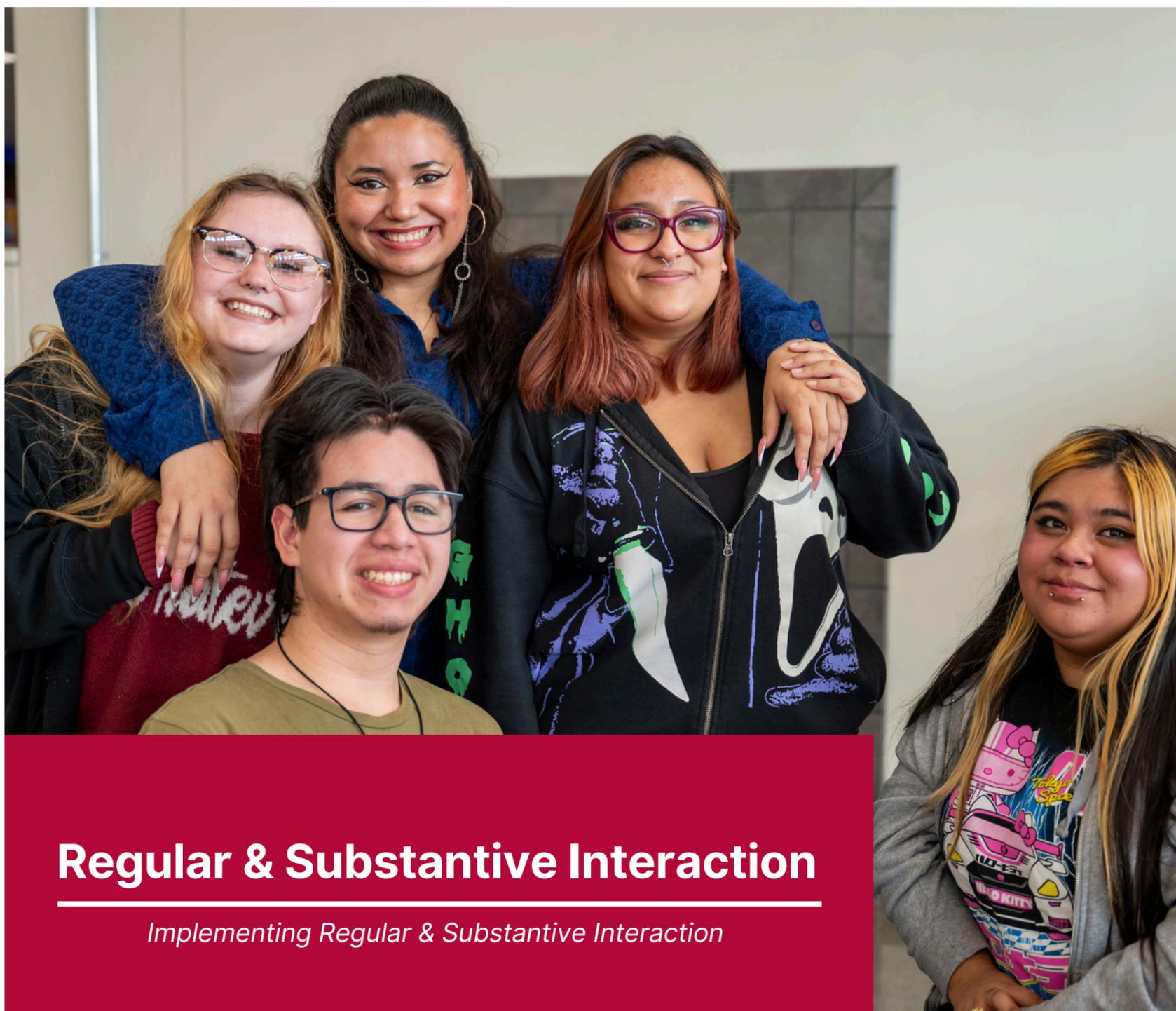


REACHING STUDENTS INTENTIONALLY



Regular & Substantive Interaction

Implementing Regular & Substantive Interaction

YOU belong **HERE**

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Regular & Substantive Interaction (RSI)

In a distance education (DE) course, an instructor should at a minimum provide weekly, instructor-initiated, and substantive interaction. The interactions should be clearly communicated to students within the syllabus and introductory module. This communication should describe when and how the instructor will initiate an interaction (Addendum A). An example is provided in Addendum A. Courses must include at least two types of substantive interactions, balanced throughout the course (Addendum B). Examples of evenly distributed substantive interactions are provided in Addendum D.

