

Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) Self-Reflection Form

Purpose

This self-reflection form is designed to help instructors explore how they incorporate Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) into their online courses, supporting both quality engagement and compliance with ACCJC¹ accreditation standards.

The minimum accrediting requirement is to meet the **Initial** level in the ACCJC rubric.² However, our mentoring and support system is designed to help faculty reach the **Developed** or **Highly Developed** level.

You may have activities in your online course that don't meet the formal definition of RSI, but it is OK to keep them! The recommendation is to first review your course comprehensively. Then, adjust or add activities to ensure you are meeting the weekly RSI requirement through both regular and substantive interactions.

Key Definitions

Regular Interaction

Providing substantive interaction with students on a **predictable and scheduled** basis commensurate with the course length and content.

This includes monitoring student academic progress and proactively engaging when needed or upon student requests. Regular interaction for SBVC's online courses is defined in our RSI policy as follows:

Course Length	Minimum Regular Interaction	Rationale
12 weeks or longer	At least once per week	Standard pacing supports weekly pattern
Fewer than 12 weeks	More than once per week	Accelerated pacing requires increased engagement

¹ Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC)

² Institutions that remain at the Initial level may receive a recommendation for improvement.

Instructor-to-Student Substantive Interaction

Instructor-initiated engagement with students that supports teaching, learning, and assessment aligned with course content. Examples include:

1. Assessing or providing individual feedback on a student's coursework.
2. Providing information or responding to questions about course content.
3. Facilitating group discussions about course content, with an active instructor presence.
4. **For synchronous courses only:** Providing direct instruction such as lectures or presentations.

While the ACCJC requires at least two of the above activities to occur during the course, we recommend incorporating the first three for asynchronous courses and all four for synchronous courses. Which interactions you choose to integrate into your course each week is flexible (it doesn't have to be all of them each week). The key is maintaining regular, substantive interaction that supports student learning.

Student-to-Student Substantive Interaction

Meaningful course-related exchanges where students actively engage with each other's ideas, perspectives, and knowledge.

The ACCJC doesn't currently evaluate this type of interaction. However, under [Title 5, Section 55204](#), it becomes a requirement if described in the Distance Education (DE) addendum. Our DE addendum explicitly includes student-to-student interaction, making it a binding Title 5 requirement for our courses.

This section of Title 5 establishes the expectation of Regular and Substantive interaction in California. Courses should strive to include weekly student-to-student interaction, as this practice reflects the spirit of Title 5 and could be subject to future ACCJC review.

How to Use this Form

There are two versions of this form, both containing the same questions:

- A fillable PDF for offline self-reflection.
- A [Microsoft Forms version](#) you can submit if you'd like feedback.

Submitting the form is entirely optional! We've included it as a way for you to request feedback, share your activities, or set up a time to discuss your approach if you'd like some additional support.

Before You Begin

You may find the following resources helpful as you reflect on RSI in your course.

[ACCJC Quality Continuum Rubric](#)

[SBVC's Adopted RSI Policy](#)

RSI Best Practices, containing examples (available in Spring 2026)

Reflection: Course Design & Organization (Best Practices)

Course Design & Organization provides students with a clear, accessible, and well-structured learning environment. These elements establish the framework for student success but do not, by themselves, constitute instructor-to-student RSI.

Please mark all strategies you currently implement in your online courses.

Clear Course Structure: Create a well-organized syllabus, schedule, and set of course policies, with clearly defined due dates.

Comprehensive Orientation Module: Provide a course overview, navigation guidance, and expectations.

Module Overviews: Summarize weekly/module topics and learning objectives.

Multimodal Content Delivery: Incorporate various presentation styles (e.g., text, visuals, audio, video, simulations, etc.).

Student Support Services: Include a section in the syllabus or orientation module with clear guidelines on where students can get assistance with course technologies, tools, and other support services (e.g., Counseling, etc.).

Reflection: Instructor-to-Student Interaction Strategies

Please mark all strategies you currently implement in your online courses.

Communication

This section includes the elements of a communication plan and confirms that these activities occur during your course. All courses should have a published communication plan. Instructors are expected to both include these strategies in the plan and implement them consistently throughout the course.

Communication Plan: Establish a clear communication plan made available to students via the Syllabus and/or Orientation module in Canvas that outlines the regular, predictable, and substantive communication students can expect to receive from you. Itemize the specific activities in this plan (e.g., announcements, feedback), and reinforce them frequently where relevant throughout the course.

Implemented in Course

Preferred Communication Method: Tell students how you will communicate with them individually and how they should communicate with you. It is recommended that all course communication be conducted through Canvas Inbox to ensure consistency and a single point of contact.

Included in Communication Plan

Implemented in Course

Timely Response to Inquiries: State your expected response time during the work week (best practice: within 48 hours), and note any exceptions for holidays, weekends, or breaks. During the course, provide prompt replies to emails, Canvas messages, and other student communications to ensure consistency and support.

Included in Communication Plan

Implemented in Course

Synchronous Office Hours: Schedule at least one synchronous office hours session per week, and clearly communicate the day, time, modality (e.g., Zoom), and academically-related purposes. Note: By-appointment office hours do not count as RSI but are required under our Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Included in Communication Plan

Implemented in Course

Timely Feedback: Establish a typical turnaround time for individualized feedback on student work (best practice: one week). Deliver feedback early enough for students to apply it to upcoming assignments and improve their performance. These communications count as RSI when documented visibly (See RSI Documentation Announcements below).

