

# Regular & Substantive Interaction (RSI) at MSUN

In compliance with federal guidelines, MSUN has developed strategies to help train and guide MSUN faculty in developing their online courses to meet the NWCCU and US Department of Education requirements for Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI).

## Distance Education vs. Correspondence Courses

At MSUN, online courses fall under the category of *distance education courses*, rather than correspondence courses, because students enrolling in online courses are eligible for federal financial aid. If courses do not meet the requirements of distance education courses, the institution can be audited and penalized (and may lose their ability to offer federal financial aid).

### What is a distance education course?

According to the US Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), distance education (DE) is education that uses one or more types of technology to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously.

### What is a correspondence course?

A correspondence course is a distance learning course where students are self-paced, working without regular faculty interaction or direct instruction. Students will complete work on their own and often will submit course work through email or regular mail.

## Examples of RSI at MSUN

RSI can sound daunting, but you may find that these requirements are already reflected in the practices you have incorporated into your course design.

### Examples of Regular Interaction

- Using the feedback tools in Brightspace (text, voice, & video feedback) with sufficient frequency to allow students the opportunity to check their understanding and comprehension while the course is in progress.
- Using due dates on assessments in Brightspace; keeping course calendars updated; and encouraging students to sign up for instant Brightspace notifications so that they receive your communication.
- Using the Brightspace announcements to help students keep track of time-sensitive tasks; providing the class with information about overall class progress; and highlighting relevant current events for the course content.

- Designing your Brightspace course in a way that requires student-instructor interaction at least once per week during the semester, consistently. For example, students are assigned a weekly discussion and a chapter quiz that is due on the same day each week. Regardless of what you choose, regularity throughout the entire semester is key.
- Using a consistent course design structure. For example, students are assigned coursework in weekly modules in the Content Area in Brightspace with consistent deadlines each week.
- Providing students with a preferred and clear communication policy for how to contact the instructor, when students should expect a response from the instructor, as well as a policy for weekend and holiday communication; following that policy.
- Providing students with clear requirements/expectations about the nature and frequency of their participation in the course.
- Proactively reaching out to struggling students. When these efforts are not productive, instructors can submit either an Academic Alert or a Care Report using MSUN's submission form on the faculty homepage: <https://www.msun.edu/facstaff/>.

#### **Examples of Substantive Interaction**

- Using the feedback grading tools in Brightspace to provide individualized, specific feedback so students can better understand where they are being successful and where they need to improve within a given assessment. (For example, simply saying "Good job!" or "Needs Improvement." does not constitute substantive interaction.)
- Using the announcements in Brightspace not only for regular interaction, but also to provide students with opportunities to develop understanding and further learning.
- Cultivating Brightspace discussion board conversations in a way that includes your voice as the instructor to guide deeper understanding of course content (rather than student-to-student interaction only).
- Interacting with students in a proactive manner, rather than just being reactive to student performance and participation. (For example, interacting with students when they are performing well in the course just as much as you would with students who are performing poorly.)
- Soliciting student feedback to help improve the course while it is occurring (for example, using the survey tool in Brightspace at mid-term to gather student feedback for possible improvements for the second half of the course).

## Important definitions regarding RSI

From the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) Distance Education Policy,<sup>1</sup> which is based on the US Department of Education's RSI Definitions of Terms:

### **Substantive Interaction**

Engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:

1. Providing direct instruction
2. Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework
3. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency
4. Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency
5. Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency

### **Regular Interaction**

An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency:

1. Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency.
2. Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

### **Requirements for Regular and Substantive Interaction**

Regular and substantive interaction between instructor(s) and students requires:

1. The institution's online instruction is delivered through appropriate media.
2. The instructors meet the requirements of the institution's accrediting agency for instruction in the subject matter.
3. Instructors engage in at least two forms of substantive interaction meeting the regulatory requirements for the course or competency (see definition above of Substantive Interaction).
4. The institution has established scheduled and predictable opportunities for substantive interaction between students and instructors and created expectations for instructors to monitor each student's engagement and substantively engage with students on the basis of that monitoring.
5. Instructors are responsive to students' requests for instructional support.

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<sup>1</sup> NWCCU Distance Education Policy pg. 4 <https://nwccu.app.box.com/s/mafhw08hcz4jrtj9nrz9dglr2f8vgqa>

## References and further discussion on RSI

\*Quick Reference: Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI)-Oregon State University

<https://ecampus.oregonstate.edu/faculty/canvas/QuickReference-RSI.pdf>

\*NWCCU POLICIES | DISTANCE EDUCATION (page 4)

<https://nwccu.app.box.com/s/mafhw08hcz4jrtj9nrz9dglr2f8vgqa>

Ensuring regular and substantive interaction in your online teaching-Northern Illinois University

<https://citl.news.niu.edu/2022/01/11/ensuring-regular-and-substantive-interaction-online-teaching/>

\*Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) Examples-Blue Mountain Community College

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19GPh6BiWTMbwH0q-9pr-MspSzv9i-sF7aF8F7gUq5gk/edit#heading=h.bnlauf7ecjsq>

Regular Substantive Interaction- Blue Mountain Community College (video 3:11)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifpg1Q8R6NY>

Monroe Valley College Audit (14% compliance)

<https://www.rccd.edu/mvc/accreditation/Accreditation%2020201/Evidence/RSI%20Checklist.pdf>

Riverside Community College District Checklist

[https://www.rccd.edu/admin/ed\\_services/de/Documents/DE%20checklist%20for%20Hybrid%20and%20Online%20Courses.pdf](https://www.rccd.edu/admin/ed_services/de/Documents/DE%20checklist%20for%20Hybrid%20and%20Online%20Courses.pdf)

Interpreting what is Required for “Regular and Substantive Interaction”

<https://wcet.wiche.edu/frontiers/2016/09/30/interpreting-regular-and-substantive-interaction/>

Is Your Distance Education Course Actually a Correspondence Course?

<https://wcet.wiche.edu/frontiers/2012/04/20/correspondence-definition/>

Final audit report, The Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission

<https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/oig-reports/a05p0013.pdf>

Regular and Substantive Interaction-Northern Illinois University (definitions and supporting research)

<https://www.niu.edu/citl/online/standards-and-principles/regular-and-substantive-interaction.shtml>

Regular and Substantive Interaction: Background, Concerns, and Guiding Principles

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED593878.pdf>

NWCCU Distance Education Policy: Verification of Student Identity and Regular and Substantive Interactions

<https://nwccu.app.box.com/s/mtvtwjt4o18vhz2gnuwr8bnt1gngmsb>

OSCQR-Sunny Online Course Quality Review Rubric

<https://oscqr.suny.edu/rsi/>

OSCQR Course Design Review (section 5)

[https://www.jjay.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/about\\_us/OSCQR\\_Course\\_Design\\_Review-3.1.pdf](https://www.jjay.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/about_us/OSCQR_Course_Design_Review-3.1.pdf)