# Regular and Substantive Interaction Policy

When teaching a course through distance education (DE), the regular and substantive interaction between the instructor and the students helps to ensure that students receive the benefit of consistent instructor presence as a provider of course content and instructional information, and as a facilitator of student learning. In addition, regular and substantive interaction between the instructor and students as well as between students affects retention, success, financial aid, and college accreditation. Therefore, Porterville College sets forth this policy that provides procedures to help guide instructors in maintaining this crucial element in their courses.

## Distance Education Definition

*Distance education (DE) refers to 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.1* (Please note: This definition only applies to courses in which any portion of the scheduled instruction is being provided through Distance Education. This does not apply to a course that has not supplanted any portion of its scheduled instructional hours with DE, but makes use of technologies listed under the DE definition.)

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 previously listed technologies.1*

As of the spring 2022 semester, Porterville College offers three modalities that fit this criteria of “Distance Education.” Those modalities are listed in the schedule under the “Campus” heading as “On-line,” “Hybrid,” and “HyFlex.”

If new modalities are offered that fit this definition of “Distance Education,” they will be subject to this policy. Also, if the terms used for the three existing modalities changes in the future, they will continue to be subject to this policy as long as they still fit the criteria shown here for “Distance Education.”

## Regular and Substantive Interaction

Federal and state regulations specifically define and call for regular and substantive interaction between the instructor and students in all distance education courses. The interaction can occur 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 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;*
* *Other instructional activities approved by the institution’s or program’s accrediting agency.*

*Regular 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 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 promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.1*

## Documenting Interaction

Because regular and substantive interaction is a federal and state mandate, there are instances in which the college must prove that this interaction is occurring. Therefore, it is very important that the instructor interaction be documented within the district approved learning management system (LMS). In order for this to occur, instructors in distance education courses at Porterville College are required to include, in a section within their course syllabus, an outline of the regular and substantive interaction plan for the course. Within this section you should also include the turn-around time for inquiries, as well as assignment feedback and grading. As per KCCD Board Policy, the maximum turn-around time on student inquiries should be no more than 48 hours, excepting weekends and holidays. In addition to turn-around time, it should be made clear to students how they can reach you, with at least two methods of contact delineated. As a reminder, the course syllabus will be available to students within the approved course management system as per KCCD Board Policy.

In addition, instructors must do one of the following:

1. Use the class announcement feature of the approved LMS twice each week to send a notice about an academically related issue to the class.
2. Use a tool outside the approved LMS twice each week to send a notice about an academically related issue to the class. Then repeat those notices using the announcement feature of the approved LMS.
3. Use a tool outside the approved LMS twice each week to send a notice about an academically related issue to the class. Then take a screenshot of those notices, being sure that they clearly show the date and the contents of the message, and upload the screenshot to the “Files” area of the course, placing them within a folder labeled “Class Announcements.”

## Student-to-Student Interaction

Regular and substantive student-to-student interaction can be beneficial to student success in many classes. However, there may be some classes for which student-to-student interaction is not possible or beneficial. Interaction among students, when required for a class, will be described in the course outline of record or distance education addendum. In classes requiring interaction among students, that interaction must occur within the approved course management system as per the KCCD Board Policy. It is also important to document how student to student interaction will occur in the course, by describing the expected interaction in the course syllabus or other logical location in the course.

## Unexpected Instructor Absence

If the instructor will be out of contact for any time not specified in the course documents, the instructor will notify students of the loss of contact and when they can expect regular contact with the instructor to resume. If the instructor’s absence will exceed three instructional days (excluding weekend and holidays), then the instructor will submit an absence report so that a substitute can be assigned.

## Guiding Policies and Regulations

* U.S. Department of Education, Title 34 § 600.2
* § 55200 and 55204 of Article 1 of Subchapter 3 of Chapter 6 of Division 6 of Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations
* KCCD Board Policy Manual, Procedure 4B3

## Conclusion

By adopting this regular and substantive interaction policy, Porterville College aims to ensure that students enrolled in distance education classes experience the same quality and amount of support from instructors, as well as the opportunity to collaborate amongst their peers, as those enrolled in on-campus classes. The only difference will be the way in which contact occurs. Ultimately, regardless of instructional modality, students remain the focus at Porterville College as we commit to ensuring an excellent educational experience.

1. [U.S. Department of Education, Title 34 C.F.R.§ 600.2](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-600)