

Memo To: All UH-Downtown/PS Holders

UH-Downtown/PS 03.A.37

From: William Flores, President

Issue No. 1

Effective date: 06/22/2015

Subject: Online Education Policy

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1. PURPOSE

The University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) Policy for Online Education provides a framework for transparent, encompassing, and impactful decision-making with regards to online education that values shared governance.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Online Education: Includes degree programs, certificates, courses, and support services provided via the Internet and delivered synchronously or asynchronously.
- 2.2 Undergraduate Online Program: Degree programs which are designated as fully online undergraduate programs by the faculty per university curriculum policies.
- 2.3 Graduate Online Program: Degree programs which are designated as fully online graduate programs by the faculty per university curriculum policies.
- 2.4 Online Course Section: Course section in which 51% or more of the instruction (as determined by official course contact hour designation) occurs online through an Internet-based delivery system.
- 2.5 Hybrid Course Section: Course section in which 50% of the instruction (as determined by official course contact hour designation) occurs online through an Internet-based delivery system.
- 2.6 Authentication: Process by which the university ensures that the student registered for the course is the same person who is participating in the course activities and evaluations.
- 2.7 Rubric: An evaluation tool or set of guidelines used to promote consistent measurement of expectations, goals, or standards.
- 2.8 Academic Unit: UHD colleges and their corresponding departments
- 2.9 Learning Management System: Educational technologies and software that support the delivery of online course materials and online instruction.
- 2.10 Delivery Mode: Various modalities for delivering programs, certifications, and courses such as face-to-face, hybrid/blended, and online.

- 2.11 Academic Honesty: Principles of academic integrity that are defined and enforced as per the University PS 03.A.19 on Academic Honesty.
- 2.12 Prerequisite: Academic courses, approvals, or status required for enrollment in a given course.

3. POLICY

3.1 Goals for Online Education

UHD's goals for online education align with the objectives stated in the university's strategic plan, as well as the SACSCOC guidelines.

3.2 Institutional Responsibilities

- 3.2.1 The university will assure that the institution's administrative policies and procedures provide an effective and efficient online education support infrastructure. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will inform Deans and Chairs/Program Directors when a program qualifies as "online" according to the definitions in 3.3.4 of this policy.
- 3.2.2 The university will provide sufficient financial resources to initiate and maintain quality online education programs, certificates, and courses.
- 3.2.3 The Office of the Provost will provide oversight of university-wide support structures for online education.
- 3.2.4 Assessment of online programs follows the same policies and procedures as identified for all academic programs in PS 03.A.31.
- 3.2.5 The Office of the Provost will ensure UHD's compliance with laws in other states concerning authorization to provide online degree programs, certificates, and courses to students who reside in states other than Texas. If necessary, the Office of the Provost will limit enrollment in online course sections, programs, or certificates to students residing in Texas or other states where UHD is authorized to offer online education.

3.3 Degree and Certificate Programs Offered Online

- 3.3.1 Academic Departments and Programs determine what programs and certificates will be offered online, with decisions influenced by currency of program, its courses, and available resources.
- 3.3.2 Online degree programs and certificates will be consistent with the role and mission of UHD, and program approvals will follow the course and program inventory policy and procedure outlined in [PS 03.A.12: Changes to Curricula, Courses, and](#)

[Program Inventory Policy](#), with no distinctions made among delivery modes. All policies, standards, and guidelines for traditional courses apply to online course sections.

- 3.3.3 In the event that an online degree program or certificate is terminated, the university has responsibility to follow university regulations related to program termination.
- 3.3.4 Online degree and certification programs assessment of student learning will occur as outlined in the [PS 03.A. 31: Academic Assessment Policy](#). Undergraduate degree programs in which 20 or more graduating students completed 50% or more of their UHD courses online within a single Academic Year must conduct separate assessments for online and face-to-face students for that year and in subsequent years as per accrediting requirements. Graduate degree programs in which 10 or more graduating students completed 50% or more of their UHD courses online within a single Academic Year must conduct separate assessments for online and face-to-face students for that year and subsequent years as per accrediting requirements.

3.4 Online Courses

- 3.4.1 Course descriptions, prerequisites, and learning outcomes, as well as the approval processes will not differ based on delivery mode.
- 3.4.2 Programs, and/or departments, will define standards and best practices appropriate to their discipline(s) for development and delivery of online instruction.
- 3.4.3 Online course sections are subject to the same policies and procedures that govern the delivery of instruction of other modes.
- 3.4.4 The university will ensure student authentication in online courses, certificates, and programs following all applicable regulations and best practices.
- 3.4.5 Students in online course sections have the same rights and responsibilities as students in course sections offered in other delivery modes.

3.5 Library Support

- 3.5.1 The library will provide students enrolled in online course sections access to library services and resources equivalent to those provided to students enrolled in other modalities.
- 3.5.2 The library will regularly evaluate resources and services provided for students enrolled in online course sections, and make continual improvements as needed.
- 3.5.3 Librarians will inform faculty about available student services, resources, and library instruction, so that faculty can communicate these to students enrolled in online course sections.

3.6 Student Support Services

- 3.6.1 Students enrolled in online course sections, will have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support their course work and degree completion. Support services include the following: admissions; registrar; payment processing; bookstore; university catalog; academic advising; technical assistance; registration; withdrawal from courses; financial aid information; academic calendar; services for disabled students (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 accommodation); policies, procedures and protocols for taking courses.
- 3.6.2 All divisions offering support services for students enrolled in online course sections will assess services regularly as part of assessment processes identified in university policy and practice, making continual improvements as needed. Assessment will include input from students regarding their online experiences.
- 3.6.4 Divisions/units offering support services for students enrolled in online course sections will regularly inform faculty and students about these resources.

3.7 Faculty and Faculty Services

- 3.7.1 Faculty teaching online course sections will comply with departmentally required standards for best practice in the online environment and have access to resources for online pedagogy support. Faculty teaching in an online course section must have regular and substantive interactions with students throughout the term in compliance with Title IV requirements.
- 3.7.2 As with all curriculum, responsibility and authority for academic management, program assessment, and oversight of online programs, certificates, and course sections reside with the faculty bodies identified at university and departmental levels. The faculty member of record in each course section retains full control of the online course content, as consistent with university policy and departmental requirements
- 3.7.3 Online course sections are subject to [University of Houston System Board of Regents Intellectual Property Policy, 21.08](#), which defines all intellectual property rights applicable to faculty, staff and students.
- 3.7.4 As part of regular assessment practices defined in PS 03.A.31, faculty will assess online course sections using their departmentally adopted standards, and they will make continual improvements as needed.
- 3.7.5 University will provide faculty with adequate equipment, software, and communications access to support interaction and consultation with students enrolled in their online course sections.

- 3.7.6 University will provide students with technical support appropriate for success in online course sections.
- 3.7.7 University is responsible for informing students about technical skills as well as required hardware, software, and supplemental materials necessary for participation in the university-wide online course environment. Faculty must also include such information in their syllabi along with any additional technology needs specific to the course

4. PROCEDURES

Each department will develop a process to review and assess their online course sections and programs using their adopted online instructional standards.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

Responsible Party (Reviewer): Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs and Provost

Review: Every five years, or as necessary.

Signed original on file in Employment Services and Operations.

7. POLICY HISTORY

Issue #1: 06/22/2015

8. REFERENCES

[PS 03.A.12: Changes to Curricula, Courses, and Program Inventory Policy](#)

[PS 03.A. 31: Academic Assessment Policy.](#)

[University of Houston System Board of Regents Intellectual Property Policy, 21.08](#)