CORRESPONDENCE COURSES VS. DISTANCE EDUCATION

In a typical correspondence course, an institution will use mail or an electronic transmission to provide instructional materials to students who are separated from the instructor. This material would usually include all exams and other assignments.

Distance education (online and hybrid courses) use technology to deliver instruction to students and includes regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correspondence Course</th>
<th>Distance Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited interaction between instructor &amp; students. Interaction is not regular or substantive.</td>
<td>Interaction should be regular (at least once weekly) and substantive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interaction with instructor primarily initiated by student.</td>
<td>Interaction should be initiated by instructor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-paced.</td>
<td>Interaction should be regular and of an academic nature.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

Competency-based education means that we define what students should know and be able to do, and they graduate when they have demonstrated that competency.

An institution that offers completely competency based education or distance education, needs to make sure they meet the “regular and substantive” requirements otherwise they risk losing federal financial aid funding.

Correspondence courses are not eligible for federal financial aid funding.

CONTENT & TIME EQUIVALENCY

- Consider the hour per credit time equivalency when creating engagement in your online classes.
- Online and hybrid courses must meet the same credit hour requirement as face-to-face courses.
- Without face-to-face lectures, online instructors must be more intentional about creating opportunities for substantive interaction in Falcon Online.
- Help keep everyone on track. In Falcon Online, post deadlines in the calendar and draft a weekly reminder announcement.
- Virtual office hours must include two continuous office hours at a set time. Host virtual office hours using Adobe Connect or YouSeeU.

INTERACTION MUST BE SUBSTANTIVE AND ACADEMIC IN NATURE

- Activities which are academic in nature further learning or assessment of learning.
- Create opportunities within the course shell to provide comments on student submissions.
- Limited feedback such as posting “good job” does not qualify as substantive.
- Interaction should occur within the digital classroom (i.e. the learning management system or publisher material accessed through the course shell).
- Email correspondence does not fulfill the once weekly substantive interaction requirement.
SUBSTANTIVE INTERACTION

INTERACTIONS MUST BE INITIATED BY THE INSTRUCTOR - Falcon Online Examples

**Discussions**
- Schedule a chat or virtual room discussion.
- Facilitate a study group, open lab or virtual office hours.
- Use announcements to communicate about aspects of the course.
- Reward participation through your grading strategy.
- Scaffold assignments by having a writing assignment based on assigned discussions or use discussion posts as writing assignments.
- Introduce peer review.
- Associate rubrics with discussion topics, assignment folders and grade items.
- Create a forum specifically for questions about the course & another as a student “lounge” for non-academic conversations.
- Make the first topic low stakes and a teachable moment.
- Highlight good posts early in the semester.

**Assignments**
- General feedback: provide meaningful feedback where students are both performing well & where they need improvement.
- Record audio comments.
- Insert comments directly into a document and upload the document into the feedback area for students to review.
- Enable TurnItIn.com in Falcon Online.
- Use the feedback box in the Assignments folder.

**Gradebook**
*By going to a grade item and selecting Enter Grades, you can access the Comments tool to:*
- Identify where the student excelled in a post.
- Clarify course concepts.
- Identify problems within a post relating to content.
- Identify problems within a post related to citation style or other criteria.
- Offer suggestions for change.
- Provide feedback on an assignment submission.
- Rubrics allow additional overall feedback as well as for each criterion.
- It is best practice to associate a rubric with the grade item associated with the discussion topic. This ensures students can view the rubric feedback.

**Quizzes**
Places to leave feedback on a quiz:
- From the quiz drop down menu, select Grade to access the:
  - Users tab— you can enter feedback on the student’s attempt or the overall grade. Click on either link to access the feedback box. On the attempt, you can provide individual question feedback by selecting the “Expand question feedback” option.
  - Attempts tab— you can click on the student’s attempt and enter feedback in the Attempt Feedback box. You can also provide question feedback.
  - Questions tab—view with or without the student name, and enter feedback by clicking on the question and expanding the question feedback option.
SUBSTANTIVE INTERACTION MUST BE REGULAR

Course Structure
- Post a welcome message.
- Post weekly announcements identifying feedback policy, communication policy and other pertinent information for course involvement and flow.
- Instructor contact information is provided clearly in Falcon Online and contains different options for communication (i.e. phone, email, office hours, and location).
- Frequently post feedback in the discussion board and offer live chats.
- Provide video presentations.
- Offer peer review opportunities.

Syllabus
- Syllabus/Addendum is easily located in the course shell and contains all information (from college template).
- Give students a specific timeframe describing when to expect feedback for assignments & online interaction.
- Give students a specific timeframe describing when to expect email replies/correspondences.
- Identify how many different ways a student can interact with their instructor & vice versa.
- Post office hours, including virtual office hours available via Adobe Connect or YouSeeU.
- Instructor communication policy is provided, including their mode of communication preference.

WHY SUBSTANTIVE INTERACTION MATTERS

1. Effects on Students
   Positively impacts:
   - Student success
   - Retention
   - Advancement
   - Successful course completion

2. Effects on Financial Aid
   - An institution that offers completely competency based education or distance education, needs to make sure they meet the “regular and substantive” requirements otherwise they risk losing federal financial aid funding.
   - Correspondence course are not eligible for federal financial aid funding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Aid 2016/2017</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percent of Students</th>
<th>Dollars Awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>9,223</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>$27,496,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans</td>
<td>4,409</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>$17,022,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>1,194</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>$1,392,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Study</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>$239,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,998</strong></td>
<td><strong>74%</strong></td>
<td><strong>$46,151,321</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total number of students does not equal the sum by financial aid type because some students receive more than one type of aid.

These figures represent all students attending Daytona State College, not just distance education.
CHECKLIST FOR ONLINE COURSES

Communication and Interaction
☐ Regular interaction is scheduled in the course structure and syllabus.
☐ Interaction is designed to offer value to the student experience and positively affect learning outcomes.
☐ There is a sufficient quantity of interaction to establish instructor presence.
☐ Student engagement surpasses reading the text and completing assessments.

Content and Time Equivalency to Face-to-Face Courses
☐ Once weekly direct engagement with instructor, activities and/or peers built into each week (not including reading and study time expected outside Falcon Online).
☐ The time investment expected is presented clearly in the course syllabus and/or course introduction pages.

Accessibility
☐ Images and graphics (as well as charts, screenshots and visual aids) have appropriate alternative text tags which explain the purpose within content.
☐ Graphics, charts and visual aids have a text explanation of the content offered below or above them.
☐ Word documents, PDFs and Falcon Online pages use heading styles (not simply resized text) for emphasis and content hierarchy.
☐ Use of linked PDFs and Word documents is not excessive (content is mainly in your modules).

Grade Book
☐ Use the Falcon Online grade book to record student’s grades.

Attendance Reporting
☐ There are activities of some kind in the first weeks of class to establish participation.