Regular Substantive Interaction (RSI) Rubric and Process Findings by the Canvas Workgroup

The workgroup met every other week through Winter and Spring 2023.
The RSI Rubric/DLC Recommendations were used as a starting point.

- **The group agreed on the following items.**
  1. The ultimate goal of this process is to support faculty in designing and teaching an excellent online course that benefits students and meets federal and state regulations. Faculty interaction with students is one of the most important elements in online student success.
  2. The workgroup agreed with the DLC recommendation that the review begin with a self-evaluation and then move to a trained reviewer for approval and required commentary. The reviewer comments would catalog any revisions made (if revisions were required). The faculty member has the choice of reviewer per the contract.
  3. The content of the rubric itself was not changed, but the layout was reconfigured to more closely reflect the regulations on RSI (CFR 600.2, quoted in the preamble).
     a. RSI is focused on instructor-student contact per regulations.
     b. Monitoring Student Engagement was asked about separately per regulatory language.
     c. Evidence of at least two RSI elements "on a predictable and scheduled basis" is the basis of RSI demonstration (currently in a dropdown box).
     d. Per California Title 5 regulations, student-student interaction is required "if applicable." Rubric language was amended to describe instructor contribution as "facilitation" for this section to make clearer the faculty's intentional design to foster student-to-student interaction.
  4. The instructions to the faculty member (author of the course) were not changed from DLC recommendations, but the instructions to the reviewer were revised to enable the potential for a mentoring experience and to allow faculty to update their courses within the semester to meet RSI immediately. These reviewer revisions led to two items recommended for re-negotiation.
     a. Including an option of working with the reviewer to improve the course in 13.A.4.a.
     b. That the RSI review may take place as early as 25% into the semester to allow faculty time to update their course if needed (also change in 13.A.4.a).
  5. The workgroup suggested that the rubric be used as part of SPOT (DL) recertification, a process that takes place every four years, "or if concerns arise." A faculty member due for recertification would select one live course for review, select the reviewer, and wrap up the review, all within the same semester, if possible.
  6. Reviewers should be SPOT certified or the equivalent, experienced in teaching online, and trained in using the RSI rubric.
  7. The workgroup did not attempt to finalize the administrative set up of the RSI review process. The current rubric is constructed as a Word document but may be converted to an electronic process.

- **Issues discussed but without consensus.**
  - Faculty perspective: Faculty emphasized that preference would be peer (i.e., faculty) reviewers that were trained and compensated for their reviews. Faculty liked the idea of reviewers being perceived as mentors for other faculty.

- o   Administrators' perspective: Faculty mentoring is preferred. If the situation arises, educational administrators believe that faculty members have the right to choose educational administrators to review RSI per the contract.

- **Additional items or questions for other groups to address.** The workgroup requests that the following items be negotiated.
    1. If RSI is not demonstrated, the faculty member has the option of working with the reviewer to improve the course within the same semester (13.A.4.a).
    2. The RSI review may take place as early as 25% into the semester to allow faculty time to update their course if needed (13.A.4.a).
    3. Form H.13 is replaced by this rubric in the Faculty Contract.
    4. Reviewers from each division have training and review time be compensated.

Appendix

Rubric to Assess Regular Substantive Interaction (RSI)
Canvas Shells and Related Matters Recommendation

The Faculty Association contract Article 13.A.4 is the impetus for creating this rubric. 13.A.4.a indicates that use of this rubric is not part of the evaluation cycle. The contract states that "Academic Senate in consultation with the Faculty Association and the District will create a rubric that identifies regular and effective contact."
The REC Task Force created a rubric which was approved by Academic Senate in Fall 2019. In updating this rubric, the Distance Learning Committee (DLC) affirms the Task Force components:
- Regular substantive interaction is a regulatory requirement for all distance learning courses, per the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and Title 5.
- Individualized instructor-student contact is important to student equity and success.
- Students should have regular opportunities to interact with each other online if applicable.
- A *variety* of contact methods should be employed in a predictable and scheduled manner.
- If a contact method is not viewable in the LMS (e.g., email, phone, apps, Early Alert), then mention of it should be made in the course (e.g., syllabus, orientation, announcements, etc.) to indicate to the student and a potential evaluator that it is available.

CFR 600.2 defines regular substantive interaction as follows:
For purposes of this definition, substantive interaction is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:
- i.   Providing direct instruction;
- ii.   Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
- iii.   Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
- iv.   Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
- v.   Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency -

i. Providing the 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 or competency; and

ii. Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

The Canvas Shells and Related Matters Workgroup recommends:

- RSI reviews are the responsibility of the entire institution.
- That the Academic Senate, Faculty Association, and District accept the updated rubric (follows).
- That the RSI Rubric is a tool to help faculty assess RSI in online and hybrid courses.
- That, since this RSI Rubric review process is not part of the evaluation process, faculty participate in an RSI review of their courses once every four years to coincide with the SPOT/DL recertification cycle, or if concerns arise.
- That the process start with a self-assessment. Self-assessment enables reflection.   Self-assessment also helps reduce time on what could potentially be a very time-consuming endeavor for reviewers.
- A professor may choose from a department chair, educational administrator, or a faculty member to conduct an RSI certification of an online course. All above RSI certifiers must be SPOT certified or the equivalent. All RSI reviews shall be in consultation with the professor.
- Multiple trained reviewers can act as "designees" to reduce the burden of RSI evaluation which in contractual language currently falls on the "department chair or designee."
- That the current version of the RSI rubric, which is presented as a Word document with drop-down boxes, be configured in whatever way needed to create an efficient, paperless process.
- That form H.13 be replaced by this rubric in the Faculty Contract.

