

**Student Identity and Distance Education Courses**

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 the estimated additional student charges associated with verification of student identity, if any.

The Vice President of Academic Affairs or her/his designee, in consultation with the Online and Digital Education Advisory Committee (ODEAC) or other appropriate campus committee, shall utilize one or more of the following acceptable procedures for verifying a student's identity:

- Secure credentialing/login and password system
- Proctored examinations
- Assessments that include evidence/proof of process of student work (e.g. pictures or video, handwritten work, etc.)
- Video or audio conferencing to meet with student and/or evaluate student work
- Technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

The Vice President of Academic Affairs or her/his designee, in consultation with the ODEAC or other appropriate campus committee, shall establish procedures for providing a statement of the process in place to protect student privacy and estimated additional student charges associated with verification of student identity, if any, to each student at the time of registration.

**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. All distance education is subject to the general requirements of 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 American with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. Section 12100 et seq.) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. Section 794d).

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. It requires 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). El Camino College offers distance education and web- enhanced courses via four delivery modes:

1. **Online:** a course in which 100% of instruction takes place entirely online with no mandatory face-to-face meetings, synchronous visits or meetings, or campus visits.
2. **Live Online:** a course that takes place fully online but requires student attendance at one or more synchronous online visits (e.g., a Zoom meeting.)
3. **Hybrid:** a course that provides instruction both online and face-to-face with at least one mandatory on-campus meeting. Mandatory meetings are regularly scheduled, and the dates are posted in the schedule of classes. Students are informed of mandatory meetings in the schedule of classes.
4. **Web-Enhanced Course (WEC):** Web-Enhanced Courses are traditional face-to-face classes that make routine use of the Learning Management System. The courses hold all their meetings on campus. The instructor will post required course materials and/or activities online and may require assignments be turned in online. Web-Enhanced Courses do not require a Distance Education Addendum, but use of technology in these courses must still meet accessibility requirements.

### **Course Approval**

In order for a course to be taught using a fully online or hybrid delivery method, it must be proposed to and approved first by the appropriate Division Curriculum Committee and then by the College Curriculum Committee, before being approved by the Board of Trustees.

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

### **Course Certification Process**

When approving distance education courses, the 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 Curriculum Committee approval procedures.
- **Regular and Substantive Contact:** Each section of the course that is delivered through distance education will include regular, effective, and substantive contact between instructor and students, and will provide opportunities for regular effective contact between students.

- **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.
- **Learning Management System:** Faculty are required to use the College's designated LMS, per the Campus Curriculum Committee mandate.

### **Distance Education Instructor Certification**

Faculty teaching distance education courses must be certified to teach distance learning prior to being assigned a distance education course. Certification is granted by satisfactorily completing an online certification program approved by the Academic Senate and offered through Online and Digital Education. On completion of the course, faculty undergo a capstone course shell review to demonstrate competency.

### **Certification Waivers**

Faculty who can demonstrate current proficiency and awareness of online best practices and legal requirements may be eligible for a certification waiver. This might include having taken an equivalent course in Online Instruction, including Accessibility, and having taught online within the past two years. Faculty applying for a waiver must submit the following documentation to the Distance Education Faculty Coordinator: a waiver form, certification of completion of training. Waivers are approved by the Distance Education Faculty Coordinator using an OEI Course Quality Rubric referenced course walkthrough. The Distance Education Faculty Coordinator makes the final decision.

### **Maintaining Certification**

Having a certification maintenance process is essential, as distance education has a continual change of regulations and technology. Over time, a faculty member who is certified could become out-of-date in their knowledge of current regulations and technology affordances. Requiring certification maintenance creates another accountability measure for the institution to meet regulations required for distance education courses.

The Online & Digital Education Department will maintain a database of all faculty who have completed certification at El Camino or have completed the waiver process. Faculty are required to maintain certification in order to continue teaching distance education courses. The certification maintenance process will occur at least every five years.

If a faculty member is teaching online consistently, they can either:

- a. Submit proof of participation in senate approved distance education specific professional development to the Professional Development and Learning Department which will provide them to the Distance Education Faculty Coordinator to maintain certification; OR

- b. Engage in a course quality improvement process (e.g., POQR) which will be tracked by Online & Digital Education and result in updating faculty status in the certification database.

Certification status will be updated annually for faculty who maintain certification through either of these avenues resetting the certification clock for those faculty members.

If a faculty member does not maintain certification through one of the avenues listed above, they will be notified by Online & Digital Education and will be able to get recertified through a short refresher course.

If a faculty member has not taught online for three consecutive years, they will be required to take an extended refresher course to make sure they are up-to-date on new requirements, regulations, and tools.

In the event that the college changes Learning Management Systems, all certified faculty will be required to take a short workshop to help them with the transition between systems.

The specific process for maintaining Distance Education Certification will be developed in consultation with the Academic Senate.

