THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE

ONLINE AND HYBRID EDUCATION POLICY

Number   02.01.35

Division   Academic Affairs

Date   February 9, 2021; Reviewed/Revised January 2, 2025; Revised April 28, 2025

Purpose   This policy addresses the unique circumstances associated with technology-enabled course delivery, building on the existing academic policies, processes, and procedures of the University.

Policy   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.

Procedure

General Administrative Principles

Policy on privacy protection. Students who enroll in online courses are 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 ensures that a student who registers for an online course is the same student who participates in and completes course assignments. The University provides a two-step authentication 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 07.03.02: Copyright Policy.

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. All determinations of reasonable accommodations will be handled by the Disability Support Services Office. Faculty will be notified by that office of any accommodations required by a student.

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. 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.

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.

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. All technology licensed by the University for use in online courses undergoes a rigorous cybersecurity review to protect personal information of students. To facilitate consistent communications with online students about the technology, the University maintains a common template in the LMS for use with all University online courses. The template includes easy-to-access technology tutorials and access to information technology assistance for both students and faculty. The University ensures students enrolled in online courses have access to the LMS and any other university-licensed resources as well as support needed when using it.

2. **Instructional Design.** The University maintains appropriate investments in instructional design resources to support online courses and programs and to provide instructors access to best practices in course design. Faculty members are encouraged to engage with campus Instructional Designers in order to receive feedback on implementation of best practices in design and implementation.

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.** The University ensures there are sufficient faculty qualified to develop, design and teach the courses/programs. In support of online courses and programs, the University determines 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 ability to deliver a high quality of the online educational experience is assessed by the Instructional Design team. Every faculty member teaching in online courses must be reviewed. A link to the process appears on the Academic Affairs website. Exemptions shall be granted on a case by case basis by the Provost or designee

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.** The University provides resources and training on best practices in online course design and delivery of online, hybrid and on-campus instruction. Faculty have access to Instructional Designers who assist in design of the course to maintain online learning objectives and outcomes consistent with courses serving on-campus students

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.