



Ohlone Regular Effective Contact Policy

Regulations:

Title 5 and the Distance Education Guidelines for the California Community Colleges state:

55211. 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) All approved courses offered as distance education include **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.

(b) All distance education courses are delivered consistent with guidelines issued by the Chancellor pursuant to section 409 of the Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors. **Regular effective contact** is an academic and professional matter pursuant to title 5, section 53200.

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

Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code.

Guideline for Section 55211

This section defines what contact must be maintained between instructor and student:

Subsection (a) stresses **the responsibility of the instructor in a DE course to initiate regular contact with enrolled students to verify their participation and performance status.** The use of the term “regular effective contact” in this context suggests that students should have frequent opportunities to ask questions and receive answers from the instructor of record.

Subsection (b) honors the principle that for DE courses, there are a number of acceptable interactions between instructor and student, not all of which may require in-person contact. Thus, districts will need to define “effective contact, **including how often, and in what manner instructor-student interaction is achieved.** It is important that districts document how regular effective contact is achieved. Since regular effective contact was declared an academic and professional matter, this documentation must include demonstration of collegial consultation with the academic senate, for example through its delegation to the local curriculum committee. A natural place for this to occur is during the separate course approval process (see section 55213). Documentation should consist of the inclusion of information in applicable outlines of record on the type and frequency of interaction appropriate to each DE course/section or session. As indicated in the *Guideline to Section 55219*, districts need to describe the type and quantity of student-faculty interaction in their annual reports to their local governing boards and the State Chancellor’s Office.

Summary:

In hybrid¹ or fully online² courses, ensuring **Regular Effective Instructor/Student Contact** guarantees that 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.

DE Courses are considered the "virtual equivalent" to face to face courses. Therefore, the frequency of the contact will be at least the same as would be established in a regular, face to face course. In a face to face course the instructor is present at **each** class meeting and interacts via all class announcements, lectures, activities and discussions that take a variety of forms. For example, discussions can be held as part of a lecture format, group work scenarios, or content review sessions. The instructor also serves as a content advisor when he or she answers questions both as they come up in class and as they arise in individual situations. These types of questions are dealt with via the telephone, email, or face to face office visits.

Title V regulations do not make a distinction between regular and distance education courses beyond the need to have a separate curriculum approval process and the need to ensure regular effective contact. Therefore, it is assumed that those qualities of regular effective contact described above for the face to face environment, should also be applied

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Hybrid: A blended course comprised of onsite and online components. Classroom hours are reduced and it requires some kind of on-line student activity as part of the course work. This activity may include some or all of the following: quizzes, homework assignments, group discussion, e-mail communication, downloading of files, and tests.

² **Fully Online:** Course completely conducted via the Internet.

to the distance education situation. The DE Guidelines require colleges to develop a policy regarding regular effective contact that addresses “the type and frequency of interaction appropriate to each DE course/section or session.”

Ohlone College’s Policy:

All DE courses at Ohlone College, whether hybrid or fully online will include regular effective contact as described below:

- **Initiated interaction:** Instructors will regularly initiate interaction with students to determine that they are accessing and comprehending course material and that they are participating regularly in the activities in the course. Providing students with an open ended question forum, although appropriate, does not constitute the entirety of effective instructor initiated interaction.
- **Frequency:** 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 DE format. Contact shall be distributed in a manner that will ensure that regular contact is maintained, given the nature of asynchronous instructional methodologies, over the course of a week and should occur as often as is appropriate for the course requirements, objectives and content.
- **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 that are made available for students

when the course officially opens each semester. If the instructor must be out of contact briefly for an unexpected reason (such as illness or a family emergency that takes the instructor offline), notification to students will be made in the announcements area of the course that includes when the students can expect regular effective contact to resume. If the offline time results in a lengthy absence (i.e. more than three or four days) a substitute instructor should be sought who can assist students while the instructor is unavailable.

Types of Contact: Regarding the types of contact that will exist in all Ohlone College DE courses, instructors will select from, as appropriate, the following **basic** resources to initiate contact with students:

- Threaded discussion forums with appropriate instructor participation.
- General email
- Weekly announcements in the Course Management System
- Timely feedback for student work.
- Instructor prepared materials and/or any publisher created materials (written, recorded, broadcast, etc.) **that, combined with other course materials, creates the “virtual equivalent” of the face to face class in the particular discipline.**

Suggestions:

- Instructors should also choose to use other forms of communication, as mentioned in section 55211 of Title 5. (“...*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.*”) and/or CCCConfer, video conference, pod cast, or other synchronous technologies may also be included.
- It is suggested that Instructors should have a threaded discussion that is set aside for general questions about the course and may wish to have weekly or other timely, question and answer sessions available to students. This may also be accomplished through virtual office hours.