

Regular & Substantive Interaction (RSI)

This is a guide intended to help guide and facilitate discussions of RSI in departments. RSI will look different in different disciplines. The discipline expert faculty need to help shape what RSI looks like when teaching their subject

RSI consists of three elements: *regular, timely and substantive* interactions with students. This document will guide you through considerations of what RSI looks like in your discipline's online courses.

Regular

Regular instructor/student interactions are defined as *predictable, scheduled and documented instructor-initiated interactions with students about the course content*.

What does this mean?

“Predictable” means that the student knows what to expect and when to expect it.

How do I show this?

A new student or outside evaluator needs to be able to understand when and how you plan to interact with the class. Document when you will interact with your class each week in the syllabus or welcome unit.

- The syllabus is a great place to lay out your communication plan. You can include a Communication Plan that outlines expectations for when you will present course content, and when students should expect to hear from you.
- You can also include a Communication Plan in your welcome unit. Again, share when and how you plan to present course content and when students can expect to hear from you.

Timely

“Timeliness” in RSI means setting and adhering to expectations about response times for class-related interactions.

What does this mean?

Timely responses to email and direct student messages (Canvas inbox) are within a time period that your department has agreed is reasonable (usually 2-3 business days). Students should also be able to expect when they will receive feedback on regular assignments. Instructors should also be punctual to Zoom office hours or scheduled class meetings/study sessions.

How do I show this?

The syllabus or welcome unit (or both) are great places to set expectations about your response times to messages, when you will provide feedback on student work and when you will hold your drop-in student hours. You can easily fold this information into your class Communication Plan.

What does my communication plan look like?

A communication plan should include:

- When students can expect to receive new content material (eg. When do you publish new content each week)
- When you hold drop-in student hours each week
- When you send out course announcements that explain or expand upon the course content
- When students should expect to receive a response from you to their class message or email
- When student should expect to receive feedback from you on their class work

Substantive

The US Department of Education § 600.2 defines substantive interaction as “engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least **two** of the following”:

- (i) Providing direct instruction;
- (ii) Assessing or providing feedback on a student’s coursework;
- (iii) Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
- (iv) Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency

In addition, the Department of Education [will seek to determine whether](#) the institution has created expectations for instructors to monitor each student's engagement.

What does this mean?

Substantive interaction should be instructor-initiated, instructor-generated, and provide meaningful content related interaction between the instructor and student.

How do I show this?

Consider how you interact with your class each week. The ways that you interact may differ at different points in the quarter. Your goal should be to have at least **two instances** of substantive interaction with your students each week.

Examples of substantive interaction each week

- I) *Providing direct instruction with interaction*
 - a. Written or video instructional material created by the instructor that is required to complete the assessed course activities **and** has associated interactive discussions
- II) *Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework*
 - a. Individualized feedback (written, audio or video) on student work
- III) *Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency*
 - a. Announcements that explain, preview, summarize and/or clarify course content
 - b. Responding to questions posted in a class discussion
- IV) *Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency*
 - a. Instructor interaction in class discussions that expands upon or clarifies student postings and encourages students to engage further with the content
 - b. Instructor lead synchronous instruction (review sessions, field trips, workshops or other activities lead by the instructor)

- V) *Monitoring student engagement prior to census and monitoring learning after census*
- Course related work submitted prior to census
 - Proactive engagement with students periodically through the course about their progress in the course

Shifting our Instruction to More Substantive Interactions

Teaching involves applying many different instructional techniques. A high quality online course includes both "substantive" and "non-substantive" interactions. Our goal is to have at least two substantive interactions each week.

- Substantive interactions are instructor initiated
- Substantive interactions are instructor generated
- Substantive interactions provide instruction related to course content

Both non-substantive and substantive instructional techniques are part of a quality course

Non-Substantive	Substantive
Lecture material from a textbook publisher or OER source	Textbook publisher or OER lecture material that is introduced and summarized by the instructor (video, audio or written) and explicitly connected to the course and unit objectives, related lecture material and assessments
An auto-graded quiz score	An auto-graded quiz <i>with associated individualized comments added by the instructor</i> providing support for concepts mastered and guidance on gaining competency on material that is not yet mastered
Filling out a grading rubric	Filling out a grading rubric and including specific, individualized comments either in each rubric element, or overall summative feedback comments
An identical email message sent to each student in the class providing general supportive comments and encouraging the student to come to office hours	An individualized email message sent to each student in the class that is specific to the student's performance so far in the class with individualized suggestions for how the student can improve and compliments their successes.
An announcement with a link to a news article and instructions to read the article.	An announcement with a link to a new article and a short paragraph describing how the material in the article is related to the current content introduced in class.
An instructor response to a discussion posting: "Great point, Maura! Thank you for sharing"	An instructor response to a discussion posting: "Great point, Maura! Thank you for sharing. Consider also how the actions of government policymakers can be affected by current events such as wildfires or civil unrest. Can anyone take this a step further and apply these ideas to Maura's posting?"

Additional examples of substantive interaction

- You post a discussion question and actively facilitate the ensuing conversation

- You ask a student to visit you during office hours or to schedule a phone call or videoconference with you
- You provide personalized comments (in any medium) for an individual student's assignment
- You routinely post announcement or send messages that you have written specifically for the course
- You actively facilitate a required online discussion for every course unit
- You hold a required one-hour online review session every other week during the quarter
- You send a message previewing concepts introduced in the next unit and listing questions for students to have in mind when reading the textbook chapters
- You post an example from last night's Giants game in the course's 'Real-World Physics' discussion to illustrate the concept of coefficient of restitution