

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 a repository of all content and assessments.

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

Correspondence Course

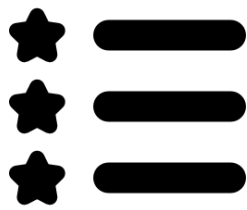
- Limited interaction between instructor and students (not regular or substantive.)
- Interaction with instructor primarily initiated by student.

Distance Education

- Interaction is predictable and scheduled (at least once weekly.)
- Interaction includes at least two forms of substantive interaction.
- Interaction should be initiated by instructor(s) of record.
- Interaction is of an academic nature.

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.

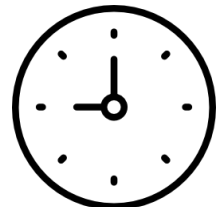


An institution that offers completely competency-based education or distance education, needs to make sure they meet the “regular and substantive” requirements otherwise they risk losing federal financial aid funding.

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 Microsoft Teams or Virtual Classroom.



SUBSTANTIVE & ACADEMIC IN NATURE

- Activities directly connected to course content 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 online classroom (i.e. Falcon Online or publisher material accessed through the course shell).
- Email correspondence does not fulfill the once weekly substantive interaction requirement.

**INTERACTION MUST BE INITIATED BY THE INSTRUCTOR: Falcon Online Examples****General**

- Use announcements to communicate about aspects of the course
- Schedule and facilitate a study group, open lab, or virtual office hours.

Discussions

- Create a forum and topic specifically for questions about the course content.
- Use discussion posts as writing assignments or scaffold assignments by using discussions as a primer or drafting activity.
- Make the first topic low stakes and a teachable moment.
- Highlight good posts early in the semester.
- Pin your reply about overall student performance on a topic.
- Reward participation through your grading strategy.
- Associate rubrics with built-in feedback with discussion topics.

**Quizzes**

From the quiz drop-down menu, select Grade to access these places to leave feedback:

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's name and enter feedback by clicking on the question and expanding the question feedback option.

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.



Grades

By going to a grade item and selecting Enter Grades, you can access the Comments tool to:

- Clarify and provide context for course concepts.
- Identify where the student excelled in a post.
- 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.



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 Instant Messaging.
- 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/correspondence.
- Identify how many ways a student can interact with their instructor & vice versa.
- Post office hours, including virtual office hours available via Microsoft Teams or Virtual Classroom.
- Instructor communication policy is provided, including their mode of communication preference.

WHY SUBSTANTIVE INTERACTION MATTERS

Student Impact

- Student success
- Retention
- Advancement



Financial Aid Impact

- 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.

Checklist for Online Courses

Communication & 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 sufficient quantity of interaction to establish instructor presence.
- Student engagement surpasses reading the text and completing assessments.

Content & 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.
- Starting instructions and a welcome message, including the instructor contact information are provided on the course homepage.
- Syllabi are created initially using the [Daytona State College syllabus template](#).
- Review the [Rubric for Online Course Design](#) to preserve best practices.

Accessibility

- Images and graphics (as well as charts, screenshots, and visual aids) have appropriate alternative text tags which explain the purpose within content.
- Word documents, PDFs, and Falcon Online pages use heading styles (not simply resized text) for emphasis and content hierarchy.
- The accessibility checker is used when developing course documentation for all HTML, Word, PowerPoint, PDF documents, etc.
- HTML templates made available through Falcon Online are used to generate new course content.
- PDFs, Word documents, and websites are linked correctly in the Content area of the virtual classroom.

Grades

- Use the Falcon Online grade book or publisher grade book to record student grades.
- All grades are reported in the online grade book to increase transparency and help the students track their ongoing success in the class.

Attendance Reporting

- There are activities of some kind in the first week of class to establish participation.