



## REGULAR AND SUBSTANTIVE INTERACTION (RSI) GUIDELINES

### I. Why substantive interaction matters:

1. Positive impact on Students:
    - a. Student Success
    - b. Retention
    - c. Advancement
  
  2. Effects on Financial Aid
    - a. 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 funding and could face fines if found in non-compliance. The U.S. Department of Education requires that all online courses for which students may use Title IV funds “ensure that there is regular and substantive interaction between students and instructors.” The DOE has the authority to review distance learning offerings at colleges and universities that receive federal funds.
  
  3. RSI is more than a federal requirement, it is the foundation of effective online teaching and learning.
- 

### II. Differences between Correspondence Courses vs. Distance Education Online Classes:

1. In a correspondence course, an instructor will use mail or electronic transmission to provide materials to students who are separate from the instructor. This material would normally include all exams and course work. There is limited if any interaction between instructor and students. If interaction occurs it is normally initiated by the student and the work is self-paced. Correspondence courses are not eligible for federal financial aid.
  
  2. Distance education (online and hybrid) uses technology to deliver instruction to students and includes regular and substantive interaction between students and the instructor. Interaction is regular (at least once weekly) and there is interaction of an academic nature initiated by the instructor on a regular basis.
-

### **III. Content and Time Equivalency:**

1. Online and hybrid courses must meet the same credit hour requirements as face-to-face courses.
  2. Without face-to-face lectures, online instructors must be more intentional about creating opportunities for substantive interaction to occur.
  3. Each course should have weekly deadlines and a weekly announcement.
  4. Virtual office hours or hours that you are available online should be posted in the syllabus.
- 

### **IV. Interaction should be Substantive and Academic in Nature:**

1. Assignments should create opportunities within the online course to provide assessment of learning through substantive feedback comments. Limited feedback such as posting good job or just entering a numerical grade does not qualify as substantive. Feedback should be meaningful, both when a student is doing well, and in areas where they could improve.
  2. Substantial feedback interaction could be in the form of audio, written, or video.
  3. There should be at least one assignment per week where substantial feedback from the instructor is provided.
- 

### **V. Course Structure:**

1. Online courses should be set up in a logical organized manner including assigned content in weekly folders.
2. All courses should contain a welcome message
3. There should be a weekly announcement identifying feedback on assignments, instruction for upcoming assignments, and other course or institutional reminders.
4. Feedback can be in the form of interaction during the weekly course discussion forum.
5. The syllabus shall be easily located in the course shell and in the format approved through academic council

6. The syllabus will contain specific time frames describing when to expect feedback for assignments and turnaround time for communication. This time frame for feedback should not be more than 2 weeks and the communication should normally be 24-48 hours.
  7. Identify how students can interact with you, i.e., phone, email, office hours
- 

#### **VI. Points to Consider - Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI):**

1. Regular interaction is scheduled in the course structure and syllabus
2. Interaction is designed to offer value to the student experience and positively affect learning outcomes
3. Sufficient quality interaction to establish instructor presence
4. Student engagement surpasses reading the text and completing auto graded assessments
5. Once weekly direct engagement with instructor, activities and or peers build into each week
6. Time investment for students is present and clear in the course syllabus and/or welcome pages
7. An activity and deadline before the end of week 1 is present to measure participation

**The following checklist will be implemented into the annual course assessment report. Faculty will check their course, indicate whether RSI is present in each characteristic, and if not, the plan for implementation. This report will be filed along with the annual assessment report, which is reviewed by the Dean associated with the division of each class.**

#### **Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) Checklist**

If RSI is not evident in all areas, please provide the plan and date for

Characteristic	Examples	Present in Course
<p><b>Initiated by Instructor</b></p> <p>Interaction should be started by the instructor to count as regular and substantive. There should be an active presence in initiating and guiding a range of interactions with students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructor participates in weekly discussion forum</li> <li>• Instructor asks a student to visit during office hours</li> <li>• Instructor provides individualized substantive comments through audio, video, or writing on student assignments</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Frequent and Consistent</b></p> <p>Interaction should be reasonably frequent and consistent throughout the course. Once the term begins, there should not be more than one week that passes without interaction with students in some form. The mode of interaction may vary throughout the course, but there must be a presence the entire term. Daily communication is not required, but at a minimum instructors should be available during office hours and respond to student emails within 24-48 hours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course announcement posted weekly</li> <li>• Post weekly office hours when students can reach you online more than one time per week</li> <li>• Provide written feedback to students at least on one assignment per week</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Focused on course subject</b></p> <p>Interactions should pertain to the course content and contribute to the students' progress towards the course outcomes. Routine procedural reminders aren't substantive on their own, neither are numerical grades unless accompanied by personalized feedback or suggestions for improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send a message or post an announcement to students previewing concepts introduced in the next unit and/or listing questions for students to consider while reading the textbook chapters</li> <li>• Post an example of how a real world situation relates to the assigned content</li> <li>• Provide specific feedback on written work</li> </ul>	

implementation: