Distance Education

Date Adopted: 3/9/2004
Date Revised: 10/11/13
Date Reviewed: 10/11/13
References: Title 5, Sections 55200 – 55211 (see Sections 55202 and 55204); Article 22 of the Agreement between Board of Trustees, Sierra Joint Community College District and Sierra College Faculty Association, last reviewed June 30, 2012

Definition: Distance education (DE) means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology. Distance education course modalities include fully online, hybrid and TV.

Course Approval
Each proposed or existing course offered by distance education shall be reviewed and approved separately. Separate approval is mandatory if any portion of the instruction in a course or a course section is designed to be provided through distance education.

The review and approval of new and existing distance education courses shall follow the curriculum approval procedures outlined in Administrative Procedures 4020, Program and Curriculum Development. All of the approval conditions and criteria applied to other courses also apply to Distance education courses. Additionally, DE courses must meet the requirements of Title 5, Section 55204 of education code.

Standards and Guidelines
When approving distance education courses, the Curriculum Committee will work with the Distance Learning and Instructional Technology (DLIT) Committee to ensure the following standards and guidelines are met:

- 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.
- Course Quality Determinations: Determinations and judgments about the quality of the distance education course shall be made according to the relevant academic department/division approval procedures.
• Regular Effective Contact: In addition to the quality standards and quality determinations above, each section of the course that is delivered through distance education will meet the requirements of Title 5, Section 55204, education code. Subsection (a) emphasizes the role of “regular effective contact” as the academic and professional responsibility of the distance education instructor. Regular effective contact shall include:
  o 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. Instructor-prepared content (written, recorded, broadcast, etc.) combined with other course materials, creates the “virtual equivalent” of the face-to-face class and must be included in DE courses.
  o Types of Contact: Contact between instructors and students in a DE course may include:
    ▪ Discussion forums with appropriate instructor participation
    ▪ Email
    ▪ Electronic Media
    ▪ Weekly announcements in the Learning Management System
    ▪ Timely feedback for student work
    ▪ Timely response to student emails or inquiries
    ▪ Group or individual meetings
    ▪ Orientation and review sessions
    ▪ Supplemental seminar or study sessions
    ▪ Field trips
    ▪ Library workshops
    ▪ Telephone contact
    ▪ Correspondence
    ▪ Voice mail
    ▪ Other activities

**Duration of Approval**
All distance education courses approved under this procedure will continue to be in effect unless there are substantive changes of the course outline.

See Board Policy 4100.