Student-Centered & Accreditation-Ready: RSI Made Easy

Crafton Hills College supports student success through intentional interaction!

Why RSI Matters

Regular and Substantive Interaction is not just compliance - it's a powerful accelerator of student success that transforms online learning experiences.

Reduces Equity Gaps

Creates more equitable learning experiences for all students

Increases Retention

Boosts student satisfaction, engagement, and course completion rates

Enhances Efficiency

Makes your teaching more effective and streamlined

Meets federal, state, and ACCJC regulations

Adheres to overarching distance education regulations

What RSI Is

RSI is about creating genuine teaching moments that support student success.

- **Instructor-initiated** interaction between the instructor and students
- **Planned and intentional**, not incidental or optional
- **Regular and ongoing** throughout the term, not concentrated at the beginning or end
- **Focused on learning**, not administrative tasks alone
- **Substantive**, meaning it actively supports student understanding and progress

What RSI Is Not

Understanding what doesn't count as RSI is just as important as knowing what does. These common practices fall short of the substantive interaction standard:

Generic Announcements
Broad messages to the entire class without teaching content or personalized guidance

Automated Messages
System-generated notifications or reminders that lack instructional value

Peer–Only Discussions
Student-to-student interactions without instructor facilitation or guidance

Administrative Reminders
Logistical information about deadlines or course policies without teaching

Empty Feedback
Generic praise like "good job!" without specific, actionable guidance for improvement

Rubric–Only Grading
Scores or check marks without explanatory comments that guide student learning and improvement

Substantive Interaction Requirements

Federal regulations require at least 2-3 of these instructor-led activities to qualify as substantive interaction:

Guiding Comprehension

Helping students understand complex ideas through clarification and deeper exploration

Facilitating Discussion

Leading academic conversations that advance learning and critical thinking

Timely Feedback

Providing individualized, actionable responses that guide student improvement

Instructor-Initiated Outreach

Reaching out to students based on performance or engagement (e.g., missed work or inactivity) to offer guidance, support, or next steps.

Instructor Check-Ins

Initiating documented, instructor-to-student contact to address progress, questions, or concerns and guide next steps.

Direct Instruction (synchronous courses)

Providing lectures, demonstrations, or explanations that teach course content and concepts

ACCJC Pilot RSI Rubric

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges evaluates RSI through a comprehensive rubric focusing on five key areas:

Instructor Presence

Clear, consistent visibility of the instructor throughout the course

Regularity & Predictability

Scheduled, consistent patterns of interaction students can rely on

Substantive Actions

Teaching activities that meaningfully advance student learning

Course Design

Structure that enables and encourages regular substantive interaction

Evidence of Engagement

Documented proof of meaningful instructor-student interaction

Making RSI Manageable

RSI doesn't have to be overwhelming. The key is working smarter, not harder. When you build interaction into your course structure and establish efficient routines, RSI becomes a natural part of your teaching practice.

Build Into Structure
Design interaction points directly into your course framework

Use Templates
Create reusable routines that save time and ensure consistency

Focus on Meaning
Prioritize meaningful interaction over frequent busywork

Reuse Components
Leverage successful elements across multiple courses

High-Impact, Low-Lift RSI Strategies

These proven strategies deliver maximum student benefit with minimal time investment. Each one creates meaningful interaction while respecting your workload:

1. Weekly Learning Guides

Brief roadmaps that orient students and provide teaching presence

2. Instructor–Led Discussions

Facilitated conversations that deepen understanding and critical thinking

3. Actionable Feedback

Specific, constructive responses that guide student improvement

4. Learning Checks

Quick assessments with personalized guidance on misconceptions

5. Unit Wrap–Ups

Synthesis activities that connect concepts and preview what's next

6. Personalized Nudges

Targeted outreach to students who need additional support

Instructor–Initiated vs Student–Initiated

Understanding this distinction is critical for RSI compliance. Only instructor-initiated interactions count toward meeting federal and accreditation requirements.

Instructor–Initiated (Counts)

- Direct instruction and explanations
- Proactive outreach to students
- Discussion facilitation and guidance
- Individualized feedback on work
- Clarifying misconceptions

Student–Initiated (Does Not Count Alone)

- Student questions to instructor
- Peer-to-peer discussions
- Student-led study groups
- Self-directed learning activities
- Automated system responses

While student-initiated interactions are valuable for learning, they don't fulfill RSI requirements unless the instructor responds with substantive teaching.

