
GAVILAN COLLEGE

DISTANCE EDUCATION: BEST PRACTICES

2012

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INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2001, Gavilan College distance educators gathered and discussed goals and objectives for the new distance education program. Many of these goals have been accomplished. The current Distance Education Committee, formed in the fall 2008 has been tasked with, among other things, preparing written recommendations for guidelines and best practices for the College's Distance Education Program and includes planning for the anticipated growth and maintaining program quality of the program. The current membership of this committee includes representation from the faculty, MIS and Admissions and Records.

This committee has concluded that the following topics will be included in this document, called Gavilan College Best Practices and recommendations for Distance Learning:

- Institutional responsibilities
- Faculty responsibilities
- Student support services
- Evaluation

The purpose of this document will be to guide and support the direction of Distance Education through the best practices recommended within and in accordance with the Distance Education Master Plan, Educational Master Plan, The Technology Master Plan and Strategic Planning Goals. This document will be forwarded through the shared governance process to have input and support from the campus community. Through this process, the College will implement the recommendations after consultation and agreement with appropriate governing bodies, i.e., academic senate, administration, etc.

Background

Distance education has been used as a method to deliver curriculum for many years at Gavilan College. Gavilan faculty have been developing and teaching online courses since 1998. These pioneers were innovative in their quest to find and utilize technology tools to deliver education online. Their grass roots efforts helped to create the successful and in demand distance education program we have today.

According to a survey conducted in 2009, for a 2010 report¹, growth for distance education has been double digits, with a 22% increase from '07-'08 to '08-'09. The college has followed this growth trend and in the last few years has seen a demand for all instructors to have an online presence and to make course materials and resources available online. This demand has led to the creation of a shell for every course section offered through Gavilan, either through the college's CMS, ilearn.gavilan.edu, or creation

¹ Trends in ELearning: Tracking the Impact of eLearning at Community Colleges, March 2010, Instructional Technology Council.

of a web presence. Instructors are offered training and instruction to incorporate this online component into their courses.

PROGRAM INFRASTRUCTURE

The **Distance Education Program** operates under the umbrella of the Library Department. The Program is responsible for the technology, guidance, training, and support needed for the instructional program to deliver curriculum, asynchronously² or synchronously³, in an online environment, videoconferencing environment or other distance learning format for Gavilan Community College. This support includes technical needs of distance learners and instructors at all three campuses (Gilroy, Hollister and Morgan Hill) as well as any other geographical location that our students and faculty may be accessing our online environment from. It also includes training for integrating engaging multimedia technologies in an online environment and orientations to online learning for students.

The Distance Education Program maintains excellent working partnerships with other instructional and student service departments on campus and is currently staffed with one full time Distance Education Coordinator and one part-time Distance Education Trainer.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

To successfully implement an effective distance education program at Gavilan College, there must be a continued commitment to the infrastructure needs, including staffing, hardware upgrades, network capabilities, software upgrades, training, and support for faculty and students. Distance education requires ongoing support for faculty and students as well as technical support. The administration has demonstrated a commitment to distance education by funding an online course management system and initial personnel support by creating and hiring a Distance Education Coordinator.

FACILITIES AND FINANCES

It is recommended that Gavilan College possess the equipment and technical expertise required for distance education. Via the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, through program planning and program plans, long-range planning, budgeting, and policy processes should reflect the facility, staffing, and

² Not synchronous; occurring at different times.

³ In a synchronous manner; an action as carried out with synchrony; in phase or at the same time, at the same frequency.

equipment (maintenance and upgrades) needs as well as other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of the distance education program.

COURSE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE STANDARD

- It is recommended that the Distance Education Committee review the effectiveness of the course management software every 3-5 years and forward findings to the District Technology Committee.
- It is recommended that Gavilan College adopt and support course management software to ensure consistency among distance education courses and to provide a controlled student authentication environment.
- Course Management software products must be in compliance with Section 508 (ADA) regulations and will be reviewed as necessary by the Distance Education and District Technology Committee and may be changed after consultation and agreement with appropriate governing bodies, i.e., Academic Senate.
- Training and support for the institutions CMS will be provided by Gavilan College.

STUDENT AUTHENTICATION - INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

Gavilan uses industry-standard authentication programs that are used by students accessing Web course and other secure Internet information including e-mail. For students in our course management system, we use password based authentication over an encrypted channel. In addition, all students agree to an acceptable use policy that prohibits sharing logon and password information. (BP3720) Penalties for academic dishonesty are clear and widely disseminated in syllabi and the Student Handbook. (APPENDIX B)

SUGGESTED BEST PRACTICES

Issues of load, class size, technical and teaching assistance, teaching schedules, academic calendar and compensation are negotiable items, which are not appropriate to be discussed in this recommended best practices document. However, the following recommendations are provided to help ensure academic integrity and student success in an online environment.

