

AP 4105 DISTANCE EDUCATION

References:

Title 5 Sections 55200 et seq.

NOTE: This procedure is **legally required** if the District has implemented distance education courses. Local practice may be inserted, but must include the following minimum requirements contained in Title 5.

Definition

Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology. Distance Education classes where fifty-one percent (51%) or more required instructional time shifts from in-class to geographically separated instruction shall be considered online classes for evaluation purposes.

Course Approval

Each proposed or existing course offered by distance education shall be reviewed and approved separately. Separate approval is mandatory if any portion of the instruction in a course or a course section is designed to be provided through distance education. (Ref. FA Contract Article 10.D.1.h)

The review and approval of new and existing distance education courses shall follow the curriculum approval procedures outlined in AP 4020 titled Program and Curriculum Development. Distance education courses shall be approved under the same conditions and criteria as all other courses.

Certification

When approving distance education courses, the college curriculum committee will certify the following:

- **Course Quality Standards:** The same standards of course quality are applied to the distance education courses as are applied to traditional classroom courses.
- **Course Quality Determinations:** Determinations and judgments about the quality of the distance education course were made with the full involvement of the college curriculum committee approval procedures.

- Instructor Contact: Each section of the course that is delivered through distance education will include regular effective contact between instructor and students. (Ref. FA Contract Article 10 F.3b)
- Duration of Approval: All distance education courses approved under this procedure will continue to be in effect unless there are substantive changes of the course outline.

NOTE: The **red ink** signifies language that is **legally required** and recommended by the Policy and Procedure Service and its legal counsel. The language in **green ink** was added during the administrative review on April 10, 2013. The **violet ink** was added by FA on November 12, 2013. This document was reviewed by representatives of the Academic Senates on December 12, 2013.

Date Approved:

(This is a new procedure recommended by the Policy and Procedure Service)

Legal Citations for AP 4105

Title 5 Sections 55200 et seq.

5 CCR § 55200
Cal. Admin. Code tit. 5, § 55200

Title 5. Education
Division 6. California Community Colleges
Chapter 6. Curriculum and Instruction
Subchapter 3. Alternative Instructional Methodologies
☞ [Article 1.](#) Distance Education

☞ § 55200. Definition and Application.

Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology. All distance education is subject to the general requirements of this chapter as well as the specific requirements of this article. In addition, instruction provided as distance education is subject to the requirements that may be imposed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12100 et seq.) and section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. § 794d).

Note: Authority cited: Section 66700 and 70901, Education Code; References: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code; title 29 United States Code section 794d, and title 42 United States Code section 12100 et seq.

5 CCR § 55202
Cal. Admin. Code tit. 5, § 55202

Title 5. Education
Division 6. California Community Colleges
Chapter 6. Curriculum and Instruction
Subchapter 3. Alternative Instructional Methodologies
☞ [Article 1.](#) Distance Education

☞ § 55202. Course Quality Standards.

The same standards of course quality shall be applied to any portion of a course conducted through distance education as are applied to traditional classroom courses, in regard to the course quality judgment made pursuant to the requirements of section 55002, and in regard to any local course quality determination or review process. Determinations and judgments about the quality of distance education under the course quality standards shall be made with the full involvement of faculty in accordance with the provisions of subchapter 2 (commencing with section 53200) of chapter 2.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code. Reference: Section 70901, Education Code.

5 CCR § 55204
Cal. Admin. Code tit. 5, § 55204

Title 5. Education
Division 6. California Community Colleges

Chapter 6. Curriculum and Instruction
Subchapter 3. Alternative Instructional Methodologies
☞ [Article 1.](#) Distance Education

➡ **§ 55204. Instructor Contact.**

In addition to the requirements of section 55002 and any locally established requirements applicable to all courses, district governing boards shall ensure that:

(a) Any portion of a course conducted through distance education includes regular effective contact between instructor and students, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, correspondence, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities. Regular effective contact is an academic and professional matter pursuant to sections 53200 et seq.

(b) Any portion of a course provided through distance education is conducted consistent with guidelines issued by the Chancellor pursuant to section 409 of the Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code.

5 CCR § 55206
Cal. Admin. Code tit. 5, § 55206

Title 5. Education
Division 6. California Community Colleges
Chapter 6. Curriculum and Instruction
Subchapter 3. Alternative Instructional Methodologies
☞ [Article 1.](#) Distance Education

➡ **§ 55206. Separate Course Approval.**

If any portion of the instruction in a proposed or existing course or course section is designed to be provided through distance education in lieu of face-to-face interaction between instructor and student, the course shall be separately reviewed and approved according to the district's adopted course approval procedures.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code.

5 CCR § 55208
Cal. Admin. Code tit. 5, § 55208

Title 5. Education
Division 6. California Community Colleges
Chapter 6. Curriculum and Instruction
Subchapter 3. Alternative Instructional Methodologies
☞ [Article 1.](#) Distance Education

➡ **§ 55208. Faculty Selection and Workload.**

(a) Instructors of course sections delivered via distance education technology shall be selected by the same procedures used to determine all instructional assignments. Instructors shall possess the minimum qualifications for the discipline into which the course's subject matter most appropriately falls, in accordance with article 2 (commencing with section 53410) of subchapter 4 of chapter 4, and with the list of discipline definitions and requirements adopted by the Board of Governors to implement that article, as such list may be amended from time to time.

(b) The number of students assigned to any one course section offered by distance education shall be determined by and be consistent with other district procedures related to faculty assignment. Procedures for determining the number of students assigned to a course section offered in whole or in part by distance education may include a review by the curriculum committee established pursuant to section 55002(a)(1).

(c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to impinge upon or detract from any negotiations or negotiated agreements between exclusive representatives and district governing boards.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code.

5 CCR § 55210
Cal. Admin. Code tit. 5, § 55210

Title 5. Education
Division 6. California Community Colleges
Chapter 6. Curriculum and Instruction
Subchapter 3. Alternative Instructional Methodologies
Article 1. Distance Education

➡ § 55210. Ongoing Responsibility of Districts.

If a district offers one or more courses or course sections in which instruction is provided through distance education for at least 51 percent of the hours of instruction in the course or course section, the district shall:

(a) maintain records and report data through the Chancellor's Office Management Information System on the number of students and faculty participating in new courses or sections of established courses offered through distance education ;

(b) provide to the local governing board, no later than August 31st of each year, a report on all distance education activity;

(c) provide other information consistent with reporting guidelines developed by the Chancellor pursuant to section 409 of the Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code.

FROM WASC Distance Learning Manual

Introduction

Distance learning is thought by some to be significantly changing American higher education. Today's distance education courses depend on the multitude of constantly changing communication technologies that can transmit instruction and relay materials between learner and teacher. These technologies have taken shape at a mind-boggling pace, erasing traditional barriers of time, space, and place and represent the capacity to fundamentally change the paradigm for transmitting knowledge and skills from master to learner. For reasons of access, economy, effectiveness, and convenience, distance learning has swept higher education and, in the view of some, changed the role of the academy from a cloistered retreat to a marketplace that some institutions would prefer not to enter. Whether one is a zealot for or against distance learning, one cannot escape its impact. Nearly half of the college students in this country are of the age group once thought of as nontraditional. They are adults, most of whom work fulltime, and they are primarily coming to college for many reasons, including economic advancement, accomplishment of educational degree goals, and personal enrichment. Many of these students are attracted by the convenience and flexibility of distance education programs—a perfect fit for their busy lives. They are not alone, however; the evidence indicates that many students of a more "traditional" age find distance learning attractive and that the population of Americans seeking postsecondary education is growing faster than the nation's ability to meet the demand.

Since the accrediting process serves to validate an institution's commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement, the purpose of this publication is to provide some assistance to member institutions as they plan and evaluate distance learning programs and since these programs will undergo the same scrutiny employed in the evaluation of conventional campus-based programs, to provide team members with information that aids evaluation. In addition to the policies covered in this manual, users should refer to the Commission's standards as they evaluate distance learning.

Some Current Accreditation Concerns Motivation

The institution should examine closely its motivation for doing distance education since the driving forces behind this effort are many— the potential for increasing enrollment, public pressure, reducing cost, grant monies, opportunities for faculty to be creative, notions that everybody-is-doing-it, and many more. Lack of an identified need for distance learning, whether real or perceived, can influence achievement of institutional understanding of the motives for doing distance education. Understanding institutional motives can drive institutional commitment to the program, an essential

matter if students are to be ensured the opportunity to complete educational goals in such a program.

Mission, Educational Programs, and the Curriculum

Distance learning should remain consistent with and central to the stated mission of the institution. The educational policies of the institution regarding distance learning programs should be clearly stated, and the distance learning curriculum should demonstrate appropriate rigor and breadth if degrees or certificates are awarded. If course materials are developed outside the institution, the academic quality of those materials should be assessed via the institution's review policies. Academic standards for all courses and programs should be the same as for all other educational experiences delivered by the institution. Students should be able to move easily from the distance education curriculum to other curricula of the college.

Faculty

Some faculty members will be more interested in distance education than others, and most faculty who engage it will require ongoing training. Because technological currency is important, the level of support for staff development is one indicator of institutional commitment to distance learning. Policies regarding faculty loads, class size, time allowed for course development, and compensation need to be appropriate for the context of distance learning. Faculty access to appropriate technology and software as well as to support personnel is critical to a successful program. On-going evaluation of faculty involved in distance learning should include appropriate recognition of all scholarly activities.

Students

The overriding concern for students is that the delivery of instruction be in modes appropriate for the specific content of a course. Students should expect that distance learning programs will permit completion of learning outcomes and objectives in the same manner as those delivered in traditional programs. The academic and technical skills (as well as the commitment) required to successfully complete such a program should be made clear to students, and since a distance learning environment requires certain skills and competencies to succeed, the institution should have the means to assess whether students have them. Proper training should be available for students in working independently and in utilizing the necessary technology. Access to student services such as admissions, orientation, financial aid, registration, advisement, tutoring, and other appropriate

student services and technical support should be made available. Student access to faculty should also be a major program ingredient, and issues about the evaluation of student work should be addressed.

Access for learning or physically challenged students may pose some special concerns since these students frequently avail themselves of distance learning. These students often will indicate that they would not be likely to be taking courses at all were it not for the availability of such an education.

The college may need to consider special services or additional equipment for these students.

Library and Learning Resources

Availability and use of appropriate, equivalent, (and sometimes personalized) learning resources are essentials of a supportive and successful distance learning program. Although many of today's institutional libraries are technologically capable of supporting learners at a distance, orientation and training are important components of effective student use of all resources for learning. Special funding may be necessary.

Institutional Effectiveness and Student Outcomes

Although the Commission does not endorse a specific assessment model, providing evidence of institutional effectiveness will require that the institution develop distance learning outcome and assessment strategies. Such strategies should take into account how distance learning programs compare with more traditional programs in such areas as transferability, observable and measurable learning outcomes, eligibility for financial aid, student satisfaction, and other program goals. Review and approval processes should be in place and used to ensure appropriateness of goals and objectives, as well as the effectiveness of distance learning.

Organization, Planning, Human Resources

The college community must understand the connection between the distance learning program and the institution's mission and share the reasons for the program's development. The college should demonstrate commitment to financial and technical support that allows a program to continue for a period of time sufficient for students to complete educational objectives.

Those involved with the administration of such programs should provide an appropriate infrastructure and possess skills appropriate to such an Some

Current Accreditation Concerns 5 endeavor-especially technological proficiency and the ability to communicate with all constituencies. Planning for the fiscal, technical, and human resources needed to deliver such a program must be thorough and continuous and provide for evaluation on an on-going basis. Evaluation should focus on the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the institution's distance learning program, as well as on assessment of student learning, retention, and satisfaction.

The institution should also demonstrate preparedness to deal with such problems as computer viruses, hackers, computer crime, etc.

Facilities and Equipment

In integrating a distance learning program into the institution's mission, planning for technology-enhanced facilities and equipment appropriate to meeting program or course objectives must be part of long range planning and budgeting activities. The technology should support the program's design, and planning for obsolescence should be evident. Expenditure patterns should demonstrate commitment to providing the resources necessary to ensure success and effectiveness, as well as continuity and integrity of the program.

Catalogs and Publications

As an official document of the institution, the catalog should clearly describe the distance learning program. Complete, timely, and accurate description of instructional delivery could also be presented in the catalog or in supplemental publications. If prerequisites for participation or other program requirements exist, these should be clearly stated, as should expected learning outcomes and the nature of the faculty/student interaction. Transferability of credit should be addressed in a forthright manner, as should matters regarding fees.

Intellectual Property Rights

The preparation of distance learning instructional materials differs from the preparation of materials for the traditional classroom setting, raising questions about ownership, copyright, and fair use. Faculty and administrative personnel will need to develop policies that do not undermine faculty rights or the learning/teaching process and that address issues of copyright, ownership, and faculty compensation.

ACCJC Policies

There are two policies of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges that are specific to distance education and which should be considered when developing distance learning programs as well as in evaluating their effectiveness, the Substantive Change Policy and the Policy on Distance Learning, Including Electronically-Mediated Learning.