Ensuring Regularity and Substance

Regularity = Scheduled & Consistent

Students need predictable patterns they can rely on throughout the course. Regular interaction means establishing a consistent schedule that students can anticipate.

Examples:

- Weekly learning guides posted every Monday
- Predictable feedback cycles (e.g., within 48 hours)
- Required interaction points each week
- Consistent discussion facilitation schedule

Substance = Advances Learning

Substantive interaction goes beyond surface-level engagement to meaningfully move students forward in their understanding and skill development.

Examples:

- Clarifying misconceptions with detailed explanations
- Providing deeper context and connections
- Coaching students through challenging concepts
- Facilitating discussions that build critical thinking
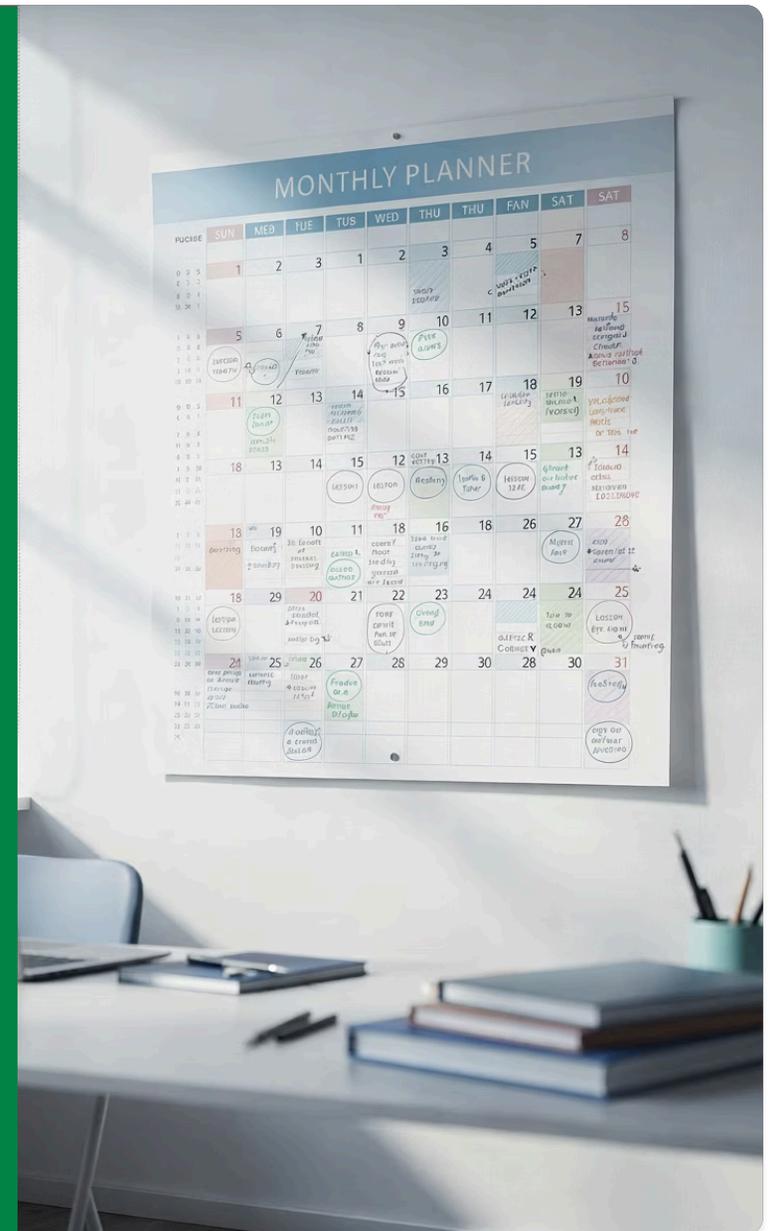
Time-Saving RSI Strategies

Work efficiently while maintaining high-quality interaction. These strategies help you maximize impact while respecting your time:

Reusable Templates

Create frameworks for weekly guides, feedback, and discussions that you can adapt quickly

Audio/Video Feedback

Record quick explanations that feel personal and often take less time than typing

