

Faculty Teaching and Learning

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Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) in Online Courses

As someone who will be teaching fully online course(s) during **Spring 2025** and/or **Fall 2025** semesters, please know that **your online course(s) might be selected to be reviewed** during Cañada Accreditation Process by ACCJC.

We invite you to watch the RSI Showcase Quick Cuts video, which includes highlight clips from our three-hour RSI Summer Showcase event. Canada Faculty share their online courses and how they are implementing RSI standards in preparation for the ACCJC review.



Support for RSI

Below are a few resources we recommend reviewing to Faculty teaching online in Spring 2025 and Fall 2025 to ensure their courses align with the [RSI Rubric](#).

Microcourse: Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI in Action): This 2-hour asynchronous microcourse focuses on the revised standards for Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI), as outlined in Title V of the California Education Code.

- **Office Hours**
 - **Fall 2025:**
Stop by the DE Team's **Virtual Office Hours** on **Tuesdays from 11:00 AM-12:00 PM** (noon). No appointment is required. We can answer any questions related to Canvas, RSI, and more!
[Join Office Hours via Zoom](#) →
 - If you need to meet outside of office hours, please email Nada Nekrep (nekrepn@smccd.edu) or Erica Reynolds (reynoldse@smccd.edu). We are happy to look at your online courses and answer any questions
- **Use the [RSI Checklist](#) to evaluate your online courses**
 - Review the [ACCJC RSI Rubric](#) and use Cañada's RSI Self Assessment Tool to evaluate the RSI in your online courses. The more elements you have checked off, the better RSI you have!
 - [RSI Checklist Document](#) →
- **Watch Recording on How to Use the RSI Checklist**

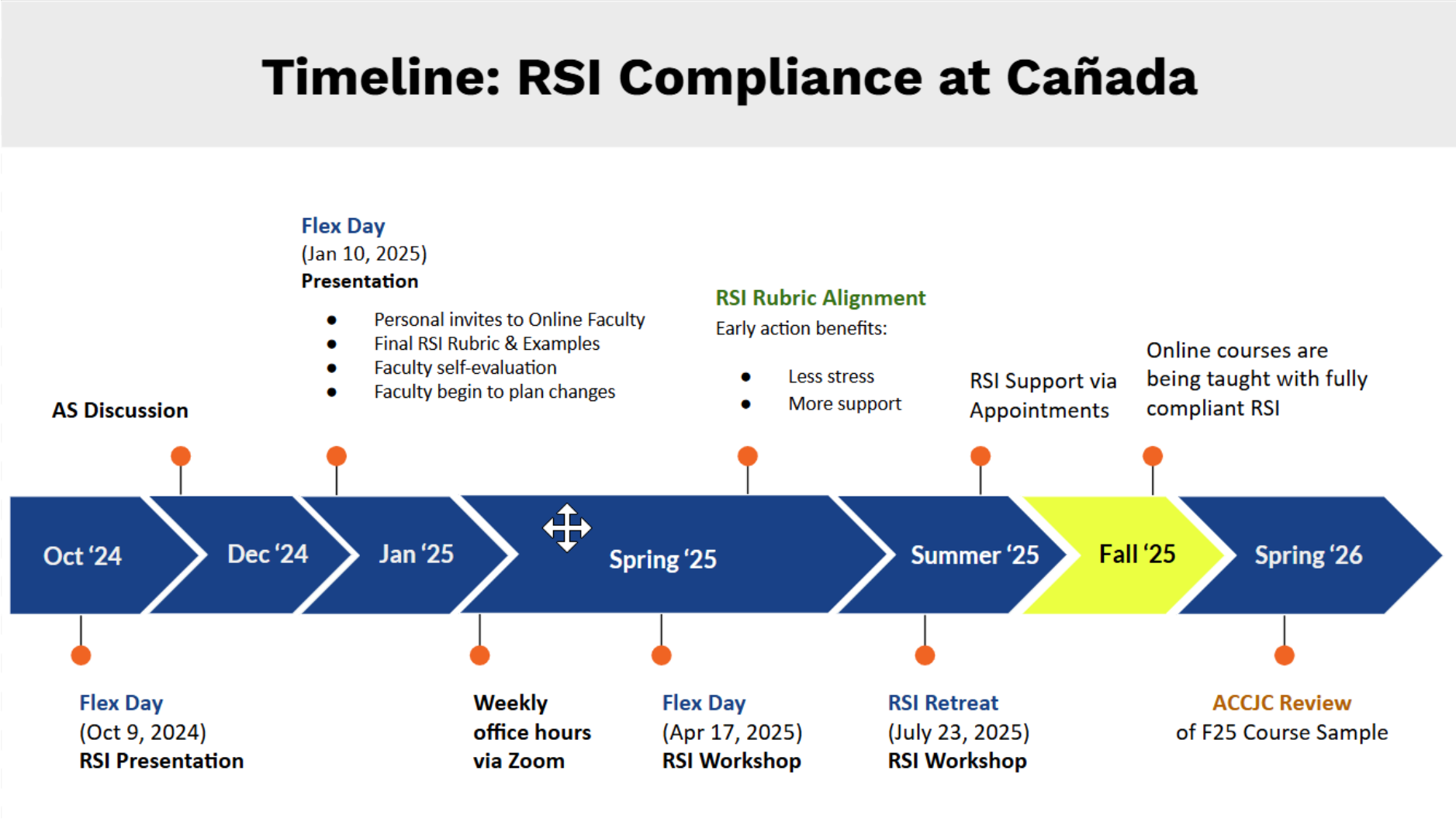
This session introduces the **RSI Checklist**, a practical tool designed to help online faculty easily assess and strengthen the use of Regular and Substantive Interaction in their courses.