The development of distance education programs may represent a substantive change—a change which alters the objectives or the scope of the institution, modifies the nature of the constituencies it seeks to serve, or changes the geographic area served. Such changes are subject to Commission review and require that the institution notify the Commission in advance of program initiation by filing a Substantive Change Proposal. The policy, cited below, describes the intent, processes, and procedures substantive change. It can also be found in the Accreditation Reference Handbook or the Commission's web site: www.accjc.org. Policy on Distance Learning, Including Electronically-Mediated Learning (Adopted June 2001; Edited August 2004)

Background

Recognizing that most institutions must make use of the growing range of systems for delivery of instruction, including various electronic means, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) has adopted a policy based on principles of good practice to help assure that distance learning is characterized by the same concerns for quality, integrity, and effectiveness that apply to more traditional modes of instruction.

As methods used to facilitate/conduct distance learning evolve, the ACCJC policies that address distance learning also change. This policy statement has drawn from several previous policies and is intended to replace those policies with a single, unified, and up-to-date statement. Further development of this policy may well be appropriate in the not-so-distant future.

Definition of Distance Learning

Distance learning is defined, for the purposes of accreditation review, as a formal interaction designed for learning in which any portion of the interaction occurs when the student is separated by location from the instructor, resources used to support learning, or other students. Distance learning may employ correspondence study, audio, video, or computer technologies. Educational interactions delivered through these means may occur on campus as well as off campus. These interactions may be synchronous or asynchronous.

Policy Statement

ACCJC policy specifies that all learning opportunities provided by our accredited institutions have the same quality, accountability, and focus on student outcomes, whether they are delivered electronically or by more traditional means. The intent of the policy is to provide a framework that allows institutions the flexibility to adapt their delivery modes to the emerging needs of students and society while maintaining quality. Any institution offering courses and programs electronically is expected to meet the requirements of accreditation in each of its courses and programs and at each of its sites.

Principles

- Development, implementation, and evaluation of all courses and programs, including those offered electronically, must take place within the institution's total educational mission.
- Institutions are expected to control development, implementation, and evaluation of all courses and programs offered in their names, including those offered electronically.
- Institutions are expected to have clearly defined and appropriate student learning outcomes in all courses and programs, including those delivered through electronic means.
- Institutions are expected to provide the resources and structure needed to accomplish these outcomes.
- Institutions are expected to demonstrate that their students achieve these outcomes through application of rigorous assessment.
- Institutions are expected to provide the ACCJC reasons to believe that these outcomes will continue to be accomplished.
- Institutions are expected to give the ACCJC advance notice, through the Substantive Change process, of intent to: initiate a new delivery mode, such as electronically-delivered courses; or offer 50% of a program through a mode of distance or electronic delivery.

Guidelines for Implementation Curriculum and Instruction

Each electronically-delivered course or program of study results in learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the course credit, degree, or certificate awarded. A degree or certificate program delivered partially or entirely through electronic means is coherent and complete and results in learning outcomes comparable to those delivered through other means. Student experiences result in achievement of intended learning outcomes whether electronically-delivered courses provide for synchronous or asynchronous interaction between faculty and students and among students.

Portions of courses delivered through electronic means adhere to the same principles as courses delivered entirely through these means.

Institutional Context and Commitment Role and Mission

Delivery of courses and programs through electronic means is consistent with the institution's role and mission. Review and approval processes ensure the appropriateness of electronic delivery to meeting the course and program objectives. Specific needs of students for whom electronically delivered courses are intended are identified and addressed.

Learning Resources

Appropriate learning resources are available to students who take electronically delivered courses.

Students and Student Services

Students receive clear, complete, and timely information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, nature of faculty/student interaction, assumptions about technological competence and skills, technical equipment requirements, availability of academic support services and financial aid resources, and costs and payment policies. Enrolled students have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support their learning and assess their progress. Students have the background, knowledge, and technical skills needed to successfully use the technology involved in their course work. Advertising, recruiting, and admissions materials clearly and accurately represent the courses and programs, and the services available.

Commitment to Support

The institution demonstrates a commitment to ongoing program support, both financial and technical, and to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable students to complete a degree/certificate. The institution ensures that qualified faculty provide appropriate oversight of courses delivered electronically. The institution gives appropriate consideration to the technical skills and needs of faculty assigned to teach through electronic means. The faculty evaluation process provides a means to evaluate technical skills when appropriate. The institution provides faculty training and support services specifically related to teaching via electronic means.

Evaluation and Assessment

The institution evaluates the educational effectiveness of electronically delivered course work, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction. Students have access to such evaluation data. The institution provides for assessment of student achievement in each course and at completion of a program.

