

# Distance Education Best Practices

GAVILAN COLLEGE

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## Introduction

In the fall of 2001, Gavilan College distance educators gathered and discussed goals and objectives for the new distance education program. The current Distance Education Committee, formed in the fall 2008, is tasked with, among other things, preparing written recommendations for guidelines and best practices for the College's Distance Education Program, including planning for the anticipated growth and maintaining quality of the program. The DE committee was restructured to report as a subcommittee to Academic Senate. Although now a sub-committee of the Senate, the structure of the committee still includes representation from the faculty, MIS and student support services.

This committee has concluded that the following topics will be included in this document, Gavilan College Distance Education Best Practices:

- Institutional responsibilities
- Faculty responsibilities
- Student support services
- Evaluation

The purpose of this document will be to guide and support the direction of Distance Education through the best practices recommended within and in accordance with the Education, Technology and Distance Education Master Plan documents and Strategic Planning Goals. This document will be forwarded through the shared governance process to have input and support from the campus community. Through this process, the College will implement the recommendations after consultation and agreement with appropriate governing bodies, i.e., academic senate, administration, etc.

## Background

Distance education has been used as a method to deliver curriculum for many years at Gavilan College. Gavilan faculty have been developing and teaching online courses since 1998. These pioneers were innovative in their quest to find and utilize technology tools to deliver education online. Their grass roots efforts helped to create the successful and in demand distance education program we have today.

In 2018 The College was accepted in to the Online Education Initiative (OEI), now California Virtual Campus (CVC) Consortium as a cohort school. This has offered the College the opportunity to participate in statewide pilot programs, such as an enrollment exchange and professional development programs. Another outcome of Gavilan's participation is to create a quality standard for delivering online education to our students for equity, access and success. The College has adopted the Course Design Rubric developed by the OEI, see Appendix A, and in 2022 had it's Peer

Online Course Review Club state approved through CVC. The College can now certify “Quality Reviewed” courses, which is the highest award for online courses in the CCC system. For more information, please see the [POCR](#)<sup>1</sup> website.

In 2020, the demand for distance education was fueled by the COVID 19 pandemic, with an initial jump to 100% of our classes being held online. The effects of the pandemic are still being sorted out and we'll be monitoring success rates as this shift settles down.

The pandemic also requires the College to pivot their long-range planning goals and visions for distance education, as students found they could be successful in this modality and that it worked well with their busy lives. In a Gavilan FA23 student survey, 32% of students would like to stay completely online, 48% would like a blend of both online and in person, and lastly, 31% would like the ability to choose how to attend at any given time (hyflex).

According to the CCCCO's DataMart, Gavilan College distance education total student headcount has increased 120% from 2018-19 (7828) to 2022-23 (17,220). This demand has increased usage of the college's LMS, [ilearn.gavilan.edu](https://www.gavilan.edu), integrated apps, like Turnitin, Hypothesis, NetTutor and other specific integrations, and consequently increased demand on the Distance Education staff, which has remained at the same staffing level as 2008. Training programs and requirements have also shifted and with that more demand.

### **Infrastructure**

The distance education program operates under the umbrella of the Library and Distance Education Department. The program is responsible for the technology, guidance, training, and support needed for Gavilan's instructional programs to deliver curriculum, asynchronously or synchronously, in an online environment, video/web conferencing environment or other distance learning formats.

This support includes technical needs of distance learners and instructors at all four off-site campuses (Gilroy, Hollister, and Coyote Valley) as well as any other geographical location that our students and faculty may be accessing our online environment from. It also includes training for integrating engaging educational technologies into the classroom and orientations to online tools for students.

The Distance Education Program maintains excellent working partnerships with other instructional and student service departments on campus and is currently staffed with one full time Distance

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gavilan.edu/staff/tlc/pocr.php>

Education Coordinator and one part-time Distance Education Trainer. The staffing level has not changed since 2008.