LOAD

In a study, completed by the Instructional Technology Council, Trends in Elearning: Tracking the Impact of eLearning at Community Colleges, March 2010, one of the greatest challenges facing administrators

was faculty workload. Preparing, teaching, and evaluating an initial online class offering requires approximately three times the number of hours per week compared to a traditional, on-site class. The College might address this issue is by offering flex credit towards the development of new online courses, providing off-site training and conference opportunities, and by facilitating access to technology.

STUDENT READINESS

Distance learners should have completed one or all of the following before enrolling in a distance education class:

- An online readiness and a technical readiness assessment that is available in LIB 732.
- An introduction to online learning (on-site orientation, LIB 732 online class).

CURRICULUM APPROVAL PROCESS

Any class offered at Gavilan College requires approval through the curriculum committee. The College requires a course delivered via distance education to undergo the same approval process. In addition, the Curriculum Committee requires separate approval for any distance education course, even if its on-site counterpart already exists. The curriculum approval process for an online course includes an additional form (Form D) that identifies how the instructor will ensure that equivalent instruction and regular effective contact will take place in the online environment.

RECOMMENDED FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

GENERAL

A quality distance education program is driven by solid course content and objectives, trained faculty, and institutional support for all involved constituents (students, staff, and faculty).

While faculty responsibilities are governed by academic and negotiated policies and procedures, faculty can attempt to ensure that all distance education classes they facilitate contribute to a quality learning experience for students by following the best practices suggested in this section and by consulting the *Distance Education Faculty Handbook* (currently in-development).

INSTRUCTOR READINESS

Because we believe that an instructor trained in distance learning methodologies is important to our commitment to delivering quality education, we recommend that instructors, prior to teaching online, participate in one or more of the following:

- Formal coursework in the teaching and delivery of distance education
- Online course work
- Certificate program in online teaching
- Successful delivery of courses in the online environment

Training and development courses can be found at @One, CSU East Bay Online Teaching programs, and other institutions.

In addition, it is recommended that faculty who have not used the current course management system at Gavilan College request an orientation to the current course management software as well as information regarding universal design for learning that adheres to Section 508 (ADA) compliance.

INSTRUCTOR SUPPORT

Gavilan College will provide resources to allow distance educators to develop proficiency in creating and developing distance education courses, such as:

- Staff development workshops
- Teaching and Learning Center (training & technical support)

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The content and objectives of the online course need to be identical to the content and objectives of the same course taught in the on-site environment; it is the method of delivery and evaluation that will differ. The curriculum approval process includes a form (Form D) that identifies how the instructor will ensure that equivalent instruction and regular effective contact will take place in the online environment.

AVAILABILITY AND RESPONSE TIME TO STUDENTS

Because of the inherent nature of isolation that the online environment produces, online instructors need to inform students of their response time, which should not exceed 48 hours. Faculty should consider a synchronous office hour during which they can be reached.

CREATING SECTION 508 (ADA) COMPLIANT COURSES AND MATERIALS

All distance education faculty members should be made aware of the principles of universal design and ensure their online teaching materials and web pages meet the Level 1 web accessibility guidelines. See <http://www.gavilan.edu/drc/Gavilan508.html> for more information.

- Under section 508 (ADA) compliant, all online courses and materials must be accessible for students with disabilities.
- When the course is proposed for online delivery, part of the curriculum approval process includes a Course Accessibility Agreement guide and checklist for instructors to complete. (Form D)

COPYRIGHT LAWS

Copyright laws that apply to faculty and education need to be understood and adhered to by online instructors as well.

COURSE MANAGEMENT

- Course materials may be developed by the instructor or provided by the publisher.
- Courses should have a consistent appearance without violating the instructor's academic freedom.
- Online courses should use the course management software (ilearn.gavilan.edu) to provide a familiar "gateway" to students along with standards developed for all Gavilan online courses.
- Course management details (dates, log-on information, materials, etc.) need to be coordinated with the distance education contact person (Distance Education Coordinator).
- A back-up plan for technology failures, identifying who to contact as well as method (phone, e-mail address of contact) needs to be provided.

AUTHENTICATION PRACTICES FOR ACADEMIC HONESTY

If you are teaching or working within Gavilan College, using ilearn.gavilan.edu and MyGav, please keep in mind that your secure login credentials are an important defense against academic dishonesty. Your students are expected to be aware of these policies as well.

