

Mt San Antonio College
Academic Senate
And Office of Instruction
Requirements for Online Learning

Mt San Antonio College has identified the collective goal of focusing on the classroom, and this focus includes the virtual classroom environment. While it is recognized that Mt. SAC faculty members have been leaders in innovative instruction in a variety of modes, styles, and approaches, it is necessary to examine the integrity of online instruction to ensure that it is no less dynamic and individualized than conventional classroom instruction and that both Title 5 requirements and State Academic Senate standards are met.

The opportunity to examine the integrity of Mt. SAC's virtual course offerings occurs when an online course is created and/or when that course is evaluated. In the past, the nascent online learning program has fostered an atmosphere of creativity and innovation to the benefit of both students and faculty. The time has come, however, to ensure that standards for online course offerings meet the expectations of all stakeholders involved and to ensure that faculty members have skills they need to offer quality instruction in the challenging virtual environment.

Therefore, as a necessary step in the focus on the virtual classroom, the purpose of this document is: 1) to propose policy for the creation of new distance learning courses (including online and television), to meet new Title 5 requirements regarding the review and evaluation of existing distance learning courses, and 2) to propose policy for those currently teaching and those who may wish to teach online or televised courses in the future.

PART I: Creation of New Courses:

Quality standards for distance learning curriculum are an area of Academic Senate concern. Curriculum review of distance learning courses must consider the transfer of content and the interaction between instructor and student. The State Academic Senate position¹ on the review of distance education courses is that approval for distance learning courses shall be separate from traditional courses. Further, Title 5 regulations have been revised specifically for distance education. The revised Title 5 regulations² are included for review and must be considered in the creation of new courses:

Section 55205. Definition and Application.

Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology. 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. Sec. 12100 et seq.) and section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, (29 U.S.C. § 794d). Title 5 Section 55376.

1 "Guideline for Good Practices: Effective Instructor Contact in Distance Learning" (Academic Senate Position Paper, Spring 1999).

2 The Board of Governors (BOG) approved changes to Title 5 regulations governing Distance Education (DE) in March 2002, which were subsequently approved and adopted by the Secretary of State in July 2002.

(http://www.cccco.edu/divisions/esed/aa_ir/disted/attachments/10.3-T5_Regs-Distance_Education.doc).

Mt San Antonio College
Academic Senate
And Office of Instruction
Requirements for Online Learning

Section 55207. Course Quality Standards.

The same standards of course quality shall be applied to distance education as are applied to traditional classroom courses, in regard to the course quality judgments made pursuant to the requirements of section 55002 of this part, and in regard to any local course quality determination or review process.

Section 55211. 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) All approved courses offered as distance education include regular effective contact between instructor and students, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, correspondence, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities.

(b) All distance education courses are delivered consistent with guidelines issued by the Chancellor pursuant to section 409 of the Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors. Regular effective contact is an academic and professional matter pursuant to Title 5, section 53200.

55213. Separate Course Approval.

Each proposed or existing course, if delivered by distance education, shall be separately reviewed and approved according to the district's certified course approval procedures

Recommendations:

- Representatives from Academic Senate, Distance Learning, and Educational Design Committees will adopt a separate approval process and form that is appropriate for the distance learning courses to ensure all existing and new courses meet Title 5 requirements. A separate course outline will be created for each course offered as a DL course and will be reviewed by the Education Design committee.
- Specifically, course approval must consider:
 - o The objectives and content of the course are adequately covered as specified in methods of instruction, assignments, evaluation of student outcomes, and instructional materials.
 - o If taught in both traditional and distance learning modes, both achieve the stated objectives and content.
 - o The distance learning methodology is effective for the specified class size subject to the restrictions of distance education.
 - o For transferable courses, personal contact is specified, and, for non-transferable courses, regular contact is specified.
 - Regular personal contact between faculty and student is an area of grave concern and needs careful examination. We propose that faculty demonstrate not only how contact is performed but also how its effectiveness and frequency are measured prior to approval of distance learning courses
 - o Diverse learning styles are considered. Educational information in distance learning courses must be accessible for learners with disabilities, as mandated by state and federal laws
 - o Virtual Office Hours

Mt San Antonio College
Academic Senate
And Office of Instruction
Requirements for Online Learning

- Faculty representatives from Academic Senate, Educational Design, and Distance Learning Committees will form a sub committee to regularly review individual courses to ensure their quality of content and pedagogical methodology are upheld and addressed.
 - Courses will be reviewed through the Program Review process.
 - Departments will have a grace period of one year to address issues or concerns raised by the sub committee about an individual course. If issues or concerns are not addressed, those courses will not be offered in a distance learning mode until such time those issues are addressed by the department.
- Faculty currently teaching online courses should be given ample time to create a new course outline for each distance learning course, and those courses may continue to be offered in the interim for a period of one year. After the grace period has expired, faculty will no longer teach those courses via distance learning modes until approval is gained through the regular established curriculum approval process.

PART II: Faculty Certification

The current student success and retention rates for online coursework are less than that of traditional courses as measured by the Distance Learning Committee, Fall 2002. We propose that reexamination of the quality of instruction across distance learning modes may improve success and retention of those students who choose to utilize this mode of delivery.

Mt San Antonio College faculty members who are currently teaching or wishing to teach in a distance learning mode should demonstrate the skills necessary to address the technological/pedagogical opportunities and constraints inherent to this mode of instruction (online or televised). Therefore, we propose that faculty be "certified" to teach online and be evaluated regularly by their peers to ensure academic rigor across curriculum.

Recommendations:

1. Certification would include technological and pedagogical competencies as measured by "hands on" and written assessments.
2. Certification would take place through Staff and Organizational Learning. Staff and Organizational Learning will assess an instructor's proficiency and will offer additional instruction, if necessary, or issue a certificate of technological and pedagogical competence. Faculty will not be required to receive any needed "additional instruction" from Staff and Organizational Learning. When and where the faculty member receives additional instruction is solely their own decision.
3. Once a faculty member has been certified, a certificate stating such will be housed in the appropriate Division Office and Office of Instruction.

Mt San Antonio College
Academic Senate
And Office of Instruction
Requirements for Online Learning

- Faculty representatives from Professional Development Council, Academic Senate, Faculty Association, and Distance Learning Committee will form a sub committee to establish technological and pedagogical competencies necessary to ensure student success in distance learning courses.
 - These representatives will also establish a mentoring procedure and present its recommendations to the Senate and the Faculty Association. This is to assure that certified faculty members will mentor un-certified faculty on a regular basis.
 - These representatives will define and establish an evaluation process for certified faculty and determine how often faculty should be evaluated.
- The Faculty Association and Academic Senate will establish a regular evaluation process that will be undertaken by faculty peers who are currently teaching online. Further, the Faculty Association will negotiate the contractual issues surrounding the mentoring process.
 - Faculty will be responsible for implementing the mentoring and evaluation process.
- Faculty who are currently teaching online should be given ample opportunity to become certified. We propose that faculty be allowed one year from the approval date of established competencies to become certified, ensuring ample opportunity to reach a standard acceptable to the academic community. Faculty should be allowed to continue to teach online courses during the approval process for no longer than one year.

Respectfully submitted:

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