Regular and Substantive Interaction in Online Courses

Why Does it Matter?

Federal Regulation  Funding  Research  Student Eligibility

Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 §600.2 - Distance education means education that uses [technology] to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously.

What it Means

Must be with and initiated by the instructor

Must be regular and somewhat frequent

Must be substantive or academic in nature

What it Doesn't Mean

X Interaction with TAs and GAs
X Automated answers
X Instructional videos

While these can help with workload, feedback, and instruction, they’re NOT enough to qualify under federal regulations for regular and substantive interaction.

For additional assistance, contact an instructional designer.

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Examples

Using discussions with the requirement for dialogue between learners and the instructor
- Journals, wikis, blogs, and discussion boards can be used.
- The instructor is required to be involved in the discussion.
- The discussion must be relevant to course content.

Requiring students to attend synchronous sessions to discuss or review course assignments
- Sessions can also be used for online office hours.
- Discussion topics must be relevant to the course content.
- The instructor is required to be active vocally during the session.

Using metacognitive essays that allow students to reflect on instructor feedback
- Reflecting on instructor feedback creates two-way dialogue.
- Feedback must be relevant to the course content and/or assignments.
- The instructor needs to provide the feedback.

Assigning students to watch a webinar or video and then interact with the instructor
- Journals, wikis, blogs, and discussion boards can be used.
- The instructor is required to be involved in the interaction.
- The video and interaction must be relevant to course content.

Utilizing announcements to advise against common errors or applaud student effort
- Announcements must be relevant to the course content.
- The announcement should focus on course work.
- Due date announcements are not sufficient to meet this requirement.