

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE
ONLINE AND HYBRID EDUCATION POLICY

<u>Number</u>	02.01.35
<u>Division</u>	Academic Affairs
<u>Date</u>	Revised February 9, 2021
<u>Purpose</u>	This policy addresses the unique circumstances associated with technology-enabled course delivery, building on the existing academic policies, processes, and procedures of the University.
<u>Policy</u>	<p>This policy establishes an academic environment that allows students in hybrid, flipped, fully online courses and fully online programs and certificates (collectively, “online” course(s) and/or online program(s)) to experience, to the extent reasonably practicable, the same level of educational 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 and Correspondence Learning (https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/07/DistanceCorrespondenceEducation.pdf). This policy does not apply to exigent, or intermittent, remote teaching of a class that was originally intended to be delivered through face-to-face instruction.</p>

Procedure

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 a Student Records Policy, which can be found at <http://www.uah.edu/registrar/ferpa>. The University’s Online Privacy Statement is found at <https://www.uah.edu/policies/online-privacy-statement>.

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 an online 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 online course.

3. **Intellectual property.** Intellectual property matters for online courses are described in Policy 02.01.68: Determination of Rights in Copyrightable Materials Policy and can be found at <https://www.uah.edu/policies/02-01-68-determination-of-rights-in-copyrightable-materials-policy-determination-of-rights-in-copyrightable-materials-policy-negotiation-form>
4. **Accommodations.** Federal disability laws apply to students taking online courses and are followed by the University. The University is committed to reasonable accommodations for qualified students with a disability taking online courses. 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 are 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 (**see Addendum A-Procedure for Establishing an Online Degree Program/Courses and Addendum B-Course Quality Review and Approval Procedure**). Grading procedures and credit awarded for courses, regardless of the method of delivery, is determined by standard policies and practices of the University. 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 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 curriculum approval process 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 quality standards for online course approval that are based on nationally recognized best practices. The standards are used to evaluate the quality of online and hybrid courses, as a guide to design online and hybrid courses, and as a self-evaluation tool to assist instructors with course redesign and improvement. The University's QEPO Certification Program describes and provides guidance on the application of the standards to course design (p. 2).

Existing courses that are proposed to be offered in later terms as online courses 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 as an online course 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 (**see Addendum B-Course Quality Review and Approval Procedure**).

- B. **Support Services.** To support online course 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.** The University will maintain an appropriate investment in instructional design resources to support online courses and programs. Numerous resources are available to assist faculty with the design of online courses. To insure quality during the course development process, faculty members are required to work with campus Instructional Designer to create learning modules, interactive student activities, and other assignments within their online courses. In addition to real-time consultation with campus Instructional Designers, 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 remain engaged with campus Instructional Designers in order to receive frequent updates on best practices in the field.

Faculty members are provided with quality standards from the Course Review and Approval Tool (CRAT) during the required QEPO training, on the Enhanced Teaching and Learning (ETL) resource portal, and through ongoing support as needed.

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

C. **Consortial Arrangements.** In entering into consortial arrangements for online course 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 by a faculty certification process, if applicable. Faculty who teach online courses must be certified through the University's QEPO Certification Program unless they otherwise demonstrate mastery of online best practices. Exemptions shall be granted on a case by case basis by the Provost or designee. The QEPO Certification Program will be administered in connection with the University's Enhanced Teaching and Learning.

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 campus Instructional Designers will adopt best practices in online course evaluation as part of the SIE development process. Additionally, student and instructor surveys to evaluate online learning, student engagement and technologies may 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 campus Instructional Designers and receive certification through the University's QEPO Certification Program. This certification program will familiarize faculty with the Course Review and Approval Tool (CRAT) 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 Enhanced 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 (para. 2B., 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.

Review Academic Affairs will review this policy every five (5) years or sooner as needed.

ADDENDUM A: PROCEDURE FOR ESTABLISHING AN ONLINE DEGREE PROGRAM/COURSES

The development of an online degree program/course will follow a standard process to ensure the program/course meets best practices for online learning. Under the auspices of the Office of the Provost, Office of Online Learning (OL) will work with the Deans, Department Chairs, and faculty of each college to create and maintain high quality online programs/courses.

According to the [Online and Hybrid Education Policy](#), all online courses and programs will be subject to the same curriculum development, approval, and assessment processes as course and programs serving on-campus students, thereby assuring that relevant accreditation standards are met. Online programs and courses at UAH are programs/courses in which 100% of the direct instruction of the course is delivered with no on-campus meeting typically required. Further, hybrid programs/courses are defined as those where 51% to 99% percent of the course material is delivered online with a combination of standard on-campus class meetings.

