

COOL Executive Summary of Division Feedback on RSI Documentation Model: Overview and Dissenting Opinion

Overview

The Committee On Online Learning (COOL), a subcommittee of the Foothill College Academic Senate has drafted a model for documenting RSI to meet federal and state standards and align with accreditation requirements.

An initial draft was presented by COOL to Academic Senate in June 2023, and COOL took the feedback from Academic Senate and revised the model. COOL representatives have shared the second version of the RSI documentation model with their constituents who teach online.

COOL has adopted the practice of documenting a dissenting opinion in the case of a non-unanimous vote. This document summarizes perspectives and feedback collected from faculty constituents and provides a dissenting opinion as the vote in COOL was not unanimous.

Summary of Feedback

Most faculty voiced that RSI documentation and training was needed to meet regulatory requirements. Most faculty agreed that RSI is critical to student success in an online class and is valuable. Faculty had positive comments about the rubric.

The dominant theme of the negative feedback was a concern over the time commitment required to engage with the RSI documentation model. Concerns about allocation of limited time resources were especially strong among adjunct faculty. There was concern that online faculty were being required to meet a higher standard than face to face faculty.

Dissenting Opinion

Faculty want to engage in high-quality teaching, align with genuine professional standards, foster a respectful relationship with our employer, and avoid unnecessary time commitments. The approved draft is a positive step toward improving our teaching practices and standards, but many faculty are concerned about the proposed time requirement (18 hours over 3 years).

Let's collegially engage all faculty in adopting and documenting RSI without diminishing the level of self directedness we value as professionals. Let's not establish the precedent that a change in accreditation standards corresponds to an 18-hour training program. This is burdensome for part-time faculty who are already stretched thin (they may also participate in duplicate training elsewhere); Redundant for faculty who are highly engaged in online teaching and related professional learning programs (e.g. POCR); Prohibitive for an instructor who might fill a small online teaching need (e.g. 1 unit); and not a best use of college resources.

BSS Feedback on RSI for COOL

Julie Jenkins <jenkinsjulie@fhda.edu>

Fri 10/13/2023 10:36 AM

To:K Allison Meezan <meezankaren@fhda.edu>

Cc:Alexis Aguilar <aguilaralexis@fhda.edu>

Hi Allison,

I'm attaching some feedback we received on the RSI...I know we'll talk about it in the meeting today, but I think some of these may be spaces where the document is unclear (Another that I didn't include here asked how Option 1 & 2, became Phase 1 & 2). Another issue though that is coming up is, like always, workload-- esp. about PGA/PAA when that may be a system that needs to be re-thought out.

Julie

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Suggestions:

1. Put what RSI (Regular, Substantive Interaction) stands for in the title of the document. Right now, it just says "RSI."
2. Provide specific examples of RSI (even if it's not a mutually agreed upon list at this point). It's hard to comment when I'm not sure what "2 RSI's per week per student" specifically may mean (maybe I just missed it). Depending on what a single/discreet RSI is, it could be tough for both students and faculty to have 2 RSI's per week / per course. For students, this could set them up for increased workload / cognitive load in each course only in order to meet an RSI target. For faculty, if the College continues to insist on enrollment of 50 students per class, that means a minimum of 100 RSI grading interactions per week. Multiply that by 3 classes per quarter and you can see how this becomes unsustainable. Again, it depends on what is meant by a single, discreet RSI. In my classes, I get a lot of questions - sometimes dozens per day. Each of these is a regular and substantive interaction. But, depending on how we are defining RSI, they may not count.
3. This I will refer to as the "Morale Imperative." Please consider this carefully. Background: Aside from being through an unprecedented Morale Crisis at Foothill in the last 5-plus years, plus the pandemic and many (all) of us have had the additional stress of the introduction of aggressive AI. So we have had to spend an inordinate amount of time and energy reconceptualizing what we are doing in our classes due to the sudden and unexpected advent of tools like Chat GPT and other aggressive AI in a College climate that has been less than ideal. Considering AI in our classrooms we did without much guidance or assistance from the College. As such, adding another extensive requirement in a top-down fashion will add to the pre-existing "feelings of anomie, being overwhelmed/exhausted/low trust/low morale..." factor to consider.
4. For the badges, what do you do for faculty who either don't do or no longer need PGA credit?

If I am understanding this draft correctly, all faculty will have to be re-approved to teach online regardless of prior approval and will then need to be re-certified for RSI every three years. If this is separate from the regular J1 evaluations that faculty are subject to it seems to be a clear violation of the contract. There seems to be room for RSI to be included in the existing evaluation process for faculty.

Thanks for sending along. I wanted to give you some of my initial thoughts, as you asked for feedback.

From an adjunct/part-time point of view this all seems (in the nature of academia) unnecessarily complicated, cumbersome, and very unpractical for a simple task.

