

UWS Statement on Regular and Substantive Interaction

Applies to UWS online courses, students and faculty

Purpose

The purpose of the UWS regular and substantive interaction requirements is to facilitate academic excellence; fulfill the UWS core values of student focus and best practices; support student achievement of course and program learning outcomes; support student retention and persistence; and ensure compliance with the Department of Education requirements for online education. The following document includes a definition for regular and substantive interaction, associated policies and guidance documents, information for tracking and methods of validating regular and substantive interaction requirements, and references.

Definitions and Requirements

Definition for Regular

At least one scheduled faculty-created activity or examination must occur in every seven-day period. Each week it is expected that a student is academically engaged through substantive classroom exercises such as those described below. Each week it is expected that the faculty member is academically engaged through predictable (i.e., scheduled in advance) course activities and interactions such that students can expect and rely on those activities for their learning progression.

Definition for Substantive

The regular activity is also required to be substantive. At UWS, substantive interaction is defined as engaging students in important and meaningful teaching, learning and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and including two of the following:

- Providing direct instruction
- Assessing or providing quality feedback on a student's coursework
- Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency
- Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency

Faculty members are responsible for continually engaging in substantive interaction with the student (either scheduled or upon request of the student).

Regular and substantive interaction between student and the faculty member must occur throughout the term and should be commensurate with the number of weeks in the course and the number of credits assigned to the course. Student academic engagement and success is proactively monitored.

Logging into a course does not qualify as substantive interaction.

For lecture and lab courses, substantive interaction may include, but is not limited to the following:

| Student Activity | Faculty Activity |
|---|---|
| Submitting an academic assignment | Providing feedback and assessment of an academic assignment |
| Taking an exam, an interactive tutorial, or computer-assisted instruction | Developing the content for and providing support for student engagement with an exam, an interactive tutorial, or computer assisted instruction |
| Attending a study group that is assigned by the faculty or program | Assigning and providing guidance to student study groups |
| Participating in an online discussion about course content | Facilitating an online discussion about course content |
| Consulting with a faculty mentor to discuss course content | Consulting with students to discuss course content |
| Participating in faculty-guided independent study | Providing course content, student assessment and engagement for an independent study |

For atypical courses such as capstone, dissertation, practica and clinical internships, substantive interaction between faculty and students may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Scheduled check in at regular intervals
- Initiated by faculty and student as need arises as well through regularly planned intervals for instructional activities
- Provides specific academic content feedback on performance in professional settings as well as in written and other submitted assignments
- Robust, personalized feedback
- Providing information needed to ensure continued student progress through the course
- Responding to questions about the content of the course or competency; facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency

Acceptable Technology

According to the Federal Student Aid Handbook, institutions must use “acceptable technology” to deliver distance educations. Specifically, “distance education uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students and support regular and substantive interaction either synchronously or asynchronously. The types of technologies that can be used to support regular and substantive interaction between student and faculty include:

1. The internet
2. One-way and two-way transmission through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices
3. Video or audio conferencing

Please note that these technologies should be used in conjunction with the substantive activities noted in the table above.

Guidelines and Associated Policies for Faculty

- I. UWS faculty who are teaching online courses are expected to adhere to the UWS definition of regular and substantive interaction.
- II. Guidelines for faculty related to regular and substantive interaction can be found in:
 - a. UWS Online Faculty Required Best Practices
 - b. UWS Adjunct Faculty Performance Evaluation Plan (PEP)
- III. Faculty should contact their program directors or dean for copies of the documents referenced above and for questions related to regular and substantive interaction expectations.
- IV. For support, questions or troubleshooting related to UWS's educational software tools used to carry out regular and substantive interaction, faculty should submit a request to the [ServiceHub](#).

Guidelines and Associated Policies for Students

- I. Students enrolled in UWS online courses are expected to engage regularly with their faculty, the course material and their classmates.
- II. Policies about attendance/interaction in online courses include:
 - a. [Policy 1204: Attendance, Tardiness, and Course Participation](#)
 - b. [Policy 1239: Continuous Enrollment, Approved Leave, Involuntary Leave, Withdrawal, Dismissal, and Expulsion](#)
 - c. [Policy 9001: Student Conduct](#)
- III. For academic or advising support and for questions related to regular and substantive interaction requirements, students should contact Student Services at studentservices@uws.edu
- IV. For technical support related to UWS's educational software tools used to regularly engage with coursework, students should submit a request to the [ServiceHub](#).

Verification of Regular and Substantive Interaction

- I. To assure the integrity of the academic experience, UWS verifies regular and substantive interaction in the courses through:
 - a. Automated email notifications and summary reports to monitor students who have not logged into their courses.
 - b. Weekly non-substantive activity summary reports to monitor students and faculty who have not demonstrated substantive activity in their courses.
- II. Students who do not regular and substantive activity in their course(s) for 21 consecutive days are administratively withdrawn from their courses.

References

Federal Student Aid. (2019). *Volume 5 - Withdrawals and the Return of Title IV Funds* (Chapter 2). <https://ifap.ed.gov/federal-student-aid-handbook/1920FSAHbkVol5>

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Martin, Greg (2020). *Session BO12 Regulatory Update-Distance Education* [PowerPoint Slides]. Federal

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McArdle, Martin, and Musser (2019). *Session #13 Regulatory Update – State Authorization for Distance Education and Distance Education* [PowerPoint Slides]. Federal Student Aid. <https://fsaconferences.ed.gov/conferences/library/2019/2019FSAConfSession13.pdf>

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