

Antelope Valley College
Regular, Effective Contact Policy for Online Instruction

1. Background

- 1.1. 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.
- 1.2. 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 distance education (hereafter, DE) courses, which include hybrid courses. 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."

2. Relevant Ed Code

2.1. Ed Code §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 §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 §53200) of chapter 2. NOTE: Authority cited: §66700 and §70901, Education Code. References: §70901 and §70902, Education Code.

2.2. Ed Code §55204. Instructor Contact.

In addition to the requirements of §55002 and any locally established requirements applicable to all courses, district-governing boards shall ensure that:

2.2.1. 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, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, correspondence, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities. Regular effective contact is an academic and professional matter pursuant to §53200 et seq.

2.2.2. Any portion of a course provided through distance education is conducted consistent with guidelines issued by the Chancellor pursuant to §409 of the Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors. NOTE: Authority cited: §66700 and §70901, Education Code. Reference: §70901 and §70902, Education Code.

3. AVC Distance Education

- 3.1. All distance education courses at AVC, whether hybrid or fully online, will include regular effective contact as described in this section.
- 3.2. **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. Opportunities that relate to the content of the course should include those in which students interact with instructors, instructors to interact with students, and students to interact with each other. Providing students with an open-ended question forum, although participation may be required, does not constitute the entirety of effective instructor initiated interaction. In addition to open-ended question forums, utilizing CMS blogs, journals, AVC email, and collaboration chat tools are appropriate to engage instructor and student interaction. Furthermore, implementing web 2.0 tools into course activities (ie. VoiceThread, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) are also appropriate tools to create interaction. Some web 2.0 tools can be brought into the CMS and some can be linked from the CMS. 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 your course.
- 3.3. **Frequency:** Distance Education 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. A class that meets three hours a week would require three hours of faculty communication time. Faculty office hours are not included as fulfilling the regular effective contact requirement and are a separate requirement. 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.
- 3.4. **Establishing expectations and managing unexpected instructor absence:** Instructor availability for any synchronous class meeting times 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 for any reason associated with a leave, the instructor must follow standard procedures for such leave as delineated in the faculty collective bargaining agreement and applicable administrative policies. Students will be notified of the instructor’s absence or leave at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.5. **Type of Contact:** In all AVC DE courses, instructors should use a mix of resources to initiate and maintain contact with students. Acceptable resources include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Threaded discussion forums;
 - AVC email and voice mail;
 - Weekly announcements;

- Field trips, seminars, or other in-person activities;
- Timely feedback for student work.