Book	VCCCD Administrative Procedure Manual
Section	Chapter 4 Academic Affairs
Title	AP 4105 Distance Education
Code	AP 4105
Status	Under Consideration
Legal	34 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R) Parts 600.2, 600.22 and 602.17 (U.S. Department of Education regulations on the Integrity of Federal Student Financial Aid Programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended)
	ACCJC Accreditation Standard II.A.1
	California Education Code Section 66700
	California Education Code Section 70901
	California Education Code Section 70902
	Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S. Code, Sections 12100 et seq.)
	Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act 1973, as amended (29 U.S. Code, Section 794d)
	Title 5, Section 55200 et seq.
Adopted	May 12, 2015

Definition
Per Title 5, Section 55200, distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology. This definition includes both hybrid and fully online courses. All distance education is subject to the general requirements under Title 5 as well as the specific requirements of articles 55200 and 55204. 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. Section 121000 et seq.) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. Section 794 d).

The U.S. Department of Education defines distance education as education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. (Title 34 Subtitle B, Chapter IV Part 600 Subpart A Section 600.2)

Distance Education Instructor Certification
Distance Education (DE) faculty must be certified to teach distance learning prior to being assigned a distance education course.

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 instruction in a course replaces face-to-face time, or if an entire section of a course, is designed to be provided through distance education.

The review and approval of new and existing distance education courses shall follow the curriculum approval procedures outlined in [Administrative Procedure 4020](#), Program and Curriculum Development. Distance education courses shall be approved under the same conditions and criteria as all other courses.

Addendum to Course Outline
An addendum to the official course outline of record shall be completed if any portion of the instruction of a new or existing course is provided through distance education. The addendum must be approved according to the District College curriculum approval procedures. The addendum must address the following:
- How course outcomes will be achieved in a distance education mode;
- How the portion of instruction delivered via distance education provides regular and effective contact between instructors and students; and
- How the portion of instruction delivered via distance education meets the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Certification
When approving distance education courses, the Curriculum Committee (CC) will certify the following:
A. Course quality standards: The same standards of course quality are applied to distance education courses as are applied to traditional classroom courses.
B. Course quality determinations: Determinations and judgments about the quality of distance education courses are made in accordance with all CC course approval criteria and procedures.
C. Instructor contact: Each section of a course that is offered through distance education will include regular effective contact between instructor and students. Distance Education includes the following specifications of instructor/student contact:
1. Instructor-initiated interaction: In hybrid or fully online courses, ensuring regular effective instructor/student contact guarantees the student receives the benefit of the instructor's presence in the learning environment both as a provider of instructional information and as a facilitator of student learning.
In a face-to-face instructional format, instructors are present at each class meeting and interact via class announcements, lectures, activities, and discussions, which take a variety of forms. In hybrid and online instructional formats, instructors will regularly initiate interaction with students to assess if they are doing all of the following:
a) Accessing and comprehending course material
b) Participating regularly in course activities
Faculty office hours are not included as fulfilling the regular effective contact requirement and are a separate requirement. Providing students with an open-ended question forum, although appropriate, does not constitute the entirety of effective instructor-initiated interaction.
Instructor-initiated interaction will create an environment of academic integrity that discourages fraud in the form of student misrepresentation and constitutes a means for the following:
a) Monitoring satisfactory progress, defined as earning grades consistent with a final course grade of a "C" or "Pass"
b) Tracking student attendance
c) Determining the last day of attendance for students who drop the course via the following methods:

- Prior to the first census date, the instructor will initiate an activity that requires student participation
- The instructor will include various robust assessments and assignments on a frequent basis throughout the semester

2. Frequency of interaction: Distance education courses are considered the virtual equivalent of traditional classroom courses; thus, the frequency of instructor/student interaction in a distance education course will be at least the same as would be established in its face-to-face counterpart. At the very least, the number of instructor contact hours per week that would be available for face-to-face students will also be available, in asynchronous and/or synchronous mode, with students in the distance education format (based on the Carnegie unit). Given the nature of asynchronous instructional methodologies, contact shall be distributed in a manner that ensures regular instructor/student contact is maintained over the course of a week and the duration of the term and should occur as often as is appropriate for the course.
3. Establishing expectations and managing unexpected instructor absence: An instructor and/or department established policy describing the frequency and timeliness of instructor-initiated contact and instructor feedback will be posted in the syllabus and/or other course documents made available to

students when the course officially opens each semester. This information will also refer students to the section in the college catalog on student rights and responsibilities.

During the course, instructors will notify students and the Department Chair when they must be out of contact beyond what is described in the course documents as mentioned above. This notification will include when students can expect regular effective contact to resume.

4. Quality of contact: Regarding the type of contact that will exist in all Ventura County Community College District (VCCCD) distance education courses, instructors will use a variety of means to initiate contact with students, such as the following:

a) Threaded discussion forums (with appropriate instructor participation)

b) "Questions for the instructor" forums

c) General email

d) Weekly announcements

e) Timely and frequent feedback for student work

f) Instructor prepared electronic lectures or introductions in the form of electronic lectures to any publisher created materials (written, recorded, broadcast, etc.) that, combined with other course materials, create the virtual equivalent of the face-to-face class.

