

Chapter 4 – Academic Affairs

AP 4105 Distance Learning

References:

Title 5 Sections 53200, 55202, 55204, 55206, 55370 et seq.; Distance Education Guidelines, 2011 Omnibus Version (CCCCO), Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34, Education Section 602, Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008

Definition

“Distance education” means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by time and/or distance and interact through the assistance of technology. Distance education, also known as distance learning here at Mt. SAC, 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.

At Mt. San Antonio College, a distance learning (DL) course is a course that has regularly scheduled replacement of seat time and is published accordingly in the Mt. SAC Schedule.

For local purposes, the following terms are defined as follows:

- In-person courses: A course with no seat time replaced with online instruction.
- Online: A course in which 100% of instruction takes place online with no mandatory face-to-face meetings or campus visits. Online courses can meet synchronously or asynchronously.
- Hybrid: A course that provides instruction both online and face-to-face with at least one mandatory in-person meeting. Mandatory meetings are regularly scheduled, and students are informed of mandatory meetings in the schedule of classes.
- Synchronous instruction: An online course in which instruction takes place in real-time, online meetings during regularly scheduled times.
- Asynchronous instruction: An online course in which no set class meeting times are required.

Course Approval

The same standards of course quality shall be applied to any portion of a class conducted through distance education as are applied to in-person classes. Each proposed or existing course offered through distance learning shall be reviewed and approved separately by the Distance Learning Committee (DLC). Separate approval is mandatory, according to Title 5, Sections 55378 and 55206, if any portion of the instruction in a course or a course section is designed to be replaced through distance learning.

The review and approval of new and existing distance learning courses shall follow Mt SAC's curriculum approval procedures including the completion and approval of an addendum to the Course Outline of Record (COR) of the Distance Learning Course Amendment Form.

The Distance Learning Course Amendment Form 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 substantive interaction between instructors and students, and among students when applicable; 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.

Departments shall review DL courses when traditional courses are modified or submitted for COR review and submit a DL Course Amendment Form to the DLC.

Departments may designate a course Fully Online by Mutual Agreement (FOMA) on the DL Amendment Form, in which case the course is to be offered online only in the event of an emergency. FOMA courses cannot be offered during regular, non-emergency situations.

Distance Learning Faculty Certification

Faculty must be certified to teach distance learning courses by satisfactorily completing the Skills and Pedagogy for Online Teaching (SPOT) process or equivalent, as approved by Academic Senate and established by the College, prior to being scheduled to teach a distance learning course. SPOT or the equivalent certification is designed to help faculty create DL courses that demonstrate best practices for course design and equity, and meet state and federal regulations for accessibility and regular substantive interaction.¹

Scheduling of Distance Learning Courses

Distance learning courses shall be listed in the Mt. SAC Schedule of Classes in the same manner as in-person courses. If the course is offered in a distance education format, the Schedule of Classes must include the following information:

1. All online and in-person synchronous class meeting days/dates and times.
2. Required asynchronous in-person activities.
3. Required technology platforms, devices, and applications.
4. Test or assessment proctoring requirements.

¹ 34 CFR 600.2, <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-600/subpart-A/section-600.2>;

29 U.S.C. § 749d, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/29/749d>;

5 CA ADC § 55204, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/regulations/california/5-CCR-55204>;

5 CA ADC § 55206, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/regulations/california/5-CCR-55206>.

Authentication of Students in Distance Learning Courses

Consistent with federal regulations pertaining to federal financial aid eligibility,² the district must authenticate or verify that the student who registers in a distance education course is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. Accepted practices for authentication include user ID and password authentication to access the student portal or Learning Management System (LMS). Online courses will be conducted through the Mt. SAC LMS. Publisher materials may also be used as long as the publisher materials are accessed through the Mt. SAC LMS and meet federal and state guidelines for accessibility and regular substantive interaction.

Privacy of Students in Distance Learning Courses

Students have a right to privacy in online classes.

- Synchronous classes will not require that students keep their cameras on, with exceptions including: presentations with audio, video, and/or skills demonstration requirements; course safety needs; certification or accreditation requirements; and proctored exams. Disciplines with essential audio and visual requirements will give adequate notice to students (in the syllabus and/or orientation) and clearly identify situations in which video will be required. Use of proctoring software requires disclosure in the Schedule of Classes.
- Students should give permission to be recorded. Recordings should be set using Speaker View and recordings should be uploaded to the LMS course shell. Recording links should not be emailed.

Enrollment and Attendance in Distance Learning Courses

Students will register and enroll in distance learning courses in the same manner as in-person courses, but attendance will be determined through contact with professors in the first week of the term.

