

# Regular & Substantive Interaction

## What is it, and why does it matter?

RSI is linked to Title IV eligibility and enforced through accreditation. The requirement is intended to ensure that the faculty member (not the student) directs the flow of information and events in a course by initiating learning experiences *and* interactions. This happens naturally in a campus classroom but must be curated in the online classroom. ATS in particular has a standard directly linked to evidence of RSI, but the concepts of the interaction are simply good practice in promoting a community of learning. Since it is verified through the accreditation process, it is ideal that these interactions take place within Populi for easy verification.

## The 3 Requirements to Qualify as Regular & Substantive Interaction

1. Initiated by the Instructor
2. Frequent and Consistent (think semester-long “cadence”)
3. Focused on the Course Subject (of an academic nature)

## Recommendations for Promoting and Developing RSI

1. Set clear expectations for interaction in the syllabus.
  - This includes what you will communicate and how often.
  - Make first contact with students before the course even begins.
  - Establish contact methods, hours, and response times.
2. Provide timely, individualized, and in-depth feedback on student work.
3. Choose online tools/environments that make interaction easy - and easy to document.
  - Can't prove when auditors come if in a platform that goes away (personal email/social media)
  - HCU email through Populi automatically saves these interactions.
4. Collect mid-semester feedback from students.
  - Everyone can benefit from feedback.
  - Ask whether they hear from you enough or too much, then adjust.
  - Ask what communication expectations aren't being met.
  - Ask students what they can do to make interactions more meaningful also.
5. Ask for feedback from trusted colleagues.
6. Design course from the ground up to integrate strategic points for faculty/student interaction.

## ATS Recommendations for Self-Study (for Standard 3.9)

- Describe practices and policies for RSI for all modalities, including policies related to class size.
- Note guidelines for availability and frequency of faculty interaction with student, feedback on work.
- Note methods and how student feedback is gathered on the above issues and how the school responds.
- Smaller schools should reflect on how they “ensure a viable community of learning,” which also focuses on student-student interaction through things like group work and discussion boards.
- Clarify that there are no classes taught by taped lecture only (with no direct faculty interaction with students).

## Good Examples of RSI:

- Post a discussion and actively facilitate the conversation.
- Ask students to visit office hours or schedule a phone/Zoom call.
- Provide personalized comments on an individual assignment in Populi.
- Routinely post announcements or send messages specific to the course material.
- Actively facilitate a required discussion online.
- Hold a required review session every 3-4 weeks or before each exam.
- Send/Post a message previewing concepts introduced in the next unit.
- Send/Post a message listing questions to have in mind when reading textbooks.
- Post a real-world example on a discussion board that illustrates a concept from course objectives.
- Post a weekly “kick-off” or “wrap-up” with content previews or summaries, aggregated assignment feedback, etc. that invites comment or follow-up from the student.

## Things that do not qualify as RSI:

- Auto-graded assignments
- Students dropping by without an appointment to discuss coursework
- Adding grades to gradebook
- Discussion Posts that are auto-graded and you don't participate in
- Interaction with educational software such as an online lab
- A welcome message the first week of class only
- An optional review session once per semester
- Reminding students of course attendance policy
- Posting an announcement about deadlines