# THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE

## ONLINE/DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

## - <u>INTERIM</u> -

<u>**Number**</u>    02.01.35

<u>**Division**</u>    Academic Affairs

<u>**Date**</u>    July 23, 2015

<u>**Purpose**</u>    This policy addresses the unique circumstances associated with technology-enabled course delivery (herein, "online"), building on the existing academic policies, processes, and procedures of the University.

<u>**Policy**</u>    This policy establishes an academic environment that allows students in hybrid/flipped and fully online courses and programs to experience, to the extent reasonably practicable, the same level of quality and service as those students who receive face-to-face instruction from an instructor in a classroom on the campus of the University (herein, "on-campus students"). This policy is organized to address the general organization of the SACSCOC Guidelines and Principles for Distance Learning.

## <u>Procedures</u>

### General Administrative Principles

**Policy on privacy protection**. Students who enroll in online courses will be afforded the same level of privacy protection as on-campus students. The University's policy on student records privacy protection is Student Records Policy which can be found at: http://www.uah.edu/registrar/ferpa. The University's Online Privacy Statement is given in Appendix I.

1. **Reporting of accurate headcount enrollment.** The University has a clear, specific method for coding/classifying online and hybrid delivery courses and will report as required.

2. **Identity verification**.  The University will ensure that a student who registers for a course is the same student who participates in and completes course assignments.  The University provides a method for secure log-in for submission of assignments and for online test-taking through the Learning Management System (LMS).  This level of identity verification is equivalent to that required for on-campus students.

   Within each college, faculty will set a policy for managing online/remote test administration, which may include proctors, remote recording of the test-taking in progress, or other methods. The University is committed to adopting new technologies to aid in this process.  The University will include this cost in the tuition and fees for the course.

3. **Intellectual property**.  Intellectual property matters for online courses are described in Appendix II.

4. **Accommodations.**  Accommodations required under federal disability laws are made for online students in the same manner as for on-campus students. The Disability Support Services (DSS) office provides a broad range of services to make academic life as accessible as reasonably practicable for students with disabilities. The University's Quality Education Practices Online (QEPO) Certification Program provides additional guidance on creating accessible online courses.

**Academic and Accreditation Principles.**  All online courses and programs will be subject to the same curriculum development, approval, and assessment processes as courses and programs serving on-campus students, thereby assuring that relevant accreditation standards are met.  Online courses and programs are not handled differently and are expected to meet all of the same standards in this regard established for programs serving on-campus students.  The specifics about these matters are detailed below.

1. **Mission.**  At this time, online courses and programs at the University are embedded in the existing programs of the University.  UAH's online education programs are not so expansive that they warrant specific highlighting in the mission statement, but they are included in the Board-approved degree program mission of the university. Online educational opportunities are typically offered in

a comprehensive technological university, and that characteristic of UAH is explicit in the mission statement.

2. **Curriculum & Instruction.**

    A. **Faculty Oversight.**  As with all University courses, faculty will be primarily responsible for oversight of online course and program rigor and quality.  All online courses and programs will follow the same processes for development and approval as those courses and programs serving on-campus students.  All online courses and programs will adhere to the same general guidelines about content, rigor, mission-fit, time commitment, and credit hours used for those programs serving on-campus students. Online courses must also meet minimum standards of the University's QEPO Certification Program. The QEPO Certification Program is based on the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Principles of Good Practice and the Quality Matters™ rubric.

    Existing courses that are proposed to be offered online will be reviewed and approved by the department chair, in consultation with department faculty and an instructional designer, to determine if the course can be offered online without sacrificing quality or access to essential materials or experiences.  If a course requires access to a laboratory or other unique university assets and the course cannot be redesigned to provide the same level of rigor and relevance as the on-campus version, the course will not be approved for online delivery.

    B. **Support Services.**  To support online instruction**,** the University will provide appropriate and relevant technology and support services to faculty and students in the following areas.

        1. **Technology.**  The University will maintain an appropriate investment in technology to support online courses and programs.  To facilitate consistent communications with online students about the technology, The University will maintain a common template in the LMS for use with all University online courses.  The template will include easy-to-access technology tutorials and access to information technology assistance for both students and faculty.

