Guidelines on “Substantive Interaction”

A hybrid or online course must require and support substantive interaction between students and the course instructor. It is expected that this interaction requires an amount of time and a level of rigor that makes it equivalent to in-class activities.

On September 9, 2020, the Department of Education published a new definition of “substantive interaction”:

For purposes of this definition, **substantive interaction** is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes **at least two** of the following—

(i) Providing direct instruction;

(ii) Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;

(iii) Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;

(iv) Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or

(v) Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

It is also expected that the substantive interaction will be planned and initiated by the course instructor, not solely by the student. Instructors of hybrid and online courses are expected to “provid[e] the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis.”