



Distance Education Handbook

Pierce Education Technology Committee

Introduction and Purpose

What is distance learning?

Section 51865 of the California Education Code defines distance learning as “instruction in which the pupil and instructor are in different locations and interact through the use of computer and communications technology. Distance learning may include video or audio instruction in which the primary mode of communication between pupil and instructor is instructional television, video, telecourses, or any other instruction that relies on computer or communications technology.”

A similar definition is found in Article 40 of the 2011 – 2014 agreement between the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) and the Los Angeles College Faculty Guild (AFT) which defines distance learning as “a formal mode of interaction which uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and which supports regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously.”

This handbook serves as a guide for Pierce College instructors teaching online, hybrid or web enhanced classes. In addition to identifying the resources available to instructors, and their students, it includes policies and procedures relating to distance education which have been developed by both the District and the College.

PierceOnLine encompasses online, hybrid and web-enhanced classes and follows the principles of high standards and student-focused learning.

Mission Statement

The Vision of PierceOnLine is:

- To offer students an opportunity to access their materials and coursework through integrated technology anywhere and anytime to enable successful completion.
- Using alternative delivery methods, allow students an opportunity to take college courses leading to a degree, transfer, certificates, and/or job opportunity.
- To build online communities where students are engaged and cultivate knowledge from collaborative learning activities.
- Develop distance education program in which the standards and practices of our on-site courses are reflected.

The Distance Learning Program:

- Develops and maintains the College's Online and Hybrid Classes website and the Online Help Desk
- Sets up and provides access to course sites for online, hybrid and web enhanced classes
- Provides technical support for the College's Learning Management System (LMS) and assists instructors with multimedia and web development
- Supports training opportunities related to distance learning and other innovative instructional technologies

Development of distance education (DE) as a mode of instruction directly supports the College's Mission Statement:

Los Angeles Pierce College is a student-centered learning institution that offers opportunities for access and success in a diverse college community. The college dedicates its resources to assist students in identifying and achieving their educational, career, and personal goals. Our comprehensive curriculum and support services enable students to earn associate degrees and certificates, prepare for transfer, gain career and technical proficiency, and develop basic skills. We serve our community by providing opportunities for lifelong learning, economic and workforce development, and a variety of enrichment activities.

As indicated in the Mission, the instructional modes, such as the online course, is an integral part of the college's mission. In addition, the development and use of educational technology is described as a primary objective of the college. These portions of the mission directly support the development of online and distance learning programs that are geared to meet the needs of our diverse, urban community. These values serve as a broad planning objective through which our Distance Education Program, also known as PierceOnLine, is based.

The Distance Learning Program is NOT responsible for scheduling classes or instructor assignments. These duties are the responsibility of the College's Academic Affairs Deans who work in consultation with Division Chairs who are elected by the faculty.

Computers and related peripherals that are used on campus are installed and maintained by the Information Technology Department and audio visual equipment is distributed and maintained by the IT Department as well.

PierceOnLine

PierceOnLine is located on the first floor of Library Learning Crossroads Building through the Faculty & Staff Resource Center. The Center is open Monday – Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Friday from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Instructors have access to individual assistance in-person, via email and by phone. Advance appointments are suggested. PierceOnline offers weekly workshops, topics covered range from the integration of video and audio into courses, using rubrics to grade and advanced Moodle questions and troubleshooting.

PierceOnLine has developed initiatives to assist new and continuing instructors teaching online, hybrid and web-enhanced classes through an email distribution list, extensive online resources, on-campus and online workshops.

Resources which are available online for instructors include:

- Video repositories, instructional software, Web 2.0 tools and tutorials
- Moodle visual tutorials materials
- Training workshop handouts
- Curriculum forms and examples
- Anti-plagiarism and Student Discipline resources

Training

Before teaching an online or hybrid, Pierce faculty must complete a Moodle certification course. This three week online class is the minimum requirement for teaching online. PierceOnline offers this course four times a year.

