Tips for Maintaining Regular, Effective, and Substantive Contact with Students in Online/Hybrid Courses

The tips below are meant to help ensure course quality and student success in online/hybrid classes by providing examples of how to maintain regular, effective, and substantive contact. They will also help ensure that online courses are consistent with AP 4105, ACCJC Accreditation Standards, Chancellor’s Office Distance Education Guidelines, and Title 5.

Grade Assignments in a Timely Manner

Return graded assignments to students’ personal gradebook within the same time frame you would use for a face-to-face class.

Provide Audio/Written Feedback:

Provide substantive, specific written feedback that adds depth and insight and reinforces key concepts on all assignments. Audio feedback adds a personal touch.

Be part of the class

When the instructor participates students become more involved. Be “present”; appear in the Online Course no less than 3 times a week - ideally you should appear more often. Leave your footprint.

Announcement/News Forum

Use the Announcement Forum to post weekly or semi-weekly reminders about due dates, upcoming events, weekly learning goals, clarify concepts, summarize important points from the previous week’s discussion, deliver an anticipatory set, et cetera.

Participate in your Forums

This is a fundamental and vital part of the online instructor’s role in the Online Classroom. Steer student comments in the right direction. Consider it akin to calling on them in an on-campus course. Summarize and provide closure at the end of each week. Use the students’ first name in your replies. Thank students publicly for comments submitted that express insight and depth. If you are just checking in to catch up on the day’s postings, let your presence be known in some way, shape or form.

Live Classroom lectures

Use Blackboard Collaborate or Google Hangouts to present lecture material or do a review session before a quiz or exam in a live/synchronous session. Schedule these session in your syllabus so students know when to expect them. Make attendance inviting but optional. Allow opportunities for questions and answers/discussion. Allow as much time as you might for a face-to-face session – for instance, an hour and 15 minutes. Archive these sessions for students who may have “missed class” that day and send an email note inviting them to review asynchronously.
Ask Your Faculty Forum/Email

In your “Module 0” folder, create a forum where students can “ask the faculty” a question for clarification and so forth. Invite peer responses if another student sees it before you do. Respond to messages and questions within 24 hours of receipt.

Office hours:

Have scheduled, regular office hours wherein you are available via phone, email, chat or video conferencing. Set evening hours if some of your students work during the day. Arrange telephone office hours if you see that any of your students are having difficulty online. Examples are one-on-one conference calls, email, and video conferencing. When feasible, offer personal face-to-face visits. Schedule at least one session with each student per semester to discuss major projects.

Logs

Take note of students who don’t participate during the first week. Check Logs to verify students are participating regularly. Check your Participants list and see when a student logged in last. This is akin to taking attendance in face-to-face courses and contacting students if they go missing. Contact students individually via email, text, or phone. Do not rely solely on Messaging for absent students as they may have technological difficulties preventing them from logging in.