 - [Access the Recording for Elevate Your Online Teaching with the RSI Checklist](#)
 - Passcode: **GQ*z13=k**
- **Try the RSI Plan Template**

If you need some help developing a plan for RSI, we suggest filling out the [RSI Plan Template](#). After completing the template, you can upload it directly to your Canvas course.

RSI Timeline

Below is an image of the timeline for the RSI Review Process at Cañada.



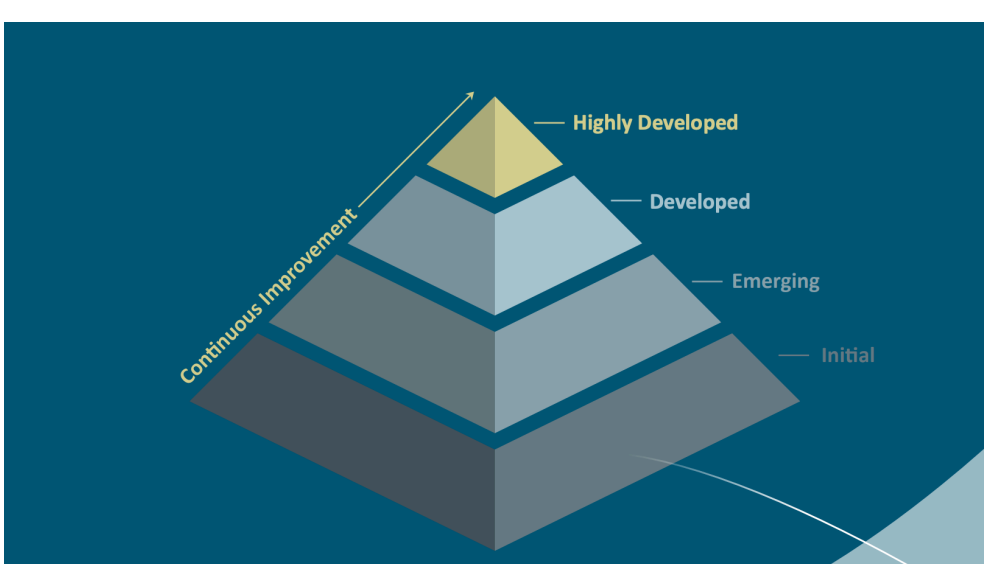
Past Communications

- + [9/10/2025 | Watch the August Flex Day Recording!](#)
- + [8/6/25 | ACTION NEEDED for all Fall 2025 Online Faculty: Attend Flex Day Session on RSI!](#)
- + [7/28/25 | Review the RSI Showcase Recording!](#)
- + [7/7/25 | RSI Showcase Coming Soon!](#)
- + [6/30/25 | ACTION NEEDED for all Fall 2025 Online Faculty!](#)
- + [4/17/25 | RSI April Flex Session](#)
- + [3/14/25 | RSI Canvas Global Announcement](#)
- + [2/10/25 | Prepare Your Online Course\(s\) for ACCJC Review](#)
- + [12/12/24 | Guidance for Online Faculty - Prepare Your Online Course\(s\) for ACCJC Review](#)

Need a breakdown of RSI Rubric Criteria?

Check out the ACCJC Quality Continuum Rubric for Distance Education, which breaks down each criteria that the reviewers will look at.

[ACCJC Quality Continuum Rubric for Distance Education](#)



Additional Information on RSI

Faculty presence is an important factor in the success of online courses. Online instructors were previously required to meet the requirements for "Regular Effective Contact", using both synchronous and asynchronous channels, as appropriate, to connect with students in their online courses. In 2021 the Department of Education updated the definition to "[Regular and Substantive Interaction](#) (RSI) between students and their instructors. Clearly-defined RSI became a primary requirement for all online courses eligible for federal financial aid, [setting them apart from correspondence education with limited interaction](#).