Rubric to Assess Regular Substantive Interaction (RSI)

Faculty Name: _____   **Date:** _____

Course Name/ID: _____   **CRN:** _____

Course Units:* _____   *For noncredit, report hours

This course section is: **Hybrid** (_____%) ☐ **Synchronous** ☐   **Asynchronous** ☐

Describe how you monitor your students' academic engagement and success and promptly and proactively engage in substantive interaction with a student when needed.

Evidence of Instructor-Student Contact (predictable and scheduled)

Type of instructor-student contact	Evidence	Reviewer
Use the drop-down box to choose type of contact. Identify all types you include for which you have evidence in the LMS. You can insert a new row and copy the drop-down box to log more types.	Where in your course is this RSI found? *Include frequency.* Be specific.	
Choose an item.		☐
Choose an item.		☐
Choose an item.		☐
Choose an item.		☐
Choose an item.		☐

Evidence of Student-Student Facilitation if applicable (recurring)

Type of student-student contact	Evidence	Reviewer
Use the drop-down box to choose type of contact. Identify all types you include for which you have evidence in the LMS. You can insert a new row and copy the drop-down box to log more types.	Where in your course is this facilitation/interaction found? *Include frequency.* Be specific.	
Choose an item.		☐
Choose an item.		☐

Reviewer Summary: Does the professor demonstrate RSI in this course section?
Check the appropriate box *and provide comments*.

Demonstrates RSI   ☐   Does not demonstrate RSI   ☐

Comments:

Signed (Instructor): _____ Signed (Reviewer):

_____

Instructions

Faculty member: Using this rubric,

- **Indicate how you monitor student engagement, including frequency of monitoring.**
- **Indicate *all types* of regular substantive interaction (RSI) you include in the online portion of your course. Do not include any activities held during an in-person class. (Drop-down boxes are used in this Word document to indicate the choices. The format of these choices may change based on the way that the rubric is eventually presented.)**
- **In the next column, indicate specifically *where* in your course you have demonstrated RSI. (Examples: Syllabus page 2; Module 1 – assignment name; Module 2 - specific content page.) List multiple examples if appropriate.**
- **Note that rote responses ("good job") are not considered substantive. Substantive responses allude to instructional content.**
- **Contact the reviewer to set up a review.**

Reviewer: Access the submitted rubric.

- **Reach out to the faculty member and create a dialogue so you understand what the faculty member does in their course.**
- **The faculty should describe evidence of monitoring engagement and report at least two forms of faculty -student RSI in order to "meet regulations." Verify the evidence you can and check the checkbox. California law states that students should interact when applicable. Note student interactions as well. RSI is only pertinent to the online portion of a class, so do not accept in-class activities.**
- **Please write comments for the faculty member's benefit which describe areas of excellence and opportunity that you see.**
- **A follow-up written communication should be sent to the professor, department chair, and administrator within two weeks of the review.**

After the Review

- **If the course does not demonstrate RSI, the faculty member may request a new review by a different reviewer. OR**
- **If the course does not demonstrate RSI, faculty also have the option of working with their reviewer to improve their course, if possible, in the semester so that it demonstrates RSI. The process of remediation and corrections made to the course should be documented on this rubric in the "Reviewer Summary" section of the rubric.**

[for reference – not to be included with rubric]
Contract Language
13.A.4.a.
A professor may choose from a department chair, educational administrator, or a faculty member to conduct an RSI certification of an online course. All above RSI certifiers must be SPOT certified or the equivalent. All RSI reviews shall be in consultation with the professor.

The RSI certifier may be granted access after a two (2) day notification period for no longer than one (1) week to visit a DL course to ensure that regular and substantive interaction is occurring. This observation shall occur after the 40% mark of the course. A follow-up written communication will be sent within two (2) weeks of the observation to the professor, to the department chair, and to the appropriate educational administrator. If regular and substantive interaction is not evident during this observation, the professor may request a second review by another SPOT certified or equivalent educational administrator. If the review does not find adequate regular and substantive interaction, a professor may be required to repeat SPOT certification, recertification, or its equivalent in order to maintain eligibility for teaching DL courses. Teaching DL courses is subject to college need, and loss of eligibility is not in itself a disciplinary action. No disciplinary action or evaluation will result from these observations. Professors will be compensated at the non-instructional rate for additional hours required for retraining or recertification.