Rubric for Online Instruction

Pierce subscribes to Quality Matters (QM), “a faculty-centered, peer review process that is designed to certify the quality of online and blended courses” (<http://www.qmprogram.org/>). QM’s peer review approach has received national acclaim and consists of three primary components, a course review rubric, the Peer Review Process and QM Professional Development. The QM rubric (Appendix A) can be used as a course “self evaluation” tool. Tech Fair workshops use this rubric to facilitate the development of new courses and the revision of existing courses. The rubric is also used as a means of evaluating and showcasing exemplary online instruction at the Etudes Annual Summit and/or West’s Tech Fair.

Expectations of Instructors

Use of the College’s Learning Management System (LMS)

Keeping up to date on the LMS platform (Moodle) and College information is the responsibility of each instructor. There are professional development activities and informational announcements sent regularly through College email. Faculty should also visit the Moodle Users' Group frequently.

In addition to the Users' Group there are a number of online resources available to instructors.

At minimum online instructors should make use of these Moodle tools:

- **Announcements/News Forum** – About a week prior to each semester instructors will receive a sample Welcome Letter with instructions on how to post an Announcement that will be emailed to all registered students. In addition to being posted in the course site News Forum announcements are also emailed to all enrolled students. Announcements should be used on a regular basis to remind students of important deadlines, etc.
- **Syllabus** – Instructors are encouraged to make their syllabi public so that prospective students can view syllabi prior to enrolling.
- **Add a Resource – Pages or Files** – This tool can be used for lectures, class notes, instructional resources, etc. Usually instructors organize modules by week or unit. Be careful to ensure that the terms you use are consistent to avoid confusion. For example, if you use Chapter 1 in the modules area don't use Week 1 for the same topic in the
- **Assignments** – In addition to Discussions, which can also be graded through ratings, these tools are the primary evaluation tools. In addition to weekly homework assignments and a discussion, instructors may want to require weekly quizzes. A portfolio approach to evaluation is strongly recommended for online classes. High stakes exams may pressure students to attempt cheating (see Academic Misconduct below).
- **Forums** – These tools are the primary communication tools used in an online class. An important Title V requirement is "regular effective contact" which makes the use of these tools essential for a successful online class. The Forum Tool is used for group discussions and the Private Messaging tool is used to send messages to one or more students.
- **Chat Room** – The chat tool can be used for group discussion, synchronous discussion and office hours. All chats are archived so students who are unable to participate can still access the information.

- **Gradebook** – Use of the gradebook will make it easier to provide students with prompt feedback regarding their performance and facilitate the submission of grades at the end of the semester.
- **Activity Log** – This tool easily enables instructors to monitor student activity and submissions. It can be used as an “early alert” system as it makes it easy to contact students who are not participating or doing poorly in the class.

Curriculum Development

Most disciplines can adapt on-campus courses for online or hybrid delivery. Courses that include clinical experiences and laboratories can be augmented by distance education. The decision to use distance learning must be made on a course-by-course basis with consideration given to course content, student needs and the flexibility of the delivery mechanism. Developing an online or hybrid class provides faculty with the opportunity to see their course(s) from a new perspective and often results in improvements to both their on-campus and online courses.

Proposals for the development of online or hybrid courses are initiated, evaluated and approved by faculty in the discipline. Distance education course proposals should be evaluated for appropriateness and only those courses demonstrating suitable content and sufficient rigor should be approved. The proposal should include a consideration of the following:

- Appropriateness within the degree program or as a stand-alone course
- Suitable course content and sufficient rigor
- Appropriate uses of technology in course delivery
- Sufficient type and number of instructor-student contacts per semester

If you are interested in developing an online or hybrid course check ECD to see if the course has already been approved for distance education delivery. The curriculum approval process is the same for hybrid classes as it is for classes that are fully online. Be sure to check with your Division Chair before you start the process as his or her approval is required.

