

Sierra College

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

AP 4105

Distance Education

Date Adopted: 3/9/2004

Date Revised: 5/13/2016

Date Reviewed: 5/13/2016

References: Title 5 Sections 55200 et seq.;
34 CFR Section 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);
ACCJC Accreditation Standard II.A.1;
Article 22 of the Agreement between Board of Trustees, Sierra Joint Community College District and Sierra College Faculty Association, last reviewed June 30, 2015

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 courses 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 Vice President of Instruction 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 Vice President of Instruction 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.

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 or online hybrid.

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.

Certification:

When approving distance education courses, the Curriculum Committee will work with the Distance Learning and Instructional Technology (DLIT) Committee to certify the following:

- **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 were made with the full involvement of the relevant academic department/division approval procedures and the DLIT Committee standards.
- **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, and 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:
 - **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.
 - **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.