Summary:

- At a minimum, provide weekly, instructor-initiated, and substantive interaction.
- Include at least two types of substantive interactions, balanced throughout the course.
- Interactions should be clearly communicated to students within the syllabus and introductory module.
- Communication about interactions should describe when and how the instructor will initiate an interaction.

RSI is required by federal law (34 C.F.R. § 600.2), necessary for accreditation compliance (ACCJC Policy on Distance and Correspondence Education; Standard 2.6), aligned with District policy (AP 4105), and vital for creating high-quality, equitable online learning experiences.

Substantive Interaction Categories

✓ *At least two types of substantive interaction, balanced throughout the course:*

1. You assess or provide feedback on students' coursework (this does not include automatically graded assignments).
2. You provide information to students about the content of a course or competency.
3. You respond to questions related to the course content or competency, for example, sharing material related to understanding course objectives and outcomes.
4. You facilitate a group discussion or similar activity regarding the content of a course or competency.

Regular Interaction Guidelines

✓ *Must have each of the following present throughout course:*

1. At a minimum, provide weekly, instructor-initiated, substantive interaction. While this interaction does not require individual contact with every student each week, it must be intentionally planned, course-embedded, and accessible to all students, with additional interaction provided as needed.
2. At a minimum, you should tell students – within your syllabus and the introductory module – when they can expect you to reach out and what methods you will use to initiate communication.

Student-to-Student Interaction

✓ *The opportunity for student-to-student interaction must be present, if determined in the course outline of record, at regular intervals throughout the course, not just once or twice.*

Facilitation of student-to-student interaction means instructors explicitly cultivate opportunities for students to interact with their peers and encourage such interaction through various methods. Examples of student-to-student interaction facilitation are provided in Addendum C.

Addendum A

Sample Interaction Statement

This is a sample statement that can be used in your Canvas course syllabus module and as a syllabus statement to students describing all the ways you intend to intentionally interact with them.

Title: [Staying Connected and Instructor Interaction](#)

Even though this class is fully online, you won't be learning on your own. I'll be regularly checking in, sharing updates, and providing feedback to help you stay on track and get the most out of the course. Below is what you can expect and when you can expect it:

- **Weekly Instructor Announcements:** Each Monday by 9:00 a.m., I will post a Canvas announcement outlining the week's learning objectives, key concepts, required activities, and upcoming deadlines. These announcements may also include clarification of challenging material or common questions from the previous week.
- **Instructor Participation in Discussions:** I will actively facilitate discussion boards each week by posting guiding questions, responding to student posts, and prompting deeper analysis of course concepts. You can expect instructor engagement in discussions at least 2–3 times per week, including follow-up questions and synthesis of key ideas.
- **Individualized Feedback on Assignments:** For written assignments, projects, and reflections, I will provide personalized, content-specific feedback using Canvas SpeedGrader. Feedback will be tied to the assignment rubric and course outcomes and will be returned within 7 days of submission. This feedback is designed to help you understand both your strengths and next steps for improvement.
- **Instructor-Initiated Outreach and Check-Ins:** If I notice limited participation, missing assignments, or patterns that suggest you may be struggling, I will reach out via Canvas Inbox or Pronto to offer support, clarify expectations, and help you re-engage with the course.
- **Student Hours and Scheduled Support:** I hold weekly online student hours via Zoom (listed on the Canvas homepage), where you can ask questions about course content, assignments, or feedback. If you are unable to attend, you may request an alternative appointment time.

- **Timely Responses to Course-Related Questions:** I respond to Canvas Inbox messages and course-related emails within 48 hours on weekdays. Questions related to course content or assignments will receive substantive responses intended to clarify understanding and support your progress.

My goal is to ensure you experience consistent instructor presence, clear expectations, and ongoing academic support throughout the course. You should always know how and when I will be engaging with you and how to reach me when you need help.

Addendum B

Example Substantive Interactions

Assess or provide feedback on students' coursework (this does not include automatically graded assignments).

After students submit a written assignment or project in Canvas, you use SpeedGrader to leave individualized, criterion-referenced feedback, highlighting strengths, suggesting concrete revisions, and linking feedback to specific course outcomes or rubric criteria. This might include annotated comments, audio feedback, or text that guides students' next steps rather than just a grade.

