

Regular & Substantive Interaction Guidelines – Moorpark College

Recommended by the Distance Education Committee March 23, 2022

Introduction

Online learners face unique challenges, such as time management and self-directed learning. The Distance Education Committee works together with Faculty to provide a strong foundation for success in online courses. We strive to provide a quality learning experience through engagement and integration into the academic community. The cornerstone of this support is regular and substantive interaction between instructors and students. This document includes the following:

- Federal, state, and accrediting body definitions for Distance Education and Regular & Substantive Interaction
- Guidelines for meeting and exceeding these regulatory standards
- Examples created by Moorpark College faculty to use when teaching online

Definition of Terms

The following are definitions as stated in: [Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) Title 34, Subtitle B, Chapter VI, Part 600, Subpart A, § 600.2](#), [Proposed Amendments to Title V \(TV\) of the California Code of Regulations](#), and [Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges \(ACCJC\) Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education](#).

Distance Education

(CFR, TV, and ACCJC) 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 the instructor(s), either synchronously or asynchronously.

The technologies may include:

- A. the internet;
- B. one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;
- C. audioconferencing; or
- D. other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (A) through (C).

Regular & Substantive Interaction

(TV) 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 and substantive interaction between the instructor(s) and students, (and among students if described in the

course outline of record or distance education addendum) 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.

(CFR, TV, and ACCJC) For purposes of this definition, substantive interaction is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:

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

An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency:

- A. Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and regular basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and
- B. Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

Types of Online Courses

The following definitions are provided as clarification based on the course offerings at Moorpark College:

Synchronous Course

Synchronous learning is online education that happens in real-time. This means that students and the instructor interact in a specific virtual place at a set time. In these courses, instructors commonly take attendance, as in an on-ground course. Common methods of synchronous online learning include video conferencing, teleconferencing, live chatting, and live-streamed lectures that must be viewed in real-time.

Asynchronous Course

Asynchronous learning does not require real-time interaction; instead, content is available online for students to access when it best suits their schedules, and assignments are completed on a set schedule.

Hybrid Course

Hybrid courses include components of both synchronous and asynchronous courses.

Regular & Substantive Interaction at Moorpark College

Per [Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) Title 34, Subtitle B, Chapter VI, Part 600, Subpart A, § 600.2](#), [Proposed Amendments to Title V \(TV\) of the California Code of Regulations](#), and [Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges \(ACCJC\) Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education](#), instructors must maintain regular substantive interaction in online and hybrid courses.

Below is a list of suggestions for initiating, maintaining, and supporting a culture of regular and substantive interaction. **Required activities as defined by the federal and state regulations above are in bold text**, followed by examples developed by MC faculty for effective implementation:

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

A. Providing direct instruction;

- a. Synchronous interaction with students via Zoom, Teams, or another video conferencing platform during class meetings, open office hours, or individual appointments.
- b. Delivery of pre-recorded video or audio explaining course content to students.

B. Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;

- a. Instructor explains in course syllabus and/or policies when and how students will receive grades and feedback on assessments.
- b. Instructor provides rubrics/scoring guides to clearly explain how individual assignments will be graded.
- c. Instructor promptly grades and provides individual feedback to students using the Canvas Gradebook and/or by leaving written, audio, or video comments within individual assignments.
- d. Instructor provides feedback to the entire class using written, audio, or video comments in a course announcement or module page.

C. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;

- a. Instructor clearly explains the preferred method of student to instructor contact (e.g. email, Canvas Inbox, phone, office hours, chat, etc.).
- b. Instructor promptly replies to student inquiries and requests for support in accordance to their communication standards as presented in course syllabus and/or policies.
- c. Instructor presents course content through Canvas modules.
- d. Instructor provides clear instructions or guidelines explaining required or suggested participation levels within the course overall or within specific assessments.
- e. Instructor provides reminders throughout the course that students are encouraged to initiate contact with them.

D. Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency;

- a. Instructor initiates a graded discussion board.
- b. Instructor creates student study groups.
- c. Instructor assigns group projects or presentations.
- d. Instructor establishes opportunities for student-to-student discussions such as a student-only discussions, synchronous chats, or polls.
- e. Instructor assigns a peer critique or peer review, such as writing assignments that allow students to review and provide constructive criticism of each other's work.

E. Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

- a. Instructor sends a welcome letter to students prior to course start that is also available to students joining after the initial correspondence.
- b. Instructor sends course announcements prior to course start and throughout the course.
- c. Instructor shares video tutorial explaining course navigation, etc.
- d. Instructor provides clear instructions or guidelines explaining required or suggested participation levels within the course overall or within specific assessments.
- e. Instructor clearly explains types of assignments used for assessing students throughout the course
- f. Instructor clearly communicates the availability of college support services such as: department chair, dean, ACCESS, counseling, health services, tutoring services, etc.

An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency:

A. Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and regular basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and

- a. Instructor sends course announcements prior to course start and throughout the course.
- b. Instructor includes "Instructor Initiated Contact Policy" within course syllabus and/or resources, clearly explaining how they will contact students.
- c. Instructor explains in course syllabus and/or policies how frequently they will send announcements.
- d. Instructor shares expected response times to student communication in course syllabus and/or policies.
- e. Instructor provides reminders throughout the course that students are encouraged to initiate contact with them.

B. Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

- a. Instructor promptly grades and provides individual feedback to students using the Canvas Gradebook and/or by leaving written, audio, or video comments within individual assignments.
- b. Instructor initiates contact with students who have fallen behind on coursework in a timely manner.
- c. Instructor uses the Starfish tool to provide Kudos to students who are excelling in the course.
- d. Instructor uses the Starfish tool to provide feedback and recommendations to students who are not excelling in the course.
- e. Instructor uses the Starfish tool to raise flags and seek support for students who are at risk of failing, have stopped communication or participation in the course, and/or show signs of other concerning behavior.
- f. Instructor promptly replies to student inquiries and requests for support in accordance to their communication standards as presented in course syllabus and/or policies.