Procedure

1. Deans and Department Chairs will determine online learning needs for the academic year including which programs need to be offered as online programs and what courses need to be developed. The OL Instructional Designers will meet with the Deans and Department Chairs to provide guidance in the development of the online programs and courses. Factors to be considered include:
 - a. Student need, demand for the program, and/or strategic rationale;
 - b. Key courses to be offered in an online learning format with credit hour requirements and course objectives.
 - c. Resources required (faculty, facilities, equipment) to deliver the course at the required level of quality are sufficient.
 - d. Faculty are able to meet current commitments in addition to commitments to develop a course, or appropriate arrangements are provided to release faculty from these duties.
 - e. Faculty (i.e., “subject matter expert” and “course developer”) are available and committed to develop each assigned online learning course.
 - f. Faculty assigned an online or hybrid course have completed technical training and the QEPO certification program unless the faculty member otherwise demonstrates mastery of online best practices as determined by the Dean of the College.
2. A timeline with key dates for course development will be updated yearly and posted on the OL resource portal.
3. When a course has been approved by the College authority, online course design & development should be coordinated through OL.
4. Online course development ideally begins 15 weeks or one semester before the first course is to be offered to allow time for final course review and approval by an Instructional Designer; however, under circumstances requiring the course be

developed more quickly, the faculty member may work directly with OL to meet the necessary deadlines.

5. Instructional Designers are responsible for managing the course development process and reporting the status of each course to the College Dean or designee.
6. The faculty member and Instructional Designer using a team approach are responsible for applying quality standards throughout the course development process.

ADDENDUM B: COURSE QUALITY REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCEDURE

The Course Quality Review and Approval Procedure for online programs and courses establishes a university-wide procedure to ensure online courses meet best practices for online learning and quality standards for online course approval. The Office of the Provost is responsible for ensuring the quality of online courses and their compliance with SACSCOC standards and designates Online Learning (OL), a team within Enhanced Teaching and Learning (ETL) as staff charged with overseeing the process and supporting faculty throughout training, course development, and course delivery. OL will work closely with the Deans, Department Chairs, and faculty of each college to create and maintain high quality online programs/courses through training, communication channels for reporting and monitoring, and direct support to faculty course developers and instructors.

Background

According to the [Online and Hybrid Education Policy](#), “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 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 quality standards for online course approval. The quality standards are adapted from the [Online Learning Consortium's OSCQR Course Design Review Scorecard](#) and serves as the basis for the University's Quality Education Practices Online (QEPO) Certification Program and the course review rubric contained within the [Course Review and Approval Tool \(CRAT\)](#).”

Scope

This Procedure applies to courses developed after May 2020. Initially, all existing courses will be reviewed for conformance to quality standards within two (2) years if appropriate staffing exists and then all courses will be placed on a review cycle of every three (3) years.

Procedures

1. Online course development is coordinated through the Office of Online Learning. Faculty will contact the Office of Online Learning to begin course development.
2. Instructional Designers in the Office of Online Learning are responsible for managing the course development process and reporting the status of each course, see the [process for establishing an online degree program/courses](#).
3. The faculty member and Instructional Designer, using a team approach, are responsible for applying quality standards throughout the course development process.
 - a. Quality standards are identified during the QEPO trainings, if applicable, and are located on the OL resource portal, and through a shared [Course Review and Approval Tool \(CRAT\)](#) used for tracking progress, confirming best practice applied through course design, and quality reviews.
 - b. UAH master course template incorporates quality standards and is the preferred format for course development. Colleges and departments may customize course templates with additional College/Department specific standards, but are required to ensure that UAH specific standards are incorporated into the course design.
 - c. Each course will be subject to a quality review and approval.
 - A record of reviewed and approved courses shall be maintained by OL, posted online, and shared with the registrar and relevant administrators, as needed.
 - A schedule for course review will be maintained by OL and posted on the OL website. Deans are responsible for ensuring that courses within their colleges are reviewed according to the schedule.
 - Special circumstances (e.g., late hires, courses added after the deadline) may exist that require exceptions to this Procedure. Exceptions shall be granted on a case-by-case basis for a limited time period of typically one (1) semester by the Provost or the Provost's designee.
4. The course review and approval process includes a self-review and a review by an UAH Instructional Designer.
 - a. Course will be reviewed for the following standards:
 - Course overview and introductory information
 - Learning objectives
 - Assessment and measurement
 - Learning activities and learner interaction
 - Learner support
 - Accessibility and usability
 - Content, rigor, and workload
 - b. **Faculty Self-Review** will be conducted using the CRAT.
 - c. **Internal Review by Instructional Designers in OL:** An Instructional Designer will track course development and review of course materials throughout the process. This includes conducting a quality review via the CRAT and confirming the course reflects the adopted course quality standards in course design.

- d. **External Reviews** from an outside source may be conducted as requested by and approved by the Department Chair and/or College Dean. This report should be managed by and reside in the academic college.
 - e. If a course is conditionally approved, faculty will address feedback from the course review, making suggested changes to the course.
- 5. A master list of reviewed and approved courses dates will be maintained by OL.
 - 6. Each course on the master list will be subject to review and approval every three (3) years. OL will maintain a course review schedule with review and approval deadlines calculated from the date listed on the master list.