### **Program Review and Improvement**

The DE program undergoes regular review and evaluation via the institution's formal Program Integration Planning and Review Committee and other college planning activities. It also submits and evaluates annual Program Level Outcomes and uses the data gathered to inform decisions about the direction and priorities of the program.

The DE Program also conducts annual surveys of both students and faculty. The data gathered helps to find trouble points, technology problems, and other issues that affect students and/or staff. These annual surveys do not attempt to evaluate individual faculty members, nor do they solicit feedback about specific courses. Their purpose is to provide feedback on the program, and the ways in which it can improve.

Results from these surveys, and other data gathered, are shared with staff, faculty, and administration as they become available.

### **Institutional Responsibilities**

To successfully implement an effective distance education program at Gavilan College, there must be a continued commitment to the infrastructure needs, including staffing, hardware upgrades, network capabilities, software upgrades, training, and support for faculty and students. Distance education requires ongoing support for faculty and students as well as technical support.

The administration has demonstrated a commitment to distance education by funding an online course management system and initial personnel support by creating and hiring a Distance Education Coordinator in 2008. In 2018, the administration made an additional commitment to become a member and fully participate in the Online Education Consortium, which is now known as California Virtual Campus Consortium. Along with this membership comes milestones the college must meet in exchange for access to best practices, training, and technology to support the College's online students and teacher.

As the program has grown, not only as technology has become more available and stable but also since the COVID 19 Pandemic, so has the need for additional staffing. The College created and funded a Teaching and Learning Center but has never staffed it. According to the Technology Master Plan and state standards Gavilan has been deficit 1.4 Instructional Technology positions since 2012. Hiring an Instructional Technologist should be a priority.

Funding the Peer Online Course Review process is also imperative as we enter the age of competing for students. In addition, The College should prioritize and support online teacher

training. These are the recommendation for the next steps in the supporting the Distance Education Program.

### **Class Assignment, Load, and Course Caps**

Issues of load, class size, technical and teaching assistance, teaching schedules, academic calendar and compensation are negotiable items, which are outside of the scope of this document. However, the following regulation is provided to inform the decision-making process around these issues.

According to excerpts from Title 5 §55208(a): Faculty Selection and Workload,

- "Instructors of course sections delivered via distance education technology shall be selected by the same procedures used to determine all instructional assignments."
- "The number of students assigned to any one course section offered by distance education shall be determined by and be consistent with other district procedures related to faculty assignment. Procedures for determining the number of students assigned to a course section offered in whole or in part by distance education may include a review by the curriculum committee established pursuant to section 55002(a)(1)."

It is important to note that Distance Education courses and instructors are subject to the standard practices, procedures and criteria which have been established for traditional face to face courses at Gavilan College including but not limited to, faculty involvement in course development and approval, instructor compensation, selection of online instructors, and oversight of online courses to ensure conformity with existing institutional practices and procedures. Departments should continue to select appropriate faculty to teach online, in accordance with Title V §55208(a).

### **Curriculum Approval Process**

In accordance with Title 5 §55202, "The same standards of course quality shall be applied to any portion of a class conducted through distance education as are applied to in-person classes, in regard to the course quality judgment made pursuant to the requirements of section 55002, and in regard to any local course quality determination or review process." and §55206 (Separate Local Approval) "If any portion of the instruction in a new or existing course is to be provided through distance education, an addendum to the official course outline of record shall be required."

Any DE class offered at Gavilan College requires approval through the curriculum committee which includes a separate approval process, even if its on-site counterpart already exists. The separate approval process for a DE course includes an additional area in the College's curriculum software that identifies how the instructor will ensure that equivalent instruction and regular effective contact will take place in the online environment.

## **Facilities and Finances**

It is recommended that Gavilan College possess the equipment and technical expertise required for distance education. Planning, via the Program Integrated Planning and Review Committee, and through program plans, budgeting, and policy processes, should reflect the facility, staffing, and equipment (maintenance and upgrades) needs as well as other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of the distance education program.

