



COLUMBIA GORGE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Regular and Substantive Interaction In Your Distance Learning Class



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Introduction

Communication between the faculty and students is a key component to student success. Because of this, regular and substantive instructor-initiated interaction with students is required in all online classes at Columbia Gorge Community College (CGCC). This includes timely and substantive feedback on student assignments.

The Department of Education (DOE) conducts Title IV audits which address compliance of rules related to Title IX, Cleary Act and Financial Aid. In an audit in the summer of 2017, of particular interest to the DOE was a close look into online classes regarding last date of attendance as well as evidence of regular and substantive interaction (RSI) between faculty and students.

To demonstrate the presence of this interaction in online classes at CGCC, auditors looked for evidence in the learning management system (LMS) Moodle only. Therefore online instructors at CGCC must show regular and substantive interaction every term with Moodle tools in order to comply with federal regulations.

In addition, Quality Matters plays an important role in course design at CGCC for both hybrid and online classes. Standard Five is of particular interest to the subject of RSI in that it calls for:

- course activities to provide interaction for active learning
- instructors to clearly state classroom response time and feedback on assignments, and
- requirements for learner interaction to be carefully explained.

Purpose

- Provide definitions related to regular, substantive interaction in online classes
- Provide examples of regular, substantive interaction
- Provide examples for how to utilize Moodle's tools to facilitate faculty-student interaction.

Definitions - From Federal Regulation

Distance Education

Distance education means education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (4) of this definition to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support **regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously**. The technologies may include—



- (1) The internet;
- (2) One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;
- (3) Audio conferencing; or
- (4) Video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3) of this definition.

Correspondence Course

Correspondence course: (1) A course provided by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced.

- (2) If a course is part correspondence and part residential training, the Secretary considers the course to be a correspondence course.
- (3) **A correspondence course is not distance education.**

Correspondence courses are generally not eligible for financial aid.

Regular

Something that happens over and over, at regular intervals such as daily and weekly. It is predictable and built into the course design.

The expectation is that online and onground students have equal access to their instructors. So for example, regular interactions between instructor and students in a one credit class should be for at least one hour per week, two hours for a two credit class etc., not including grading.

Substantive Interaction

Instructor-initiated interaction which is academic in nature.

Examples of Regular Interaction

- Faculty presence, guidance, and initiation of contact.
- The flow, sequence, and deadlines of the course are directed by the instructor and the timing of the course set through use of learning activities, online discussion, lectures.
- Interaction with students happens fairly frequently and students grow to expect it.
- Announcements in Moodle at strategic points in the course by the instructor concerning course assignments and additional guidance.



- Notice to students of instructor absence from class and information on when regular interaction will resume.
- Assignments and assessment deadlines that are spread throughout the term of the class.

Examples of Substantive Interaction

- Follow-up questions on a discussion board to assist students in reaching a higher learning potential.
- Personalized feedback on assignments, discussions and quizzes that guide students to further knowledge and skills.
- Course materials (ex. recorded webinars, videos, and reading materials) which facilitate synchronous or asynchronous interactions and require the student to contact the instructor or participate in an online discussion moderated by the instructor.
- Constructive feedback on student assignments, which identifies specifically what has been done correctly, needs improvement, or guides students to the next steps of learning. Brief comments like “good job” or “you need to improve” are not substantive.
- Instructor announcements to the class regarding course content and upcoming assignments.
- Synchronous online meetings and chats that further explore course material and answer student questions.

Moodle Tools for Faculty-Student Interaction

News/Announcements Forum

The course announcements forum is a special forum for announcements and is automatically created when a course is created. A course can have only one announcements forum. Only teachers and administrators can post announcements. The "Latest announcements" block will display recent announcements.

Class Forums/Discussion Boards

There are 5 forum types.

- A single simple discussion - A single discussion topic which everyone can reply to (cannot be used with separate groups)
- Each person posts one discussion - Each student can post exactly one new discussion topic, which everyone can then reply to
- Q and A forum - Students must first post their perspectives before viewing other students' posts
- Standard forum displayed in a blog-like format - An open forum where anyone can start a new discussion at any time, and in which discussion topics are displayed on one page with "Discuss this topic" links
- Standard forum for general use - An open forum where anyone can start a new discussion at any time



Moodle Messages

The messages stay in the Moodle system and go to students cgcc email. You can use it to contact students directly about their progress in the course. Access is through the Navigation Block/Current Course/Participants or through the Messages Block.

