

# Regular and Effective Contact Policy

## DRAFT

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Regular and effective contact between instructor and student and among students increases student success in online learning<sup>1</sup>.

- **Instructor-initiated contact** is a key feature of distance education courses, and it is what makes them different from other types of courses, such as correspondence courses.
- **Student-to-student interaction** is another key feature of distance education courses, and it is what makes them different from other types of courses, such as self-paced courses.

These forms of contact are also required by federal regulatory requirements, state education codes, and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), and are recommended by the Statewide Academic Senate for Community Colleges<sup>2</sup>. Regular and effective contact is a California Title V (section 55204) educational requirement that requires instructors to incorporate instructor-initiated, regular, and effective contact into online and hybrid course design and delivery. This means that it is the responsibility of the instructor to initiate contact with students by, for example, making announcements, facilitating discussions, reaching out when they are inactive or miss assignments, and monitoring their overall progress. It is also the responsibility of the instructor to design and encourage opportunities for students to interact with other students in the course, for example via discussion boards, group collaboration, peer review, and other student-to-student interactive activities.

## Instructor-Initiated Contact

Instructor-initiated, or faculty-to-student, contact, includes both establishing contact prior to and at the beginning of the course, as well as maintaining contact throughout the duration of the course.

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<sup>1</sup> Baker, Credence. "[The impact of instructor immediacy and presence for online student affective learning, cognition, and motivation.](#)" *Journal of Educators Online* 7.1 (2010): n1.

<sup>2</sup> See [Federal Regulatory Requirements](#); See [Title V State Code of Regulations](#); See [ACCJC Policy on Distance Ed](#); See ASCCC "[Ensuring an Effective Online Program](#)"

## Establishing Contact

Faculty are responsible for doing the following to establish pre-course contact with students and guide them when the course begins:

- Send a welcome email 1 week prior to the course start date to help establish contact between instructor and student and guide the student to start the course.
  - Make sure to archive welcome letter in orientation module and/or announcements for late add students.
- Include a plan or policy for regular and effective contact (ex: Communication Plan) in your syllabus and orientation module.
- Send an announcement on the first day of class to remind students that the course has started and what to do first.
- List your contact information in multiple places (ex: homepage, syllabus, communication plan, orientation module, etc.) with your response times (ex: 24-48 hours).
- If possible, provide a captioned video to welcome students (recommended).

## Maintaining Contact

To maintain instructor-initiated, or faculty-to-student contact, throughout the course, faculty are responsible for doing the following:

- Send out 1-3 weekly announcements that are archived in Canvas
- Respond to students who ask questions in the question forums within your stated response times
- Communicate with individual students (ex: messaging through Canvas Inbox, Canvas Chat) within your stated response times
- Hold weekly online office hours (ex: ConferZoom video conferencing, Canvas Chat, Canvas Inbox)
- Instructor participation in required discussions or other student-to-student interactive activities
- Provide timely and frequent, meaningful and individualized, qualitative and quantitative feedback on student work within your stated response times
- Contact students who need help, are falling behind, etc.
- Inform students and your manager when you cannot have regular effective contact for any reason, and inform them again when it does resume.

### **Note to Faculty Who Use Publisher Content**

- Instructors who use third-party tools, such as publisher packs or other digital apps, must authenticate students through the college's learning management system (LMS).
- Even when third-party tools are used, instructors must use the LMS to facilitate interaction according to the requirements above, and to document the types of instructor-to-student contact that take place via the third-party system.

## **Student-to-Student Interaction**

Student-to-student interaction includes opportunities for both students to initiate contact with other students and to have consistent, meaningful interaction with their peers throughout the course. Faculty are responsible for designing, facilitating, and encouraging such opportunities as the following:

### **Required facilitated student-to-student interactions:**

- icebreaker or introduction activity in week 1
- ongoing question forums with student replies
- informal student-to-student interaction (ex: cyber cafe/student lounge/water cooler)
- allow comments on announcements

### **Plus at least 2 of the following facilitated student-to-student interactive activities throughout the duration of the course:**

- whole class discussions
- group discussions
- group assignments
- group activities (ex: Padlet, Flipgrid)
- group presentations
- group projects
- peer reviews
- collaborative annotation assignments with required student-to-student interaction
- student video assignments
- ConferZoom for synchronous activities

### **Note to Faculty Who Use Publisher Content**

Even when third-party tools are used for student-to-student contact, instructors must use the LMS to facilitate interaction according to the requirements above, and to document the types of contact that take place via the third-party system.