We recommend the use of "strong passwords," which should:

- Have a minimum length of eight characters

- Be comprised of a combination of alpha, numeric, or special characters
- Be treated as confidential information
- Be changed immediately if the security of the password is in doubt

When creating a strong password, you should NOT include any of the following:

- your name, nickname, birthday, interests, or information known or easy to learn about you
- your address, street name, phone number, town, or city
- names of your family, friends, pets, or co-workers
- your social security, driver's license, license plate, or other series of assigned numbers or letters
- word or number patterns such as aaabbb, zyxwvut, 123456, or 123321
- slang words, obscenities, popular phrases, acronyms, or jargon

RECOMMENDED STUDENT SERVICES RESPONSIBILITIES

A goal of Gavilan College is to provide deliver and maintain equivalent student support services for students participating in distance learning at Gavilan College. In order to achieve this listed below, are recommendations to implement these services as resources become available.

ONLINE INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES

Distance learners should have access to the same informational resources provided to on-site students. Online student services information should include at a minimum web page with contact information and what the specific services are in the following areas:

- Admissions and Records
- Campus Activities
- Campus Security
- Campus Tours
- Career Center
- Child Development Center
- Cooperative Work Experience & Internships
- Counseling and Guidance
- Disability Resource Center
- Distance Education
- EOPS/CalWORKs/CARE Program
- Financial Aid and Scholarships

- International Student Services
- Library
- MESA
- Student Government (ASB)
- Student Success Center
- Transfer Center
- TRIO
- Tutorial Center
- Veterans' Services
- Writing Center

FORMS

Distance learners should have easy access to all forms necessary for conducting basic college business at a distance:

- Online application
- Assessment
- Bookstore
- Counseling
- Financial Aid
- Library
- Orientation
- Registration Information system. All students should be able to apply and register online, paying all necessary fees electronically.

LIBRARY

Provide students with the necessary information to facilitate remote access to research resources. This includes access to digital library resources, full text databases and reference services.

COUNSELING

Expand online counseling/advising services so that distance learners have access to services.

SUPPORT

Provide training and support to student services staff so that students can easily make contact with student services providers who will have knowledge of the unique needs and circumstances of distance learners and make additional modes of communication available to students and to counselors.

EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Create a process for collecting student email addresses in the registration process. Student interaction with faculty and other students is an essential characteristic of online education. The easiest way to collect email addresses is to request it on the application form.

ORIENTATION

Provide an introductory non credit course, such as LIB 732: Online Learning at Gavilan College, and/or online tutoring in basic skills technology for distance learners. Online and distance tutoring support services help students succeed and can increase student satisfaction with their online courses.

EARLY ALERT

Establish an "early alert system" to identify students who are having difficulty, either academically or technically with a distance class. It is important to have a means of early intervention in the distance education environment.

1. If possible, conduct targeted surveys of students who have dropped out of distance education courses to help determine obstacles to student success in distance education environments.

FINANCIAL AID/SCHOLARSHIP

Provide scholarship information, applications and assistance in an online environment. It is essential to provide the same opportunities for recognition and support to distance learners as are offered to on-campus students.

ASSOCIATED STUDENT BODY

Work with Associated Student Body to connect activities or resources for distance learners as a result of purchasing an ASB card. A comprehensive virtual campus includes not only courses and student services but also student communities and extra-curricular activities. This could include membership in the Associated Student Body and involve online activities.

SECTION 508 (ADA) COMPLIANCE

Create web pages and distance education course materials that are accessible to users with disabilities. The Gavilan College web standards support the principle of “Universal Design” which promotes a high degree of usability for people with visual, hearing, physical, language and cognitive disabilities. Gavilan College follows the 508 web standards.

Computer labs on campus should have available appropriate hardware, software and network configurations to enable students with disabilities to access distance education materials.

RECOMMENDED EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

GENERAL

The evaluation and assessment methodology for distance education courses proposed in this section will assist Gavilan College and faculty in making appropriate modifications for effective instruction. As a formative evaluation, it serves as a guide to assess the needs of the College, the instructor and the students in order to ensure a supportive environment and a positive learning experience. As a summative evaluation, it serves as an indicator of the course’s effectiveness in meeting the outcomes stipulated in the course outline and assessing the student’s expectations, thus helping the instructor measure its overall effectiveness. A best practice recommends faculty conduct in class assessments for their own feedback purposes every semester.

It is also recommended that any program or student survey/assessment conducted will not be instructor/course specific. The results of these suggested assessments will not be used as an instructor evaluation but used instead as positive and constructive feedback to improve the effectiveness of the distance education program. Faculty evaluation is to be done outside of this document and in accordance to contract.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Before distance education courses are offered, the distance education program at Gavilan College should be evaluated by how well it meets the following recommendations:

- Infrastructure of the distance education program such as course management software, common course template and an online helpdesk for faculty and students that is available 24/7
- Faculty training (workshops, staff development, in-services)
- Faculty peer mentoring program (ongoing)

- Student services (the same services should be offered to on-site and distance education students)
- ADA compliance of all course material and delivery
- Approval of course for appropriateness, validity, relevancy

FORMATIVE: During the semester, the effectiveness of the College's distance education program should be assessed by how well it meets the following:

