Regular and Substantive Interaction Policy

Regular and substantive interaction between the instructor and students and among students increases student success in online learning[1]. It is a key feature of distance education courses, and it is what makes them different from correspondence and self-paced courses. It includes both:

- Instructor-initiated interaction
- Student-to-student interaction

These forms of interaction are also required by federal regulatory requirements, state education codes, and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), and are recommended by the Statewide Academic Senate for Community Colleges[2]. Regular and substantive interaction is a California Title V (section 55204) educational required by instructors of online and hybrid course design and delivery. This means that it is the responsibility of the instructor to initiate contact with students by, for example, making announcements, facilitating discussions, reaching out when they are inactive or miss assignments, and monitoring their overall progress. It is also the responsibility of the instructor to design and encourage opportunities for students to interact with other students in the course, for example via discussion boards, group collaboration, peer review, and other student-to-student interaction activities.

Instructor-Initiated Interaction

Instructor-initiated interaction with students includes establishing interaction prior to, and at the beginning of, the course, as well as maintaining interaction throughout the duration of the course.

Establishing Interaction

Faculty are responsible for doing the following to establish pre-course interaction with students and guide them when the course begins:

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[1] Baker, Credence. "The impact of instructor immediacy and presence for online student affective learning, cognition, and motivation." *Journal of Educators Online* 7.1 (2010): n1.
[2] See Federal Regulatory Requirements; See Title V State Code of Regulations; See ASCCC "Ensuring an Effective Online Program"

- Send a welcome email 1 week prior to the course start date to establish contact between instructor and student and guide the students to starting the course. Make sure to archive your welcome letter in your orientation module and/or announcements for late add students.
- Include a plan or policy for regular and substantive interaction (example: Communication Plan) in your syllabus and orientation module.
- Send an announcement on the first day of class to remind students that the course has started and what to do first.
- List your contact information in multiple places (examples: homepage, syllabus, communication plan, orientation module, etc.) with your response times (ex: 24-48 hours).
- Is recommended that you provide a captioned video to welcome students.

Maintaining Interaction

To maintain instructor-initiated, or faculty-to-student, interaction, throughout the course, faculty are responsible for doing the following:

- Send out 1-3 weekly announcements that are archived in Canvas.
- Respond to students who ask questions in the questions forum within your stated response times.
- Communicate with individual students (ex: through Canvas Inbox, Pronto, email) within your stated response times).
- Hold weekly online office hours (ex: Zoom video conferencing, Microsoft Teams, Pronto video meetings).
- Participate in required discussions or other student-to-student interaction activities.
- Provide timely and frequent, meaningful and individualized, qualitative and quantitative feedback on student work within your stated response times.
- Contact students who need help, are falling behind, etc.
- Inform students and your manager when you cannot have regular and substantive interaction for any reason, and inform them again when it does resume.

Note to Faculty Who Use Publisher Content
- Instructors who use third-party tools, such as publisher packs or other digital apps, must authenticate students through the college's learning management system (LMS).

- Even when third-party tools are used, instructors must use the LMS to facilitate interaction according to the requirements above, and to document the types of instructor-to-student contact that take place via the third-party system.

Student-to-Student Interaction

Student-to-student interaction includes opportunities for both students to initiate interaction with other students and to have consistent, meaningful interaction with their peers throughout the course. Faculty are responsible for designing, facilitating, and encouraging the following opportunities:

Required facilitated student-to-student interactions:
- icebreaker or introduction activity in week 1
- ongoing question forums with student replies

Non-facilitated, optional student-to-student interaction opportunity where students can interact informally about non-course related topics (examples: cyber cafe/student lounge/water cooler).

Plus at least 1 opportunity of the following facilitated student-to-student interactive activities every week throughout the duration of the course, with at least 2 different types throughout the course:
- whole class discussions with required student-to-student interaction
- group discussions with required student-to-student interaction
- group assignments with required student-to-student interaction
- group presentations
- group projects
- peer reviews
- activities with required student-to-student interaction (examples: Padlet, Flipgrid, PlayPosit, Canvas Studio, Hypothesis, etc.)
- collaborative annotation assignments with required student-to-student interaction
- student video assignments with required student-to-student interaction
- Zoom for synchronous activities with required student-to-student interaction

Note to Faculty Who Use Publisher Content
- Instructors who use third-party tools, such as publisher packs or other digital apps, must authenticate students through the college's learning management system (LMS).

- Even when third-party tools are used for student-to-student contact, instructors must use the LMS to facilitate interaction according to the requirements above and to document the types of contact that take place via the third-party system.

Approved by the DE Committee on April 15, 2022
Approved by the Academic Senate on

Checklist for Regular and Substantive Interaction

Created by: Maritez Apigo, DE Coordinator, OER Coordinator, & English Professor

~ Faculty-to-Student Interaction ~

Establishing Interaction

- ☐ Email a welcome letter 1 week prior to the course start date to guide students how to begin the course successfully. Make sure to archive your welcome email in your orientation module and/or announcements for late add students.
- ☐ Include a plan or policy for regular and effective contact (ex: Communication Plan) in your syllabus and orientation module. (See the CVC-OEI Example Communication Plan at the end of this document.)
- ☐ Send an announcement on the first day to remind students that the course has started and what to do first.
- ☐ List all contact information methods in multiple places (homepage, syllabus, communication plan, orientation module, etc.) along with your response times (24-48 hours).
- ☐ If possible, provide a captioned video to welcome students (recommended).

Maintaining Interaction

- ☐ Send out 1-3 weekly announcements.
- ☐ Respond to students who ask questions in the questions forum within your stated response times.
- ☐ Communicate with individual students (ex: email, Canvas inbox, Canvas Chat) within your stated response times
- ☐ Hold online office hours during your stated times (ex: Video conference using Zoom, Canvas Chat)
- ☐ Instructor participation in required discussions or other student-to-student interaction activities
- ☐ Provide timely and frequent, meaningful and individualized, qualitative and quantitative feedback on student work within your stated response times
- ☐ Contact students who need help, are falling behind, etc.
- ☐ Inform students and your manager when you cannot have regular effective contact for any reason, and inform them again when it does resume.

~ Student-to-Student Interaction ~

All of these small-scale interactions:
- ☐ icebreaker or introduction activity in week 1
- ☐ ongoing questions forum with student replies
- ☐ non-facilitated, optional student-to-student interaction opportunity where students can interact informally about non-course related topics (examples: cyber cafe/student lounge/water cooler).

Plus at least 1 opportunity of the following facilitated student-to-student interactive activities every week throughout the duration of the course, with at least 2 different types throughout the course (check two or more):
- ☐ weekly discussions with required student-to-student interaction
- ☐ group discussions with required student-to-student interaction
- ☐ group assignments with required student-to-student interaction
- ☐ group presentations
- ☐ group projects
- ☐ peer reviews
- ☐ activities with required student-to-student interaction (Padlet, Flipgrid, Canvas Studio, Hypothesis, Pronto, etc.)
- ☐ collaborative annotation assignments with required student-to-student interaction
- ☐ student video assignments with required student-to-student interaction
- ☐ Zoom for synchronous student-to-student interaction activities

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~ CVC Example Communication Plan ~

There are a number of ways to stay in communication with students. An important part of this is to make sure you've let them know how and when they can expect to hear from you.

This is just an example of a "communication plan." Feel free to customize to suit your individual course. For example, short (under 3 minutes) weekly video check-ins are a great idea but if you won't be using those, remove that section. Add this plan to your syllabus and orientation module. The HTML code is provided below for your orientation module in Canvas.

[Page Title, something like: *How Will We Be Connecting?* OR *Our Communication Plan*]

I value an interactive and personal learning environment and I intend to harness the technological tools available to us to communicate with you in a variety of ways.

I want to make sure you know that you're not alone in the course. I care about you, I care about the challenges you face, and I care about supporting your learning. Here are some of the ways I'll connect with you throughout the semester:

"Introduction" Discussion

Think of this discussion [LINK TO YOUR INTRO DISCUSSION] as our first class period. It's the first time that we'll virtually *meet* and start getting to know each other as unique and multifaceted individuals. [If this is a required activity, let them know.]

Module Discussions

I monitor these discussions daily and will chime in with opinions and clarifications as it seems appropriate. The Student Q&A forum is where I encourage you to post general questions about the class - and feel free to answer someone's question when you can!

Weekly Video-Check In

Every week, I'll record a brand new video for you where I briefly preview that week's module. I might also share a story, recommend an app, give props to a class member, or mention something about [YOUR COURSE TOPIC] I saw in the news.

Gradebook Feedback

Not only will you find your grades and rubric scores in our gradebook [LINK TO GRADEBOOK], I also use the comments feature to ask questions and spark further conversations about your ideas and contributions. I do my best to grade assignments and offer feedback within 5-7 days.

- [How do I view grades and instructor comments?](#)
- [How do I view annotation feedback in an assignment?](#)

Announcements

When I come across information I think will be valuable for you, I'll post it as an announcement. [LINK TO ANNOUNCEMENTS] Some of these posts relate to [YOUR COURSE TOPIC] specifically, but some will feature useful resources that will help you as a student or as a human being. If we need to make any changes to our semester schedule, I'll also post these in the announcements area.

Weekly Office Hours

I set aside **XX** hours each week to be available to you if you need me. Check out this semester's syllabus [LINK TO SYLLABUS] for specific days and times. [You could also put the info right here so they don't have to click anywhere else. And If you'll be using ZoomConference or some other video conferencing software for office hours, let them know.]

Canvas Mail

If I need to get a hold of you this semester, I'll contact you through Canvas mail. You can access this feature by clicking "Inbox" in the left-hand global navigation bar.

I respond to email within **XX** hours, Monday through Friday. I reserve the right to wait until Monday to reply to messages sent over the weekend. ;-) Please include the course name and section number in the Subject Line (e.g., ENG 101, Sec. 1129).

~ CVC Example Communication Plan HTML Code for Canvas ~

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<div class="image-and-hover" style="padding: 0 15px; float: left;"><img
src="/courses/837/files/80070/download?wrap=1" alt="group connecting via different
methods" width="264" height="176"
data-api-endpoint="https://ccconlineed.instructure.com/api/v1/courses/837/files/80070"
data-api-returntype="File" /></div>
<p>I value an interactive and personal learning environment and I intend to harness the
technological tools available to us to communicate with you in a variety of ways.</p>
<p>I want to make sure you know that you're not alone in the course. I care about you, I
care about the challenges you face, and I care about supporting your learning. Here are
some of the ways I'll connect with you throughout the semester:</p>
<h2>"Introduction" Discussion</h2>
<p>Think of this discussion<span style="color: #ff0000;">[LINK TO YOUR INTRO
DISCUSSION]</span> as our first class period. It's the first time that we'll virtually *meet*
and start getting to know each other as unique and multifaceted individuals. <span
style="color: #ff0000;">[If this is a required activity, let them know.]</span></p>
<h2>Module Discussions</h2>
<p>I monitor these discussions daily and will chime in with opinions and clarifications as it
seems appropriate. The Student Q&amp;A forum is where I encourage you to post
general questions about the class - and feel free to answer someone's question when
you can!</p>
<h2>Weekly Video-Check In</h2>
<p>Every week, I'll record a brand new video for you where I briefly preview that week's
module. I might also share a story, recommend an app, give props to a class member, or
mention something about <span style="color: #ff0000;">[YOUR COURSE TOPIC]</span> I
saw in the news.</p>
<h2>Gradebook Feedback</h2>
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<p>Not only will you find your grades and rubric scores in our gradebook[LINK TO GRADEBOOK], I also use the comments feature to ask questions and spark further conversations about your ideas and contributions. I do my best to grade assignments and offer feedback within 5-7 days.</p>

How do I view grades and instructor comments?
How do I view annotation feedback in an assignment?

<h2>Announcements</h2>
<p>When I come across information I think will be valuable for you, I'll post it as an announcement. [LINK TO ANNOUNCEMENTS] Some of these posts relate to [YOUR COURSE TOPIC] specifically, but some will feature useful resources that will help you as a student or as a human being. If we need to make any changes to our semester schedule, I'll also post these in the announcements area.</p>
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<p>I set aside XX hours each week to be available to you if you need me. Check out this semester's syllabus [LINK TO SYLLABUS] for specific days and times. [If you'll be using ZoomConference or some other video conferencing software for office hours, let them know.] </p>
<h2>Canvas Mail</h2>
<p>If I need to get a hold of you this semester, I'll contact you through Canvas mail. You can access this feature by clicking "Inbox" in the left-hand global navigation bar.</p>
<p>I respond to email within XX hours, Monday through Friday. I reserve the right to wait until Monday to reply to messages sent over the weekend. ;-) Please include the course name and section number in the Subject Line (e.g., ENG 101, Sec. 1129).</p>