

**Mt. San Jacinto College**  
**Regular Substantive Interaction Policy**

In response to Title 5 Section 55204: Any portion of a course conducted through distance education must include regular substantive interaction between instructor and students. MSJC outlines the following Regular Substantive Interaction policy to address this requirement.

**Regulations:**

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

**55200. Definition and Application.**

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:

- The internet;
- One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communication devices;
- Audio conference; or
- 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. The 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.

Additionally, AP 4105 outlines MSJC’s definition of distance education:

Fully online courses involve regular and effective online interaction that takes place synchronously or asynchronously and is supported by online materials and activities delivered primarily through the college's course management system (CMS) and supported through the use of other required materials. All approved instructional contact hours, including online proctored assessments, are delivered through these online interactions. No MSJC on campus activities are required.

- Synchronous online courses have regularly scheduled activities which require students to be present online at a specified day/time. These courses are identified in the MSJC class schedule as "Online Real-Time" courses.
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- Asynchronous online courses do not require synchronous activities; however, if irregular synchronous events are scheduled, students must have equal opportunity to meet the requirement asynchronously. These courses are identified in the MSJC class schedule as "Online Anytime" courses.

Hybrid courses are courses that require students to come to any MSJC campus for any reason (e.g., orientation, tests, etc.). These courses have scheduled on campus meetings with either synchronous or asynchronous online activity in lieu of face-to-face interaction. Online activities are supported by online materials and activities delivered primarily

through the college's course management system and supported through the use of other required materials.

- Synchronous online activities have a regularly scheduled day/time when students are required to be present online. These courses are identified in the MSJC class schedule as "Hybrid Real-Time" courses. Additionally, section 55005 of Title 5 states that “any required technology platforms, devices and applications” including “any test or assessment proctoring requirements,” must be made clear to students prior to enrollment.
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- Asynchronous online activities do not require students to be online at a specified day/time; however, due dates still apply. These courses are identified in the MSJC class schedule as "Hybrid Anytime" courses.

MSJC Distance Education courses are identified as one of these types of courses in the class schedule. A note has been added to the class schedule about distance education and course types informing students about where they can get assistance with MSJC’s online support resources.

MSJC Distance Education courses adhere to regular substantive interaction as defined by Title 5 section 55202. Additionally, the Educational Technology and Curriculum Committees have established a Regular Substantive Interaction Policy that defines the type and frequency of interaction appropriate to teach a distance education (DE) course section or session. This distinction separates DE courses from correspondence courses. MSJC does not offer correspondence courses.

### **Guideline for Section 55202**

This section emphasizes the extent to which course quality depends upon the full involvement of faculty in the design and application of DE courses. Recent updates to 55202 highlight accessibility requirements, noting DE courses are legally obligated to

ensure all students with disabilities can engage in DE courses as independently as their peers.

#### **55202. Course Quality Standards.**

The same standards of course quality shall be applied to any portion of a course conducted through distance education as are applied to traditional classroom courses, in regard to the course quality judgment made pursuant to the requirements of 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.

**NOTE:** Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code. Reference: Section 70901, Education Code.

#### **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 substantive interaction between the instructor(s) and students, and among students, (as described in the course outline of record), 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 teacher, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:

- Providing direct instruction;
- Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
- Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
- Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
- 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:

Note: Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code.

### **MSJC Regular Substantive Interaction Policy:**

Title 5 & CCC DE Guidelines require colleges to develop a policy regarding regular substantive interaction addressing "the type and frequency of interaction appropriate to teach a distance education (DE) course section or session." All MSJC DE courses, whether hybrid or fully online, will include regular substantive interaction as described below:

- **Initiated Interaction:** Instructors will regularly initiate interaction with students to determine students are accessing and comprehending course material and are participating regularly in the course's activities. Areas within the course management system (CMS) shall be provided to allow for community building between students. Students shall be provided opportunities within the design of the class to interact with their instructors and other students. Instructors may opt to use other appropriate tools that facilitate student-to-instructor and student-to-student interactions; however, course activities should be conducted within the college supported CMS as much as possible to provide ease of access for students.

Implementing a variety of accessible and appropriate software tools, apps, and publisher resources to create interactions is also desirable. If using external tools, it is recommended they are integrated with the college supported CMS (if applicable) or linked from within the CMS using MSJC student authentication practices in accordance with MSJC AP4105. **All adopted tools must be accessible to all students in accordance with Section 55200.**

- **Frequency of Contact:** The number of instructor contact hours per week shall be equivalent to the hours available for face-to-face students in the same or similar courses. Instructor to student contact shall be distributed in a manner that will ensure regular substantive interaction is maintained not only weekly, but also for the duration of the course. The quantity and frequency of instructor-initiated announcements and response times for student-initiated questions shall be established by each instructor. While communication should occur as is appropriate for the course, instructors are expected to be responsive to student inquiries within a 24-72 hour time frame excluding holidays. Faculty office hours are not included as fulfilling the regular effective contact requirements and are a separate requirement for full-time faculty members.
- **Establishing expectations:** A 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. Within the syllabus instructors shall share their expectations of student participation in group and/or whole class discussions or other related activities developed to facilitate interaction between students, the content of the course and the instructor. Instructors are required to monitor the discussions and related activities to provide guidance and direction.
- **Managing unexpected instructor absence:** If an instructor must be out of contact for three or more days, excluding holidays, then the instructor will notify students in the announcements area of the course. The announcements must also include information regarding when students can expect regular effective contact to resume. If the time away will be more than three days, excluding holidays, then the department chair and appropriate dean shall be informed of the absence. A

substitute instructor may be sought to assist students while the instructor is unavailable.

### **Required Types of Contact**

MSJC DE course instructors will, at a minimum, use the following resources to initiate contact with students:

- Content related discussion forums within the designated CMS including appropriate instructor participation.
- Weekly announcements posted within the designated CMS.
- Timely feedback on student work, which may include comments and/or rubrics, used within the Grades area of the designated CMS.

DE course instructors will, at a minimum, use the following resources to allow students to initiate contact with the instructor and/or other students:

- Open ended discussion forum within the designated CMS with appropriate instructor participation.
- Content related discussion forums within the designated CMS.
- MSJC administered communication tools (such as email or the designated CMS communication tools).

### **Contact Considerations:**

- Instructors may opt to use additional forms of communication to enhance regular effective contact opportunities, as mentioned in Section 55204 of Title 5. (e.g., group or individual meetings (virtual or f2f)), orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminars, or study sessions, physical and/or virtual field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, text messaging, etc.

- Student record information should only be shared in accordance with AP 3721.