Faculty will drop, as a No-Show, any student who has not actively participated in the course or has not completed the faculty-determined check-in activity. Faculty members have discretion to establish any date between the official start of the term and the third day of the term. The No-Show date and check-in activity must be explicitly defined by each faculty member in the syllabus and within the LMS, preferably as part of an orientation module and/or pre-semester announcement. Examples of participation and check-in activities include posting in discussion forums, completing a syllabus quiz, updating a profile, or any other meaningful activity that requires the students to engage. Simply logging into the LMS will not count as academic engagement.

The “Last Day of Attendance” counted in the online classroom is the last day of class participation (active engagement) by the student.

² 34 C.F.R. § 602.17(g), <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-602/subpart-B/subject-group-ECFR941656d458ef3eb/section-602.17>.

Active engagement is defined as:

- Attending a synchronous class, lecture, recitation, or field or laboratory activity, physically or online, where there is an opportunity for interaction between the instructor and students;
- Submitting an academic assignment;
- Taking an assessment or an exam;
- Participating in an interactive tutorial or webinar, or other interactive computer-assisted instruction;
- Participating in a study group, group project, or an online discussion that is assigned by the institution; or
- Interacting with an instructor about academic matters; and

Active engagement is not:

- Living in institutional housing;
- Participating in the institution's meal plan;
- Logging into an online class or tutorial without any further participation; or
- Participating in academic counseling or advisement.

Regular Substantive Interaction in Distance Learning Courses

Any portion of a course conducted through distance education must include regular substantive interaction between the instructor(s) and students (and among students if described in the 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. An instructor is an individual responsible for delivering course content and who meets the qualifications for instruction established by an institution's accrediting agency.

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

- 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.
- 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.
- The instructor will notify students if the instructor will be out of contact beyond what is described in the syllabus and/or course documents. This notification will include when students can expect regular substantive interaction to resume.

Substantive interaction means engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion. Professor-student interaction employs a variety of contact methods on a predictable and scheduled basis and includes at least two of the following.

1. Providing direct instruction (examples include holding synchronous class meetings);
2. Assessing or providing substantive feedback on a student's coursework (examples include but are not limited to individualized comments and embedded rubrics);
3. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency (examples include but are not limited to regular announcements, Q&A forums, and responding to student communications in a timely manner);
4. Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency (examples include but are not limited to a threaded discussion forum or video break-out room); or
5. Other instructional activities approved by the ACCJC.

Students should be given the opportunity to interact with other students at least the same as an in-person counterpart. Student-to-student opportunities include but are not limited to threaded discussion forums and other asynchronous interaction tools; group projects and presentations; peer reviews; collaborative documents and other tools for knowledge-building and sharing; and synchronous online interactions.

Accessibility in Distance Learning Courses

Each course that is delivered through distance learning must comply with federal accessibility requirements and state and local policies. All course content delivered via distance learning must be accessible to all persons regardless of ability. Accessibility principles apply based on the format of the content and apply to all content without specific requests for accommodations. All course content that is electronically distributed shall be accessible, including but not limited to content provided in the LMS, through announcements, email, and in documents attached or embedded in these locations. Content that requires accessibility review includes:

- Media including video and audio;
- Text including headings and links;
- Non-text objects including images, tables, and charts;
- Design elements including color contrast and spacing;
- Navigation elements;
- Synchronous communication;
- Prescribed accommodations that are followed for other graded course activities.

Mt. San Antonio College provides tools and services to support the accessibility of course materials. By proposing a distance education course, the faculty author and department chair agree that the course will be able to meet the accessibility requirements in state and federal regulations (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), section 508 of the

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, California Government Code section 11135, and Title 5 section 55205).

Equity in Distance Learning Courses

Mt. SAC acknowledges equity gaps for some disproportionately impacted student populations have historically been larger for DL course sections compared to in-person classes. The College takes institutional responsibility for closing equity gaps and committing resources to supply equity-minded provision of online technologies, academic support, student services and orientations, professional development and training, and updated data to inform decision-making.

Consistent with the College mission, online courses should provide an engaging and supportive teaching and learning environment for students of diverse origins, experiences, needs, abilities, and goals.

Support for Distance Learning Faculty

Mt. SAC will support Distance Learning faculty needs for quality and equitable online teaching practices, including but not limited to, instructional design; accessibility review and update; campus-purchased tools and equipment; and professional development.

Evaluation of Distance Learning Faculty

Student evaluations and classroom visitation evaluations of distance learning faculty shall be conducted per the Faculty Agreement. Evaluators shall be SPOT certified or the equivalent. When the evaluator is an educational administrator, the equivalent training will be determined by the administration. Training will be completed prior to evaluation.

Support for Distance Learning Students

To ensure support for DL students comparable to traditional students attending in-person classes, services should be available in an on-line mode. Services include, but are not limited to, counseling, library resources and library reference services, tutoring, textbook purchase or rental, fee payment, and the College's IT help desk, LMS help, and support for basic needs. Faculty shall include links to Mt. SAC student and technology resources in each online class as part of the syllabus, orientation module, and/or announcement.

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