Regular and Substantive Interaction

Policy Category:	Academic Policies
Responsible Office:	Office of Academic Affairs
Related Law & Policy:	34 CFR 600.2; "Distance Education" and other related policies from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities; UAA Policy – Blackboard Use Policy

I. Scope

This policy applies to University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) employees and units developing, offering, and engaging in online programs, courses and activities, specifically courses marked "O" for Online delivery to for-credit undergraduate and graduate students taught asynchronously.

II. Policy Overview

This policy identifies expectations for all UAA, including all of its campuses and sites, applicable programs and courses to be compliant with relevant federal and accreditation policies.

III. Policy Statement

Applicable online courses must demonstrate "regular and substantive" interactions (RSI). UAA will ensure instructors are promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with students using a combination of processes, including at the request by the student. Faculty shall use a variety of instructional strategies and resources as recommended by the Office of Faculty Success to facilitate an engaging learning environment. Additionally, faculty should share a syllabus statement that details how substantive interaction will occur, including specific expectations of using class discussion boards, announcements that provide class feedback and direction, individual feedback on student projects, and optional study sessions, in accordance with Faculty Senate Resolution #040723-1. Deans/Campus Directors and their Designees are responsible for assuring "regular and substantive" interactions occur in applicable courses.

IV. Roles/Responsibilities

Office of Faculty Success:

- Will provide instruction and support for faculty and staff creating online courses and online instructional content.
- Will support faculty by researching methods and strategies of engagement in online courses.
- Will maintain a resource website providing faculty and administrators guidance on RSI, including definitions, examples, and frequently asked questions.

Faculty and Instructional Staff:

- Will engage students in "regular and substantive" interaction as defined by the Department of Education when designing or teaching a fully online course.
- Will take advantage of recommendations and resources recommended by the Office of Faculty Success to facilitate an engaging learning environment.
- Will include, in addition to student learning outcomes and method of determining course grades, a statement that clearly explains at least two recommended methods in which RSI is met within the specific online course.

Department Heads/Chairs and School Directors

- Will, if notified of an RSI concern, report the relevant information to the respective Dean/Campus Director or Designee.

Deans and Community Campus Directors, or Designee:

- Will ensure that faculty and instructional staff have opportunities for training in RSI requirements and strategies.
- Will consider faculty and instructional staff compensation or recognition for completing training required to meet RSI requirements.
- Will ensure that faculty workloads give consideration to time requirements for creating "regular and substantive" interaction in online courses.
- Will review all reports of faculty not engaging in RSI and determine if instructional reassignment is necessary.
- Will collect course syllabi every semester, and will randomly sample RSI statements to ensure compliance.
- Will maintain a process for receiving, tracking, and reviewing all RSI-related complaints.
- Will submit an annual report of all RSI complaints found to be valid, and the complaint resolution, to the Office of Academic Affairs.
- Will work with non-compliant instructional faculty to revise syllabi and course practices, including referral to the Office of Faculty Success or similar resource, for assistance with course design and RSI implementation.
- Will change future course assignments as necessary for faculty who are found to be out of compliance with this policy.

Office of Academic Affairs:

- Will collect, compile, and archive RSI complaints found to be valid on an annual basis.

Office of Student Success

- Will, if notified of an RSI concern, report the relevant information to the respective Dean/Campus Director or Designee.

V. Reason for Policy

UAA values and supports quality instruction in all of its educational programs and courses. For those courses offered fully online (which we define to mean delivery through the Learning Management System, with no assigned campus or classroom and no set meeting time), UAA expects and ensures that all courses and programs meet or exceed UAA's understanding of federal requirements for Regular and Substantive Interaction. Courses offered fully online and marked "C," "U, or "S" for delivery to for-credit undergraduate and graduate students provide opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course.

VI. Approval

DocuSigned by:

Sean Parnell

Chancellor Approval

January 17, 2024

Date