Pierce College Instructor/Student Contact Policy for Distance Education Courses

Ensuring regular effective contact in hybrid or online courses guarantees that the student receives the benefit of the instructor's presence in the learning environment both as a provider of instructional information and as a facilitator of student learning.

Title 5 regulations do not make a distinction between regular and distance education courses beyond the need to have a separate curriculum approval process and the need to ensure regular effective contact. Therefore, it is assumed that those qualities of regular effective contact described above for the face-to-face environment should also be applied to the distance education situation. The distance education guidelines require colleges to develop a policy regarding regular effective contact that addresses "the type and frequency of interaction appropriate to each distance education course/section or session".

Pierce College Policy:

All distance education courses at Pierce College, whether hybrid or fully online will include weekly effective contact as described below:

1. **Initiated interaction and frequency of contact:** 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. Distance education courses are considered the "virtual equivalent" of 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 distance education format. Contact shall be distributed in a manner that will ensure that regular contact is maintained, given the nature of asynchronous instructional methodologies, over the course of a week and should occur as often as is appropriate for the course.

2. **Type of Contact:** Weekly contact with students through **some combination** of the following options:

    a. Course announcements
    b. Participation in a threaded discussion board
    c. Participation in an open-ended discussion board
    d. Opportunity for questions and answers in a chat room
    e. Email contact
    f. Participation in online group collaboration projects
    g. Face-to-face informal meetings (e.g. review sessions)
    h. Face-to-face formal meetings (e.g. regular, scheduled class sessions)
    i. Teacher response to student work in progress
    j. Timely feedback for student work.
    k. Regular podcasts
    l. Voice enabled messages (e.g. Voice Boards or voice email)
    m. Synchronous virtual meetings