Questions to Aid in the Evaluation of Distance Learning

An institution offering courses through electronic or other modes of distance delivery is expected to meet ACCJC standards and policies. The questions below are provided to assist institutions in undertaking discussions as part of self study development. Evaluation teams will similarly use them in assessing quality.

Curriculum and Instruction

- What means does the institution have to ensure that courses intended for electronic or other modes of distance delivery are developed through a process similar to traditionally-delivered courses?
- How does the institution ensure that courses and programs provide for timely and effective interaction between students and faculty?
- How does the institution ensure that courses and programs provide for effective interaction among students?
- How does the institution ensure that faculty has responsibility for and exercise oversight of electronically-delivered courses and programs, ensuring both the rigor of those courses and programs and the quality of instruction?
- How does the institution ensure that the technology used is appropriate to the nature and objectives of the courses and programs?
- How does the institution ensure the currency of materials, courses, and programs?
- How clear and effective are the institution's distance learning policies concerning ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses, or other media products?
- How does the institution ensure that appropriate faculty support services specifically related to distance learning are provided?
- How does the institution provide effective training for faculty who teach using electronic means?

Evaluation and Assessment

- How does the institution assess student capability to succeed in electronically delivered courses and programs?
- How is this information applied to admission and recruiting?
- How effective is this assessment?

- How does the institution evaluate the educational effectiveness of its electronically-delivered courses and programs (including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction) to ensure comparability to traditionally-delivered courses and programs?
- How does the institution ensure the integrity of student work and the credibility of the degrees and credit it awards?

Library and Learning Resources

- How does the institution ensure that students have access to and can effectively use appropriate information resources?
- How does the institution monitor whether students make appropriate use of learning resources?
- How does the institution provide laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses or programs?

Student Services

- How does the institution provide adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support the programs, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, and placement, and counseling?
- How does the institution provide an adequate means for resolving student complaints?
- What advertising, recruiting, and admissions information does the institution provide to students that adequately and accurately represents the programs, requirements, and services available?
- How does the institution ensure that students admitted possess the knowledge and equipment necessary to use the technology employed in the course or program?
- How does the institution provide assistance to students who are experiencing difficulty using the required technology?

Facilities and Finances

- How does the institution ensure that equipment and maintenance required for electronically-delivered courses and programs are provided effectively?
- How are facilities, staffing, equipment, and other resources associated with the viability and effectiveness of the electronically delivered courses and programs reflected in the institution's long-range planning, budgeting, and policy development processes?

34 CFR Part 602.17

§602.17 Application of standards in reaching an accrediting decision.

The agency must have effective mechanisms for evaluating an institution 's or program 's compliance with the agency 's standards before reaching a decision to

accredit or preaccredit the institution or program. The agency meets this requirement if the agency demonstrates that it--

- (a) Evaluates whether an institution or program--
 - (1) Maintains clearly specified educational objectives that are consistent with its mission and appropriate in light of the degrees or certificates awarded;
 - (2) Is successful in achieving its stated objectives; and
 - (3) Maintains degree and certificate requirements that at least conform to commonly accepted standards;
- (b) Requires the institution or program to prepare, following guidance provided by the agency, an in-depth self-study that includes the assessment of educational quality and the institution's or program's continuing efforts to improve educational quality;
- (c) Conducts at least one on-site review of the institution or program during which it obtains sufficient information to determine if the institution or program complies with the agency's standards;
- (d) Allows the institution or program the opportunity to respond in writing to the report of the on-site review;
- (e) Conducts its own analysis of the self-study and supporting documentation furnished by the institution or program, the report of the on-site review, the institution's or program's response to the report, and any other appropriate information from other sources to determine whether the institution or program complies with the agency's standards;
- (f) Provides the institution or program with a detailed written report that assesses--
 - (1) The institution's or program's compliance with the agency's standards, including areas needing improvement; and
 - (2) The institution's or program's performance with respect to student achievement; **and**
- (g) Requires institutions that offer distance education or correspondence education to have processes in place through which the institution establishes that the student who registers in a distance education or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. The agency meets this requirement if it--
 - (1) Requires institutions to verify the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, methods such as--
 - (i) A secure login and pass code;
 - (ii) Proctored examinations; and
 - (iii) New or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identity; and
 - (2) Makes clear in writing that institutions must use processes that protect student privacy and notify students of any projected additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity at the time of registration or enrollment.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1099b)