

# Promoting Instructional Engagement in Regular Substantive Interaction (RSI)

## Overview

Foothill and DeAnza colleges have been leaders in providing high quality online courses for over 25 years. High quality online courses depend on a culture of ongoing engagement with professional development among faculty.

New requirements from the federal government have moved from "Regular Effective Contact" to "Regular Substantive Interaction" (RSI, defined on Page 3). This mandate is reinforced at the state level in recent changes to California's Title 5. Campuses have been tasked with developing standards and processes for defining and documenting RSI. This document provides a district-wide model for achieving our RSI goals.

## Goals

The goal of this document is to provide a model for RSI documentation district-wide. The goals of this documentation process are to:

- Ensure that Foothill and DeAnza online courses provide students with an active learning environment that meets or exceeds the level of engagement and interaction with their instructor that they would experience in a traditional face to face classroom.
- Engage faculty in meaningful peer discussions about effective RSI practices that build student success in online courses.
- Create a process to document ongoing RSI practices employed by every faculty teaching asynchronous online courses.

## RSI Documentation Model

We are currently exploring a two-phase, three-year model. Faculty teaching online would complete both phases of the RSI documentation process every three years and will receive a badge for successfully completing the process.

## Summary

- **Phase 1:** A four-hour asynchronous online course in which faculty learn about RSI and reflect on their practices
- **Phase 2:** Cohort reviews and coaching that span two quarters and require six hours of synchronous or asynchronous group discussion and eight hours of asynchronous documentation, peer review and reflection.
- At the conclusion of Phase 2 faculty complete a review template that includes a self-reflection and a *course communication plan* and a *student progress monitoring plan*. Based on these, faculty and their Online Learning Mentor complete an RSI proficiency rubric and earn their RSI badge.

## Phase 1: Asynchronous online course

- Faculty complete an online asynchronous course facilitated by Online Learning Coordinators and staff on RSI which includes:
  - Learning about institutional RSI guidelines
  - Exploration of effective RSI practices
  - Reflection on their teaching using institutional RSI guidelines and rubric.
- Completion of the asynchronous course and reflection will take approximately 4 hours.
- The asynchronous online course will be completed within the first two quarters of a faculty teaching online, or by January 2025.

## Phase 2: Cohort Reviews and Coaching

- Online Faculty Coordinators, along with an instructional designer, lead small group reviews of courses. Faculty will be given an option to participate in cohorts within their department/division. Groups will meet synchronously or asynchronously over the course of two quarters.
- Phase 2 cohort reviews and coaching will take approximately a total of 14 hours.
- Online Learning Coordinators and staff would lead discussions on effective RSI practices across disciplines.
  - Synchronous groups will meet for a total of three hours per quarter over two quarters.
  - Asynchronous groups will spend approximately three hours per quarter over two quarters engaging in asynchronous online peer discussion.
  - All participants will spend approximately eight additional hours engaging in documentation, peer review and reflection.
- Course reviews will take place using a review template and rubric provided by Online Learning in a development shell. In the process of the course review, instructors would:
  - Document examples of substantive interactions using institutional RSI guidelines,
  - Create a *course communication plan*,
  - Create a *student monitoring plan*,
  - Provide reflections on their RSI practices,
  - Review and discuss peer's examples of substantive interactions
  - Complete the RSI rubric as a self-evaluation
- Each faculty member must meet the minimum standards in the RSI rubric as determined by self-evaluation and review by an Online Learning mentor.
- Faculty whose courses do not meet minimum standards in the RSI rubric will work with Online Learning to build in RSI to their course and will be re-reviewed within two quarters. Re-reviews would take place by the faculty documenting examples of substantive interactions and provide reflections with the RSI template and rubric and discussing the outcomes with mentors in the Online Learning team.

## RSI Rubric

For purposes of cohort review documentation, the rubric will be completed by the faculty and the Online Learning mentor following the peer review, reflection and discussion process. If either party believes that one or more rubric standards do not meet expectations, a second Online Learning mentor will discuss the rubric and course review with the faculty. If the second Online Learning mentor also finds one or more rubric standards that do not meet the standard, the faculty will collaborate with Online Learning to build additional RSI into their course. The faculty will then be re-reviewed within two quarters.

The RSI rubric will evaluate the review template and self-evaluation. The review template will include a course communication plan, and a student progress monitoring plan.

Course communication plan: Weekly substantive interaction	<b>Meets the standard:</b> Interaction plan outlines how substantive interaction (at least two instances weekly) will take place throughout the quarter. The type of interaction may vary as the course progresses. <i>Substantive interaction</i> is defined below	<b>Developing:</b> Interaction plan is not present or does not outline how at least two instances of substantive interaction will take place weekly. Substantive interaction is defined below
Student progress monitoring plan: Monitoring student engagement prior to census and monitoring course progress after census	<b>Meets the standard:</b> A plan is present to monitor student engagement prior to census and periodically (at least two times throughout the course) proactively engage with students about their course progress.	<b>Developing:</b> A plan is not present or does not adequately outline steps that the instructor will take to monitor student engagement prior to census and periodically (at least two times) proactively engage with students about their course.

## Regular Substantive Interaction (RSI) Defined

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