REGULAR & SUBSTANTIVE INTERACTION (RSI) CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to self-evaluate whether your online course meets federal requirements

OVERVIEW: WHY RSI?

- Instructor presence is the instructor's interaction and communication style and the frequency of the instructor's input into the class discussions and communications
- A study by the Community College Research Center found that **a course's level of interpersonal interaction was most important in predicting student grades**, more so than effective technology integration or clarity of learning objectives
- A rule from the Department of Education that went into effect in July 2021 requires that all online courses for which students use federal financial aid include regular substantive interaction between students and instructors with "regular" meaning it takes place on a predictable and scheduled basis and "substantive" meaning that students are engaged through teaching, learning, and assessment. Interaction should be instructor-initiated and includes regular, frequent, meaningful interaction. Without RSI, online courses become classified as correspondence education, which is not eligible for federal financial aid (SUNY, 2021)

CHARACTERISTICS OF RSI

*from Columbia Basin College

Initiated by the Instructor

To count as 'regular and substantive,' interactions need to be started by you. This doesn't mean students should be discouraged from contacting you or asking questions – far from it! But you should expect to take an active part in initiating and guiding a range of interactions with your students throughout the quarter. This ensures that interactions are not optional and left up to each student's individual discretion; rather, they are an integral part of your instructional plan for the course.

Frequent and Consistent

Interactions with students should be reasonably frequent and consistently repeated throughout the quarter. This means that once a course begins, long intervals of time shouldn't pass between the interactions you initiate with students. The mode of interaction may vary throughout the course, depending on your aims and the needs of your students, but the regular cadence of interactions you establish should remain as consistent as possible. Daily communication isn't required, but at a minimum you should seek to interact with every student at least once each week and you should log in to the course every 1-2 days.

Focused on the Course Subject

Interactions should be connected to the subject of the course and contribute to the students' progress toward course, program, and college learning objectives. Routine procedural interactions, such as reminders of upcoming deadlines, aren't 'substantive' on their own; neither are activities like assigning grades, unless they are accompanied by personalized feedback or suggestions for improvement. This doesn't mean that interactions designed to welcome students or build classroom community aren't important, merely that they aren't sufficient by themselves.

Direct Instruction

Providing direct instruction (i.e., live synchronous online interactions where instructor and learners are present online at the same time)

Examples

- ✔ Direct, synchronous instruction
- ✔ You hold a required one-hour online review session every other week during the quarter
- ✔ You encourage students to participate in *optional*, one-time online review sessions before exams
- ✔ Hosts weekly office hours virtually or in-person (CBA requirement for full-time faculty); or makes accessible to students, in-person or remotely, at a mutually agreeable time (CBA requirement for adjunct faculty – students **must** receive an invitation to participate during the week
- ✘ Prerecorded video lectures

Custom Feedback

Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework

Examples

- ✔ You provide personalized comments (in any medium) for an individual student's assignment, discussing their work, what they did well, and/or how they can improve in the future
  - o Feedback should be sent in the timeline defined in the syllabus
- ✔ LMS inbox messages to groups of students offering guidance for further study
- ✘ You add numeric grades to the course gradebook
- ✘ A student submits a quiz in Canvas that is automatically graded
- ✘ You grade using a rubric but otherwise provide no written feedback
- ✘ "Nice job!"; "Not quite! Try again!"

Content Announcements

Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency.

Examples

- ✔ 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 send an announcement or create a video addressing a commonly missed question on the recent homework assignment
- ✘ You post an announcement about an upcoming assignment deadline
- ✘ You remind students of the course attendance policy

Content Discussion

Facilitating a content-focused group discussion

Examples

- ✔ You actively facilitate a required online discussion for a unit
- ✔ You post an example from last night's Mariner's game in the course's "Real-World Physics" discussion to illustrate the concept of coefficient of restitution
- ✔ Provides an open discussion forum where students can ask questions, and receive instructor feedback, about course content and activities
- ✔ Instructor interactions that clarify, summarize, redirect, or extend the conversation in a class discussion, shared document, or other means of all-class interaction.
- ✘ You post to the course's "General Topics" discussion thread lamenting the outcome of last night's Mariner's game
- ✘ Students engage with each other in an online discussion assignment; instructor does not contribute.

CHECK-IT: DOES YOUR COURSE MEET FEDERAL RSI REQUIREMENTS?

Course Information

Course Name:

Quarter and Year:

Instructor Name:

Course Format:

Syllabus Statement

☐ Syllabus includes a statement about how quickly students will receive feedback on assignments
☐ Syllabus includes information on how to contact the instructor
☐ Syllabus includes a policy for weekend communication

Insert a copy of your syllabus statement here

Assignment By Day Three

☐ The class includes an assignment within the first three days of the quarter. The assignment need not be substantive (related to course content) or merit feedback, but is required for assessment of student financial aid status.

Describe your "assignment by day three" here

Monitoring Student Progress

☐ Monitors the student's academic engagement and success and promptly and proactively engages in interaction with the student when needed, on the basis of this monitoring or by student request

Describe your monitoring process here

Regular and Substantive

The DOE requires substantive interaction in a course as engaging students in at least <u>two</u> of the following weekly(regularly). Review examples of these categories above and decide which apply.

*Note: **you do not have to use the same forms of RSI for every week of the quarter**. You can mix it up as long as you hit two of the four each week. In other words, you might use direct instruction and content announcements one week and custom feedback and content discussions the next, and so on.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10
Direct Instruction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Custom Feedback	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Content Announcements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Content Discussions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Evidence

You can submit documentation for the RSI in a variety of ways. Pick the approach that works best for your workflow and for the RSI methods you've used in your class.

Examples include:
- Screenshots of the practice (announcements, rubrics with comments, discussion thread showing your interaction with different students, emails with students – names redacted, Zoom meeting in progress with students present, conference sign-up sheet with students scheduled)
- Video tour of the specific aspect from your course with some minimal narration (provide Panopto link)
- A link directly to your canvas course (or the relevant section)

Provide two different representative examples of RSI here

FINAL COMMENTS (OPTIONAL)

Do you have anything else you want to add? (Examples: highlight something great, questions about RSI or the process, how you might want to change your RSI going forward)

RESOURCES TO IMPROVE YOUR INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE

- This list of practices that support RSI standards contains a series of hyperlinks, each providing examples of what engaging in that practice can look like in your course
- Check out eLearning's instructional design LibGuide for suggestions and ideas!
- This article reviews the guidance put out by the Department of Education, clarifying terms and expectations
- This resource has a nice visual of components that enhance the RSI of a course as well as definitions of terms
- From Blue Mountain Community College, view a list of examples of practices that support RSI
- The 4 Connections is a mechanism by which you can build relationships with your students both in an on-line and an in-person environment
- Here are some examples of Canvas Communication Tools that can support RSI

LOOKING FOR SUPPORT?

- Contact eLearning@greenriver.edu to connect with an Instructional Designer or Faculty in Residence if you'd like support completing this self-audit or additional support in improving your RSI