

Policy Number/Title: 2.2.39 Regular and Substantive Interaction
Effective Since: 08/28/2024
Last Revision Approved: 08/28/2024
Responsible Office: Academic Affairs

1. Scope:

All faculty

2. Definitions:

This section was intentionally left blank.

3. Policy:

Winthrop University is committed to providing the highest quality education to students regardless of delivery modality. In terms of online education, Winthrop provides courses that meet the U.S. Department of Education’s requirement that “all online courses for which students may use Title IV funds (federal financial aid) ensure that there is regular and substantive interaction between students and instructors.”(i)

Winthrop’s commitment to regular and substantive interaction aligns with well-established best-practices for online education, as detailed by the Online Learning Consortium (ii) and other pedagogical resources.

Winthrop’s commitment to regular and substantive interaction provides online students with the highest level of instruction and greatest probability of academic success and degree completion.

Specifically, Winthrop University complies with this policy in the following manner. Each online course, including asynchronous or competency-based education modalities, will follow four criteria:

I. The instructor of record meets SACSCOC standards for subject matter expertise.

Winthrop University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Therefore, Winthrop faculty who teach in online courses meet all



qualifications of SACSCOC standard 6.2a and possess the expertise appropriate for instruction.

II. The instructor of record initiates interaction with the student in specific ways throughout the course.

In addition to responding to student-initiated communications, Winthrop faculty proactively engage with students throughout their online courses. Specifically, Winthrop faculty of online courses commit to initiating at least the following substantive interactions with their online students:

- Individualized emails;
- Personalized feedback on assignments; and
- Scheduled virtual office hours.

III. The interactions between the instructor of record and the student are regular and somewhat frequent throughout the term.

The interactions between Winthrop faculty and their online students are consistent and relatively frequent in direct proportion to the length of time the course is offered. For example, in addition to holding virtual office hours, Winthrop faculty of online courses commit to providing predictable and regular interactions in other ways, such as:

- Weekly course announcements or updates;
- Virtual group help sessions.

IV. The interactions between the instructor of record and the student are substantive and academic in nature.

Winthrop online students are engaged academically through multiple ways “consistent with the content under discussion.” Specifically, Winthrop faculty of online courses commit to engaging in at least two of the following activities:

- Provide direct instruction;
- Assess or provide feedback on student’s work;
- Respond to student questions or provide information about the content of the course or competency;



- Facilitate group discussions regarding the course content; or
- Provide other instructional activities as prescribed by specialized accreditation standards.

- i. Visit Federal Register for Distance Education and Innovation for the entire policy.
- ii Online Learning Consortium (2019). Regular and substantive interaction: Background, concerns, and guiding principles; WCET (n.d). Regular and Substantive Interaction; Cooper, M., & Swartzwelder, R. (2020, September 4). U.S. Department of Education issues new distance education and related regulations. Maynard Cooper Gale. <https://www.maynardcooper.com/u-s-department-of-education-issues-new-distance-education-and-related-regulations>

Empire State University [Faculty Resources for Online Learning](#)

4. Procedures:

This section was intentionally left blank.

5. Resources:

This section was intentionally left blank.

6. History of Revisions:

08/28/2024 Policy first established

7. Approvals:

Responsible Officer Signature/Date:

Vice President/Senior Administrator Signature/Date:

President Signature/Date: