This is all in GOTT 2: We touch on it as we explain tools in GOTT 1.

1.9 How does Regular Effective Contact Affect Course Design?

Teachers Matter

The California Code of Regulations stipulates that students are entitled to regular effective contact, but what exactly does this entail? Think of it this way: On a normal teaching day, you would not go into your classroom, write all the notes for the day on the board, turn on a video, set out a test, and leave before your students even arrived, would you? You would not have your students pick up their mid-term from an empty classroom, fill in the scantron form, walk the form to the scantron machine, and have it graded, without ever interacting with them, would you?

Remember the old myth about online courses, that holdover from correspondence courses, which suggests that distance students learn in a bubble of isolation? We'll admit that there are some solitary souls who do like to learn independently. But most of us are social beings, and it is pretty hard to engage our students if they are learning in a vacuum. We need regular interaction with others to provide the optimal learning environment. And, it turns out, *teachers matter*. One way we engage our students in face-to-face classes is through human interaction.

But, in an online class, how do we replace face-to-face contact? The answer is actually pretty simple, we build it into the design of the course.

Recent Change to the DE Regulations

§ 55204. Instructor Contact, Changes:

- Added that distance education courses include regular and substantive interaction "among students" to align with accepted distance education best practices and the Online Education Initiative's course design rubric. This addition also mirrors in-person interactions.
- Added "either synchronously or asynchronously" to clarify the nature of distance education courses.
- Removed "correspondence" as this category of distance education does not accurately describe instructor contact.

Module 4: Interaction & Community — Complete One Item

- 4.0 Module 4 Overview

The Importance of Interaction

- 4.1 Teaching Adult Learners
- 4.2 Teaching California Community College Students
- 4.3 The Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education

Building Community Right Out of the Gate

- 4.4 Before Your Course Starts
- 4.5 When Your Course Starts
- 4.6 Discussion Rules & Netiquette
- 4.7 Discussion: Breaking the Ice
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Interaction Tools & Expectations

- 4.8 Interaction in Rubric Section B
- 4.9 Canvas Communication Tools
- 4.10 Instructor-Initiated Contact
- 4.11 Student-Initiated Contact

Individualized Learning

GAVILAN COLLEGE

4.0 Module 4 Overview

What You're Going to Learn | What You're Going To Do | OEI Course Design Rubric

Welcome to Module 4!

Both the CVC-OEI Course Design Rubric and the @ONE Principles for Quality Online Teaching have sections that focus on the importance of building community in your online course. While "correspondence" courses were typically self-paced, the evolution of Web 2.0 tools, the development of robust course management systems that support communication and interaction, and the growth of research about online learners all support the idea that **online learning can and should include interaction**. Though the idea of building interaction in an asynchronous environment where you and your students are not even in the same space may sound daunting, this module will explore the myriad ways interaction can be an organic component of your online course.

This week, we'll also focus on creating your own content, and finishing modules. As you begin to really dig in and design your content unit, we want to stress that designing the content and flow of your unit is a *creative endeavor*. This creativity is enhanced by sharing ideas with peers. When we share resources (videos, handouts, websites, and OER materials) and/or ideas for activities and assessments and receive critical feedback from our peers on our course design, we engage in a cross-pollination that benefits all involved—students, faculty, staff, and campuses!

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Identify and use tools for enhancing **instructor-initiated** interaction
- Identify and use tools for enhancing **student-initiated** interaction
- Identify and use tools for welcoming students and building a learning community
- Create content pages within a learning module;
- Provide individualized learning opportunities;
- Evaluate the best format for providing different materials and resources to students.
- Review information about barriers to student success.
- Review materials about how to create effective policies and consider the examples.
- Thoughtfully design your online course policies to support student success
- Identify common barriers to student success;
- Identify campus and/or district policies and resources that support online learner success;
- Share one of your own policies with your peers and provide meaningful feedback
- Develop course policies that support online learner success;
- Finish your Orientation module by filling out the remaining template pages with policies included.

In the recent past, students were generally *not as successful* in online courses as they had been in traditional classes. The attention to online course design and the wrap-around services that the Online Education Initiative has provided has changed that picture! In the past five years, the success gap in the California Community Colleges has closed from 12% to less than 4% and some colleges have better success in their online offerings than in their on-ground counterparts.

That said, recent studies suggest the **design of the course** is a big factor in ensuring that students are able to succeed in the online environment. Students are not as successful when courses are poorly designed or when the course has not been updated regularly to take advantage of new information and ideas about the methodology.

Intentional course design can mitigate the challenges posed by the online environment and leverage the benefits of online learning to better support marginalized or underserved students. This week, we're intentionally focusing on creating policies and orientation material that set a welcoming tone while also clearly setting expectations.

If you want to have a successful class, you need to design for *all your students*, not your *ideal* student. This means recognizing that California Community College students have a diverse set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and many must overcome barriers to be successful.

We can help our online students get the best start possible by recognizing how important the first two weeks in an online class are. Creating a welcoming environment and crafting clear policies to help set expectations is one way to help students get started on the right foot.

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4.8 Interaction in Rubric Section B

More Strategies for Community

Okay! You're off to a start with an Icebreaker discussion, but there is more that needs to be done to fully support a robust learning community.