## **Instructor Support & Training**

Before the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020, the VP of Academic Affairs instituted a requirement that prior to a distance education teaching assignment, faculty must successfully complete a 20-hour Introduction to Online Teaching (GOTT 1) course. The College will ensure the course is available to instructors, as needed, to fulfill this requirement. Gavilan College will review this requirement and adjust as needed using the shared governance process and collegial discussion. This is in accordance with Title 5 §55208.

Gavilan College will provide resources to allow faculty to develop proficiency in creating and developing DE courses, such as:

- Gavilan Online Teacher Training Academy (GOTT) facilitated courses.
- Staff development workshops
- Teaching and Learning Center (training & technical support)
- Peer Online Course Review process
- CVC Course Design Academy

## **Learning Management Software Standards**

Currently, Gavilan College uses the statewide funded learning management system, Canvas, which adheres to our recommended software standards. Should that change, The College commits to providing a learning management system using the same recommendations below:

- It is recommended that the Distance Education Committee review the effectiveness of the learning management software every 3-5 years and forward findings to the District Technology Committee.
- It is recommended that Gavilan College adopt and support learning management software to ensure consistency among distance education courses and to provide a controlled student authentication environment.
- Learning Management software products must be in compliance with Section 508 (ADA) regulations and will be reviewed as necessary by the Distance Education and District Technology Committee and may be changed after consultation and agreement with appropriate governing bodies, i.e., Academic Senate.
- Training and support for the institutions LMS will be provided by Gavilan College.



## **Student Authentication**

Gavilan uses industry-standard authentication programs that are used by students accessing Web courses and other secure Internet information including e-mail. For students in our course management system, we use password-based authentication over an encrypted channel. In addition, all students agree to an acceptable use policy that prohibits sharing logon and password information. (BP3720) Penalties for academic dishonesty are clear and widely disseminated in syllabi and the Student Handbook. For more details, see Appendix C.

## **Student Readiness**

After registering for a course, and throughout the semester, DE students will have the option to complete one or all of the following:

- An online readiness and a technical readiness assessment.
- An introduction to online learning (on-site orientation or self-paced, online class).

## **Faculty Responsibilities**

A quality distance education program is driven by solid course content and objectives, trained faculty, and institutional support for all involved constituents (students, staff, and faculty). While formal faculty responsibilities are governed by academic and negotiated policies and procedures, faculty can attempt to ensure that all DE classes they facilitate contribute to a quality learning experience by following the best practices suggested in this section, participating in training and by consulting the DE Faculty Handbook.

## **Account Security**

If you are teaching or working within Gavilan College, using [ilearn.gavilan.edu](http://ilearn.gavilan.edu) and MyGav, please keep in mind that your login credentials are the "keys" to all your employee accounts at Gavilan College. To share your password, or to leave a public computer logged in, means that you are exposing:

- Your official email account, messages sent and received, and the ability to send new messages.
- Your posted grades.
- Your direct deposit, withholding, and other financial details.
- iLearn access, including grades, student assignments, and messages.
- And much more.

Maintaining your account security is an important defense against academic dishonesty and various privacy violations.

## **Copyright Laws**

All relevant copyright laws need to be understood and adhered to by online instructors.

## **Course Content**

The content and objectives of the online course need to be identical to the content and objectives of the same course taught in the on-site environment; it is the method of delivery that will differ. The curriculum approval process includes a section identifying how the instructor will ensure that equivalent instruction and regular effective contact will take place in the online environment.

## **Course Review and Feedback**

A variety of mechanisms, both formal and informal, serve to help instructors evaluate their course material and approach. Aside from the formal evaluations of full and part-time faculty, we recommend that instructors consider:

- Participating in the local Peer Online Course Review (POCR) process in the development phase of the online course
- Conducting informal, anonymous surveys throughout the semester, asking for feedback from students regarding the pedagogy/methodology, quality of instruction, communication, accessibility, and effective use of technology.
- Participating in their department's discussions and review of the Student Learning Outcomes, retention rates, completion rates, persistence, satisfaction, and other statistical data reported through the Research Office.
- Carefully review the annual survey results provided by the Research Office and the DE Program, especially the latter, which focus on student satisfaction and the most common complaints and trouble spots.