Us part-timers have full-time jobs, and I am reading the hours upon hours of training and meetings and events that are proposed here and wondering why this was the best path forward. I am seeing ~20-25 of initial work, and ongoing 2+ hours per quarter with meetings, for something that is pretty straightforward. I am unlikely to make any of the cohort review groups or other activities, without having to take PTO from my day job. This seems unfair and harsh on a specific group of faculty. And not something to lose either job over.

My professional thoughts - we all are highly educated, have training in pedagogy, and can implement laws and standards as required. All I really need is the RSI definition from the government and then I can easily implement those standards into my courses (they are actually already met, and I am guessing is the case for most faculty). Put it in our contracts. Have us do a 5-minute self-report attestation after each course that we met them. Maybe, if the college needs to, a one-hour online async training, where part-timers are paid for their time.

I really do think self-reporting documentation is the path forward, or periodic within department peer review for documentation purposes, and that could probably take 15-30 minutes maximum per course. It does not need to be synchronous or in "small groups." That seems like a scheduling and logistics nightmare for us part-timers that work elsewhere.

Julie Jenkins, PhD
she/her/hers
Anthropology & Global Studies, Foothill College
BSS COOL Rep
Faculty Association Executive Council

Student Resources:

[Personal Counseling Services](#) | [Food Pantry](#) | [Veteran's Center](#)
[Disability Resource Center](#) | [Dreamers and UndocuAlly](#)

As a member of the Foothill College community with an office on campus, I acknowledge that I am a guest on the ancestral and traditional land of the First People of this region, the present-day [Muwekma Ohlone Tribe](#) of the San Francisco Bay Area (formerly Verona Band of Alameda County). I support the sovereignty of this Chochenyo-Thámien-Ramaytush-Awáswas Ohlone-speaking tribal group and other indigenous peoples. [Link to Foothill College Muwekma Ohlone Tribal Land Acknowledgment](#)

FAC Division faculty feedback on RSI model

We appreciate your comments before **October 13, 2023**

All comments are shared with anonymity

Add your **Affirmations** here - why you support the RSI model

- I very much support the goals of the RSI model, these are critical to student success and adherence to CA and US education code.
- I support option 1 over option 2 for the reasons below.
- RSI is required and valuable
- Option 1 is easier to implement, I support Option1
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Add your **Concerns** here - your worries about the RSI model

- Option 2's aims are commendable, but it is far too time, labor, and resource intensive. I feel that ultimately it would take valuable faculty time that should be committed to working with students and redirect it toward documenting such activity.
- The fiscal resources necessary to pay reviewers for option 2 would be better spent on classroom instruction needs.
- I feel that much of this activity should be conducted in course evaluations rather than a separate review system.
- The rubric is excellent, can this element of option 2 be included (or partially included) in option 1 "Each faculty member must meet the minimum standards in the RSI rubric as determined by self-evaluation and review by an Online Learning mentor."
- Option 2 has a lot of schedules that need to align, while faculty are also being tasked to shoulder more campus responsibilities.
- Option 1 is more supportive of faculty who teach many different courses. They can complete the online asynchronous class once and it applies to all their courses, only the reflection is for each course. Whereas the entirety of Option 2 has to be completed for each course.
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Add your **Questions** here -

- Is the RSL engagement model initiative necessary through state mandate or is this internally driven?
- Are faculty “badged” or are courses “badged”?
 - If a faculty has many different courses does the faculty get a badge for each course?
 - If the same course is taught by different faculty does each faculty get a badge for that course?
- I appreciate that a development shell (option 2) protects student privacy, but how can it measure RSI without actual student interactions?
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HSH Division faculty feedback on RSI Document

- 36 online courses (15-W, 1-V, 20-Y) taught by 12 instructors
- The following comments are shared with anonymity

1. It was unanimous that RSI documentation is necessary, but a major concern was raised for the proposed time commitment.

- The RSI documentation is required by law so it's not really an option to dispute necessity.
- I think it is necessary, however I think it can be accomplished by a mandated 1-hour course, with compensation for full time and part time faculty, with written documentation of satisfying the RSI requirements
- It is a lot of hours over the span of multiple quarters. Would it be possible to have it in smaller increments like the cybersecurity awareness training the district does?
- I think that it's important to address online learning and create an environment in which students are regularly engaged.
- Good online instructors engage in regular and substantive interaction (RSI) with students to promote a strong sense of instructor presence in the online classroom. This is a two-way street as well--students must engage in the online course and be encouraged and required to their part in RSI.
- This extra hoop jumping is frustrating for those of us that are committed and absolutely engaged in interaction within our online/async/hybrid courses.

2. Concerns noted:

- Do we get a choice in the options proposed?
- Has this been reviewed and approved by the FA? Since it has requirements for classroom assessment...What the consequences, if any, for faculty not participating in this process?
- I don't think face to face courses jump through all these hoops
- This extra hoop jumping is frustrating for those of us that are committed and absolutely engaged in interaction within our online/async/hybrid courses.