- Evaluation by faculty
- Evaluation by students
- Availability of support for faculty and students

SUMMATIVE: After the courses are delivered, the College should assess the effectiveness of the distance program by how well it has met the following:

- Educational effectiveness/outcomes (successful completion of the course and the level of student readiness for the next course)
- Student retention should be evaluated by statistics and attrition rates
- Student satisfaction should be evaluated by the results of evaluations and surveys posted in the course management system
- Faculty satisfaction of the course management system and support staff should be evaluated by the contract survey

INSTRUCTOR DEVELOPMENT

Before an instructor delivers a distance education course, he/she should have met the following the recommendations:

- Training offered by the College (or elsewhere) by way of formal coursework in the teaching and delivery of distance education, completion of distance education coursework, or previous delivery of distance education courses
- Instructor Readiness Assessment.
<https://weblearning.psu.edu/FacultySelfAssessment/#>
- Request a formal mentor for the 1st teaching year, one that has been teaching in the online environment for 2 years or longer.

Formative: During the semester, the effectiveness of the course should be evaluated by the instructor of the course in terms of the following:

- Pedagogy and methodology in meeting the course requirements

- Quality and quantity of interaction, dynamic facilitation and leadership
- Level of communication in terms of clarity and timeliness of feedback regarding the student's progress, effectiveness in reinforcing important course information, and acknowledging receipt of material (APPENDIX C, F)
- Contract evaluations will be conducted when the instructor is scheduled for one within the terms of their contract

Summative: After the course is delivered, it is recommended that the effectiveness of the instructor be evaluated, by the instructor themselves, in order to make modifications/improvement for subsequent semesters:

- Evaluation/survey posted in the course for students to assess the instructor's pedagogy/methodology, quality of instruction, quality/quantity of communication, knowledge of subject matter, accessibility, effective use of technology and leadership (APPENDIX C, F)
- Self-appraisal by instructor
- Contract evaluations will be conducted when the instructor is scheduled for one within the terms of their contract

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Before taking a distance education course, the student should be evaluated for how well s/he meets the following recommendations:

- Completion of an introduction to online learning class or demonstration of technical readiness
- Completion of an online readiness assessment which includes elements of time management, independence, self-motivation (ADDENDUM D)

Summative: After the course is delivered, student persistence and satisfaction can be evaluated by looking and retention and completion rates. Students will be surveyed through the course management system for students to assess the instructor's pedagogy/methodology, quality of instruction, quality/quantity of communication, knowledge of subject matter, accessibility, effective use of technology and leadership. Instructor and course identification will not be asked for. Survey is completed anonymously.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CURRICULUM APPROVAL FORM D

- For new courses, **submit with New Course Proposal - Second Reading, Course Outline, and Advisory/Prerequisite documentation, as needed;**
- For existing courses **submit with Modify a Course - Form C, Course Outline, Advisory/Prerequisite documentation, as needed.**

Discipline& Number		Course Title:	
Date:		Prepared by:	

Attach additional pages as needed:

1. NEED/JUSTIFICATION: Why should this course be offered via distance learning?
2. INSTRUCTOR/STUDENT CONTACT
 Check all that apply: Online -- Requiring no in-person meetings.
 Hybrid -- Requires one or more in-person meetings.
 Telecourse -- Number of in-person meetings to be required _____
3. COMMUNICATIONS: How do you plan to communicate with your students? Please indicate the frequency of use of each technology, and the purpose of using each technology.
 - A. ELECTRONIC
 - Email-- Frequency/purpose:

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- Chat (Synchronous)-- Frequency/purpose:
 - FAQs-- Frequency/purpose:
 - Forum; Bulletin Board; Discussion Board (Asynchronous or Synchronous) -- Frequency/purpose:
 - Television-- Frequency/purpose:
 - Other- Please specify:
 - B. TELEPHONE-- Frequency/purpose:
 - C. IN PERSON MEETINGS: Frequency/purpose: (Note: for Distance Ed classes these must be optional and an alternative must be provided for students unable to come to campus)
 - D. OTHER -- Frequency/purpose (describe):
4. ASSESSMENT: How will instructors ensure that weekly content, course objectives, critical thinking, reading, and writing components will meet standards set in the course outline of record?
 5. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION: What methods of instruction will be used to ensure student success?
 6. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND RESOURCES: Describe how students will be provided access to materials and resources, including assigned text/s.
 7. ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: How will you accommodate these students? **(See attached Distance Learning Course Accessibility Agreement.)**
 8. OFFICE HOURS: What method/s will be used for office hour contact in this Distance Ed class?
 9. RESOURCES: What additional resources might be needed for this class to be successful online?
Date

APPROVALS:

1. Distance Ed Coordinator		
2. Department Chair		
3. Area Dean		
4. Curriculum Committee Chair		
5. Vice President of Instruction		
6. President		

