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# Oxnard College

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# Distance Education Handbook

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This Handbook has been prepared based on the  
recommendations of the  
Oxnard College Distance Education Committee.

Approved by  
Distance Education Committee – 2/2/2017  
Curriculum Committee – 2/22/2017  
Academic Senate – 4/24/2017

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# Introduction

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Dear Distance Education Instructor:

This Distance Education Handbook (Handbook) is designed to provide you with the essential information, resources and tools to ensure that students at Oxnard College receive the same high quality learning experiences in the online environment that they receive in face-to-face classes. In addition, the Handbook helps ensure that online instruction across all disciplines and from all instructors complies with all state, federal and accrediting agency guidelines and mandates.

Distance Education is an exciting and ever-evolving field. The Distance Education Committee celebrates faculty as the creative forces for innovation in their respective disciplines and welcomes an ongoing, robust dialogue from all participatory governance groups on ways in which to augment and improve this document.

We thank all faculty for their efforts to increase access to education and improve student learning.

Sincerely,

The OC Distance Education Committee

## Acknowledgements

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# Instructor Resources

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## Distance Education Services

Instructional Support Services contact information, instructor resources, and student resources can be found on the Instructional Support Services website:

<http://www.oxnardcollege.edu/faculty-staff/instructional-support-services>

## Learning Management System (LMS) Training

Instructors will complete training before the assignment of online courses. The Instructional Technology Support Services and Professional Development Committee (PDC) offer Learning Management System (LMS) training sessions to our instructors throughout the year. The Agreement between AFT 1828 and the VCCCD (23.2.A.) states the college will provide a certificate to instructors upon completion of training. The certificate will be provided by the Distance Education Committee.

## LMS Technical Support

*Learning Management System (LMS) is a website that hosts online course materials.*

Currently the LMS used at Oxnard College is Desire2Learn, and Canvas is being piloted in 2016/2017 for full implementation in 2017/18.

The following link is provided for faculty instructional support services:

<http://www.oxnardcollege.edu/faculty-staff/instructional-support-services>

The district maintains an always up-to-date website with computer requirements, basic student tutorials, and technical support tips: [vcccd.edu/dehelp](http://vcccd.edu/dehelp)

## Professional Development Opportunities and Workshops

*DE faculty and staff host a variety of workshop opportunities promoting best practices in online teaching and learning.*

Instructors should make a reasonable effort to participate in professional development opportunities offered by the PDC and through professional organizations that focus on online teaching and learning.

## Student Expectations and LMS Procedures

*Faculty should familiarize themselves with these procedures and include information on their expectations in course syllabi.*

1. Instructors have the discretion to allow access to their online courses prior to the actual start date of the course (as listed in the schedule of classes.) Instructors can also set the last date for accessing the course for after the actual end date of the course (as listed in the schedule of classes.)
2. Students should be advised not to use the LMS to verify course registration. Rather, they should first check the VCCCD portal. If still concerned, students may then contact the Office of Admission and Records for course registration information.
3. Students should be made aware that they will not have access to their LMS course materials after the class has ended. Therefore, they should consider saving any copies of their work that they may need at a later date outside of the LMS.
4. Students should understand that the LMS gradebook is provided for student convenience only and is not a representation of official grades. Students should be advised to contact the instructor with questions regarding their course grade. Instructors assign course grades, not the LMS gradebook.
5. Students need to know that only the course instructor can answer questions regarding access to date-restricted content in an LMS. Students must send all requests for re-access to quizzes, drop boxes, or discussions to the instructor.
6. Students who encounter a technical issue that prohibits them from completing coursework in the LMS are to notify their instructor immediately. If system issues are suspected, students and instructors can check <http://status.vcccd.edu/> to verify. Instructors should advise students to complete coursework, especially timed exams and quizzes, from reliable private or VCCCD internet connections.
7. Students who register in an online or hybrid course are expected to have regular access to a computer and a reliable, high-speed internet connection in order to complete coursework and to access the course site multiple times a week. Computers are available in the Oxnard College LLRC in case of ongoing computer issues. The instructor is not responsible for ongoing computer failures, internet connection issues, or any other computer or internet-related issues outside the control of the college or district.
8. Computer requirements for online students and faculty are updated regularly on this webpage: [vcccd.edu/dehelp](http://vcccd.edu/dehelp). This page also includes lists of free software, browser support, links to downloads, links to student LMS tutorials, and links to the district help line and hours.

# Distance Education Best Practices

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The following is a brief list of general best practices for teaching via distance education. Instructors should consult with their academic division dean or department chair for additional expectations as they pertain to their specific program.

