



THE ACADEMIC SENATE  
OF ALLAN HANCOCK COLLEGE

## **Allan Hancock College Regular and Substantive Instructor Initiated Contact Policy Distance Learning**

Allan Hancock College does not offer correspondence education courses, or self-paced online courses. \*

All AHC courses of any length, taught partially or fully via distance education modalities, including video and internet, will include regular and substantive contact as described below:

**Purpose:** Instructors regularly initiate interaction with students to determine that they are accessing and comprehending course material, participating regularly in all required activities of the course, and progressing through the course in timely fashion in accordance with the published course syllabus.

**Frequency:** DE Courses are considered the “virtual equivalent” to face-to-face courses. Therefore, the frequency of the instructor-initiated contact will be at least the same as would be established in a regular, face-to-face course. For example, in a three-unit semester-length course, an instructor should initiate a minimum of three hours of contact with students per week, using a variety of methods such as email, discussion boards, announcements, and review sessions. The same course in an eight-week term would require six hours of student contact. (See the list under **Types of Instructor-Initiated Contact** below.)

Contact shall be distributed in a manner that will ensure that regular contact is maintained, given the nature of asynchronous and synchronous instructional methodologies, over the course of a week and should occur as often as is appropriate for the course, but not less than once per week. (Refer to the AP & P Distance Learning paperwork for each course for appropriate frequency and types of contact.)

**Types of Instructor-Initiated Contact:** Instructors are expected to use a variety of methods and resources appropriate to the course and discipline to initiate and maintain contact with students. Such methods include but are not limited to:

- Threaded discussion forums with appropriate instructor participation
- Email within the Canvas LMS
- Weekly announcements in the Course Management System
- Timely feedback for student work
- Real-time audio/videoconferencing
- Interactive mobile technologies
- Chat, text, Twitter

- Telephone
- Live orientation or review sessions
- In-person labs\exams
- Face-to-face group or individual meetings
- Instructor prepared e-lectures or introductions in the form of e-lectures to any publisher-created materials (written, recorded, broadcast, etc.) that, combined with other course materials, creates the “virtual equivalent” of the face-to-face class.

**Additional Recommendations:**

It is suggested that faculty include in the syllabus and/or course orientation a description of the frequency and timeliness of instructor-initiated contact and feedback, as well as expectations for student participation. Recommendations for best practice include:

- Responding to communications from students including e-mails and phone calls within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays
- Returning or giving feedback on student work within one week, and
- Clearly stating the requirements (quantity and quality) for discussion board postings.

\*See Distance Education vs. Correspondence Education Chart

\*\*See Sample Online Syllabus

Reviewed and Approved by The Academic Senate on May 3, 2016

Citations:

The California Community Colleges Distance Education California Code of Regulations Title 5 and Related Guidelines (August 15, 2008) state:

**55204. 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) Any portion of a course conducted through distance education includes 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. Regular effective contact is an academic and professional matter pursuant to sections 53200 et seq.

(b) Any portion of a course provided through distance education is conducted consistent with guidelines issued by the Chancellor pursuant to section 409 of the Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors.

***NOTE:** Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code.  
Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code.*

Guideline for Section 55204

This section defines what contact must be maintained between instructor and student. It is virtually identical to section 55211 which it replaces, except that language has been added to clarify that rules related to conduct of distance education and effective instructor contact apply to any portion of a course conducted through distance education.

Subdivision (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**.

The last published Distance Education Guidelines, March 2004, issued by the Chancellor pursuant to section 409 of the Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors, as referenced in subdivision (b), establishes 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 and/or colleges will need to **define “effective contact” including how often, and in what manner instructor-student interaction is achieved**. It is important to document regular effective contact and how it 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 55206) as well as during faculty evaluations, student surveys, and program review. 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. Local policies should establish and monitor minimum standards of regular effective contact.