- The RSI document makes great sense for instructors who need support, but it does not make sense for ALL instructors. My concern is that it may be remedial for those of us that spend copious hours already directly engaged with our students weekly in many different ways.
- My concern is that it appears to be a one size fits all approach to online courses. Allied health programs utilize online courses in a very different way than other departments, for example. We also have regular contact with our "online students" throughout the week in other courses both on and off campus that encourages engagement/interaction. Additionally, our online courses are not stand alone and encompass content that is explored throughout other courses within the programs.
- I'm concerned that the document doesn't address that not all instructors who teach something on-line do so regularly. I teach one course (.5 unit) online once per year. Frankly, the amount of work that will be required of me as an instructor for a course that is the size and scope of what I'm teaching is discouraging.
- First, I want to commend my colleagues on all the hard work that's been put into this.
 - The Summary of the two-phase three-year model indicating Phase 1, Phase 2 and self-reflection seems to be way too time intensive to accomplish the ultimate goal of helping online instructors meet FH RSI standards in their online courses. The recommended online course held by the online learning coordinators makes sense, but why 4 hours? Phase 2 of cohort reviews taking 14 hours seems excessive. In developing the plan, I understand the need for collaboration, and distribution of duties to accomplish the documentation but isn't the key to meet the RSI goal with a doable plan, not something that is a huge time hurdle for everyone involved.
 - Option 1 appears to be the development of a course to help new online instructors learn how to teach online. This option is very time intensive for both those being reviewed, and those reviewing. If this were an undergraduate course for new online instructors, I think it would be a good design. Though for those instructors with many years of experience and education in online learning, it seems a bit

much. I believe the goal here, for most online instructors, could easily be accomplished in a fraction of the time.

- Option 2 seems to be a better plan for those who are better skilled in online learning.

3. Suggestions

- "Faculty reflect on their course using the FH RSI guidelines ... minimum of 2 hours/year" (not quarter).
- "Participants in the RSI cohort spend 2-4 hours/year in these activities, with some needing additional time to help develop their courses to meet the FH RSI guidelines"
- My suggestion is to give instructors
 - 1) an online course held by the online learning coordinators/select faculty re: RSI guidelines
 - 2) a template of the FH RSI guidelines
 - 3) a list of best practices
 - 3) some good examples
 - 4) the ability to evaluate their courses indicating how they meet the guidelines including specific examples from their course

Evaluation:

Have online learning coordinators/staff

- 1) review submissions and give comments/suggestions
- 2) allow instructors to make additions/changes in their courses where necessary
- 3) allow for a second review by learning coordinators/staff

Try to develop a process that is streamlined and that can be accomplished efficiently and effectively.

4. Questions

- If we've completed a similar course at another institution, can this be waived? I think it's important to understand that many adjuncts work at different institutions who are all requiring this regular extra training that is

incredibly repetitive. I appreciate your effort but would love the opportunity to demonstrate my ability without having to jump in and spend hours on something that I feel proficient in.

- Is there credit available for CE or count toward Professional Growth for faculty participating in these activities? "...require six hours of synchronous or asynchronous group discussion and eight hours of asynchronous documentation, peer review and reflection."
- Will faculty get compensated for doing this? There is already so much work put into an online course. It may make me want to just do them face to face.

STEM Division faculty feedback on RSI Document

- This week, I shared “Draft Model for Documenting RSI” with STEM faculty currently teaching “W” courses, with request for comments / questions.
- The CS department (currently 30 W sections taught by 19 different instructors) will plan to discuss the draft model in their October department meeting
- The following comments are shared with anonymity

Affirmations

Several faculty confirmed they see RSI documentation as necessary and doable.

- “I understand the need for monitoring that goes beyond self-evaluation.”
- “I am in favor of mandating documentation of how an instructor perceives they are meeting RSI. “
- “for most folks this should be a pretty simple concept”
- Asking the instructor to specify how they are providing RSI does not cause a hardship for faculty who are doing it; but not holding faculty to this standard has caused real hardship for our students.
- “I like the rubric”

Concerns

Several faculty expressed an emotional reaction around time requirement and teaching autonomy.

- “I am very concerned about the amount of time... something, somewhere loses those 18 hours”
- “the document made me feel like there is a huge mistrust of instructors who are teaching online”
- “Let faculty decide how they are going to meet RSI and document it.”
- “we don’t have anything like this for face to face classes.”

Questions

“Does this mean reaching out to every student individually, or evaluating the progress of each student and reaching out to those for whom we have some particular concern?”

“I was wondering if some reference can be made to those of us that have taken POCR and Humanizing and been certified maybe exempt.”

“I am wondering if part time instructors would be compensated for this time”

Idea proposed:

- A short session, maybe an hour or two, describing what RSI is and some examples of satisfying the requirements; Time to self reflect (not formally) and adjust our courses and practices if needed; An assessment using the rubric, as described; Non-punitive follow-up as needed.
- I would see this process taking maybe four hours for those who are already meeting or closely meeting the standards, more for those who need more coaching to meet the standards.