Title 5, Section 55378, requires that before an online course is developed it is separately reviewed and approved according to the district's course approval procedures. **Course Outlines** must be either created or updated before they can be submitted to the Curriculum Committee. Distance education courses should be reviewed through the six-year cyclical review process of Program Review pursuant to Title 5, Section 55201.

In addition to a new or updated course outline a **Distance Education Approval Form** is required. This form certifies that:

- The same standards of course quality are applied to the distance education courses as are applied to traditional classroom courses.
(Course Quality Standards - Title V, section 55372)
- Determination and judgments about the quality of the distance education course were made with the full involvement of the faculty as defined by Administrative Regulation E-65 and college curriculum approval procedures.
(Course Quality Determination - Title 5, section 55374)
- Each section of the course which is delivered through distance education includes regular personal contact between instructor and students.
(Instructor Contact - Title 5, section 55376)

A **Distance Education Addendum** requires documentation of each course objective and an explanation of how distance learning strategies will be used to help students achieve the objective.

These forms are all easily available to instructors online at <http://faculty.piercecollege.edu/curriculum/>. Approved forms are kept on file in the Office of Academic Affairs. If you would like to see an example of an approved DE Addendum, you can contact PierceOnLine to request this.

Committee Participation, Program Review and SLO Assessment. All faculty must participate in SLO assessment according to the bargaining contract. Full-time faculty must participate in program review and meet committee obligations. Adjuncts are also welcome to participate on committees.

Evaluations. All faculty are evaluated on a regular basis. Review the bargaining agreement (Article 19) and the evaluation form in Appendix E of the bargaining agreement to understand the items that are required for acceptable evaluations.

Attendance and class activity. Los Angeles Community College District has a policy of weekly interaction on the part of instructors. If you are unable to interact for more than one week of the semester, you must take that time as sick or vacation leave. Forms for reporting those absences are available online. (See Appendix C for the LACCD Absence Policy.) Complaints about instructor absence or unavailability will be reflected in instructor evaluations.

Regular effective contact can include email, private messaging, instant messaging, online chat, threaded discussion, phone and/or web conferencing. Instructors should include information about their office hours and the mode(s) of delivery used for office hours in their syllabi as well as an indication of how quickly questions will be replied to (24 hours, 48 hours, etc.). It is

recommended that instructors reply to student inquiries daily, with the exception of weekends, for short term classes and at least three times per week for full term classes.

In addition, instructors are encouraged to use the resources available at the PierceOnLine Digital Design Studio to make their courses more engaging by incorporating multimedia, podcasts and videos. Students can also be assigned group projects, asked to explore relevant web resources to share with the class, evaluate peer contributions and other activities requiring analysis, synthesis and evaluation with application to real-life situations.

Syllabus Requirements and Student Learning Outcomes

Your Division Chair should review your course syllabi prior to each semester.

The Institutional SLOs, as approved by the Academic Senate, can be found at: XXXXXXXX

Part of the task of any online course includes increasing student technology capabilities. Do not assume a particular level of understanding (someone may have his or her own blog, and yet be unfamiliar with how to attach a document), but after providing basic instructions, guide and expect students to increase their familiarity with technology and information systems.

Online Course Enrollment

The LACCD has specific rules about the enrollment caps for online classes that vary from face-to-face. This information is available in Article 40 of the AFT, Local 1521 bargaining agreement found at <http://www.aft1521.org/>

Online courses are extremely popular and most fill quickly. Students who want to add classes that are full are asked to email the instructor in order to get permission. Complete information about this process is available at http://www.Pierce.edu/online/more_adding.asp

AFT, California Education Code and Accreditation Requirements

There are contractual agreements that pertain specifically to DL faculty. For example, there is a large class size agreement in Article 40, Section C, for online instructors which is designed to help assure quality student education as well as recognize the considerable time and effort expected of online instructors. Much of this additional time is related to maintaining meaningful contact with students. The bargaining agreement is available at <http://www.aft1521.org/>. All requirements of the AFT 1521 Bargaining agreement must be followed.

