Memo To: All UH-Downtown/PS Holders   UH-Downtown/PS 03.A.37
                                                 Issue No. 2
From: Dr. Loren J. Blanchard, President   Effective Date: 11/22/2024
                                                 Page **1** of **8**

Subject: Online Education

1. PURPOSE

1.1.   The University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) Policy for Online Education provides a comprehensive framework for providing rigorous and high-quality online education for our diverse population of learners. UHD's policy for online education aligns with the objectives stated in the University's strategic plan, as well as with external accrediting guidelines.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1.   Academic Honesty: Principles of academic integrity that are defined and enforced as per the PS 03.A.19: Academic Honesty.

2.2.   Academic Unit: UHD colleges and their corresponding departments

2.3.   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.

2.4.   Delivery Mode: Various modalities for delivering programs, certificates, and courses such as face-to-face, hybrid, hyflex, and online.

2.5.   Graduate Online Program: Degree programs which are designated as fully online allow students to complete all of their coursework toward the degree, both required and elective, in the online modality (synchronous or asynchronous). Residency, practicum, or internship requirements do not disqualify degrees from being considered fully online.

2.6.   Hybrid Course Section: Course section in which there are required face-to-face meeting times for a portion of the class, and the face-to-face portion is reduced proportionately to the percentage of the course delivered online (as determined by official course contact hour designation). The online portion of a hybrid class is more

than 50% of the contact hours, but less than 85%. The online component may be delivered asynchronously or synchronously (if posted in the course schedule).

2.7. Hyflex Section: Course section in which some students are in the classroom face-to-face with the instructor and other students join synchronously via videoconference technology.

2.8. Learning Management System: Educational technologies and software that support the delivery of online course materials and online instruction.

2.9. Online Asynchronous Course Section: Course section in which all of the content and instruction (as determined by official course contact hour designation) is mediated by technology, with no regular required virtual or face-to-face meeting times.

2.10. Online Education: Includes degree programs, certificates, courses, and support services provided via the Internet and delivered synchronously or asynchronously.

2.11. Online Synchronous Course Section: Course section in which all of the content and instruction (as determined by official course contact hour designation) is mediated by technology, with regular required virtual class meeting times that are posted in the course schedule.

2.12. Prerequisite: Academic courses, approvals, and/or status required for enrollment in a given course.

2.13. Rubric: An evaluation tool or set of guidelines tailored to teaching mode used to promote consistent measurement of expectations, goals, or standards.

2.14. Undergraduate Online Program: Major programs which are designated as fully online allow students to complete their coursework in the major (not necessarily including core classes), both required and elective, in the online modality (synchronous or asynchronous)

3. POLICY

3.1. Goals for Online Education

    3.1.1. UHD's goal for online education is to capitalize on the flexibility and access that makes online education beneficial, providing necessary technical support and support for professional development.

3.2. Role of the University in Online Education

3.2.1. The role of the University in supporting the student success in online programs and classes includes, but is not limited to maintaining an appropriate LMS, providing technical support and training for students and faculty, providing opportunities for robust pedagogical development for a variety of online environments, implementing a university-wide rubric for assessing online courses, and following best practices to authenticate the identities of students and address academic dishonesty in online classes. The role of the University also includes:

3.2.1.A. University-level training requirements for all faculty who teach online, as determined by a joint faculty, staff, and administrator recommendation.

3.2.1.B. Development, deployment, and dissemination of regular stakeholder satisfaction assessment of online courses and programs. This may include, but should not be limited to, student evaluations of individual courses.

3.3. Institutional Responsibilities

3.3.1. Administrative Structure: The University will ensure that the institution's administrative policies and procedures provide an effective and efficient online education support infrastructure.

3.3.1.A. The Office of the Provost will provide oversight of university-wide support structures for online education.

3.3.1.B. 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.

3.3.1.C. The Office of the Provost will develop and disseminate a yearly report on the financial and operational state of the online education program at UHD. This will include stakeholder satisfaction information.

3.3.2. Budget and Planning Process: The University will acknowledge the unique characteristics and needs of online education by considering the specific financial needs of online education delivery in the Budget and Planning process.

    3.3.2.A. The University will provide sufficient financial resources to initiate new online programs, certificates, and courses, including faculty and staff hires (if needed), development activities, marketing, implementation, and assessment.

    3.3.2.B. For ongoing online programs, certificates, and courses, the University will provide sufficient financial resources for continuous assessment, training of faculty, students, and staff, IT infrastructure and support, necessary hardware and software resources, faculty and staff hires, and support structures for faculty and student success.

3.3.3. Student Support Services:

    3.3.3.A. 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.

    3.3.3.B. Divisions/units offering support services for students enrolled in online course sections will regularly inform faculty and students about these resources.

