



Administrative Procedure
Chapter 4 – Instructional Services

AP 4105 Distance and Correspondence Education

References:

Education Code Sections 66700 and 70901 et seq.;
Title 5 Sections 55002.5, 55200 et seq., and 55260 et seq.;
34 Code of Federal Regulations Part 602.17 (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);
2024 ACCJC Accreditation Standard 2

Authentication:

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

The Chief Instructional Officer shall utilize one or more of these methods to authenticate or verify the student's identity:

- secure credentialing/login and password;
- proctored examinations; or
- new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

The Chief Instructional Officer 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.

To comply with federal requirements, all Palomar College online courses use the District-supported Learning Management System which uses secure login credentials.

Definitions:

Distance Education: Title 5 § Section 55200 defines distance education as “education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor(s) and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor(s) either synchronously or asynchronously. Technologies that may be used to offer distance education include: (1) The internet; (2) One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; (3) Audio conference; or (4) Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in this definition (paragraphs (1) through (3) of this subdivision). The definition of ‘Distance Education’ does not include correspondence courses.”

Correspondence Education means education provided through one or more courses where the college or district provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and student is limited due to separation, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced, although a regular cycle of assignment submissions and delivery of feedback should be established for facilitated learning. If a course is part correspondence and part residential training, it is considered a correspondence course. Correspondence education is not distance education and requires separate approval.

Publication of Distance Education Course Section Facts:

- The college shall make available to students through college publications all the following facts before they enroll in a distance education course section:
 - Details of the class format, including any in-person synchronous meeting days/dates and times.
 - Any required asynchronous, in-person activities.
 - Any required technology platforms, devices, and applications for all class formats.
 - Any test or assessment proctoring requirements.

Class Formats:

- **Face-to-Face:** Learning that requires the instructor and students to meet in person at a set time and location.
- **Fully Online:** Learning that occurs completely online. All approved instructional contact hours, including online proctored assessments or course orientations, are delivered online. No in-person (face-to-face) assessments or meetings are required. Instructional contact hours for fully online classes can be synchronous, asynchronous, or a combination of both.
 - **Synchronous Online:** Learning where the instructor and the student meet at the same time and interact through the use of technology.

- **Asynchronous Online:** Learning in which the instructor and student are separated by time and distance and interact through the use of technology.
- **Partially Online:** Learning that occurs through a combination of Face-to-Face and Online (Synchronous and/or Asynchronous). An online class that requires any amount of Face-to-Face contact is considered a Partially Online class, this includes a single in-person course orientation, proctored in-person assessments, or any other in-person requirement.
- **Note:** Students are provided with the specific in-person or online course meeting requirements in the class schedule per the required Publication of Distance Education Course Section Facts.
- **HyFlex:** Learning that occurs in both Face-to-Face and Synchronous Online class formats simultaneously. Students have the flexibility to choose to attend either in-person or online at a set time and location.

Course Approval and Certification:

Each new or existing course to be provided through distance or correspondence education shall be reviewed and approved separately. If any portion of the instruction in a course or a course section is designed to be provided through distance education, an addendum to the official course outline of record shall be required.

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

Certification: 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 and correspondence education courses as are applied to in-person classes.

- **Course Quality Determinations:** Determinations and judgments about the quality of the distance and correspondence education course were made with the full involvement of the Curriculum Committee's approval procedures.
- **Course Outline of Record or Addendum to Course Outline:** The course outline of record or an addendum to the official course outline of record for any new or existing course provided through distance or correspondence education must address the following:
 - How course outcomes will be achieved in a distance or correspondence education mode;
 - How the portion of instruction delivered via distance education meets the requirement for regular and substantive interaction; and

- How the course design and all course materials must be accessible to every student, including students with disabilities.
- **Duration of Approval:** All distance and correspondence education courses approved under this procedure will continue to be in effect unless there are substantive changes of the course outline.

Distance Education - Instructor Contact and Regular Substantive Interaction (RSI):

Regular and Substantive Interaction:

Title 5 § Section 55204 states districts must ensure that “any portion of the course that is delivered through distance education will include regular and substantive interaction between the instructor(s) and students, (and among students if described in the course outline of record or DE Addendum), either synchronously or asynchronously, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities.”

