

E.1.9.3 (Procedure) Online Learning – High Impact Practices

Responsible Department: Vice Chancellor for Digital Learning and Transformation

Based on Board Policy: E.1.9 – Online Learning

Approved: 11-18-25

The School for Online Learning at Alamo Colleges District has enterprise-level responsibility for unifying the vision, strategy, and facilitation of operational activities. The School is responsible for establishing and managing district-wide standards for online learning quality, consistency, and strategic direction for digital learning initiatives across the system.

A critical component of maintaining quality distance education courses and programs is faculty preparedness to deliver high quality learning experiences supported by a robust quality assurance commitment. All faculty teaching distance education courses (fully online and/or hybrid) will follow best practices based on current research and using standards and guidelines adopted through Board policy to deliver consistent quality learning experiences to distance education students.

Each College within the Alamo Colleges District is committed to complying with all requirements regarding the operation of online education within states and U.S. territories. Each College requires instructors teaching hybrid and fully online courses to have regular and substantive interaction with the students enrolled in those courses.

This procedure codifies additional quality assurance practices for distance education beyond the minimum faculty certification requirements identified in other Board procedures. Further, this procedure specifically addresses faculty readiness to comply with regular and substantive interaction requirements as defined by the *United States Department of Education Title IV eligibility regulations 34 CFR 600.2*.

Substantive Interaction Definition. Substantive interaction is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following—

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

Regular Interaction Definition. An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency—

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(i) 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

(ii) 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.

This procedure supports faculty's primary responsibility for and exercise of oversight for distance education courses and programs, ensuring both the rigor of programs and the quality of instruction.

Course Certification

Quality digital learning experiences are a priority for all Colleges within the Alamo Colleges District. Colleges and/or academic departments may require distance education courses taught in hybrid and online modalities to obtain formal course certification. The course review process, certification deadlines, and faculty expectations will be codified in a set of guidelines produced and/or updated annually by the School for Online Learning in consultation with an advisory group as provided in Board Policy E.01.09.

Each College, requiring a course or courses to attain formal certification, will provide faculty or staff member(s) to serve as the local institutional representative(s) and to coordinate with Alamo Colleges Online staff and support online course certification and the peer review process.

High Impact Teaching Practices for Digital Learning

The School for Online Learning will codify and publish a list of High Impact Teaching Practices for distance education courses and programs. These teaching practices promote student success in course completion, persistence, and degree attainment by ensuring faculty have been properly trained in teaching techniques to achieve regular and substantive interaction between the student(s) and instructor(s). Instructional Designers and/or Faculty Development Specialists will support faculty in including high impact practices into their hybrid and fully online courses designs. Training will be provided on High Impact Teaching Practices to achieve regular and substantive interaction among instructor(s) and student(s).