While these practices are largely similar to what an on-site class should do, we feel strongly that these efforts towards feedback and improvement are crucial to continually developing a strong program.

## **Course Management**

- Course materials may be developed by the instructor or provided by the publisher, or some combination thereof.
- Courses should have a consistent appearance without violating the instructor's academic freedom.
- Online courses should use the learning management software ([ilearn.gavilan.edu](http://ilearn.gavilan.edu)) to provide a consistent experience to students.

- Learning management details (dates, log-on information, materials, etc.) need to be coordinated with the distance education contact person (Distance Education Coordinator).
- A back-up plan for technology failures, identifying who to contact as well as method (phone, email address of contact) needs to be provided.
- Courses are to be "ready for business" by 8am on the first day of the semester. This includes lectures and supplemental material, publisher content, and instructor presence.

### **Instructor Readiness & Development**

Because we believe that an instructor trained in distance learning methodologies is important to delivering quality education, the following is required of any instructor, prior to teaching a fully online or hybrid class:

- Required: GOTT 1: Intro to Teaching Online with Canvas

Additionally, all instructors are strongly encouraged to continue developing their skills in the online learning environment. Recommended pathways are:

- GOTT 1-6: Intro to teaching in distance ed modalities, assessment, and course design.
- GOTT A-D: Topics in Canvas, online course design, accessibility, and software
- Online Teaching Pedagogy: Online, facilitated courses offered through Gavilan.
- Participating as a student in online classes
- Certificate program in online teaching, such as those offered by CVC (formally @One)
- Participation in the CVC course exchange, including a course review (local POCR)

Training and development courses can be found at CVC (formally @One), CSU East Bay Online Teaching programs, and many other institutions. In addition, it is recommended that faculty who have not used the current LMS at Gavilan College request an orientation to the current course management software as well as information regarding universal design for learning that adheres to Section 508 (ADA) compliance.

### **Instructor Communication Policy**

Because of the inherent nature of isolation that the online environment produces, DE instructors need to inform students of their response time, which should not exceed 48 hours. Faculty should consider a synchronous office hour during which they can be reached.

When communicating with students, we recommend that faculty:

- Develop and post prominently a clear communication policy with instructor contact info and office hours and adhere to it.

- Use the LMS messaging system, especially for topics relating to coursework. This creates a manageable paper trail, should there be any dispute regarding the class.
- Use the students' Gavilan-supplied email address: *studentname@my.gavilan.edu*. As part of their orientation, students acknowledge that this email account is the channel for any official college communications.

### **Instructor Contact**

In 2023, Title 5 regulation 55204, Instructor Contact, was updated to reflect similar language regarding Department of Education federal regulations. Now instructor contact is defined as regular and substantive interaction between instructor and students and requires at least 2 different types of interaction be present in any distance education course.

“Substantive interaction means engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and include at least two of the following:

- (1) Providing direct instruction.
- (2) Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework.
- (3) Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency.
- (4) Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
- (5) Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency. “

---See Appendix D for full regulation

### **Universal Design and Accessibility**

All distance education faculty members should be made aware of the principles of universal design and ensure their online teaching materials and web pages meet the Level 1 web accessibility guidelines. See [gavilan.edu/student/aec/508.php](http://gavilan.edu/student/aec/508.php) for more information.

Under Section 508 (ADA) all online courses and materials must be accessible for students with disabilities.

When a course is proposed for online delivery, part of the curriculum approval process includes a Course Accessibility Agreement guide and checklist for instructors to complete. (Accessibility form in CurriQunet must be downloaded, completed, and then uploaded to the course modification proposal.) See Appendix B for examples of these forms.