Online instructors are required to participate in flex activities. Those hours may be met with serving on the Distance Education Committee, Etudes or Cyber Teacher Institute training or by

attending Tech Fair or other training workshops. These interactions are conducive to a healthy online program with active dialogues and well-informed teaching and learning.

All college classes must follow California Education Codes at <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/calawquery?codesection=edc&codebody=&hits=20>

Accreditation standards include specific references and requirements of Distance Learning Programs. Included in both Standard II. A. Instructional Programs and in Standard II. B. Student Support, Distance Learning Programs are held to a standard that "...offers high-quality instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services that facilitate and demonstrate the achievement of stated student learning outcomes." (See Appendix D: ACCJC/WASC Standards.)

Distance Learning classes and instruction are held to the same standards "regardless of delivery" and must assure that student learning outcomes are communicated, assessed, and used as data for continuous improvement. Further, the D/DL classes and program perform a service to students who might otherwise be unable to attend college classes, help students improve technological communication skills, and assist the College in meeting its goals for students.

Distance Learning instructors are expected to follow all good teaching practices including, but not limited to, those identified by the agencies listed above.

Section 508 Compliance

Section 508 addresses the accessibility of all course materials and media and applies to an online environment. Instructors should be familiar with Section 508 requirements and use resources inside and outside of the College to avoid violations. There is technical assistance to check for compliance at the College. Some common problems are missing ALT tags for pictures, using text color to indicate differentiation, and linking to outside sites that are not Section 508 compliant.

Affirm that links to videos and "outside" media provide closed captioning. If they do not, contact the Distance Learning Center for assistance. Violations of Section 508 are serious for the faculty, College, and students.

Distance Education Access Guidelines are available at http://www.htctu.net/dlguidelines/dlg_index.html

The High Tech Training Center has also published an "Introduction to Distance Education Accessibility" which is available at **XXXXXX**. This document will assist instructors with the creation of accessible online courses.

District Student Information System (SIS) Resources

Online student services which are provided by the district for both on-campus and online students include:

- Application for Admissions
- Course enrollment and withdrawal
- View schedule of classes
- View & Pay Fees
- View grades and transcripts

Students can access these services at <http://www.laccd.edu>

Pierce's Online Student Services and Resources

Adequate and Accessible Student Support Services

District Online Student Services – Los Angeles Pierce College is one of the nine colleges that make up the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD). LACCD offers district services that include assisting students at all nine campuses at http://laccd.edu/student_information/ LACCD offers students the following options:

- Application for admissions
- Course enrollments and withdrawal
- View schedule of classes
- Fee payment
- View grades and transcripts

PierceOnline Student Services – PierceOnLine offers support services for students taking an online course (<http://online.piercecollege.edu/get.html>). This site provides information on getting started, how to log into the course management system and a free student workshop to make sure that taking an online course is right for the student (<http://moodle.piercecollege.edu/course/view.php?id=783&sesskey=DsS00iTKi6&switchrole=5> - log in as a guest) Within this site is a resources page which links students to the library, bookstore, student organizations, learning center as well as tutorials for taking an online course.