Included in Communication Plan

Implemented in Course

Location and Type of Feedback: Identify the various methods you'll use to deliver feedback throughout the course (e.g., assignment written comments, assignment video feedback, rubric comments, "Message Students Who" messages, Inbox messages, or 3rd-party tools). Specify how you will provide feedback to students and direct them how to find this feedback.

Included in Communication Plan

Implemented in Course

Discussion Assignments: Describe the communication students can expect from you in Discussion activities, such as regular posting and reply dates, frequency of instructor interaction, and how you'll participate in Instructor-facilitated Discussions. Note: Open lounge or student-to-student discussions without active instructor presence do not meet the definition of RSI. These are still important components of your course to demonstrate student-to-student interactions, so don't delete them!

Included in Communication Plan

Implemented in Course

Proactive Outreach: Proactively communicate during the semester to students needing additional support, are at risk of falling behind, or who could benefit from targeted guidance (e.g., Starfish, Inbox, "Message Students Who," assignment comments). Indicate frequency of communications if possible. These communications count as RSI when documented visibly (See RSI Documentation Announcements below).

Included in Communication Plan

Implemented in Course

Regular Announcements: Provide weekly updates to keep students informed and engaged. To count as RSI, announcements must be regular and support student learning by reinforcing key concepts, clarifying expectations, guiding course progress, or supporting ongoing engagement. Purely logistical updates such as "Module 2 is open" aren't substantive on their own and should be paired with academically related guidance.

Included in Communication Plan

Implemented in Course

RSI Documentation Announcements: Recognize that all messages to students are considered private (e.g., email, Inbox, comments, etc.). Because individual messages are not visible to outside evaluators, the best way to document grading or proactive outreach is to post a class announcement after sending a batch of messages or feedback. In the announcement, you can explain to students what actions you've taken, direct them to where they can find the feedback, and outline how they should follow up with you. Posting an announcement in this way can be tracked as an instance of RSI.

Included in Communication Plan

Implemented in Course

Instructional Presence

RSI requires **direct instructor-to-student communication**. It is not enough to design or post course materials; RSI is demonstrated when the instructor is actively present, guiding, clarifying, and responding to students about their learning.

Please mark all strategies you currently implement in your online courses.

Discussion Participation: Engage actively in discussion threads by replying to individual student posts or posing questions, thoughts, or other comments to the group for contemplation and response. Simply monitoring or grading a Discussion does not count as RSI. Best practice is to incorporate a few instructor-facilitated Discussions in your course.

Instructional Videos/Resources: Create or curate content that explains complex topics or procedures, and provide instructor guidance that directs students on what to extract, how to use the information, or how it connects to course objectives. The content itself does not count as RSI; these resources qualify when your presence is evident through narration, framing, or guidance that communicates directly with students about their learning (e.g., you are present in the video explaining content or working out problems, you post a video or announcement from you explaining how to approach the content, etc.). If just statically posted in a module, they are considered course design, not RSI.

Study Guides/Supplemental Materials: Provide instructor-authored explanations and resources that clarify expectations, highlight key concepts, or address common student challenges. These materials count as RSI when they include your direct communication (e.g., guidance notes, commentary, or framing that tells students how to use the resource). If just statically posted in a module, they are considered course design, not RSI.

Other:

Feedback & Assessment

These communications count as RSI when also documented visibly (see RSI Documentation Announcements under the Communication section).

Detailed Assignment Feedback: Use rubrics and comments to provide constructive guidance that helps students understand their performance and how to improve. Feedback should be specific, aligned with rubric criteria, and highlight both strengths and areas for improvement.

Formative Assessment: Provide ongoing low-stakes assessments and feedback throughout the learning process to guide student progress and maintain RSI.

Performance Updates: Provide regular updates on student progress in the course, so students understand where they stand and what steps to take for improvement.

Early Intervention: Communicate with students using email, Starfish, "Message Students Who," or other methods, to direct them to additional campus resources.

Building Community (Best Practices)

These practices support engagement and student success, but do not fulfill RSI requirements unless connected to academic guidance or feedback.

Personalized Interactions: Acknowledge individual student contributions and circumstances.

Encouragement and Motivation: Send positive messages to keep students engaged.

Creating Safe Learning Environment: Establish and maintain respectful discourse.

Other:

Reflection: Student-to-Student Interaction Strategies

These activities support student-to-student interaction, per Title 5, Section 55204. Although the ACCJC does not currently evaluate these interactions, they remain a requirement in California.

Please mark all strategies you currently implement in your online courses.

Content-Focused Discussion Forums: Engage students by having them respond to instructor prompts and interact with each other around course content or progress on projects. Instructor participation required to qualify as RSI.

Peer Review Activities: Students post work and provide constructive feedback on peers' assignments, presentations, or projects.

Diverse Perspective Exchanges: Encourage students to share varied viewpoints and experiences related to course topics.

Collaborative Learning Projects: Guide students to work together on projects or case studies, sharing ideas and responsibilities.

Small Group Activities: Organize students into smaller groups to collaborate on specific learning tasks.

Problem-Solving Discussions: Facilitate students working together to solve complex problems or scenarios.

Student-Led Discussions: Invite students to take turns facilitating discussions on course topics.

Virtual Study Groups: Support students in forming groups for collective study and support.

Other:

This self-reflection tool is designed to support continuous improvement in online teaching practices and ensure compliance with regulatory guidelines for distance education.

If after completing the PDF self-reflection, you've decided to reach out to us, please re-enter your answers into the [Microsoft Forms version](#) and submit. You can expect a reply from us within one week.

Thank you!

The Distance Education Committee