## LMS Training and Technology Confidence

*Instructors demonstrate successful mastery of skills needed to teach in the online environment.*

1. Instructors teaching online for the first time or using a new LMS will receive training based on the specific tools used to conduct the course. Instructors will demonstrate successful mastery of the skills received during the training session.
2. Faculty will use these skills to update and maintain their courses in future semesters. Faculty should not rely on DE staff to update and maintain course materials for them, nor should they submit requests of this kind.
3. Online instruction is a unique instructional type that is most effective when supported by regular professional development in technological or online tools, online teaching best practices, and updates on trends in online student population characteristics, and accreditation, state and federal standards.

## Multimedia Use, Revisions, and Copyright Expectations

*These expectations help ensure a quality experience for our students through the appropriate use of multimedia.*

Instructors are responsible for complying with all copyright laws. Please consult with Oxnard College Library staff for questions regarding copyright and fair use.

Accessible design in online instruction and materials posted online is mandatory. Instructors should refer to **Appendix H** on Accessibility for details, and work with Instructional Support Services staff to ensure compliance.

## Course Instruction

*Online course instruction should replicate the classroom experience and provide students with the benefit of the instructor's expertise.*

Online instructional course content must be equivalent to the content in a face-to-face course. Specific technologies used must be adapted to the environment in which the course is being delivered and must maximize achievement of learning outcomes in those environments. Examples of instruction include: audio recordings (with transcript or

equivalent written lectures), video lecture, or a PowerPoint style presentation with voice-over. Additional tools and opportunities are available and are referenced on the Instructional Support Services webpages for Instructor Resources.

<http://www.oxnardcollege.edu/faculty-staff/instructional-support-services/technology-resources/resources-for-faculty-and-staff>

Publisher Content refers to course content or courseware provided by an external entity, usually a textbook publishing company. Publisher content is typically provided at a cost to students and often requires a separate login. The Distance Education Committee and Instructional Support Services recommend that instructors choose affordable publisher content that integrates directly into the LMS course, and not require students to jump between multiple sites. Publisher content should *supplement* or enhance but not *supplant* LMS instruction. The district does not provide technical support for publisher content or other tools that were not acquired with IT or Instructional Support Services support and recommendation.

## Communication Expectations

*These expectations ensure that our students feel a connection with our Distance Education faculty.*

1. DE instructors should provide alternative contact methods, a short biography, and a photo in their LMS profile.
2. Instructors should post a weekly message in an obvious and accessible place for all students in the district-supported LMS. This message can offer encouragement, a reflective quote, additional resources or items of interest pertaining to the course, or reminders of upcoming projects and due dates.
3. Within the syllabus, instructors should provide a communication policy to manage student expectations for response time. Instructor responses to student inquiries during the school week should be within 24 hours. Specify any times or days when the instructor will not be available to respond within the established regular timeframe, such as weekends or holidays. Instructors should notify students of any special circumstances when they will be unable to respond within the established time frame, and direct students on how to receive assistance.
4. Instructors should return graded assignments within a reasonable, established timeframe as discussed in the course syllabus.
5. It is recommended that instructors teaching online be available online for at least one hour per week for consultations with students. Instructor availability should be posted in the syllabus and any changes should be announced 48 hours in advance.

## Student Assessment

*These expectations promote academic integrity and accurate assessment of student learning outcomes. Instructors may use a variety of assessment techniques to assess student learning in the online environment.*

## Grading Final Exams, Projects, and Releasing Final Grades in the LMS

Instructors will treat feedback on final exams and final projects much the same as for a face-to-face class. Instructors who wish to provide feedback of this kind should do so via email or during office hours. Students will not have access to their online course after the class has ended.

Instructors are encouraged to make use of the LMS gradebook; however, the course syllabus should make clear that final course grades will be assigned by the instructor based on the criteria laid out in the course syllabus and the instructor's assessment of student performance in the class vis-à-vis the course learning outcomes.

## Course Management Expectations

*These expectations help ensure that our students have a quality Distance Education experience.*

Instructors should preview every page, link, quiz, discussion, assignment, and all appropriate settings and restrictions before the module opens to students. The LMS provides a course set-up checklist to assist instructors in a final review of their course prior to launch.



# Appendices

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## Appendix A

### Title 5 Distance Education Guidelines

#### **Section 55200:** Definition & Application

All distance education is subject to the general requirements of this chapter as well as the specific requirements of this article. In addition, instruction provided as distance education is subject to the requirements that may be imposed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. s 12100 et seq.) and section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. s 794d).

