

UNIVERSITY OF **INDIANAPOLIS**

Regular & Substantive Interaction for Faculty Teaching Distance Education Courses

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Workshop Objectives

- **Explain** the **importance of regular and substantive interaction (RSI)** in institutional accreditation
- **Define RSI** in distance education courses
- **Describe** at least **one example of sufficient RSI** in a distance education course
- **Describe** at least **one example of insufficient RSI** in a distance education course
- **Identify** at least **one way you can engage in RSI** in your distance education courses

What is RSI (in brief)?

- Regular = consistent
- Substantive = meaningful
- Interaction = engagement between the instructor and the learners

What is Distance Education?

- “Education that uses **one or more of the technologies** listed (on next slide) to deliver instruction to **students who are separated from the instructor(s)** and to **support regular and substantive interaction** between the students and the instructor or instructors, **either synchronously or asynchronously**” (HLC, n.d.).

Distance Education Technologies

- “The internet;
- One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite or wireless communications devices;
- Audio conference; or
- Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in items 1–3 above” (HLC, n.d.).

Distance Education Course

- “A course in which at least **75% of the instruction and interaction occurs using one or more of the technologies** listed in the definition of distance education, with the faculty and students physically separated from each other” (HLC, n.d.).
- At UIndy, this applies to courses with the following codes: Online Asynchronous (OA), Online Synchronous (OS), and Hybrid with 75-99% of the course online (H7599).

Distance Education Program

- “An **academic program offered in whole or in part through distance education**, regardless of whether a face-to-face, on-ground, or residential option is also available” (HLC, n.d.).

What is Correspondence Education?

- “Interaction between instructors and students in a correspondence course is limited, not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the students.” (HLC, n.d.).

Explain the importance of regular and substantive interaction (RSI) in institutional accreditation

Institutional Accreditation

- Higher Learning Commission (HLC) provides Reaffirmation of Accreditation for UIndy
- The status affiliation for UIndy states approval for Distance Education and not Correspondence Education.
- If the HLC audits distance education courses and finds that we are not offering them consistent with their definition (i.e., with RSI), we run the risk of having to pay back federal financial aid dollars.

4.19 Faculty Expectations for Teaching Distance Education (“On-line”) Courses [Updates to this section were approved by the Faculty Senate on 10-26-2021.]

All distance education coursework, as defined by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), (<https://www.hlcommission.org/>) should meet UIndy’s standard of quality and excellence. Faculty teaching distance education courses must:

- (A) demonstrate competence, as defined by the Faculty member’s primary unit, in the use of the learning management system either through prior experience or completion of tutorials and/or reviewing of training materials (consistent with HLC Policy CRRT.B.10.010, 3C);
- (B) ensure 40-50 hours of student work per credit hour, including any synchronous and asynchronous on-line or off-line course activities, to be consistent with the Carnegie Unit system (consistent with HLC Policy FDCR.A.10.020);
- (C) engage in regular and substantive interaction with each student, as defined by current U.S. Department of Education standards, such that students can apply feedback received to increase their knowledge and/or improve their performance throughout the course (consistent with the HLC definition of distance education);
- (D) enforce current University, department, and/or program policies and comply with administrative procedures for grades and attendance documentation; and
- (E) follow the current standards for distance education courses as articulated by the HLC.

Define RSI in distance education courses

What is RSI?

- “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:
 - 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**; and
 - **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” (HLC, n.d.).

Substantive Interaction

- Interactions that “engage students in meaningful **‘teaching, learning, and assessment activities,** consistent with the content under discussion,’ and also **includes at least two of the following activities:**
 - Providing direct instruction;
 - Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
 - Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
 - Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
 - Other instructional activities approved by HLC or the program's accrediting agency” (Harmonize, 2022).

Regular Interaction

- “Interactions should be **scheduled, predictable**, and **initiated by the instructor**.
- Interactions with students should be **frequently and consistently repeated** throughout the semester.
- It is not strictly required that interactions take place on a weekly basis, but once a course begins, **long intervals of time should not pass** between the initial instructor interaction with students” (Harmonize, 2022).

To Be Scheduled and Predictable...

- “Course materials should describe the expected **frequency of interaction** with the instructor, including times and dates of virtual office hours if applicable, grading feedback, announcements, and potential email communications.
- An example of scheduled and predictable would be to say that a **new lesson is released every {insert day of the week}** and **feedback will be provided to students one week later**, or some equally predictable timeframe” (Harmonize, 2022).

Five Key Questions

- “Is an **appropriate form of media** used?”
- Do the course **instructors meet** your **accrediting agency’s faculty requirements?**
- Does the instructor **schedule opportunities to interact in a predictable cadence?**
- Are at least **two of five substantive activities** used?
- Are instructors **responsive to students?**”
(Harmonize, 2022).

Describe at least one example of sufficient RSI in a distance education course

Describe at least one example of insufficient RSI in a distance education course

Small Group Activity

- Use the link in the chat to access RSI scenarios.
- Work in small groups (breakout rooms) to discuss the scenarios.
- Please choose someone to download the document, take notes, and report to the large group during our debrief.
 - Please also make note of any questions that you have.

Scenario #1

Professor A maintains that the following two components of their course are consistent with RSI.

- An introductory video to the course instructor is posted before the course begins.
- Each week the instructor posts an announcement that consists of only assignment deadlines.

Is Professor A correct? Why or why not?

Scenario #2

In Professor B's class, students participate in online discussions on a weekly basis. Grades are calculated by whether or not the student has posted the number of times given in the discussion board requirements.

Would this component of Professor B's course count as RSI? Why or why not?

Scenario #3

Professor C posts a weekly announcement, where they review the upcoming lesson content, on the start date of each lesson. The instructor also records mini lectures and posts them with other materials that students review each week. Students use the content from those recorded lectures to engage in discussion forums and complete assignments.

Are these course components consistent with RSI? Why or why not?

Identify at least **one way** in you can engage in RSI in
your distance education courses

Reflection

- How do you feel you're doing in addressing RSI in your distance education courses?
- In what way can the Faculty Academy assist you with ensuring that you include RSI in your distance education courses?
- What questions do you have?

References

- Harmonize. (2022, September 7). *Regular and substantive interaction requirements for online learning*.
<https://harmonizelearning.com/blog/regular-and-substantive-interaction-requirements-online-learning/>.
- Higher Learning Commission. (n.d.). *Glossary of HLC terminology*.
<https://www.hlcommission.org/General/glossary.html>.

Additional Resources

- UIndy Faculty Academy Website
 - Teaching Online
 - Federal compliance and online instruction:
<https://sites.google.com/uindy.edu/facultyacademy/teaching-online?authuser=0>

Evaluation

- Please take a moment to complete the evaluation when it's sent to you