➡ *Why it meets RSI:* This is direct instructor feedback on student work, which goes beyond automatic grading and engages students academically.

You provide information to students about the content of a course or competency.

Post a weekly "Instructor Clarification" Canvas Announcement or Pronto message that summarizes complex concepts from the module, links to additional readings or examples, and clarifies misconceptions you observed from student performance or questions.

➡ *Why it meets RSI:* You're directly giving substantive content-related explanation or extension to support student comprehension of course material.

You respond to questions related to the course content or competency, for example, sharing material related to understanding course objectives and outcomes.

Monitor the Q&A Discussion Board or Canvas Inbox/Pronto and post a detailed response to a student's question about a key concept (e.g., explaining the rationale behind a theory, linking to relevant examples, or clarifying how an outcome is assessed). Where appropriate, invite follow-up posts to continue the learning exchange.

➡ *Why it meets RSI:* This activity involves substantive instructor responses that deepen understanding of course content.

You facilitate a group discussion or similar activity regarding the content of a course or competency.

In Canvas Discussions, you post a critical follow-up question, model substantive engagement, and actively moderate by responding to student posts, highlighting good analytical points, and posing probing questions (e.g., “Can you connect this theory to X example?”). You also summarize emerging themes and direct students to build off each other’s insights.

▶ *Why it meets RSI:* Active facilitation of a group discussion fosters academic discourse about course concepts rather than leaving students to interact independently.

Addendum C

Balancing Substantive Interactions in a Course

Substantive Interaction Categories (from ACCJC Policy on Distance Education)

- **F** = Feedback on student's coursework
- **I** = Information about course content or competency is provided
- **R** = Respond to student questions related to course content or competency
- **D** = Instructor facilitates a group discussion or similar activity

The following example utilizes an even mix of substantive interactions throughout the course. The minimum frequency was used for this example. (F) = 5 times, (I) = 4 times, (R) = 3 times, and (D) = 4 times.

Week	Instructor-Initiated Substantive Interaction Example
1	I: Instructor posts content overview/orientation for Week 1
2	F: Instructor provides substantive feedback on Assignment 1
3	D: Instructor launches and facilitates a content-based discussion
4	I: Instructor posts a clarification or mini lecture on key concepts
5	R: Instructor posts a content-specific Q&A summary responding to student questions
6	F: Feedback on student draft or skills-based assignment
7	D: Instructor facilitates weekly discussion and posts synthesis
8	F: Feedback on midterm project or exam
9	I: Instructor provides new content guidance or connects past and future modules
10	R: Instructor addresses recurring student questions about course content
11	D: Instructor facilitates a content application or problem-solving discussion
12	F: Instructor provides feedback on project checkpoint or assignment
13	I: Instructor provides content overview with examples of common misconceptions
14	R: Instructor posts end-of-unit Q&A addressing student confusion
15	D: Instructor facilitates a reflection or synthesis discussion
16	F: Instructor provides substantive feedback on final assessments

Addendum D

Student-to-Student Interaction Facilitation

1. **Structured Discussion Boards with Peer Engagement Requirements**

Design weekly discussions that require students to *respond meaningfully* to at least two peers using clear criteria (e.g., asking a question, extending an idea, or offering a counterexample). Prompt students to reference classmates by name to reinforce social presence and dialogue rather than isolated posting.

2. **Small-Group Discussions or Rotating Discussion Pods**

Assign students to small, consistent discussion groups (or rotating pods) within Canvas Discussions. Smaller groups reduce cognitive load, increase accountability, and encourage deeper peer-to-peer interaction over time.

3. **Peer Feedback Using Canvas Peer Review or SpeedGrader**

Incorporate structured peer review activities where students provide feedback on drafts, reflections, or projects using a rubric or guiding questions. This promotes interaction through academic discourse and helps students learn from one another's perspectives.

4. **Asynchronous Social Interaction via Pronto or Canvas Inbox**

Use Pronto or Canvas Inbox to create informal, low-stakes spaces (e.g., "Ask a Classmate" or "Weekly Check-In" channels) where students can exchange ideas, clarify content, and support one another outside of graded discussions.

5. **Collaborative Knowledge-Building Activities**

Facilitate student collaboration through shared artifacts such as group Google Docs, Padlet boards, or Canvas Pages where students co-create summaries, case analyses, or resource collections. Require students to comment on or build upon peers' contributions to reinforce interaction.