## **Student Services Responsibilities**

A goal of Gavilan College is to provide deliver and maintain equivalent student support services for students participating in distance learning at Gavilan College. The DE program will work closely with Student Services, IT Department, and the web site committee to ensure that student services are available to online students to the fullest degree possible. The student services departments relevant to Distance Education include (but aren't limited to):

- Accessible Education Center
- Admissions and Records
- Bookstore
- CalWORKs
- Campus Activities
- Campus Security
- Campus Tours
- Career and Transfer Center
- Counseling and Guidance
- El Centro
- EOPS /CARE Program
- Financial Aid and Scholarships
- Foster Youth
- Fresh Success
- Higher Aspirations
- Library
- MESA
- Orientation / Welcome Center
- Student Government (ASGC)
- STEM
- Tutoring Center
- Veterans Resource Center
- Writing Center/Learning Commons

## **Informational Resources**

Distance learners need to have access to the same information provided to on-site students. Online student services information should include at a minimum: web page with contact information, and what the specific services are in the following areas, as well as any forms or documents that can be electronically utilized.

Where applicable, and where technology permits, student services programs can arrange to use videoconferencing, whiteboard software, and other tools to serve the online student population.

## **Accessible Education Center (AEC)**

Instructors will ensure all course materials are accessible to users with disabilities in compliance with state and federal regulation from the first day of the course. The AEC will be a resource to assist instructors. The Gavilan College web standards support the principle of “Universal Design”

which promotes a high degree of usability for people with visual, hearing, physical, language and cognitive disabilities. Gavilan College will adhere to state and federal regulations regarding accessibility and distance education, including Title 5, Div 6, subchapter 3, Article 1.2

Computer labs on campus should have available appropriate hardware, software, and network configurations to enable students with disabilities to access distance education materials.

### **Financial Aid**

Provide financial aid and scholarship information, applications, and assistance in an online environment. It is essential to provide the same opportunities for recognition and support to distance learners as are offered to on-campus students. The department will participate in the validation and facilitation of the CVC Exchange process.

### **Library**

Provide students with the necessary information to facilitate remote access to research resources. This includes access to digital library resources, full text databases and reference services. The library will also develop and maintain a database of Open Educational Resources (OER) Textbooks and Resources for students, as resources are produced by instructional staff and faculty. The library will also maintain a LIBGuide for those developing OER Resources

### **Tutoring**

As a participant in the CVC Consortium, the College has access to 250 hours a year with NetTutor, an online tutoring platform available to online students and on-campus students. It is recommended that the institution support a comprehensive online tutoring program to support student success. Embedded Peer Tutoring and other limited online in-house tutoring is also being provided by the Tutoring Center.

### **Student Government (ASGC)**

Work with ASGC to connect with activities and resources for distance learners. A comprehensive virtual campus includes not only courses and student services but also student communities and extra-curricular activities. This could include membership in the Associated Student Body and involve online activities.

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<https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs/Browse/Home/California/CaliforniaCodeofRegulations?guid=I639021B04C6911EC93A8000D3A7C4BC3&transitionType=Default&contextData=%28sc.Default%29#IE381D74056B511ED9336FE00FB183132>

# Appendices

## Appendix A: OEI Course Rubric

Gavilan College recommends the OEI Course Design Rubric as the standard for exemplary online course design. While recognizing that every course and every teacher is different and may bring unique opportunities and challenges, the Gavilan faculty adopt the four sections of the OEI Course Design Rubric as the best practices to which our online classes are aligned. The four sections of the rubric focus on content presentation, interaction, assessment, and accessibility. In 2018, the Academic Senate approved and endorsed the use of the course design rubric as a standard of quality for online teaching.