The CVC-OEI Course Design Rubric has several components that are indicative of exemplary work. Please go to the rubric now and review the items in area B before moving on.

Consider adding the following to your course from the very beginning:

- Opportunities for you to initiate interaction with your students about what they are learning.
- Opportunities for students to initiate interaction with you.
- Opportunities for students to initiate interaction with and among each other.
- Examples: discussion forums, announcements, Q&A discussion, assignment feedback and grading rubrics, collaborative projects, videos, virtual office hours, email and phone, as well as other tools such as VoiceThread, Flipgrid, Zoom, etc.

Additional Information

How do you make sure your students have a clear understanding of how to accomplish interaction with the Canvas tools?

Here are some tips about getting started with some of the tools that you and your students will use for both getting started and for interaction. Take a look at this Byte-Sized Canvas page brought to you from Helen Graves and @ONE!

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4.9 Canvas Communication Tools

You'll find that different students will prefer different types of communication. Thankfully, Canvas offers a really terrific array of communication tools. The below sections will introduce you to some Canvas tools that are essential for building strong communication channels.

Inbox | Announcements | Q&A Discussion | Assignments | Content Pages | Home Page

Inbox

Canvas has an internal messaging system called "Conversations." You can access conversations from the "Inbox" icon on the global navigation menu. We hope you've already explored the power of the Conversations tool. It's a great way to keep communication with students within the course management system.

New to the Canvas Inbox? Here's a quick video on using Conversations:

Tutorial Video Series

- ALL USERS -

Conversations Overview

04:14 · CANVAS · vimeo

115 - Conversations Overview from Canvas LMS on Vimeo .

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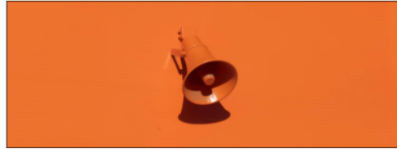
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4.10 Instructor-Initiated Contact

Section B2 of the Course Design Rubric focuses on the **instructor's plan for interacting with students within the course.** Aligned courses will demonstrate a clear plan for **consistent instructor-initiated contact** using Canvas tools. Exemplary courses build on this by offering many opportunities for contact through a wide range of communication tools, such as announcements, discussions, and others.

This may take many forms, depending on your teaching style. For example, your plan might be outlined in the syllabus, on your homepage, and/or on a page in your Orientation module.

Regardless of where it is located, your plan for instructor-initiated contact should **explicitly state** how you will be communicating with students, and with what tools.

- Will you be posting an **announcement** or two each week?
- Will you be sending any messages via the Canvas **Inbox**?
- Will you be participating in the **discussions**? How frequently?
- Will you be providing comments in the **grade book**?
- Overall, how often (and how) should students **expect to hear from you?**

Image: "Orange megaphone on orange wall ⤴ " by Oleg Laptev ⤴ is in the Public Domain, CC0 ⤴

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4.11 Student-Initiated Contact ∿

Instructor-Initiated vs. Student-Initiated

While Section B2 of the Rubric is about how **you** will be interacting with your students (**instructor-initiated** contact), Section B3 is about how students can interact with you (**student-initiated** contact). Questions to consider here include:

- What are the various methods that students can use to contact you? (examples: college email, Canvas Inbox, office hours, web conferencing, phone, text messaging, Q&A discussion, etc.)
- What is your preferred contact method?
- How long it will take to get a reply back (expected response time)?

To encourage student-initiated interaction, your contact information should be **readily accessible** to students, and be very easy to find (e.g., on the home page, in the syllabus, in the orientation module).

Communication Policy Considerations

Students take online classes for a range of reasons and many do so because they simply are not available during the hours of traditional education. Does this mean you must be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your students? Absolutely not. Does it mean they should be crystal clear about **when** you are available, **how** you prefer to be contacted, and how quickly you will **respond** to their inquiries? Yes, it does.

A clear communication policy is one avenue (well-designed courses have several!) for you to establish Regular Effective Contact with your students. A well-written communication policy is like an open door, inviting students to come in and seek feedback or help. At the same time, just as you are not expected to sit in your office all day with the door open, you are not required to wait at your computer all day, either!

Your students need time away from the course, and you need time away from the course, too! Be really careful not to set yourself up for around the clock availability. There are some things that you should do to be flexible, however, you also should set your boundaries. For example, you can let students know that you are not available on Sundays or on weekends at all if you like. You may also tell students that they should use the Q & A discussions because you check those more often than you do your email.

Tips

When you craft your communication policy, here are a few tips to keep in mind.

- Be clear about when you'll be available. If you plan to not work on weekends (or some weekends), then specify that you will respond to emails, phone calls, or the Q&A forum Monday - Friday between the hours of 9am and 5pm (for example).
- Be clear about your response time. If a student sends you an email, when should they expect to hear back?
- You may want to indicate something like: "If you don't hear back from me in 24 hours, assume I did not receive your email and resend it." This is a good way to build in protection for email malfunction issues. The last thing you want to have happen is for a student to sit and wait for a response to an email that you never received.
- This use of a Q&A discussion may cut down on your email traffic. Students then see each other's questions and your answers and benefit from each other's queries.