DISTANCE LEARNING COURSE ACCESSIBILITY AGREEMENT

The questions below concern the accessibility of your distance-learning course for students with disabilities. The instructor who is teaching this course will ensure accessibility of the instructional materials by agreeing to abide by the following criteria when creating content for online courses such as:

graphics, animations, videos, audio, PDF and Word documents, and/or Adobe Flash. (con't on next page)

Yes	No	Requirement and <i>Purpose</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>1. Using Moodle? The current course management software we use has been certified section 508 compliant. This means when using this system the delivery of your content is guaranteed accessible. However, as the instructor or course creator you must make sure that the content you provide within the CMS is accessible by using the following methods in the boxes below.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>2. Using images or animation? A text equivalent is provided for every non-text element, including both images and animated objects. <i>This will enable a screen reader to read the text equivalent to a blind student.</i></p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>3. Using multimedia? Equivalent alternatives for any multimedia presentation are synchronized with the presentation. Videos and live audio must have captions and/or a transcript. With archived audio, a transcription may be sufficient.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>4. Using documents? Ensure accessibility content, including PDF files, Microsoft Word documents, PowerPoint presentations and Adobe Flash content. PDF documents and other content must be as accessible as possible. If you cannot make it accessible, consider using HTML instead or, at the very least, provide an accessible alternative. PDF documents should also include a series of tags to make it more accessible. <i>A tagged PDF file looks the same, but it is almost always more accessible to a person using a screen reader.</i></p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>5. Using forms? When electronic forms are designed to be completed online, the form allows students using assistive technology to access the information, field elements, and functionality required for completion and submission of the form, including all directions and cues.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6. Using timed quizzes? When a timed response is required, the user is alerted and given sufficient time to indicate more time is required.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>7. Using web pages? -Ensure links make sense out of context. Every link should make sense if the link text is read by itself. <i>Screen reader users may choose to read only the links on a web page. Certain phrases like "click here" and "more" must be avoided.</i>-Ensure that webpages meet 508 standards by testing through Cynthia Says (http://www.cynthiasays.com/) or through the AccVerify/AccRepair programs (available in the SRC). For step by step instructions, follow the guidelines on the Accessibility Guidelines website: http://www.gavilan.edu/drc/access.html. When creating html content, you can use a 508 compliant program that Gavilan supports such as: Dreamweaver or Contribute (available in the SRC).</p>

You can visit Gavilan's Section 508 Standards for Electronic & Information Technology at <http://www.gavilan.edu/drc/Gavilan508.html>.

For more information on accessibility, see The Access Board provisions at ([http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(a\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(a))) and the WebAIM Section 508 Checklist at <http://www.webaim.org/standards/508/checklist>

APPENDIX B

STUDENT AUTHENTICATION - INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

Gavilan uses industry-standard authentication programs that are used by students accessing Web course and other secure Internet information including e-mail. In addition, all students agree to an acceptable use policy that prohibits sharing logon and password information. (BP3720) Penalties for academic dishonesty are clear and widely disseminated in syllabi and the Student Handbook.

For students in our course management system, we use password based authentication over an encrypted channel - first, because our current system works well and is consistent with best practice, and second, because the alternatives have serious drawbacks. For example, many states consider proctoring as physical presence. Also, technologies such as biometrics and webcam monitoring are prohibitively expensive and could be considered overkill for this kind of application.

If you are teaching or working within Gavilan College, using ilearn.gavilan.edu and MyGav, please keep in mind that your secure login credentials are an important defense against academic dishonesty.

For more information on "acceptable use" policies for students, faculty and staff that address areas such as network use consistent with institutional mission, copyright compliance, misuse of computing resources (e.g, sharing institutional account passwords) and consequences of possible loss of network privileges and/or disciplinary action, please consult one or more of the following documents listed below:

- Distance Education Best Practices
- Student Handbook
- Board Policy 3720
- Administrative Policy 3720

Authentication: Best Practices Faculty/Students

We recommend the use of "strong passwords," which should:

- have a minimum length of eight characters
- be comprised of a combination of alpha, numeric, or special characters
- be treated as confidential information
- be changed immediately if the security of the password is in doubt

When creating a strong password, you should NOT include any of the following:

- your name, nickname, birthday, interests, or information known or easy to learn about you
- your address, street name, phone number, town, or city
- names of your family, friends, pets, or co-workers
- your social security, driver's license, license plate, or other series of assigned numbers or letters
- the name or abbreviation of your school, department, or area of study
- your school mascot, colors, or slogans
- word or number patterns such as aaabbb, zyxwvut, 123456, or 123321
- slang words, obscenities, popular phrases, acronyms, or jargon
- words that appear in an English or foreign dictionary
- passwords selected for personal use or commonly used on public web sites
- the reverse of any of the above

GAVILAN COLLEGE REGULAR EFFECTIVE CONTACT POLICY

Regulations:

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

55200. Definition and Application.

Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library the assistance of communication technology. All distance education is subject to the general requirements of this chapter as well as the specific requirements of this article. In addition, instruction provided as distance education is subject to the requirements that may be imposed by the 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).