At Oxnard College, the term Distance Education applies to online and hybrid but not to web-enhanced courses. Section 55200 also specifies that all distance education content and delivery needs to be accessible.

## Appendix B

### Types of Regular Effective Contact

#### **Instructor—Student Interaction:**

Course announcements  
 Messaging via the LMS  
 Personalized feedback  
 Discussion boards  
 Chat/IM  
 Videoconferencing/Skype  
 Phone/voicemail  
 E-Mail

#### **Student—Student Interaction:**

Messaging via the LMS  
 Discussion boards  
 Chat/IM  
 Collaborative projects: group blogs, wikis

#### **Examples of Content Interaction:**

Modules on the LMS  
 Lectures (recorded/streaming)  
 Podcasts/webinars/screencasts  
 Videoconferencing/CCCConfer  
 Discussion boards  
 Textbooks  
 Instructor-provided materials including online material

#### **Frequency & Timeliness of Interactions**

1. Maintain an active daily presence, particularly during the first few weeks of a course.
2. Establish guidelines for frequency of contact, and define what interactions a student can expect each week and the average time commitment required of students.
3. Make known response time for student questions/inquiries and assignment feedback (e.g. 1-2 instructional days.)
4. Give frequent and substantive feedback throughout the course.

#### **Expectations for Interactions**

1. Specify course policy regarding frequency and timeliness of all contact initiated by the instructor in the syllabus.

2. Explain course policy regarding student-initiated contact (where to post questions, assignments, etc.) in the syllabus.
3. Outline and explain **netiquette** in initial course documents.
4. Clarify important dates, such as assignment and assessment deadlines, not only in the beginning but also throughout the course.

### **Absences from Interactions**

1. Inform students immediately should an illness, family emergency or other unexpected event prevent continuing regular effective contact for a prolonged period of time.
2. Let students know when instructor-initiated regular effective contact will continue.

## Appendix C

### Title IV Considerations

Recent Federal and WASC guidelines to prevent financial aid fraud mean that initial student logins to distance education courses no longer count as student participation. Several online programs in the community college system have recently been targeted by financial aid fraud schemes in which a 'student' registers for an online course, logs in, and then drops the course after financial aid funds have been dispersed.

A letter sent in October 2011 by the Department of Education calls upon post-secondary distance education programs to put more stringent measures into place to make certain that students are not just enrolled in courses, but also actively participate:

"...institutions [need] to take steps necessary to ensure that **students are academically engaged** prior to disbursing Title IV student aid funds." **If students do not begin attendance, Title IV funds must be returned** (34 CFR 668.21(a))(Runcie & Ocha).

## Appendix D

### Accreditation

#### ACCJC/WASC Accreditation Concerns

The following is a list of accreditation concerns that most directly affect course design and implementation:

Distance education course standards should be the same as in face-to-face classrooms and the mode of course delivery should be appropriate for the course content.

Distance education should be comparable to corresponding traditional courses and programs in order to meet institutional learning outcomes and quality standards.

Faculty should have:

1. Appropriate training.
2. Means for ongoing professional development.
3. Sufficient resources for technical and pedagogical support.
4. The same evaluation system as in the face-to-face classroom.

Students should have:

1. Appropriate technical training in the course delivery method.
2. Expectations that distance education courses will provide the same level of instruction as face-to-face courses.
3. A clear idea of the technical skills needed for the course.
4. The same level of interaction with and access to the instructor as in face-to-face courses.
5. The same access to support services as on-campus students.

## Appendix E

### Drop Policy

#### Federal Guidelines

The Federal government has not issued formal guidelines regarding what constitutes the “Last Day of Attendance” in the online classroom. However, because of the potential for financial aid fraud in online programs, the US Department of Education has recently determined that there should be “regular and substantive interaction between students and faculty” in online courses.

#### What This Means for Distance Education

It is not enough to evaluate a student’s attendance based solely on the number and frequency of logins or through course statistics on the LMS. The new guidelines are meant to protect the institution from students who are receiving financial aid assistance but who are not participating in class. Although guidelines have yet to be created, instructors must drop students based on their participation in class. ‘Attendance’ (through logins) is not the same as participation. Participation means actively completing course activities such as assignments, assessments, posting on discussion forums, etc.

**Participation policies must be clarified in the online syllabus.**

#### VCCCD Policy Guidelines

Each instructor is required to drop all students who fail to attend the first meeting of a class if they have not made prior arrangements with that instructor, and may drop students who arrive late at the first meeting of a class or who fail to attend the second meeting if they have not made prior arrangements with that instructor.

