

Los Angeles Mission College Distance Education - Regular Effective Contact

All courses offered as distance education at Los Angeles Mission College promote regular effective contact between instructor and students as well as students and students, through group or individual meetings, discussion forums, the course syllabus, online lectures, tests, quizzes, or written assignments, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips (actual or virtual online), library workshops/orientations, telephone contact, correspondence, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities.

By the first day of class, the following should be visible to students in the Etudes classroom:

Class Syllabus and other course document issues:

To promote regular effective contact, these documents should include plainly identifiable information about the following:

- Faculty contact information including an accurate e-mail address and campus telephone number
- Course goals, objectives, and student learning outcomes
- Required text, including edition/publication date, and other course materials
- A clear description of project assignments
- A clear description of assignment requirements and submission process
- A clear description of class attendance policies, including "No Show" and "Instructor Drop" guidelines
- Course schedule with weekly dates and due dates for assignments and exams
- Time-frame information regarding instructor replies to e-mail, phone calls, etc. as well as timelines for the return of various graded assignments
- Online etiquette and expectations for respectful online communication with the instructor and fellow students
- Since overall accuracy and currency are central to effective contact, instructors should ensure that the syllabus and course documents are error-free and that dates, hyperlinks, and associated publisher content are current.

Introductory Announcement

- Welcome students to the course; direct students where to find class materials and how to begin work; may repeat main points of initial class assignments. A brief, up-to-date, faculty biography in this Forum or elsewhere in the course is suggested.
- Repeat requirements to avoid being dropped (this information should also be included in the course Syllabus)
- Refer students to the Los Angeles Mission College Etudes Tutorial
- Refer students to other resources for online students

First week's content and activities

- To promote regular effective contact, initial content and class activity should include multiple avenues of instructor-student and student-student communication: Introductory forums, student home pages, student/group/class blogs, and chats as well as other modes of distance communication should be used to prepare the students for subsequent course work.
- Throughout the first week, instructors should define and emphasize the importance for the student of regular instructor-student and student-student contact.

Throughout the course, the following are recommended practices for running an online classroom which promotes regular effective contact

- During the term post materials and lecture/forum topic threads on a pre-announced and consistent schedule (i.e., each Sunday before the Monday on which each week of the course begins). This helps busy adult students manage their time.
- Provide dated class announcements at least weekly in the online classroom. Previous announcements should remain available somewhere in the classroom. Announcements should be archived in a forum for reference and to help maintain a record of the course. Announcements can be used to remind students of due dates, to let

students know that a new forum or lecture has been posted, provide encouragement and positive feedback, etc.

- Create one or more focused Discussion Forum for each week or unit of the course
- Communicate frequently with students via class announcements, discussion forums, email, chat, etc.
- Participate actively in class threads. Facilitate but don't dominate the discussions. Make discussion forums an opportunity for students to think critically about and interact with course content and with other students. Use feedback to clarify concepts and facts. Instructors may want to ask follow-up questions to elicit responses from students. Faculty should always be "visible" (even if in a minor way) in each week's lecture thread/discussion forum to let students know that the faculty member is "listening."
- Respond to all student inquires within the time frame identified in course "house keeping" documents (usually within 48 hours), even if it is just to let the student know that the instructor is working on the issue and will get back to the student in due time. If the instructor will be unavailable or absent for any period greater than the time frame identified in the "house keeping" documents, she or he should indicate the duration to the students in advance (if possible).
- Provide resources and referrals as a way to offer personalized support and demonstrate concern. Examples include referrals to services such as the Writing Center, Library, Advising, as well as appropriate books or Web resources.
- Use Early Alert and perhaps send personal e-mail as a friendly reminder to students who are not actively participating in the class.
- Monitor student attendance and participation.
- Make regular self-assessments of teaching methods and style.
- Provide dated class announcements at least weekly in the online classroom. Previous announcements should remain available somewhere in the classroom. Announcements should be archived in a forum for reference and to help maintain a record of the course. Announcements can be used to remind students of due dates, to let students know that a new forum or lecture has been posted, provide encouragement and positive feedback, etc.
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Practices related to effective feedback, record keeping, and grading in the online classroom

- In addition to best practices for effective feedback, record keeping, and grading in any learning environment, the following practices are recommended to promote regular effective contact in distance learning environments:
- Clearly state the criteria or create rubrics to manage student expectations on grading.
- Comments and grading for individual work should be provided within the time frame identified in course "house keeping" documents
- Participation in the online classroom should account for a significant portion of the course grade (25-40% is recommended). Participation should be focused and task/content-oriented. Faculty should clearly communicate their precise guidelines and explain what constitutes acceptable participation.
- Quantity is important, but the quality of the communication is more important. Students should participate in communication or collaboration activities in a manner that promotes engagement with course material and higher-order thinking skills.
- Distribute grades over a variety of assignments, throughout the term, rather than making grades dependent upon just one or two exams or assignments or on a large number of like assignments
- The instructor should monitor any contact activity in which students interact with their peers.
- Instructors should drop all non-attending students according to the policy identified in course "house keeping" documents. Instructors should make a good-faith effort to contact a student through multiple modes of communication before dropping him/her from the course.

References:

Chancellor's Office, California Community Colleges, Academic Affairs Division, Instructional Programs and Services

Chaffey Community College
Long Beach, Community College
Los Rios Community College, Regular Effective Contact Guidelines for Distance Education
University of Maryland, Expectations for Classroom Setup and Online Teaching

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