### **Establishing Regular, Effective, and Substantive Contact**

Instructors 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 at least 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 anticipated 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 initiate interaction with students to provide access to the course materials, explain what is required of them, and monitor participation in the activities of the course. There are various ways of accomplishing this, including but not limited to: asynchronous discussion board forums with faculty input in the forum or gradebook, 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 be provided with 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 results in 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:** If faculty utilize face-to-face forms of contact (e.g., group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, and library workshops), they may not require students to attend such activities unless the course is hybrid and meetings times are announced in the schedule. Alternate online activities, that entail instructor-student contact must be made available for students who cannot attend in-person activities.
- i. **Student-to-Student Contact:** Faculty will ensure ongoing regular student-to- student contact. Best practices include, but are not limited to, assigning and monitoring weekly assignments and projects that promote collaboration among students, posing questions in the discussion boards that encourage critical thinking skills and promote interaction, and monitoring student engagement.

### **Accessibility**

Each course that is delivered through distance education must comply with 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 descriptive 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.

### **Enrollment, Attendance and Participation in Distance Learning Courses**

Students will register and enroll in distance learning courses in the same manner as traditional courses. Faculty must make online courses available on or before the first day of the semester. Per AP 5070, “students who do not engage in the first required interaction of the academic term by the instructor’s deadline or within the first five days of the term if no other deadline is provided may be dropped from the roster and their places given to students on the wait list...Likewise, ...; instructors may withdraw students who do not continue to complete required regular substantive interactions by the assigned due dates specified in the syllabus.” Instructors must clearly state their attendance and withdrawal policies in the syllabus (which must be visibly posted on the course site), and instructors must document the student’s work up to the point of withdrawing the student.

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 time, or homework. Faculty must plan an approximate one-to-two ratio of instructional time to homework and study based on units of credit courses.

### **Authentication of Students in Distance Learning Courses**

Any activity that results in a grade in a distance education course will be conducted through El Camino College’s single point sign-on methods. Accepted practices for authentication include user ID and password authentication to access the student portal or Learning Management System.

### **Scheduling of Distance Learning Courses**

Distance learning courses shall be listed in the Schedule of Classes in the same manner as traditional courses, with any required on-campus meetings and other required components visible to students. Division deans determine and approve faculty assignments for all courses, including distance education sections. Faculty will only be scheduled to teach a distance education course after successful completion of online certification or upon waiver for newly-hired faculty.

## **Evaluation of Distance Learning Faculty**

The Online & Digital Education Department will provide guiding documents recommended by the Online & Digital Education Advisory Committee and approved by the Academic Senate to support evaluators in understanding how to determine quality, equity, and accessibility in online courses. Distance education faculty will be evaluated per procedures outlined in the faculty contract.

### **Dean/Director Access to Canvas Shells outside the Evaluation Cycle:**

**Deans/Directors may enter a faculty's Canvas shell if one or more of the following occur:**

1. Student complaint related to instructional negligence, or unresponsiveness that has persisted for at least three days.
2. Faculty is unresponsive to email/phone calls for a period of at least three days.
3. Faculty request.

### **Procedures to enter:**

1. Email to notify faculty member of entrance and reasons.
2. Areas viewed must be related to complaint.
3. If applicable, set meeting with faculty to discuss findings and complaint.

## **Proctoring in Distance Learning Courses**

1. Instructors teaching online courses can require proctored exams. Per Board Policy 5030, faculty are not allowed to use a service for proctoring that requires students to pay a fee.
2. Regardless of their place of residence, students enrolled in any fully online course cannot be required to come to campus to take an exam, whether on paper or in a computer lab. Students taking hybrid or high-flex classes cannot be required to take exams that use software proctoring on-campus.
3. The following disclaimer will be added in the catalog to all online courses in Divisions that use proctored exams: This online course may require up to three proctored exams.
4. It is the instructor's responsibility to state clearly in the course syllabus whether or not proctored exams will be required. Instructors must also provide detailed information about requirements of proctored exam. If a camera is required for any part of the course, the faculty member must notify the students in the syllabus of when camera use will be required.
5. Students are responsible for determining whether or not their online course requires a proctored exam. Upon gaining access to the course, students should consult the syllabus in order to make such a determination.
6. Instructors must work with students to provide testing accommodations. It is recommended that faculty reach out to the Special Resource Center for support.

## **Support for Distance Learning Students**

To ensure support for distance education students comparable to traditional students, services should be available in a distance education mode. Student Services include, but are not limited to, a distance education readiness course, counseling, library resources and library reference services, tutoring, fee payment, and the College's technical support systems.

## **Publication of Online and Hybrid Courses**

Faculty have the ability to publish their course before the term begins. Faculty are strongly encouraged to do so, and to use LMS tools as a method to send a communication to students prior to the start of the term. Faculty are strongly encouraged to communicate with students prior to the start of the term to let them know participation requirements for the beginning of the semester. On the first official day of a term, all unpublished online and hybrid courses will be automatically published for students.

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### **References:**

Title 5 Sections 55200 et. Seq.:

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;

34 Code of Federal Regulations Part 602.17.

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);

ACCJC Accreditation Standard II.A.1;

BP 4020 and AP 4020 Program, Curriculum, and Course Development

El Camino College

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