Each instructor is required to drop all students who become nonparticipants by the **census deadline** via the VCCCD Portal.

After the census date and before the final drop deadline for the class, each instructor has the option of dropping students who, in his or her judgment, become inactive in class. This policy should be made very clear to students.

Prior to the final drop deadline, a student may drop a class by submitting the approved form in the Admissions and Records Office or by using the online registration system.

#### What This Means for Distance Education

The face-to-face policy of ‘attending’ the **first class**, particularly for students who are new to distance education may present a problem. There are often students who, either because they are unaware of the policies or overwhelmed by the technology, may login to the course but might not complete any of the assignments on the first day.

It is therefore important for online and hybrid instructors to create a coherent and well-defined course drop policy, and to articulate this in the initial email and welcome letter sent to the students prior to the course start date as well as in the online course syllabus.

### Establishing a Drop Policy

Create a course **Check-In Procedure**, such as a discussion forum, an introductory email that students send to the class, or a self-assessment. Simply having the student login for the first day of class is not enough. New **Federal guidelines to prevent financial aid fraud** state that **student logins no longer count as participation**.

State the **last day** for **Check-In** to occur, for example on the second or third day after the course begins.

Require students to complete **ALL** assignments in the first learning unit by the due date.

Be specific as to the exact **day, date** and **time** of your drop deadline. Include **time zone** information (e.g. PST/EST) so that there is minimal confusion for students. Avoid using 12:00 AM or 12:00 PM as a deadline.

## Appendix F

### Instructor's Checklist

#### Content

- Updated Syllabus
- Welcome Note to Class
- Weekly Introduction Page - dates updated
- Modules have link to Quizzes or Discussions
- Links to all websites and videos still work
- Links to old Course Evaluations have been deleted

#### Assignments

- Date restrictions updated for new semester
- Dropboxes connected to gradebook

#### Discussions

- Discussion rubric provided
- Date restrictions updated
- Topics connected to gradebook

#### Quizzes

- No quizzes listed as "inactive"
- Quizzes connected to gradebook
- Date restrictions set for each Quiz



## Appendix G

### Distance Learning Appendix Submission and Approval Processes

The Distance Learning Appendix is an appendix to the Course Outline of Record housed in CurricUNET. The most current Distance Learning Appendix form can be found in SharePoint: Curriculum Committee > Curriculum Documents > Form\_DL\_Appendix\_Year of Last Revision.

#### Submission Process

There are two methods to submit a Distance Learning Appendix for review.

1. If the Course Outline of Record (COR) is being submitted in CurricUNET for a new course or for a course revision, the Distance Learning Appendix should be attached to the COR page titled Attached Files. The Curriculum Technician takes note of the appendix, adds the appendix to the next meeting agenda of the Distance Education Committee (DEC), and downloads the appendix to SharePoint for review by the committee: Curriculum Committee > Curriculum Documents > Distance Learning Appendix Review.
2. If the COR is NOT being revised, the Distance Learning Appendix should be emailed directly to the Curriculum Technician. The Curriculum Technician adds the appendix to the next meeting agenda of the DEC, and downloads the appendix to SharePoint for review by the committee: Curriculum Committee > Curriculum Documents > Distance Learning Appendix Review.

#### Review Process (One to Two Months are Required)

1. The Distance Learning Appendix is reviewed by the DEC. The DEC may take one of three actions.
  - a. Approve the appendix with no requested changes.
  - b. Conditionally approve the appendix pending minor changes.
  - c. Disapprove the appendix and request major changes.
2. The Curriculum Technician alerts the faculty members via email as to the status of their submitted appendix, and requests changes as necessary.
3. After the Distance Learning Appendix receives DEC approval, the Curriculum Technician adds the appendix to the next meeting agenda of the Curriculum Committee.
4. After the Distance Learning Appendix receives Curriculum Committee approval, the Curriculum Technician uploads the final approved version of the Distance Learning Appendix as an Attached File to the COR in CurricUNET, and saves it in SharePoint:

Curriculum Committee > Curriculum Documents > Distance Learning Appendix  
Approved.

5. The Curriculum Technician alerts the Instructional Data Specialists that a Distance Learning Appendix has been approved, and the associated change is made in Banner allowing the course to be offered via distance learning.

