Regular and Substantive Interaction Requirements

The DoE requires federally funded institutions that offer online programs and courses to include “regular and substantive interaction” between the instructor and students. (The following are excerpts from 34 CFR § 600.2 (July 1, 2021) and 85 Fed. Reg. 54758, 54760, & 54762 (Sept 2, 2020)). These requirements apply to all NT, HY, and BL courses.

# Regular Interaction

Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with students and instructors, on a predictable and scheduled basis.

# Substantive Interaction

Engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and must also include at least TWO of the following:

* Providing direct instruction.
* 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.
* Other Instructional activities approved by institutional or program accrediting agencies.

Additional Notes Regarding Substantive Interactions:

* Substantive interactions take place at the course or competency level, and not the instructor level.
* Substantive interaction must be initiated by instructors.
* Interactions with machines or other forms of technology that do not involve the instructor would not qualify as substantive interaction.

# Academic Engagement

Active participation by a student in an instructional activity related to the student’s course of study” that is defined by the institution in accordance with any applicable requirements of its State or accrediting agency.

Includes:

* Attending a synchronous class, lecture, recitation, or field or laboratory activity, physically or online, where there is an opportunity for interaction between the instructor and students;
* Submitting an academic assignment or taking an exam;
* Participating in an interactive tutorial, webinar, or other interactive computer-assisted instruction;
* Participating in a study group, group project, or an online discussion that is assigned by the institution; or
* Interacting with and instructor about academic matters.

Excludes:

* Living in institutional housing or participating in a meal plan;
* Logging into an online class or tutorial without further participation; or
* Participating in academic counseling or advisement.