

Regular and Substantive Interaction with the Instructor

At Andrews University, “regular and substantive interaction” with the teacher is essential to differentiate between self-paced (correspondence) courses and interactive online (distance education) courses. This is necessary to comply with federal regulations for financial aid.

Definitions

The Andrews University Online Quality Assurance Committee has defined “regular and substantive interaction” as teacher-led, meaningful, and beneficial interaction between the teacher and the students.

- “Regular” refers to the quantity of teacher-initiated interaction equivalent to what would occur in a face-to-face course.
- “Substantive” refers to the quality of teacher interaction that results in improved learning experiences. Substantive interaction includes but is not limited to the following:
 - Meaningful feedback – detailed explanations on student performance
 - Beneficial feedback – helps students understand how they perform and provides guidance for future improved performance.
 - Timely interaction –instructor specifies reasonable times that students can expect responses to their inquiries or grading; includes interaction initiated by the teacher.
- “Instructor” requires interaction with an instructor who has the qualifications to teach the course or with a qualified graduate student teaching under the direction of the qualified instructor, according to Andrews policy.

Auditable Examples

Because the federal financial aid auditors may review the course in LearningHub, the following minimum interactions must occur in LearningHub. The DLiT Instructional Design Specialist or Instructional Facilitator assigned to the course is responsible for the internal Andrews audit of the interaction in the course.

For a semester-length interactive online course:

- ✓ There must be a variety of regular and substantive interactions with students each week. Examples include, but are not limited to the following:
 1. discussion forums
 2. grading
 3. announcements or a weekly overview

4. a notice of the date, time, and link for a scheduled Zoom conference; or the recording of the Zoom

For other length and format courses:

- ✓ For shorter courses, there must be a variety of regular and substantive interactions with students each week; for example:
 1. in an 8 week course, there should be at least four interactions per week
 2. in a 4 week course, there should be at least eight interactions per week
- ✓ Blended/online courses: There must be a variety of regular and substantive interactions with students each week that is not face to face.
 1. If the course is longer than 15 weeks, there should be the equivalent of minimum two interactions per week. i.e. if 30 weeks are online, there should be one interaction per week.
- ✓ The DLiT Instructional Design Specialist or Instructional Facilitator assigned to the course can assist the instructor in designing the course to meet this requirement, keeping the credit hour definition in mind.

Instructional Tips

There are multiple ways to ensure regular and substantive interaction with the instructor. Additional strategies include:

- Discussion forums – instructor commenting, summarizing, asking questions, affirming
- Messages within the LMS
- Phone calls (documented by the instructor)
- Posting in the news forum
- Posting a video announcement
- Grading
- Poodll response
- Video conference / Zoom meeting
- Email (documented by the instructor)
- Social Media
- Statement / reminder of deadlines
- Office hours – making a time commitment for availability

Feedback initiated by the instructor is a common way of providing substantive interaction. Meaningful, beneficial, and timely feedback includes but isn't limited to:

- 1) Exemplary rubric for all major assessments that is graded using the rubric in LearningHub
- 2) Explanations of why the student received a specific grade so the student understands how they can improve
- 3) Clear expectations established in the syllabus for when student will receive timely feedback/grading from the instructor. The feedback and grading for an assignment should be completed before a similar assignment is due next in order

to allow the student to prepare based on feedback. For example, these are appropriate times for a semester length course:

- a. Discussion (i.e. 2-7 days for feedback and grading)
- b. Quizzes (manually graded) (i.e. 5-7 days)
- c. Minor papers/projects (i.e. 7-10 days)
- d. Major papers/projects (i.e. 10-14 days)
- e. Correct answer in quizzes shown once the quiz is closed for the whole class
- f. Exams (before the final) give specific written feedback regarding student performance

Exceptions

Courses that meet these requirements but are not auditable in LearningHub must include an explanation document each semester the course is taught. We suggest placing it hidden from the students indented underneath the syllabus. The DLiT Instructional Design Specialist or Instructional Facilitator assigned to the course may arrange with the teacher to audit the interaction occurring outside LearningHub to ensure compliance.

At the graduate level, the amount of “regular and substantive interaction” may be significantly different depending on the design of the course.