## Appendix H

### Accessibility

#### Accessibility (504 & 508 Compliance)

**Sections 504 & 508** of the Federal Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility and Compliance Act guarantee equal access to programs and services for everyone in institutions receiving federal funding. California also has its own set of requirements for accessibility. **Prior to course approval and implementation, all courses must be designed keeping those students who have special needs and require assistive technology in mind.**

The following webpage contains information on Distance Education from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office:

<http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/AcademicAffairs/EducationalProgramsandProfessionalDevelopment/DistanceEducation.aspx>. Please see the links under Statutes, Regulations and Guidelines for details on Distance Education Accessibility Guidelines for Students with Disabilities:

<http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/AA/DE/2011DistanceEducationAccessibilityGuidelines%20FINAL.pdf>.

#### Understanding Accessibility

Simply stated, accessibility refers to the ability for everyone, particularly those with special needs, to have equal access to materials on the web. This means instructors should think about using the principle of **Universal Design**: that is, creating course materials that accommodate the needs, learning styles and strategies of as many students as possible regardless of their ability.

Students who have disabilities may often have difficulty completing certain tasks on the internet such as reading, listening or typing. They may find chat rooms and videoconferencing challenging. It is important to understand what students may require in the form of assistive tools such as screen readers for the visually-impaired that require text tag modifications for images or captioning for the hearing-impaired. Creating courses keeping Universal Design principles in mind will also benefit students with a range of learning styles and preferences as well.

#### Differences between 504 & 508 Compliance

**Section 504** specifies that institutions receiving federal funding have to accommodate individuals with special needs so that they can have equal access to learning facilities and

materials. 504 compliance begins with the individual approaching the institution (at OC, this is through EAC) and requesting specific assistance.

**Section 508** specifies that institutions have the responsibility to provide resources that are accessible to everyone. Electronic resources need to follow principles of universal design, meaning that websites, online materials, and online courses have to be developed with the objective of meeting the needs of everyone.

The following chart summarizes the differences between **Section 504** and **508** compliance:

<b>Section 504</b>	<b>Section 508</b>
Guarantees <b>accommodations for an individual</b>	Guarantees <b>access for all</b>
Is handled by <b>specific departments</b> such as <b>EAC</b>	Is the responsibility of <b>everyone on campus</b>
Finds workable <b>solutions as the need arises</b>	Creates workable <b>solutions that are built-in</b> to the system
Is used <b>when 508 compliant materials still do not meet an individual's needs</b>	Is the <b>starting point</b> for accessibility

### Captioning Requirements

The following are legal requirements for captioning multimedia material:

<b>Caption Required</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All video that includes audio of any type, such as voice, music, and sound effects.</li> </ul>
<b>Transcript</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any material that is audio only.</li> </ul>

### Federal and State Guidelines

<p><b>Federal guidelines</b> for accessibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All applications should have accessibility features activated.</li> <li>Assistive technology (captioning, TDDs) should be able to track interface elements.</li> <li>All programs used should have</li> </ul>	<p><b>State requirements</b> that apply to distance education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students should be able to use their preferred means of assistive technology.</li> <li>The frequency, amount, and quality of communication with students should</li> </ul>
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<p>keyboard-activated functionality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Users should be able to modify display elements and style sheets as needed.</li> <li>▪ Images should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have text tags.</li> <li>▪ Have a description of the image that matches any function it may have.</li> <li>▪ Have a non-animated means of identification, if animated.</li> <li>▪ Have a frequency that is between 2 – 55 Hz, if animated.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Text should be used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To highlight information that relies on color-coding for emphasis.</li> <li>▪ To identify frames in webpages.</li> <li>▪ To label headings in data tables.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Narration and captioning alternatives for videos and PowerPoint Presentations should be in sync with materials.</li> <li>▪ All elements in electronic forms should be easily identified by assistive technology and should not be subject to time constraints.</li> <li>▪ Links to plugins and special software should be provided.</li> </ul> <p>Users should have a way to avoid recurring navigation links.</p>	<p>be equal, regardless of their disability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Course materials should be updated following guidelines for <b>regular effective contact</b>.</li> </ul> <p>Course materials and resources should incorporate accessibility guidelines internally, that is, within their framework, thereby reducing the need for outside assistance for students with disabilities.</p>
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### Other Considerations

In addition to the material in the LMS, instructors also need to ensure that online third-party resources (websites, videos) comply with accessibility guidelines. This also applies to preloaded publisher-created content, known as e-Packs. Some e-Pack materials may not include alt tags or other accessibility options. Before considering an e-Pack for a course it is important to find out if instructors can alter the course content to make it accessible.