

Requirements for Distance Education from the Federal Department of Education¹ Effective July 1, 2021

Applies to all courses taught online or hybrid.

Also applies to these other less prevalent technologies used to offer distance education: audio conferencing; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices.

AUHs must ensure instructors provide substantive and regular interaction.

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:

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

Regular interaction between a student and an instructor is ensured by:

- 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
- 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.

Assurance

AUHs can determine how to ensure their units' online and hybrid courses meet the requirements noted above. No regular reports from AUHs are required at this time. As with other compliance requirements, such as compliance requirements for syllabi, AUHs must be prepared to demonstrate how requirements are being met.

For more information, please contact:

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¹ Primary Source: Federal Register, Vol. 85, No. 171, September 2, 2020, Rules and Regulations, §600.2, Page 54809.