Regular & Substantive Interactions: Online Faculty Guidance

High impact and best practices in teaching and learning encourage meaningful interactions between instructors and students. MLC has long advocated for robust learning experiences across all modalities. Recent guidance by the federal government requires that institutions receiving Title IV funding demonstrate that their courses include regular and substantive interactions between instructors and students. These interactions occur when faculty meet with students at specific times, present information, solicit student feedback, and answer student questions within a predictable timeframe.

The U.S. Department of Education defines both regular and substantive interactions.

Regular interaction between students and their instructor in asynchronous online instruction must be intentionally planned and initiated by the instructor. Regular interaction includes BOTH

- Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with students on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; AND
- Monitoring the students' academic engagement and success and ensuring substantive interaction with the student when needed as indicated by such monitoring or upon request by the student.

Substantive interaction involves engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment consistent with the content under discussion, and also AT LEAST TWO of the following:

- Providing direct instruction (synchronous only);
- Assessing or providing 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; or
- Other instructional activities as approved by the institutional or programmatic accrediting agency.

Martin Luther College expects its faculty to provide regular and substantive interactions with students in each online course in a uniform manner. To that end, each faculty member follows these practices and publishes them in their course syllabus:

- Respond to student questions communicated via email, Moodle messenger, or an open forum within 24 hours.
- Give substantive feedback and scores to students in discussion forums within 72 hours of the forum’s due date.
- Evaluate student assignments with instructive comments within 7 days of the assignment due date.
- Schedule, publish, and attend virtual office hours at least once monthly so students can consult with the instructor in real-time using convenient electronic means (phone, video conference, text messaging).

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