Discussion Bundling

Respond to multiple students at once when addressing common themes or questions

Analytics-Based Nudges

Use LMS data to identify and reach out to students who need support most
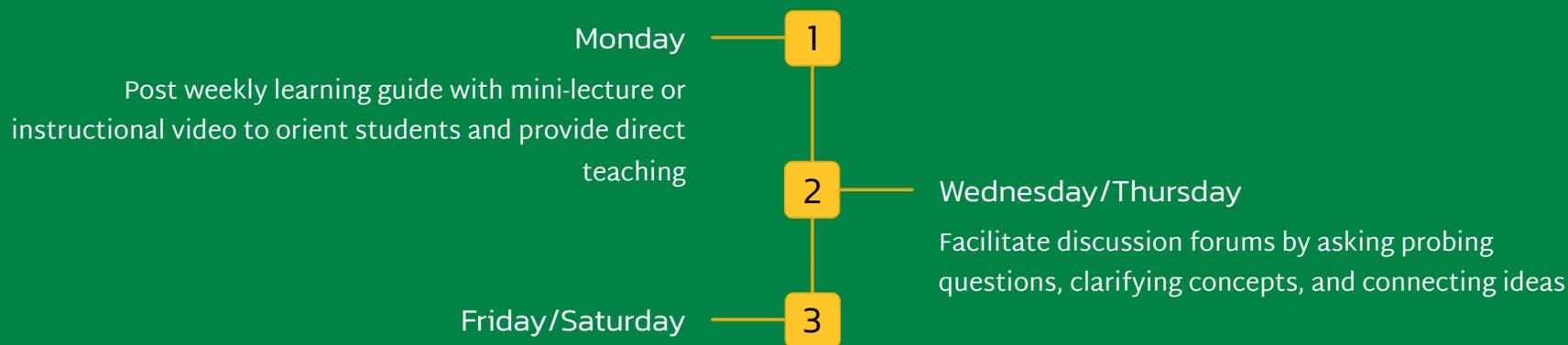
Evergreen Learning Guides

Develop core instructional content you can reuse across terms with minor updates

Weekly Flow Example

Here's a realistic weekly schedule that ensures regular and substantive interaction without overwhelming your workload:

Monday — **1**

Post weekly learning guide with mini-lecture or instructional video to orient students and provide direct teaching

2 — **Wednesday/Thursday**

Facilitate discussion forums by asking probing questions, clarifying concepts, and connecting ideas

Friday/Saturday — **3**

Provide individual feedback on assignments with specific, actionable guidance for improvement

4 Ongoing Throughout Week

Monitor student progress, respond to questions, offer check-ins, and provide clarifications as needed

This pattern creates predictability for students while distributing your workload across the week. Adjust timing based on your schedule and course needs.

What Students Want

Understanding student preferences helps you design RSI that truly serves their needs. Research and feedback consistently show that students value quality over quantity:

Prompt Clarification

"I need quick responses when I'm confused, not days later when I've already moved on or given up."

Useful Feedback

"Tell me specifically what I did well and what I need to improve. 'Good job' doesn't help me learn."

Human Presence

"I want to know there's a real person teaching this course who cares about my success."

Clear Expectations

"Show me what success looks like and give me a roadmap to get there."

Meaningful Work

"Less busywork, more activities that actually help me understand and apply what I'm learning."

RSI Quick-Win Checklist

Start improving your RSI practice today with these high-impact, easy-to-implement actions. Choose one or more to begin your journey toward accreditation readiness:

1 — **Add a Weekly Guide**
Create a simple template that orients students each week with learning objectives, key concepts, and your teaching presence

2 — **Improve One Discussion Prompt**
Revise a discussion question to require deeper thinking and plan how you'll facilitate meaningful conversation

3 — **Add Substantive Feedback**
Choose one assignment and commit to providing specific, actionable comments that guide student improvement

4 — **Address a Pain Point**
Identify where students typically struggle and create a proactive teaching intervention at that moment

5 — **Establish Weekly Pattern**
Set a consistent schedule for when students can expect to hear from you and stick to it

Your Accreditation-Ready Action Plan

Take a moment to reflect and create your personalized plan for RSI improvement. Consider your current practices and identify concrete next steps:

Regularity

Reflect: What's one thing you can add to create more consistent, predictable interaction patterns in your course?

Example: Post a weekly learning guide every Monday morning

Substance

Reflect: What's one thing you can strengthen to make your interactions more meaningful and teaching-focused?

Example: Add specific feedback comments beyond rubric scores

ACCJC Alignment

Reflect: What's one improvement you can make to better demonstrate your teaching presence for accreditation review?

Example: Document discussion facilitation more clearly

Resources & Support

- [ACCJC Pilot Rubric](#)
- [RSI Implementation Chart](#)
- Reusable Templates - see [SP2026 RSI email](#)
- [Fundamentals of RSI](#) micro-course
- Support Contact: Cynthia Hamlett

Thank You

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