- **Library and Learning Resources** – <http://info.piercecollege.edu/students/library/>
Pierce implemented EZProxy server, a software program that authenticates student

access to paid library databases within the campus LMS. By going to the site, a student is able to access the following services:

- Online articles and reference sources
 - Information
 - Pierce Library Book catalog
 - Online ebooks through ebsco ebooks, or gale virtual reference library
 - Library guides and tutorials
 - Periodicals Portal
 - Recommended sites to help students write research papers
- **OWL - Online Writing Lab (OWL)**, which is the online tutoring program focusing on writing and research. Every student enrolled at Los Angeles Pierce College is enrolled in the program which is available through our LMS. Students with writing questions can get help three ways.
 - Post writing assignments for ANY (online, hybrid or traditional) courses for the student tutor to review. When they upload their assignment, there will be a space to share what area they are hoping for feedback in. The student tutor will respond to the student with individualized comments that identify strengths and areas for improvement in the student's writing. The tutor will NOT do the work for the student but merely make suggestions.
 - Have a synchronous (real time) session with the tutor and watch and discuss as the tutor gives guidelines for making improvements.
 - Ask questions through a forum. Here students can ask a general question about writing and the tutor will respond. Using the forums, students can check to see if another student has had the same question and be able to read the answers.

There are also general resources that students can access such as: When do I use commas, Transitional word examples, How do I cite properly, and many many more.

- **Counseling Website** - http://www.piercecollege.edu/offices/counseling_center/ Pierce Counseling Department serves all current and prospective students. Counselors can

help students clarify their goals, make an academic plan, and monitor their progress. The counseling center offers online academic advising. Online counseling at Pierce gives students and prospective students the opportunity to ask general questions that pertain to reaching their educational goals at Los Angeles Pierce College. Services offered are as follows:

- Clarification of college procedures and policies
 - Certificate, degree, and transfer requirements
 - Course prerequisite information
 - Course offerings and majors available
 - Referrals to other programs and services
 - Transferability of Los Angeles Pierce College courses
- **Health Center** - http://www.piercecollege.edu/offices/health_center/ The Health Center is committed to delivering expert medical care to students. Students enrolled in an online course and an on-campus course are entitled to Health Center services. Students who are only enrolled in an online course can opt to pay the health services fee of \$11 per fall and spring semester and \$8 for summer. The website provides information on:
 - Office Location and hours
 - Email contact information
 - Health Services
 - Counseling
 - Emergencies
 - FAQ's
 - Referrals
 - Resources
- **Financial Aid Website** - http://www.piercecollege.edu/offices/financial_aid/ The Financial Aid Department assists students with information on how to receive money for a college education, including fees, books, supplies, living expenses, and child care. By going to Pierce Financial Aid website, a student will also be able to access the following services and information:
 - Office location, hours and contact information

- How to apply; eligibility requirements for aid
- Types of aid
- FAQ's
- Link for Veterans
- Links to the FAFSA application
- Online scholarships

Students who are in jeopardy of losing their financial aid participate in a financial aid workshop within our LMS, Moodle wherein students are provided a presentation and then their understanding of the process is assessed via an online quiz.

Academic Probation Workshops – <http://moodle.piercecollege.edu/> (Scroll down to "Student Workshops" (near the bottom of the page) under the "Course Categories" section and click on "Counseling". Next click on "Probation Workshops - Spring 2012".) This workshop is designed for students facing academic difficulty. Students are apprised of some of the regulations regarding academic probation and dismissal, as well as potential options to improve their academic record. If a student is on academic probation, an academic probation workshop can be completed online.

- **Online Orientation** - <https://webapps.piercecollege.edu/orientation/> The online orientation is designed for new students to help them transition and be successful at Pierce. By the end of the orientation, students will have a better understanding of the following:
 - Programs & Majors
 - Academic Planning
 - Student Success Services
 - College Success
 - Campus Life
 - Student Conduct & Safety
- **Career Center** - http://www.piercecollege.edu/offices/career_center/ The mission is to educate and to serve the students of Los Angeles Pierce College in the career education, planning and development processes. Career Center services and resources provide assistance to students with the exploration of career options, the cultivation of a comprehensive employment and education plan, and the enhancement of job search techniques and strategies.