The full, 4/2021 version of the rubric can be found online at:

[https://onlinenetworkofeducators.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CVC\\_OEI\\_Course\\_Design\\_Rubric\\_rev\\_April\\_2020\\_ACC\\_52021.pdf](https://onlinenetworkofeducators.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CVC_OEI_Course_Design_Rubric_rev_April_2020_ACC_52021.pdf)

### **Section A: Content Presentation**

The 14 elements for quality course design in this section address how content is organized and accessed in the course management system. Key elements include course navigation, learning objectives, and access to student support information.

### **Section B: Interaction**

The six elements in this section address instructor-initiated and student-initiated communication. Key elements of quality course design covered in this section include regular effective contact, both between and among instructors and students.

### **Section C: Assessment**

The eight elements in this section address the variety and effectiveness of assessments within the course. Key elements include the alignment of objectives and assessments, the clarity of instructions for completing activities, and evidence of timely and regular feedback.

Following a review by a team of trained faculty peer reviewers, each element in Sections A-C will be marked in one of three ways:

- *Incomplete*: The element is missing or present to a degree that does not adequately support student success in online learning.
- *Aligned*: The element is present and effectively designed to support student success in online learning.

- *Additional Exemplary Elements*: This designation recognizes design choices that are aligned and go even further to enhance the student experience in the online learning environment.

#### **Section D: Accessibility**

The 16 elements in this section are reviewed to determine if a student using assistive technologies will be able to access the instructor's course content as required by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (also known as "508 Compliance"). The accessibility elements in Section D focus on instructor-generated content that is primarily under the control of faculty when developing a course. Since Section D addresses elements that are required to be present, the elements in this section, when applicable, are only marked as Incomplete or Aligned.

#### **Additional Course Design Rubrics**

In addition to using the Senate approved OEI Course Design Rubric, it is recommended the College support the development and adoption of an Equity Rubric for online course design similar to the [Peralta Equity Rubric](#).

It is also recommended The College develop and adopt using a rubric for Hyflex course design, such as [this example](#) that focuses on the 4 fundamental values of hyflex design, learner choice, equivalency, reusability and accessibility.



## Appendix B: Curriculum approval process for DE courses

### CuriQunet DE Course Proposal / Approval Screens

On the Required Distance Education Addendum there are 5 areas that need to be filled out. The key to filling the form out successfully is to state the methods for teaching in each area ***in a virtual environment***.

#### ew Course: HE 3 - Social Determinants of Health, Disparities and Equities

Status: In Review [View Proposal History](#)

Units/Hours/Status	<b>Distance Education</b>
Requisites	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is Distance Ed
C-ID/Basic Skills/Cross-Listed	<b>Select the Distance Ed Delivery method below:</b>
Methods of Instruction	This course is being delivered in one or more of the following methods. Select all that apply. (multiple selections allowed)
Distance Education	Please see <a href="#">definition of methods</a> .
Course Objectives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online
Student Learning Outcomes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hybrid
Methods of Evaluation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OnlineLIVE - video over internet (Simultaneous Interaction)
Course Content	<b>Justification</b>
Out of Class Assignments	<b>Need/Justification*</b>
Textbooks	Why is this modality effective for this type of class? Or what need will this delivery method fill?
General Education Learning Outcomes	<p>The course will use the campus LMS and integrate external tools for individual and collaborative learning. The instructor can record lecture videos, with transcripts or captions for accessibility. The course will use discussion boards to facilitate classroom interactions; student to student, instructor to student, and small group work. The course can include small group work using LMS tools and external tools integrated into iLearn.</p>
Similar Courses	<b>Content Presentation</b>
General Education Pattern	<b>A. Methods of Instruction</b>*
Transfer	How do you intend to deliver instruction with a specific emphasis in online teaching and learning to achieve the learning objectives of this course?
Resources	<p>The course will use the campus LMS and integrate external tools for individual and collaborative learning. The instructor will record lecture videos, with transcripts or captions for accessibility. The course will use discussion boards to facilitate classroom interactions; student to student, instructor to student, and small group work. The course will include small group work using LMS tools and external tools integrated into iLearn.</p>
Attached Files	

