

REGULAR AND SUBSTANTIVE INTERACTION POLICY

When teaching a course through distance education (DE), the regular and substantive interaction between the instructor and the students helps to ensure that students receive the benefit of consistent instructor presence as a provider of course content and instructional information, and as a facilitator of student learning. In addition, regular and substantive interaction between the instructor and students as well as between students affects retention, success, financial aid, and college accreditation. Therefore, Porterville College sets forth this policy that provides procedures to help guide instructors in maintaining this crucial element in their courses.

DISTANCE EDUCATION DEFINITION

*Distance education (DE) refers to education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor(s) and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor(s) either synchronously or asynchronously.¹ (Please note: This definition only applies to courses in which any portion of the scheduled instruction is being provided through Distance Education. This does not apply to a course that has not supplanted any portion of its scheduled instructional hours with DE **even if** it makes use of technologies listed under the DE definition.)*

- 1) *The internet;*
- 2) *One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;*
- 3) *Audio conference; or*
- 4) *Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the previously listed technologies.¹*

As of the Spring 2025 semester, Porterville College offers three modalities that fit this criteria of *Distance Education*: online, hybrid, and HyFlex. Course sections taught in the *online* modality are categorized in the schedule of classes as either Online or Online Scheduled to distinguish between asynchronous and synchronous instruction, respectively.

If new modalities are offered that fit this definition of “Distance Education,” they will be subject to this policy. Also, if the terms used for the three existing modalities changes in the future, they will continue to be subject to this policy as long as they still fit the criteria shown here for *Distance Education*.

REGULAR AND SUBSTANTIVE INTERACTION

Federal and state regulations specifically define and call for regular and substantive interaction between the instructor and students in all distance education courses. The interaction can occur either synchronously or asynchronously, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities.

Substantive interaction means engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:

¹ [U.S. Department of Education, Title 34 C.F.R. § 600.2](#)

- *Providing direct instruction;*
- *Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;*
- *Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;*
- *Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency;*
- *Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.*

Regular interaction between a student and instructor(s) is ensured by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency,:

- *Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and*
- *Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.¹*

DOCUMENTING INTERACTION

Because regular and substantive interaction is a federal and state mandate, there are instances in which the college must prove that this interaction is occurring. Therefore, it is very important that the instructor interaction be documented within the district approved learning management system (LMS). Documentation begins in the syllabus. KCCD Board Policy dictates that the course syllabus must be made available to students within the approved learning management system. Course syllabi for distance education courses at Porterville College are required to include an outline of the regular and substantive interaction plan for the course. Within this section instructors should state the turn-around time for student inquiries, assignment feedback, and grading. Per KCCD Board Policy, the maximum turn-around time on student inquiries should be no more than 48 hours, except weekends and holidays. The syllabus should also clearly display two methods by which students can contact the instructor.

Additionally, instructors teaching distance education courses must respond to the [Regular and Substantive Interaction Form](#) at least once each academic year. This form requires instructors to provide evidence of the regular and substantive interaction strategies used in EACH of their distance education courses during the semester of submission. The Distance Education Coordinator will review all submissions and present courses of concern to the Distance Education Committee. Courses of concern are those in which regular and substantive interaction is not clearly demonstrated by the submitted evidence. The committee members will contact the instructors regarding the courses of concern and work together with the Distance Education Coordinator to ensure necessary modifications are made to the course. The instructor will be asked to submit an additional response to the Regular and Substantive Interaction Form before the end of the course.

STUDENT-TO-STUDENT INTERACTION

Regular and substantive student-to-student interaction can be beneficial to student success in many classes. However, there may be some classes for which student-to-student interaction is

not possible or beneficial. Interaction among students, when required for a class, will be described in the course outline of record or distance education addendum. In classes requiring interaction among students, that interaction must occur within the approved learning management system as per the KCCD Board Policy. It is also important to document how student to student interaction will occur in the course, by describing the expected interaction in the course syllabus or other logical location in the course.

UNEXPECTED INSTRUCTOR ABSENCE

If the instructor will be out of contact for any time not specified in the course documents, the instructor will notify students of the loss of contact and when they can expect regular contact with the instructor to resume. If the instructor's absence will exceed three instructional days (excluding weekend and holidays), then the instructor will submit an absence report so that a substitute can be assigned.

GUIDING POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

- U.S. Department of Education, Title 34 § 600.2
- § 55200 and 55204 of Article 1 of Subchapter 3 of Chapter 6 of Division 6 of Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations
- KCCD Board Policy Manual, Procedure 4B3

CONCLUSION

By adopting this regular and substantive interaction policy, Porterville College aims to ensure that students enrolled in distance education classes experience the same quality and amount of support from instructors, as well as the opportunity to collaborate amongst their peers, as those enrolled in on-campus classes. The only difference will be the way in which contact occurs. Ultimately, regardless of instructional modality, students remain the focus at Porterville College as we commit to ensuring an excellent educational experience.