2. **Instructional Design.** Numerous resources are available to assist faculty with the design of online courses. For example, during the course development process, faculty members are asked to consult with the Instructional Designer for Online Learning to create learning modules, interactive student activities, and other assignments within their online courses. In addition to real-time consultation with the Instructional Designer, faculty who are teaching online also have access to the QEPO Instructional Design course, which outlines best practices in teaching online, in designing courses online, and in supporting online students. As well, faculty members are encouraged to join the Online Learning and Educational Outreach Facebook page in order to receive frequent updates on best practices in the field.
Faculty members are provided with the UAH Online Education Best Practices, based off of the SREB Principles of Good Practice and Quality Matters™ rubric, during their completion of the University's QEPO Certification Program.

3. **Academic Success Support.** When tutoring is available for on-campus students, tutoring will, to the extent reasonably practicable, also be available to online students through appropriate staffing and use of enabling technologies. Responsibility for this support will reside within the Student Success Center. These resources will be linked through the common LMS template.

4. **Library Resources.** The University maintains a designated online learning librarian, who provides in-line chat support and online training for students who are engaged in online searches. Online training modules may also be made available by faculty through Canvas, our Learning Management System, to coach students through online search methods. These resources are linked through the common LMS template.

5. **Dispute Resolution.** Students who have concerns or complaints will follow the same processes and policies as on-campus students. A link to general student support resources for students at The University is provided in the common LMS template.

C. **Consortial Arrangements.** In entering into consortial arrangements for online delivery, all proposed courses and programs developed by consortium

partners will be subjected to curriculum review and approval by the relevant University faculty domain experts.

## 3. Faculty

A. **Qualifications.** In support of online courses and programs, the University will determine the qualifications of faculty in two areas:  (1) expertise in the content domain, and (2) ability to deliver a high quality online educational experience. Content expertise is determined within departments following current methods employed for courses and programs serving on-campus students.  The quality of the online education teaching experience will be assessed through an online education certification process.  Once developed, faculty who teach online courses must be certified through the University's QEPO Certification Program. The QEPO Certification Program will be administered in connection with the University's Center for Teaching Excellence.

B. **Assessment:**  Faculty teaching online courses will be evaluated using the same methods as for faculty teaching on-campus students.  Student evaluations and, when appropriate, pre-test/post-test or assurance of learning assessments will be used to evaluate instructor effectiveness.  The Student Instructor Evaluation (SIE) forms for online courses will include questions that pertain directly to the online experience, when appropriate.  The SIE Committee and the instructional designer will adopt best practices in online course evaluation as part of the SIE development process. Additionally, student and instructor surveys to evaluate online learning technologies will be conducted separately from the SIE. Data collected will be used for improving services to students. Data collected will also be collated and reported through University reports and for accreditation review where appropriate.

C. **Training.**  Faculty who teach online courses must consult with the University's instructional designer and receive certification through the University's QEPO Certification Program, when it is available. This certification program will familiarize faculty with the SREB Principles of Good Practice and the Quality Matters ™ rubric, and provide best practices for maintaining online learning objectives and outcomes consistent with courses serving on-campus students. Additional faculty training resources, available through online resources and in association with the planned University Center for Teaching and Learning,

will provide models for excellence in delivery of online, hybrid, and on-campus instruction.

4. **Institutional Effectiveness**

A. **Student Outcomes**.   As part of its ongoing program assessments, the University will compare online courses and programs with courses and programs serving on-campus students in the following areas each assessment cycle: student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction.  These assessments will be compared to the University's metrics over time and to peer institutions and/or national benchmarks.   These comparisons will be used to make adjustments in methods to ensure that online and in-person educational experiences are comparable.

B. **Support Services**.  As part of its ongoing program assessments, the University will compare online courses and programs with courses serving on-campus students in the following areas each assessment cycle:  student support services (p. 3b, 1-5), library resources, and technology support.  As with student outcomes, the University will compare the University to peer institutions and national benchmarks in drawing conclusions and making recommendations about changes.

<u>Review</u>      Academic Affairs will review this policy every five years or sooner as needed.


