Marywood University
Policies and Procedures

Regular and Substantive Interaction Policy

Policy Statement:

As faculty members, our commitment to online learning is grounded in the belief that education should extend beyond physical boundaries, providing accessible and engaging opportunities for all learners. The purpose of online curriculum courses with a commitment to Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) is to distinguish distance education from correspondence education and to elevate the quality of the online learning experience. RSI is driven by the following principles:

Engagement: Interactions encourage active engagement with course materials, fostering a deeper understanding and application of concepts.

Community Building: Interactions foster a sense of community among learners, promoting collaboration, shared learning experiences, and the opportunity to develop a supportive network.

Instructor Guidance: Consistent interaction ensures learners receive timely guidance and feedback from experienced instructors, enhancing the overall quality of the learning experience.

Personalized Learning: Interactions foster opportunities for tailored learning experiences, empowering students by addressing their individual needs, interests, and learning styles.

By ensuring regular and substantive interactions, faculty members aim to enhance the educational benefits traditionally associated with in-person instruction. The integration of RSI establishes a robust online community that promotes engagement, collaboration, and contributes to effective learning outcomes. Additionally, clarity in defining "RSI" ensures educational activities embrace direct instruction, assessment and feedback, information provision, and facilitation of discussions, aligning with accreditor standards. Together, faculty members shape a dynamic and comprehensive online learning environment which enriches student experiences and opens doors to a world of knowledge, collaboration, and personal growth.

Definitions:
Online curriculum courses emphasizing Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) in the context of distance education are educational programs delivered through appropriate learning management systems, where the learning experience is characterized by four critical factors.

First, the delivery of distance education must adhere to suitable online platforms, as identified in Marywood's *Learning Management System* (LMS) policy, ensuring an effective and engaging digital environment.
Second, faculty members engaged in distance education must meet accreditor requirements for proficiency in the subject matter, ensuring the quality of instruction.

Third, the learning environment should provide scheduled and predictable opportunities for instructor-student interaction, promoting a structured and supportive educational experience.

Lastly, faculty members must be responsive to students' requests for support, creating an environment where learners feel heard and guided throughout their educational journey.

This policy applies to all instructors who teach any online course in a synchronous or asynchronous format. For clarification, a hybrid or hyflex (Marywood has used the term Hybridge) course will only be included in this policy if the course is in person for 26% or more of the time, utilizing direct instruction.

Procedures:
Instructors must
1. Utilize the Marywood designated LMS for their course;
2. Include in their course syllabus two forms of regular substantive interaction they will use.
   a. There should be at least two forms of substantive interaction, possibilities include direct instruction, assessment feedback, information provision, response to content-related queries, or facilitation of group discussions. These interactions contribute to the depth and richness of the learning experience; and
3. Full time faculty include in their FARs: the two forms of substantive interaction that were used in each course.

Accountability/Assessment
- Department or program leadership (directors, chairs, coordinators, etc.) will ensure that instructors include the required RSI information in their FARs and course syllabi.
- Course evaluations will collect data about the use of RSI in each online course.
- The Online Curriculum Committee will review any individual RSI strategy if instructors are unsure if it meets the RSI definition.

This policy meets requirements set forth by the Department of Education.

Related University Policies:
Training for online Instructors LMS.

History: 2025-03-27- The President of the University approved the establishment of this policy as recommended by the Academic Council at their March 21, 2025 meeting.

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