1. Justification
2. Content Presentation - Methods of Instruction
3. Instructional Materials and Resources
  - a. What types?
  - b. Are you using OER?
  - c. How will online students access academic support? (Library, tutoring, etc.)
  - d. How will students access student support? (Counseling, financial aid. etc.)
3. Contact or Regular substantive interaction plans (must have at least 2 types listed).
4. Assessment
5. Accessibility

## **Appendix C: User Authentication**

Gavilan uses industry-standard authentication programs that are used by students accessing Web courses and other secure Internet information including e-mail. In addition, all students agree to an acceptable use policy that prohibits sharing logon and password information. (BP3720) Penalties for academic dishonesty are clear and widely disseminated in syllabi and the Student Handbook.

For students in our course management system, we use password-based authentication over an encrypted channel - first, because our current system works well and is consistent with best practice, and second, because the alternatives have serious drawbacks. For example, many states consider proctoring as physical presence. Also, technologies such as biometrics and webcam monitoring are prohibitively expensive and could be considered overkill for this kind of application.

If you are teaching or working within Gavilan College, using ilearn.gavilan.edu and MyGav, please keep in mind that your secure login credentials are an important defense against academic dishonesty.

For more information on "acceptable use" policies for students, faculty and staff that address areas such as network use consistent with institutional mission, copyright compliance, misuse of computing resources (e.g, sharing institutional account passwords) and consequences of possible loss of network privileges and/or disciplinary action, please consult one or more of the following documents listed below:

- Distance Education Best Practices
- Student Handbook
- Board Policy 3720
- Administrative Policy 3720

## **Appendix D: Title 5 Regulations for Distance Education**

Regulations:

Title 5 and the Distance Education Guidelines for the California Community Colleges state:

§ 55200. Definition and Application.

(a) “Distance education” means education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor(s) and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor(s) either synchronously or asynchronously. Technologies that may be used to offer distance education include:

- (1) The internet;
- (2) One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;
- (3) Audio conference; or
- (4) Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3) of this subdivision.

(b) The definition of “distance education” does not include correspondence courses.

(c) “Accessible” means a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. A person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as fully, equally, and independently as a person without a disability. Although this might not result in identical ease of use compared to that of persons without disabilities, it still must ensure equal opportunity to the educational benefits and opportunities afforded by the technology and equal treatment in the use of such technology.

§ 55202. Course Quality Standards.

The same standards of course quality shall be applied to any portion of a class conducted through distance education as are applied to in-person classes, in regard to the course quality judgment made pursuant to the requirements of section 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 section 53200) of chapter 2.

#### § 55204. Instructor Contact.

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

(a) Any portion of a course conducted through distance education includes regular and substantive interaction between the instructor(s) and students, (and among students, if described in the course outline of record or distance education addendum), either synchronously or asynchronously, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities.

(b) “Substantive interaction” means engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:

- (1) Providing direct instruction;
- (2) Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
- (3) Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
- (4) Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
- (5) Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

(c) Regular interaction between a student and instructor(s) is ensured by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency:

- (1) Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and
- (2) Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

(d) Regular and substantive interaction is an academic and professional matter pursuant to sections 53200 et seq.

(e) For purposes of calculating instructional time in the context of asynchronous distance education, a week of instructional time is any week in which:

- (1) The institution makes available the instructional materials, other resources, and instructor support necessary for academic engagement and completion of course objectives; and
- (2) The institution expects enrolled students to perform educational activities demonstrating academic engagement during the week.

Gavilan College Policy AP 4105:

Prior to delivery, all courses delivered in a distance format, hybrid or in full, will obtain approval through the Curriculum Committee by completing the DE Addendum in CuriQunet, which includes filling out the “Accessibility Agreement” of the course approval process, regardless of if course has been previously approved as delivered in F2F format.