55202. Course Quality Standards.

The same standards of course quality shall be applied to any portion of a course conducted through distance education as are applied to traditional classroom courses, in regard to the course quality judgment made pursuant to the requirements of section 55002, and in regard to any local course quality determination or review process. Determinations and judgments about the quality of distance education under the course quality standards shall be made with the full involvement of faculty in accordance with the provisions of subchapter 2 (commencing with section 53200) of chapter 2.

NOTE: Authority cited: Section 66700 and 70901, Education Code.

References: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code.

Guideline for Section 55202

This section emphasizes the extent to which course quality depends upon the full involvement of faculty in the design and application of DE courses. It discusses course quality standards for distance education and combines language formerly found in sections 55207 and 55209 which it replaces. Language is added to clarify that normal course quality standards apply to any portion of a course conducted through distance education.

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, 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.

Background:

In hybrid or fully online 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. 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 5 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. The guidelines do say that quality assurances within the regulations apply to all DE courses, which include hybrid courses. Therefore, it is assumed that those qualities of regular effective contact described above for the face-to-face environment, should also be applied 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”.

Gavilan College Policy:

Prior to delivery, all courses delivered in a distance format, hybrid or in full, will obtain approval through the Curriculum Committee by completing FORM D of the curriculum approval process, regardless if course has been previously approved as delivered in F2F format.

All DE courses at Gavilan College, whether hybrid or fully online will include regular effective contact as described below and as indicated via FORM D in the curriculum approval process:

- **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:** 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. At **the very least**, 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 (based on the Carnegie unit). Given the nature of asynchronous instructional methodologies, contact shall be distributed in a manner that will ensure that regular contact is maintained over the course of a week and should occur as often as is appropriate for the course.
- **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.

Type of Contact: Regarding the type of contact that will exist in all Gavilan College DE courses, instructors will, at a minimum, use the following resources to initiate contact with students:

- Threaded discussion forums within the course management system, with appropriate instructor participation. (“Questions for the instructor” forums are good but should be used in conjunction with other forums.)
- General email
- Weekly announcements in the Course Management System
- Timely feedback for student work.
- 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.

Suggestions:

Instructors should also choose to use other forms of communication, as mentioned in section 55204 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. CCCConfer is a web conferencing tool that is free to the California Community College System.
<http://www.cccconfer.org>

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.

APPENDIX D

STUDENT READINESS ASSIGNMENT (SAMPLE)



First Time Online Student?
Assess your readiness

Take the Online Readiness Quiz at:

<http://www.cerrocoso.edu/studentservices/heather/quizaccess.htm>.

Then record your scores below.

Technical Skills Quiz Score _____ Student Skills Score _____
--

If you are not ready (score of 65% or less), do not despair! Gavilan College can get you there. Taking **LIB 732**, a free non credit, self paced online short course will introduce you to the technical information you need to take a course online.

Speaking to a counselor is also a good idea before enrolling in your first fully online course. To contact a counselor, please see the <http://www.gavilan.edu/counseling>

Gavilan Online Resources

Go to the Gavilan College Distance Education page and click on the “Student” tab at: <http://www.gavilan.edu/disted> and find the information available there about Online Resources and Online Student Responsibilities.

Read the information in the New Students, Current Students, and Student Resources areas. It is expected that you have read this information and understand what is required of you as an online student.

Once you have read the information answer the questions below:

1. Of the resources available to Gavilan students online which one were you most shocked to find listed?
2. Do you plan to use any of the online resources available to you this semester?
3. If so, which ones?
4. If not, why not?

APPENDIX E

FINANCIAL AID AND DISTANCE ED

Calculating ‘Last Day of Attendance’ for U.S. Federal Financial Aid

In April 2010, Ellen Wagner and Russ Poulin were contacted about this issue by Ken Salomon and Chris Murray of the Washington legal agency of [Dow Lohnes Government Strategies](#). In brief, the “last day of attendance” is to determine the amount of aid a student is eligible to receive when that student withdraws or leaves a program without



officially notifying the institution. For online programs, some institutions use the last login of that student as the “last day of attendance.”

Until the release of new regulations in October 2010, the U.S. Department of Education did not have specific guidelines on this issue, but is going by their standard of ‘academic engagement.’ While they determine this on a “case-by-case” basis, there is some interest in having a specific regulation on this practice.