In addition, instructors shall enable effective instructor/student interaction in distance education course by doing all of the following:

a) Allocating sufficient hours per week for contact. This may include informing students of the option to meet on a face-to-face basis or via web conferencing or via telephone.

b) Conducting student/instructor interaction with similar care and attention to students as that which occurs during face-to-face office hours and meetings.

c) Responding to student emails, postings, phone calls, etc., in a timely manner.

d) Duration of approval: All distance education courses approved under this procedure will continue to be in effect unless substantive changes are made to their official course outlines of record.

Establishing Regular, Effective, and Substantive Faculty-Initiated Contact:

Faculty will use the following practices of regular and substantive contact in their Distance Education courses:

a. Regular Announcements: Faculty should make general course related announcements to the students in their distance education classes on a weekly basis, whether by the announcement area in the Learning Management System or via e-mails to the entire class.

b. Establishing Expectations: Faculty will include in their syllabus or course orientation a description of the frequency and timeliness of instructor-initiated contact and feedback, as well as expectations for student participation. This should include the timeframe for responding to e-mails and phone calls, the timeframe for receiving feedback on student work, the timeframe for submission of assignments, and the expectations of discussion board postings required of the student. This information will be available to students on the first day of class.

c. Faculty-Initiated Interaction: Faculty will regularly initiate interaction with students to determine that they have access to the course materials, that they understand the material, that they understand what is required of them, and that they are participating in the activities of the course. There are various ways of accomplishing this, including but not limited to, asynchronous discussion board forums with appropriate faculty input in the forum or grade book, synchronous chats, video conferencing, individualized contact via phone or e-mail, and, in the case of a hybrid course, in face-to-face meetings.

d. Timely Feedback on Student Work: Faculty will grade and provide feedback on student work within a reasonable timeframe. If discussion boards are required, students should be given guidelines at the outset of the course and feedback on their participation throughout the duration of the course.

e. Content Delivery: Faculty will provide content material either through online materials (in written, video, and/or audio forms) and/or through introductions to materials not created by the instructor (such as publisher-provided materials, web sites, streaming video, etc.).

f. Notifying Students of Faculty Unavailability/Offline Time: If the instructor must be out of contact briefly for any reason, notification to students will be made in the announcements area of the course and/or via e-mail that includes when the students can expect regular effective contact to resume. This should occur for any offline periods lasting longer than three business days.

g. Faculty Absence Notification: If a faculty member must be offline for a period of time that resultsin the faculty member not being able to meet his or her regular effective contact for any given week, this would be considered an absence and the Dean of the division in which the course is taught must be notified. Absences will be handled in accordance with the negotiated faculty contract.

h. Face-to-Face Forms of Contact: Faculty are encouraged to utilize the face-to-face forms of contact mentioned in Title 5, Section 55211 (e.g., group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, and library workshops), but to keep in

Enrollment, Attendance and Participation in Distance Learning Courses
Students will register and enroll in distance learning courses in the same manner as traditional courses.

Attendance will be determined through contact with instructors in the first week of the term; logging into the learning management system does not constitute active participation. Instructors may drop students from distance education courses for lack of active participation. Active participation may include, but is not limited to, writing in discussion forums, submitting assignments, taking quizzes and/or exams, or other interactive class activities.

Instructional time in all credit courses, regardless of modality, follows the standard formula derived from Title 5, section 55002.5. One unit of credit is defined as a minimum of 48 total hours of student work, inclusive of all contact hours plus outside-of-class, or homework. Instructor must plan an approximate oneto-two ratio of instructional time to homework and study based on units of credit courses. For example: in a 3-unit online course, online course work should be equivalent to 3 hours of face-to-face work per week of a regular term (completing course work, such as but not limited to, lecture, discussion, assignments, and quizzes); and homework would be equivalent to 6 hours work per week of a regular term.

Accessibility
Each course that is delivered through distance education must comply with up-to-date Section 508 accessibility requirements. All course content delivered via distance education must be accessible to all persons including those with disabilities. All activities and instructional media shall be accessible, including, but not limited to,

   a. accurately captioned videos
   b. transcribed audio files
   c. images that have alternative text
   d. readable course materials using effective font, color contrast, and spacing
   e. meaningful hyperlink text
   f. documents that are created in such a way that screen reading software is able to read them
   g. accessible synchronous communication
   h. prescribed accommodations that are followed for other graded course activities
   i. keyboard navigation.

Proctoring
Distance education courses may require exams to be taken in a proctored setting. Faculty members will clearly communicate in their syllabi any proctoring requirements along with options to complete.

Test Proctoring Fees
There is no authority that permits the District to charge students a fee to cover the costs of having someone present while students are taking tests.

Verification of Student Identity
Consistent with federal regulations pertaining to federal financial aid eligibility, the District must authenticate or verify that the student who registers in a distance education or correspondence education course is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. The District will provide to each student at the time of registration a statement of the process in place to protect student privacy and estimated additional student charges associated with verification of student identity, if any.

The Chief Instruction Officer shall ensure the institution utilizes one or more of these methods to authenticate or verify student identity:

A. Secure login and password to enable authenticated access to student information and course management system.
B. Proctored examinations.
C. New or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

<u>Student Support Services</u>
The Colleges will assure that distance learners have reasonable access to student support services that are comparable to those services provided to on-campus learners.

<u>Governance Review</u>
2020 04.23 Policy, Planning, and Student Success Committee (proposed)
2020 04.20 Chancellor's Cabinet
2020 04.16 DTRW-I
2020 03.12 DTRW-I