All DE courses at Gavilan College, whether hybrid or fully online will include regular effective contact as described below and as indicated via CuriQunet in the curriculum approval process:

**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.

**Frequency:** DE 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 (based on the Carnegie unit). 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.

**Establishing expectations and managing unexpected instructor absence:** An instructor and/or department established policy describing the frequency and timeliness of instructor-initiated contact and instructor feedback, 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 briefly for an unexpected reason (such as illness or a family emergency that takes the instructor offline), notification to students will be made in the announcements area of the course that includes when the students can expect regular effective contact to resume. If the offline time results in a lengthy absence (i.e., more than three or four days) a substitute instructor should be sought who can assist students while the instructor is unavailable.

**Type of Contact:** Regarding the type of contact that will exist in all Gavilan College DE courses, instructors will, at a minimum, use the following resources to initiate contact with students:

- Threaded discussion forums within the course management system, with appropriate instructor participation. (“Questions for the instructor” forums are good but should be used in conjunction with other forums.)
- Instructor prepared e-lectures or introductions in the form of e-lectures to any publisher created materials (written, recorded, broadcast, etc.) that, combined with other course materials, creates the “virtual equivalent” of the face-to-face class.
- Weekly announcements in the Course Management System
- Timely feedback for student work.
- General email
- Virtual Office hours

## **Appendix E: Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity and Discourage AI Use**

**Redesign or scaffold existing assignments to allow or discourage AI use.**

### Quick Tips Redesigning Assignments

Assignment redesign can take different forms, including discouraging AI use and incorporating AI use.

#### Discouraging AI Use

- There may be some ways to make it harder for students to use AI on assignments.
- Creating scaffolding in assignments allows us to see the evolution of student work and gives them the chance to invest in their tasks.
- We can also design assignments to maximize motivation. The ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction) model is one time-tested way to do this.

#### Scaffolding

Creating scaffolding in assignments allows us to see the evolution of student work and gives them the chance to invest in their tasks.

- Scaffolding sections of the assignment also allows time to build up skillsets using feedback on how to turn in a final product they can be proud of.
- Scaffolding also allows you more opportunities to become familiar with each student's voice and approaches to certain topics.

#### Reflection

Allow opportunities for reflection in student coursework, which increases motivation and can discourage AI use.

- Reflection gives students space to explain their process or how they came to conclusions, as seen in their work. This will also help you document their work, which will give you more evidence to evaluate their work if you do have concerns regarding academic integrity.
- Reflection assignments can be worth a small number of points, but they help diversify the points. This can lessen the stress of larger writing assignments if students know other points are available for simply contributing content.

#### Incorporating AI Use

- Allowing students to use generative AI may be a good choice for some assignments, as it could support their learning and provide an opportunity for you to guide how they think about and use these tools.

- Be sure to give students choices in the GAI tools they use, including some that do not require creating accounts to ensure equitable access and student privacy.
- Adopt a growth mindset. Doing something new in your courses may require some experimentation. Be curious and have fun.

### AI Augmentation

Consider creating assignments where the instructor creates a baseline product (essay, research paper, speech, report, etc.) using generative AI, and students must build upon, edit, or revise the baseline product. This allows students to start with a strong writing sample and encourages them to incorporate their own analysis, evaluations, and ideas of the subject matter into the content.

Be sure you have them document not only what they changed but also have them explain why they decided to change it.

### AI Evaluation

Have students practice critical thinking skills by having them "find the flaws" in AI-generated content about the subject matter.

- This helps not only encourages students to understand the subject matter, but it provides opportunities for students to understand the dangers behind AI hallucinations.
- Be sure students not only point out what the flaws are in AI-generated content but also how those flaws should be corrected and why.
- Remember, you can ask the AI to add flaws in its content if it does not hallucinate any initially.

Remember, you can always ask your fellow faculty what ways they have found to incorporate AI into their courses.

For more best practice strategies see [“Institutional Policies/Practices and Course Design Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education,”](#) produced by WCET in June 2009. Version 2.0, June 2009