- Dow Lohnes Government Relations brief on the [‘Last Day of Attendance’](#) issue.
- [Results of a survey](#) of WCET members conducted to learn about institutional practices for determining ‘Last Day of Attendance’ for financial aid purposes. (May 2010)
- [Letter to the U.S. Department of Education](#) on the ‘Last Day of Attendance’ issue co-signed by WCET, Instructional Technology Council, Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, and ACUTA. (June 2010)
- [Letter on Last Day of Attendance](#) in response to the U.S. Department of Education’s Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) on financial aid issues. Letter is co-signed by WCET, ACUTA, and the University Professional and Continuing Education Association on August 2, 2010.
- [Letter from the U.S. Department of Education](#) in response to the June letter. Sent August 23, 2010.
- On October 29, 2010, the U.S. Department of Education releases its [‘Program Integrity’ rules](#) including a response to our concerns about definitions and the use of log-ins to demonstrate academic participation. The “Comments” begin on page 66898 (in the middle column) and the distance education wording is on page 66899 (in the bottom of the left column).
- [A joint statement of concern](#) from WCET and six other organizations is sent to the U.S. Department of Education on April 14, 2011. The letter objected to retroactive application of the regulations released in October.
- [Response letter](#) sent on May 12, 2011 by David Bergeron, Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Education.

Fraud and Possible Abuse of Financial Aid Funds

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) seeks to assure that federal financial aid funds are used properly. Since the fall 2009 term, Congress, the USDOE, and the media have expressed increasing concern about the abuse of the financial aid process and outright fraud in the system. These concerns are often tied to unease with which some of these groups view online education.

Examples of Individuals Who Committed Fraud While Posing as Online Students

- Rio Salado College victimized:
 - Wired Campus: [Online Scheme Highlights Fears About Distance-Education Fraud](#)
 - Arizona Republic: [65 Indicted in Student Loan Fraud Against Rio Salado College](#)
- [Acxiom White Paper Underscores Need of Student Verification for Distance Learning](#). Although written by a vendor, the paper includes some examples of academic integrity and financial aid fraud.

Examples of Congressional Concerns about For-profit Institutions

- Congressional hearings on for-profit colleges (June 2010):

- Chronicle of Higher Education: [Senators Vow to Crack Down on 'Bad Actors' in the For-Profit Sector](#)
- Inside Higher Ed: [The Senate Scrutiny Begins](#)

At this point it is unclear what the impact may be on institutions offering online, distance, or hybrid courses. WCET continues to monitor this issue and inform its members.

APPENDIX F

BEST PRACTICE STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN ONLINE EDUCATION

This list of best practice strategies is based on "Institutional Policies/Practices and Course Design Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education," produced by WCET in June 2009. Version 2.0, June 2009

Institutional Context and Commitment

1. Establish a campus-wide policy on academic integrity that articulates faculty and student responsibilities.

2. Demonstrate an institutional commitment to enforcing the policy and in supporting faculty and staff in the handling of academic integrity matters.
3. Make information on academic integrity easy to find on the campus Web site, library Web site, department Web site, course, within the syllabus and within specific assignments.
4. Include ethics instruction within the core curriculum and/or area-specific within degree plans.
5. Address academic integrity at student orientation programs and events.
6. Encourage faculty to report every suspected violation and act upon it.
7. Secure student logins and password to access online courses and related resources, discussions, assignments and assessments.

Curriculum and Instruction

1. State the academic integrity/academic honesty policy within the online learning environment and discuss it early in the course.
2. Require student engagement with the academic integrity policy. For example:
 - a. Ask students for their input on how to create a community of integrity at the start of the course. This establishes the students as stakeholders in the community and the process of its formation.
 - b. Develop and ask students to commit to a class honor code.
 - c. Require students to read and sign an agreement to the campus academic integrity policy.
 - d. Write a letter to students about integrity and post it in the course.
 - e. Ask students to restate the academic integrity policy (this can also be used as a writing sample to use when grading and reviewing student work).
 - f. Ask students to reflect on the academic integrity policy in the discussion board.
 - g. Include a lesson on avoiding plagiarism.
3. Have assignments and activities in which appropriate sharing and collaboration is essential to successful completion. Foster a community of integrity by choosing authentic learning tasks that require group cohesiveness and effort. For example, focus

assignments on distinctive, individual, and non-duplicative tasks or on what individual students self-identify as their personal learning needs.

4. Provide students with a course or course lesson on research and/or study skills. Work with library staff to design assignments and prepare materials on plagiarism and research techniques.
5. Include a statement that the instructor reserves the right to require alternative forms and/or locations of assessments (e.g., proctoring).
6. Ask students follow-up questions to assignments such as, “expand upon this statement you made,” “tell me why you chose this phrase, description or reference,” and “expand upon the ideas behind this reference.”
7. Select one or two difficult concepts from the paper and ask the student to restate/rewrite the information.
8. Require students to share key learning from references for a paper or self-reflection on an assignment in the discussion board.
9. Include an ethical decision-making case study within the course.

