MiraCosta Distance Education Class Authentication Compliance, Start-of-Term Availability Procedures, and Recommendations

Most MiraCosta distance education course sections (classes) should be available in Canvas by 12 pm on the first instructional day of the week in which they start (regardless of the class's official start date in SURF). This document explains why this is required, how MiraCosta seeks to ensure that it occurs, and includes additional recommendations to faculty for good practice in setting up DE classes and communicating with students in order to help students effectively access and begin their classes.

Overview and Rationale

MiraCosta AP 4105 includes a responsibility of the Vice President of Instruction to ensure that distance education (DE) classes authenticate students in alignment with federal regulation and accreditation expectations. DE classes include 100% online classes and hybrid classes with over 50% of the instruction online. AP 4105 allows for three methods of authentication: (1) use of a secure login and password to access a MiraCosta course management system; (2) proctored examinations; or (3) "New or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification."

Because the vast majority of MiraCosta DE classes comply with AP 4105 by being situated in a MiraCosta course management system, the most straightforward way to review DE classes for compliance is to check whether DE classes have been made available (have been published) in the MiraCosta course management system, Canvas.

This availability check has a secondary effect: it helps to ensure that information about DE classes, which can sometimes be confusing for students as to how they are to access them and get started in them, is made available in a timely fashion at the beginning of the term.

Canvas Availability Requirement and Procedure

All DE classes that comply with the authentication requirement through availability in Canvas should be **available to students on the first instructional day of the week** in which they start, **regardless of the class start date as listed in SURF.** The procedure for ensuring this is as follows:

First instructional day of the week (typically Monday):
1. If possible, starting in the morning, the office of Online Education will informally notify instructors whose DE classes are not available that a formal notification will go out in the afternoon to instructors whose DE classes are still unavailable at that point.
2. Starting at 12 pm, the office of Online Education is responsible for checking all DE classes starting that week for availability in Canvas.
3. By 3 pm, the office of Online Education will send an email to any instructor of a DE class

that is not available in Canvas and is not listed in SURF as using proctored exams. The email will:

    a. inform instructors of the authentication requirement,

    b. offer help making their course available,

    c. recommend that instructors contact all students by 5 pm to let them know when the course will be available if it will not be available by 5 pm, and

    d. request a response as to what the plan is for ensuring compliance with the authentication requirement.

The email will cc the relevant department chair and dean as well as the Student Help Desk, in order to ensure that all of these parties are aware that the instructor has already been alerted, should they be contacted directly by students looking for their class.

Second instructional day of the week (typically Tuesday):

1. By 10 am, the office of Online Education will ensure that any instructor replies to the email from the previous day have been sent to the department chair and dean. Department chairs and deans, in partnership with the office of Online Education, will determine how best to follow up with faculty teaching DE classes which remain unavailable.

2. By 4 pm, the office of Online Education will provide a report to the VPI as well as relevant deans and department chairs about any DE classes which remain unavailable to students in Canvas.

Subsequently:

The office of Online Education will update the VPI and relevant department chairs and deans when the status of unavailable DE classes changes.

Communication of the Authentication Requirement

The following communication methods will be used in order to raise faculty awareness of the authentication compliance requirement for DE classes:

- The office of Online Education will send an email to all faculty during Flex week which focuses on this requirement.
- The office of Online Education will include this requirement in communication and resources for department chairs enabling their support for ensuring quality Distance Education.
- The Vice President of Instruction will include this among the Distance Education requirements noted in the start-of-semester email sent to all faculty.

An announcement for students in Canvas will help them to be aware that DE classes should typically be available in Canvas by 12 pm on the first instructional day of the week in which they start.

Related Information and Recommendations for Faculty

MiraCosta's [Online Class Quality Guidelines](#) includes as one example of good practice, "provide clear information to students at the start of the semester about how to get started in the class." Students can be anxious about where and how they should first access their DE classes, and clear communication from faculty is very important.

Please remember, regarding student communication about how to get started in DE classes:
- In terms of faculty contracts, instructional work begins on the first day of the semester. Communicating with students prior to the first day cannot be an expectation - it is a choice a faculty member makes independently.
- Students add and drop up to and well beyond the first day of class. "Getting started" communications likely need to be repeated and available to students for review within the class.
- Canvas Inbox messages can only be sent to a class once the course is published. Additionally, communicating through Canvas does not guarantee that students will receive messages via email. They can independently adjust their Canvas notification settings. It's a good idea for initial class emails to students to be sent via SURF. Advising students about how to [set their Canvas notification settings](#) is also a good idea.

With the above in mind, regarding getting started in DE classes, students want to know:
- where they should access the class,
- when they should access it and get started,
- how to navigate the class, and
- what they should do in order to start strong.

Ideas for how you might provide students with this information:
- Send a message to your students through SURF before or on the first day of the semester
- Create an announcement in your Canvas class that is released the morning of the first day of the semester
- Create a screencast introducing yourself, your class, and your expectations. Link to it within your class, and also provide it in communications described above.
- Ensure your class is available (published) in Canvas on (or before) the first day of the semester. At the discretion of faculty, classes may be opened to students as early as January 1, June 1, or August 1 - the (typical) Canvas "term start" dates. Once these dates arrive, [publishing your class](#) means that enrolled students will be able to access it.

If you have a scheduled meeting with your DE class and prefer to "reveal" the class to students during that first meeting, you **may keep *most* components of the class unpublished** until then, but **the class itself should be published** along with basic information such as a syllabus and/or class home page.