<u>Approval</u>


Chief University Counsel                                                                Date



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Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs          Date

**APPROVED:**


President                                                      Date

Appendix I:  Online Privacy Statement

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE**

**ONLINE PRIVACY STATEMENT**


The University of Alabama in Huntsville respects student privacy and collects no personally identifiable information about a student unless the student affirmatively chooses to make such information available to the University. The University does not actively share personal information about Web site visitors. Personal information provided by visitors, such as e-mail addresses or information submitted via online forms, is used by the University to assist individual visitors as necessary. This assistance may involve redirecting an inquiry or comment to another University individual or unit better suited to provide resolution.

The University analyzes Web server log files to collect summary information about visitors to its Web sites. The University also subscribes to Google Analytics, which uses cookies to collect anonymous traffic data. This information is analyzed by the University and by Google Analytics to generate summary statistics for purposes such as guiding design considerations, determining successful site segments, and determining problem areas.  Because the University is a public institution, some information collected on the University's Web sites may be subject to the Alabama Open Records Act, and in some instances the University may be compelled by law to release information gathered on the University's Web servers.  Some Web servers at the University may adopt different privacy statements as their specific needs require that they differ from this statement.

The University is a research institution. At any time, online surveys may be conducted on the University's Web sites. Confidential information gathered in these online surveys is used only for the research purpose indicated in the survey. Unless otherwise noted on the specified survey, the students' answers are confidential and individual responses will not be shared with other parties unless required by law. Aggregate data from surveys may be shared with external third parties.

The University complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), which generally prohibits the release of educational records without student permission. For more details on FERPA, students should consult http://www.uah.edu/registrar/ferpa.

Appendix II:  Intellectual Property Matters for

The creation and capture of courses for online or distance delivery, and the use of recorded lectures in subsequent semesters at the University and via other methods, raise important issues which should be addressed as a matter of policy.

**University Rights and Responsibilities**

1. The University has full ownership rights, including copyright and proprietary rights, to its curriculum, and degree program structure.

2. The University administration governs the method of program and course delivery.  For example, the decision to offer a class exclusively online is a college decision -- not the decision of an individual instructor.

3. The University has full ownership rights in the online course template and lecture captures (audio and video content) for any official University course, including but not limited to those delivered through the University's LMS.  The University's ownership rights are subject to the Instructor Rights and Responsibilities set out below.

**Instructor Rights and Responsibilities**

1. The University makes no claim to the instructor's unique interpretation and presentation of the course content (e.g., specific lecture notes, examples, assignments, and photographic or computer-generated slides developed in teaching a particular university-owned course).  If the faculty member leaves the university, the faculty member has the right to the content of the online course.

2. An instructor's recorded image and/or voice will be used or re-used by the University only with the consent of the instructor.  This includes use or re-use after retirement or separation.  When an instructor participates in online or distance delivery that involves audio and/or video capture, a signed agreement must be negotiated before capture that outlines the number of times the content can be re-used by the university as well as the method and frequency of updates to be provided by the instructor.

3. University instructors may use their recorded University lectures in subsequent semesters at the University and in other University courses, as appropriate.

**Special Issues**

1. University instructors may not make lectures (video and audio) recorded for an official  University course available on any website other than that of the University  unless specific written permission is granted by the Provost prior to the lecture being made available on any such site.

2. Instructors who recorded lectures as part of employment at a different college or university may not use that recorded lecture at the University. *(Comment – for example, a part-time faculty member who also teaches at a community college.).*

3. If an instructor chooses to leave the University, it will not make a claim to the instructor's unique interpretation and presentation of the course content. However, as noted above, the University will own and have the right to continue to use the online course template and recorded lecture material, subject to the terms noted above in #2, **Instructor Rights and Responsibilities**.

4. As a condition of enrollment, the University retains a non-exclusive, perpetual, royalty-free, world-wide license to use all student works generated in the course of fulfilling academic requirements at the University for educational or research purposes.  The University retains the same license with respect to any image or voice of a student captured in an online or distance learning course.  Subject to the University's license, students retain all ownership rights to academic work submitted through the online system, except as may be otherwise provided in writing in the special cases of University assigned efforts, sponsor supported efforts, or University assisted individual efforts.  As in the case of providing instruction to on-campus students, faculty must obtain the online student's written permission before using the student's work not within the scope of the University's enrollment-based license nor permitted by a writing pertaining to a special case.