- **Substantive interaction:** For purposes of this definition, substantive interaction means engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:
 - Providing direct instruction;
 - Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
 - Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
 - Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
 - Other instructional activities approved by the District's or program's accrediting agency.
- **Regular interaction:** Interaction between a student and instructor(s) is ensured by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency:
 - Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and regular scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and
 - Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.
- **Student to Student Interaction:** Faculty will ensure opportunities for ongoing regular and effective student-to-student contact (unless there is an approved exception through the DE Addendum).

- Best practices include, but are not limited to, implementing communication means for varied types of interaction in the course design, 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 to ensure that students participate with depth.

Correspondence Education- Instructor Contact and Students:

Correspondence Education: Each section of a course conducted through correspondence education will be established through a cycle of assignment submissions and comprehensive, responsive feedback, as determined curriculum committee. Instructors will be responsible for ensuring that each student will receive ongoing support toward making meaningful academic progress.

Students who participate in correspondence education will have access to student support services, including counseling, library searches, research assistance, and tutoring or other learning support through mail, email, telephone or in-person contact, as determined by the District.

Correspondence Education Students: A student is considered to be “enrolled in correspondence courses” if correspondence courses constitute 50 percent or more of the courses in which the student is enrolled during a financial aid award year.

In order for a correspondence education student to be considered a full-time student at the District, at least one-half of the student’s coursework must be made up of non-correspondence coursework that meets one-half of the District’s requirement for full-time students.

- For a program that measures progress in credit hours and uses standard terms (semesters, trimesters, or quarters), 12 semester hours or 12 quarter hours per academic term.
- For a program that measures progress in credit hours and does not use terms, 24 semester hours or 36 quarter hours over the weeks of instructional time in the academic year, or the prorated equivalent if the program is less than one academic year.
- For a program that measures progress in credit hours and uses nonstandard-terms (terms other than semesters, trimesters, or quarters) the number of credits determined by,
 - (1) Dividing the number of weeks of instructional time in the term by the number of weeks of instructional time in the program's academic year; and
 - (2) Multiplying the fraction determined under paragraph (3)(A) of this definition by the number of credit hours in the program's academic year.

- For a program that measures progress in clock hours, 24 clock hours per week. A “clock hour” for correspondence education purposes is defined as 60 minutes of preparation in a correspondence course.
- A series of courses or seminars that equals 12 semester hours or 12 quarter hours in a maximum of 18 weeks.
- The work portion of a work experience education course in which the amount of work performed is equivalent to the academic workload of a full-time student.

Accessibility Standards:

- All course materials must be accessible, as explained in Title 5: “a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. The person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as fully, equally and independently as a person without a disability. Although this might not result in identical ease of use compared to that of persons without disabilities, it still must ensure equal opportunity to the educational benefits and opportunities afforded by the technology and equal treatment in the use of such technology.”

Faculty Selection and Workload: Instructors of course sections delivered through distance or correspondence education are individuals responsible for delivering course content who meet the qualifications for instruction established by the District’s accrediting agency. For online instruction, this is known as Faculty Online Certification.

- **Faculty Online Certification:** Validation of preparedness or certification of faculty to teach online shall be determined in at least one of the following ways:
 - Evidence of successful completion of Faculty Senate-approved distance education pedagogy workshops.
 - Evidence of coursework, certificates, and/or degrees that focus on online teaching which were completed at other accredited higher education institutions.
 - Evidence of a successful course design and facilitation as demonstrated by alignment with the criteria approved by the Faculty Senate.
- **List of Certified Online Faculty:** Evidence is collected by the Distance Education (DE) Coordinator with assistance from the Distance Education Committee. The DE Coordinator ensures all faculty who have satisfied the certification requirements are added to the college’s comprehensive list of certified online instructors.
 - Prior to assigning an online course, department chairs or deans will consult the list of certified online instructors each term to ensure that faculty have met at least one of the three requirements.

- An exception could be made in emergency situations that require late instructor assignments, whereby the course could be assigned to an instructor not yet on the certified list with the understanding that an early and ongoing effort will be made to get the instructor qualified to be on the list during that semester.
- For assigning of distance education courses, refer to PFF-District CBA/Article 20.
- **Maintaining DE Currency:** To ensure that faculty are kept current with any changes/recommendations in online course design requirements, prior to the start of each semester, the DE Coordinator will distribute to all faculty teaching online the criteria approved by the Faculty Senate for online course design and facilitation, and a list of online teaching resources.

Also see BP/AP 4100 Graduation Requirements for Degrees and Certificates.

Office of Primary Responsibility: Faculty Senate and Instruction Office

Approved: 5/15/12

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(Replaces all previous versions of AP 4105)