Moodle Chat

The chat activity module enables participants to have text-based, real-time synchronous discussions. The chat may be a one-time activity or it may be repeated at the same time each day or each week. Chat sessions are saved and can be made available for everyone.

Moodle Lessons

The lesson activity module enables a teacher to deliver content and/or practice activities in interesting and flexible ways. This is a great way to deliver Open Educational Resource materials.

Moodle Books

The book module enables a teacher to create a multi-page resource in a book-like format, with chapters and subchapters. Books can contain media files as well as text and are useful for displaying lengthy passages of information which can be broken down into sections. You can use books to make course information readily available for students at beginning of course.

Gradebook

You can give feedback comments right in the gradebook, which is a nice way to keep this interaction with students in an organized way.

Zoom

This is the college online meeting tool. You can add one of these web-conferencing sessions as an activity in Moodle. By recording the session you can provide it to students who were not able to attend and also document this interaction.



Checklist Integrating Regular Interaction with Moodle Tools

Means of Achieving “regular” Interaction Include, but are not Limited to:

FACULTY Interaction	In my course	Tools I can/or have used
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threaded discussion forums with regular and appropriate instructor participation based on course topics and specific content of the course addressed to all students and/or to individuals publicly. 		Moodle forums
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-mail and/or messages within the course management system. 		Moodle messages – keeps a record in Moodle as long as course is kept
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular “Announcements” posted in the class. 		Moodle Instructor News Forum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular deadlines, distributed throughout the term of the course, for assignments and another student participation. 		Syllabus, calendar of due dates, Moodle messages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular, timely, appropriate feedback and evaluations of student work. 		Moodle grade feedback, use constructive, formative and summative feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual online office hours in real time, such as chat, during announced periods of time, and/or asynchronously during announced days and hours. 		Weekly scheduled VOH (Virtual Office Hours)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructor-prepared online e-lectures, podcasts or other forms of addressing course content and topics, presented in an appropriate format for the subject, such as written documents, audio and/or video files, and/or introductions and explanations for any publisher created materials (written, audio and/or video, etc.) that, combined with other course materials, creates the “virtual equivalent” of the face-to-face class. 		Moodle lessons, books, lecture documents, video, audio, podcasts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructor-prepared Syllabus, specific to each distance education course section, to document how regular contact between the students and the instructor is achieved. 		Syllabus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines for frequency of contact at least equivalent to contact in face-to-face classrooms. 		Syllabus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined response time for student questions and assignment feedback. 		Syllabus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing an active presence in the class. 		answering Moodle messages, forums, Q&A forums, grading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent and substantive feedback throughout the course. 		Moodle grade feedback, use constructive, formative and summative feedback. Be sure students know where it is found.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include course policies defining student-initiated contact (e.g., where to post questions, and examples of types of questions) in the instructor’s Syllabus. 		Syllabus, course policies links in Moodle, introduction book



Checklist Integrating Substantive Interaction with Moodle Tools

Means of Achieving “substantive/Non-trivial interactions” include, but are not limited to:

Interaction	Present in my class	Tools I can or have used
Instructor-guided introductions, especially at the beginning of the class, or at important intervals.		Moodle introduction forum, Moodle Instructors Forum
Daily or weekly assignments and projects that promote collaboration among students.		Moodle assignments, syllabus, calendar of due dates
Questions posed on the discussion board that encourage critical thinking skills and promote interaction among all course participants.		Moodle forums Moodle forums, Moodle messages, Moodle chat, collaborative Virtual Office Hours Weekly
Regular participation by the instructor in discussion activities with students, perhaps to provide a summary, to correct errors of fact, to keep the discussion on topic, and/or to add expertise to the content of the discussion.		Moodle Forums
Monitoring student interaction and activity to ensure that they participate fully.		Moodle activity completion, set to activate as students open activity. Done through Activity Completion for each activity and/or assignment
Create a specific forum for questions regarding course content.		Moodle Q&A forum
Asking students for feedback about the course on a regular basis and revising the content as needed to address issues identified.		Moodle messages, survey of course
Varied types of interaction, such as instructor-student, student-student, student-content, and student-instructor, and other interaction between and among the students and the instructor as part of the course design.		Moodle chat, messages, forums, online collaborative tools, Virtual Office Hours - weekly



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