Regular, scheduled and predictable interaction is a central component of learning that ensures high-quality course design and delivery. Studies have shown that RSI improves student retention, motivation and success, as well as fosters a sense of community. Faculty should be prepared to encourage student interaction, build multiple opportunities for instructor-student and student-student contact, encourage students to ask questions, and provide feedback in a timely manner, as specified in the course syllabus. Communication within the LMS (e.g., Canvas Inbox) is strongly encouraged as it ensures compliance with FERPA, and is also easily trackable, which is critical during potential accreditation reviews.

Learn more about RSI on the ACCJC's [2024-25 Strategic Initiative: Distance Education Rubric](#)

To learn more about Distance Education and RSI, watch the webinar recording from the California Community Colleges called *Distance Education RSI Informational Webinar- RSI Requirements, the ACCJC Rubric, Best RSI Practices and Resources*.

[Access the RSI Informational Webinar here](#)

RSI Best Practices

Below is a list of best practices for ensuring RSI in your online courses.

- + **Establish early communication with students**
- + **Provide clear and specific information in course Syllabus**
- + **Create an Ice-breaker activity**
- + **Instructor initates interaction with students**
- + **Be available to support students**
- + **Provide several channels for student-student interaction**
- + **Interact with students timely and consistently**
- + **Interactions are substantive and heavily based on course content**

Frequently Asked Questions

[Review the ACCJC Distance Education Review - Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Who will be reviewing, when will the review process begin, and how will I know if my course is selected?

- ACCJC Reviewers will be granted access to fully online courses in Canvas. Members of the DE team will not be reviewers.
- ACCJC will begin looking at courses in Spring 2026.
- At this stage, we do not have the details to provide on how you will know if your course is selected.

Does the ACCJC Review apply to cross-listed courses?

Yes, but if your course is cross-listed with an in-person course, only the online section will be reviewed.

Are Hybrid courses selected in the ACCJC Review?

Hybrid courses are not subject to the upcoming RSI accreditation review, only courses taught 100% online. However, we will continue sharing resources widely as the robust RSI greatly benefits our students taking courses in any DE modality. If you cross-listed one course that is face-to-face and one course that is fully online in Canvas, the section that is online is subject to review.

What is a communication plan? And, are there examples of a communication plan?

A communication plan is established by the Instructor at the beginning of the semester and details how they will be communicating to students. Typically, a communication plan will outline when communications will be sent out, what purpose the communication serves, and how the communication will be delivered to students (i.e. Announcements, Modules, Canvas Inbox, etc.)

[Example Communication Plans](#) →

Is there an online course that instructors can take to learn more about RSI?

Yes. Within the [Vision Resource Center](#), instructors can complete the online self-paced course called "SMCCCD Microcourse: RSI in Action". This course takes approximately 2 hours to complete.

[Visit SMCCCD Microcourse: RSI in Action](#) →

If I primarily use Outlook email to communicate with students, how do I prove I am having those interactions in my online courses?

We highly suggest that you capture screenshots of these email communications and add them to an unpublished module within your Canvas course. This will ensure that the review team has access to external communications you make with students.

For multi-modal classes, do I have to publish recordings of my zoom meetings?

No, it is not required, but it is a helpful resource for students.

Am I required to respond to my students and grade their submissions within 48 hours to meet RSI requirements?

There is no specific response time outlined in RSI regulations. ACCJC reviewers will instead be looking for interaction to be timely and consistent throughout the entire course. We recommend setting timing expectations for your students in your communication plan at the start of the semester and then sticking to that until the course ends. It's better to set realistic and manageable response time expectations in your communication plan and then stick to them, rather than to set shorter response time expectations that you're not able to meet consistently. That said, please aim for the shortest reasonable timeframe possible.

Students, especially in online courses, should feel supported and know their questions and needs will be answered within a short, reliable timeframe. A common recommendation is within 24-48 hours on weekdays.

Am I required to respond to every student's discussion post for every discussion in my course?

No. The ACCJC reviewers are not looking for instructors to respond to every single post. We understand that this would require an immense amount of time and workload. ACCJC reviewers will instead be looking for meaningful interactions that are timely and consistent throughout the entire course.

Does having robust in-person feedback apply to RSI Rubric criteria B,C,D?

No. Feedback given in-person only applies to criteria A.

Will reviewers be able to see communications in Pronto?

At this stage, we don't know if they will have access to Pronto or other third-party integrated content. Please email Lindsey Irizarry, irizarryl@smccd.edu if you would like to pilot a new RSI Report from Pronto in your Canvas course. Pronto will generate a report that shows evidence of RSI in your course.

Will Panopto videos fulfill substantive interaction?

No. Panopto videos only count as substantive interaction if they were made to provide feedback or increase learning.

When I add a video to my course, is it required to write a brief explanation about the context of the video?

While adding a description for videos is good practice, this is not required for the ACCJC RSI review.

Is the ACCJC Review more challenging than a POCR review?

No. In most cases, people find the POCR review process to be more robust, time-consuming, and detail-oriented than the ACCJC review.

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