Faculty Support

1. Incorporate academic integrity strategies into professional development and faculty training offerings.
2. Publish academic integrity strategies and policies in faculty handbook and Web-based faculty resources.
3. Publish guidelines for handling/reporting individual student infractions.
4. Assign a department academic integrity liaison to support faculty.
5. Use a plagiarism detection service.
6. Use Google to search for a unique text string or unique phrase from the paper.
7. Keep student papers filed in the department by topic for reference.

Student Support

1. Define academic integrity and cheating and clearly explain what is considered dishonest and unacceptable behavior.

2. Provide information and examples to help students understand the difference between collaboration on assignments and cheating, and identify plagiarism. Teach the proper use of citations.
3. State how much collaboration is permissible on each assignment.
4. State what the instructor's expectations are for the students and explain what they should expect from the instructor. For example:
 - a. honest work.
 - b. Repeat the campus academic integrity statement and provide a link to campus policies.
 - c. Describe academic dishonesty.
 - d. Describe the repercussions for academic dishonesty.
 - e. Describe permissible and impermissible e. collaboration.
 - f. Include outside links to information on plagiarism, self-tests and examples.
 - g. Include information on acceptable sources..
 - h. Include information about the college's writing center, library or other support.
5. Provide a writing style sheet or handbook with information on plagiarism and campus policies.
6. Indicate assessments may require follow-up documentation, questions or assignments.
7. State expectations for the time needed to complete coursework.
8. State whether the instructor/college will use a plagiarism detection service.

Assessment and Evaluation

1. Provide rubrics, or detailed grading criteria, for every assignment at the beginning of the course so students understand how they will be graded.
2. Train faculty on ways to use the settings on the college's learning management system to reduce cheating:
 - a. Use a test bank with more questions than will be used on any particular test and have the learning management system pull a smaller number of questions from the test bank
 - b. Randomize the order of answers for multiple test questions so for example, the correct answer for a particular question might be "a" for one student and "b" for another.

- c. Require forced completion on exams so students cannot re-enter a test.
 - d. Set a short window for testing completion, i.e. one or two days to take an exam rather than a whole week. Setting a completion time reduces a student's ability to access the test, look up the answer, and re-enter the test. Most test-taking software applications keep track of time on the server, not on the student's computer.
 - e. Password protect exams.
 - f. Show questions one at a time (makes more difficult for students to copy and paste the test in order to give it to someone else).
 - g. Use a Web browser lock-down service during testing.
 - h. Check the computer "properties" for the "creation date" and "author" for essay or term paper submissions if students are suspected of submitting work created by someone else.
3. The student must request testing accommodations through the Disability resource Center (DRC) and is required to inform the instructor of his/her testing accommodations. The instructor must provide the accommodations specified by the DRC.
 4. Change test items and assignment topics each semester.
 5. Emphasize assignments that require written work and problem solving (e.g., essays, papers, online discussions).
6. Use a variety of assessment strategies (quizzes, short and long papers, test questions that require the application of a theory or concept).
 7. Adopt the following practices to encourage authentic written work:
 - a. Require students to turn in copies of reference articles with cited text highlighted.
 - b. Require annotated bibliographies.
 - c. Do not allow last minute changes in assignment topics.
 - d. Require specific references be used (this might be the course text).
 - e. Require an abstract.
 - f. Give narrow assignment topics (tied into class experience) and require thesis statements prior to topic approval.
 - g. Require students to turn in a draft, and their bibliography or references prior to the paper's due date.

- h. Require students to write a concept paper and project plan prior to completing an assignment.
8. Evaluate the research process and the product.
9. After an assignment is due, have students post in the discussion board, describing the assignment and the research method used, a summary of conclusions and an abstract (a meta-learning essay).
10. When evaluating student written work, consider following these practices:
 - a. Be wary of student writing that reads like an encyclopedia, newspaper article or expert in the field.
 - b. Look for whether a paper reflects the assignment, has changes in tense, includes odd sentences within a well-written paper, is based on references older than three years, refers to past events as current, or uses jargon.
 - c. Compare student writing on the discussion board with that on assignments and papers. A writing sample collected at the start of the semester can be helpful.
 - d. Compare the writing at the beginning and end of the paper with that in the middle of the paper -- language, sentence length and reading level.
 - e. Check references; compare quotations with cited sources; look for the same author in multiple references.
 - f. Read all papers on the same topic together.
11. Make assignments cumulative (students turn in parts of a project or paper throughout the semester).
12. Give open book exams.
13. Other than grades, do not provide students feedback on tests until all of the students in the class have completed them.
14. Use proctored test sites where appropriate.
15. Faculty should use a robust user name and password to protect their computer-based grade book and keep a printed copy in a secure place in case students are able to hack into the computer system.

This document reflects the combined contributions of WCET, the UT TeleCampus of the University of Texas System, and ITC. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 United States license.

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