On this site students will find tools and resources to:

- Help Choose a Major & Plan a Career
- Research Labor Market Trends
- Learn Job Search Skills and Techniques
- Visit California Career Cafe <http://www.cacareercafe.com/>
 - Write a resume
 - Look for a position
 - Create an efolio
 - Take self-assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses
 - Learn to focus on goals
 - Hot tips for successfully interviewing
- **Transfer Center** - http://www.piercecollege.edu/offices/transfer_center/ The transfer center assists students online in determining courses needed to transfer, application information for UC and Cal State schools, transfer support, articulation agreements, and many more useful tools to help students successfully transfer to a four-year institution.
- **Online Registration** - <https://eweb2.laccd.edu/WebStudent/signon.asp> By going to this system, students will be able to access the following information
 - **The Student Information System (SIS)** – within the system, the student can:
 - Add or update the email address
 - View the registration appointment
 - View placement results
 - Add/drop classes
 - View and pay fees
 - Check class schedule
 - Check holds
 - View personal information
 - Change PIN
 - View grades
 - View class subject
 - View unofficial transcript
 - Check the status of Financial Aid application
 - Request voter information
- **Online course listings** - <http://www.piercecollege.edu/schedules/> students can view all online courses listings prior to registration by going to the Schedule of Classes and clicking the link to download a PDF of all Distance Education Classes
- **Student Loaner Laptop program** - Through the Title V grant, Pierce purchased and offers 50 laptops as loaners for students enrolled in DE courses. Extended Opportunity

Program and Services (EOP&S) continues to handle the distribution of laptops to Hispanic and other low-income students so that they have access to online courses that they would not otherwise be able to access and take. This allows Pierce to increase the number of low-income students we can serve in the online format. We are monitoring this and expect to see improvements in student outcomes.

APPENDIX A



Quality Matters™ Rubric Standard 2011- 2013 edition
with Assigned Point Values



Standards		Points
Course Overview and Introduction of	1.1 Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components.	3
	1.2 Students are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course.	3
	1.3 Etiquette expectations (sometimes called “netiquette”) for online discussions, email, and other forms of communication are stated clearly.	2
		2
	1.4 Course and/or institutional policies with which the student is expected to comply are clearly stated, or a link to current policies is provided.	1
Learning Objectives (Competencies)	2.1 The course learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable.	3
	2.2 The module/unit learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives.	3
	2.3 All learning objectives are stated clearly and written from the students’ perspective.	3
	2.4 Instructions to students on how to meet the learning objectives are adequate and stated clearly.	2
Assessment and Measurement course are tied to	3.1 The types of assessments selected measure the stated learning objectives and are consistent with activities and resources.	3
	3.2 The course grading policy is stated clearly.	3
	3.3 Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of students’ work and participation and	2
Instructional Materials learning clearly	4.1 The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated course and module/unit objectives.	3
	4.2 The purpose of instructional materials and how the materials are to be used for learning activities are explained.	3
	4.3 All resources and materials used in the course are appropriately cited.	2
	4.4 The instructional materials are current.	1
Learner Interaction and Engagement	5.1 The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives.	3
	5.2 Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning.	3
	5.3 The instructor’s plan for classroom response time and feedback on assignments is clearly stated.	3
	5.4 The requirements for student interaction are clearly articulated.	3
Course Technology learner.	6.1 The tools and media support the course learning objectives.	3
	6.2 Course tools and media support student engagement and guide the student to become an active learner.	3
	6.3 Navigation throughout the online components of the course is logical, consistent, and efficient.	3
	6.4 Students can readily access the technologies required in the course.	2

Learner how to access	7.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered and it.	3
	7.2 Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's accessibility policies and services.	3
Support	7.3 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's academic support services and resources can help students succeed in the course and how students can access the services.	2
	7.4 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's student support services can help students succeed and how students can access the services.	1
Accessibility	8.1 The course employs accessible technologies and provides guidance on how to obtain accommodation.	3
	8.2 The course contains equivalent alternatives to auditory and visual content.	2
	8.3 The course design facilitates readability and minimizes distractions.	2

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