3.3.4. Library Support: 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.

    3.3.4.A. The library will regularly evaluate resources and services provided for students enrolled in online course sections, and make continual improvements as needed.

    3.3.4.B. 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.

3.4. College Responsibilities

 3.4.1. The role of each College in supporting the student success in online programs and classes includes, but is not limited to:

  3.4.1.A. Academic advising of undeclared majors accessible to and appropriate for online students, including newly admitted students.

  3.4.1.B. Academic advising of declared majors accessible to and appropriate for online students.

3.5. Academic Department and Program Responsibilities

 3.5.1. Academic Departments and Programs determine what programs and certificates will be offered online, with decisions influenced by currency of program, its courses, and available faculty and staff resources and infrastructure.

 3.5.2. Each department will support student success in their online courses or programs by developing and implementing an assessment process for online instruction that incorporates the university rubric.

 3.5.3. Departments will define standards and best practices appropriate to their discipline(s) for development and delivery of online instruction. These standards will be reflected in each department's R&T guidelines.

3.6. Faculty Responsibilities

 3.6.1. Faculty teaching online course sections will comply with departmentally required standards for training and use best practice in the online environment.

 3.6.2. Faculty teaching in an online course section must have regular and substantive interactions with students throughout the term.

 3.6.3. Faculty must comply with Title IV requirements in the online environment.

 3.6.4. 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.

3.6.5. 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. Online Degree Programs

3.7.1. Development of Online Degree Programs: Online degree programs and certificates will be consistent with the role and mission of UHD. If the faculty of a degree program desires to designate a program as online, department approval is necessary. Then the program must complete the process designated by the University Curriculum Committee to obtain such designation.

3.7.2. Termination of Online Degree Programs: If an online degree program or certificate is terminated, the University shall follow policy related to program termination.

3.7.3. Assessment of Online Degree Programs: Online degree and certification program assessment of student learning will occur as outlined in PS 03.A.31: Academic Assessment.

3.8. Online Courses

3.8.1. Course descriptions, prerequisites, and learning outcomes, as well as the approval processes will not differ based on delivery mode. The mode or modes of instruction for a new course or program shall become part of each new curriculum proposal. Courses may be approved as "online" and/or "in-person" classes. The instructional mode shall be approved under the normal curricular approval process and subject to the principles set forth in this policy.

3.8.1.A. Students in online course sections have the same rights and responsibilities as students in course sections offered in other delivery modes.

3.8.1.B. Software, Apps, Publisher Content, and Non-University Programs in Online Courses: In some specific situations, software, apps, and/or programs that are not specifically supported by the University may be appropriate for use in an online course. However, students should be made aware in the syllabus that the required software, program, or app is not supported by UHD and should be given resources to resolve

issues and problems with such resources. If no outside support for student access and use of the resources is available, they should not be used.

    i.   Departments and individual faculty are responsible for ensuring that any copyrighted software made accessible to students is done in accordance with University policy and all legal requirements.

    ii. All online courses must have an active presence in the university-adopted LMS, even if publisher content or other outside content is a significant portion of the class activities.

3.9.   Syllabi

    3.9.1.   All course syllabi for online classes, whether synchronous or asynchronous, will at minimum include the following information (in addition to the requirements of PS 03.A.29 Course Syllabi :

    3.9.1.A. How faculty will communicate with students;

    3.9.1.B. How standards of appropriate online class behavior will be maintained;

    3.9.1.C. The minimum computer hardware and software requirements for the class beyond the university recommended tools for all classes, if any, and the department, college, or University facilities available to support these requirements;

    3.9.1.D. The enforcement of academic honesty within the online environment;

    3.9.1.E. If publisher content or other outside content is a significant portion of the class, clear and specific directions on how to access that content must be a part of the syllabus; and

    3.9.1.F. If a software, app, or program that is not supported by UHD IT resources is required in a class, the syllabus must include a statement to that effect and the syllabus must include resources that students can readily access to resolve issues and problems with access and use of such resources. If such software, programs, or apps have a cost for use, the cost should be specified in the syllabus.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1.   There are no procedures associated with this PS.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

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

Review Period: Every five years on or before May 1, and as necessary

Signed original on file in Human Resources.

6. POLICY HISTORY

Issue #1: 06/22/15
Issue #2: 11/22/24 (this issue)

7. REFERENCES

University of Houston System Board of Regents Intellectual Property Policy, 21.08
PS 03.A.12: Changes to Curricula, Courses, and Program Inventory
PS 03.A.19: Academic Honesty
PS 03.A.31: Academic Assessment
University of Houston System Board of Regents Intellectual Property Policy, 21.08

8. EXHIBITS

There are no exhibits associated with this PS.