Policy Type: Administrative
Applies to: Faculty, Administrators & Students

POLICY DATES

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Purpose Statement

The University recognizes the advantages of providing learning opportunities that are not necessarily restricted by time, place, or method of delivery, and that all approaches to instruction must meet the same high-quality standards that exist for classroom-bound education. To meet and ensure that these standards exist in online education at UMU, the online education policy serves several purposes:

   I.   To provide a standard method for determining whether a course should be offered online versus another modality
   II. To provide a guide and enough time for faculty to properly design and develop an online course
   III. To ensure online course quality using national standards as outlined by the Higher Learning Commission
   IV. To ensure that the university follows federal and state laws
   V.   To help the university move toward a more strategic plan for online education

Philosophy Guiding Online Education

All online learning programs are designed, developed, delivered, and assessed in a manner consistent with our institutional mission of preparing students for fulfilling lives, meaningful work, and responsible citizenship. At UMU, online educators (much like their face-to-face counterparts) are expected to help students achieve the stated learning objectives and goals of the course and to engage their students with rigorous and well-designed courses. To reach the standard of excellence that is expected of all UMU courses, special care is taken to design, develop, instruct, and thoroughly review these online courses. On-going training and professional development are expected of instructors as they develop and teach online courses. The goal is to provide a course that is equivalent in rigor and engagement to an in-person course.

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Definitions

Term	Definition
Online course	Online Education is defined as a planned teaching/learning experience in which teacher and students are separated by physical distance and teacher-student interaction occurs through multiple modalities of existing and evolving media. Online education requires special techniques of course design, instructional techniques, assessment, and methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organization and administrative arrangements. We accept the Higher Learning Commission's definitions for online education courses and programs: • Online education courses are those in which all or the vast majority (typically 75% or more) of the instruction and interaction occurs via electronic communication or equivalent mechanism with the faculty and students physically separated from each other. • Online education programs are those certificate or degree programs in which 50% or more of the required courses may be taken as online education courses.
Online Program	A program of studies leading to a degree conferred by an educational institution wherein most courses are online courses.

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Term	Definition
Main Course Shell	The fully developed, reviewed, and approved online course stored and housed in the Learning Management System. The Main Course Shell will be copied when needed into specific course terms within the LMS. The Main Course Shell is never live. Therefore, no students or other users are enrolled into this Course. The main course shell is where one keeps permanent changes to a course. Faculty may copy content from a Main Course Shell into a D2L Course if they are enrolled as an instructor in both courses. Main Course Shells are not deleted, only updated, and at times redeveloped.
Modes of Delivery	A variety of electronic instructional delivery modes are available at UMU, including: Asynchronous: 1. Online: Courses offered via the internet using a Learning Management System (LMS) 2. Blended or Hybrid (arranged): Combines face-to-face classroom instruction with online education activities. Synchronous: 1. Conferencing tools: Occurs in real time and allows the instructor to communicate with remote site sections of the class via two-way audio/video. Instructors and students hear and see each other live from each site. These courses blend face-to-face and online pedagogies. HyFlex: 1. The course is offered and can be completed face-to-face, online synchronously, and asynchronously. The UMU schedule of classes indicates which courses are being offered via online education and via which delivery format.

Policy Details

Standards

A. Educational Standards

    i.   For the Course or Program

All online education courses at UMU are considered comparable to face-to-face courses and adhere to the same course standards, prerequisites, and requirements as identical face-to-face courses. In addition to these standards several other standards and expectations will also apply to ensure adherence to federal and state law and HLC standards. Some of these are:

- Quality Matters
- WCAG 2.0 for digital accessibility
    - o   For more information on digital accessibility, see UMU's Digital Accessibility Policy
- Copyright Law

a. Recruitment and Admission

Recruitment and admission of students for online learning is carried out in manner consistent with traditional recruitment and admission processes. All necessary consumer disclosures are maintained, and ethical practices are in place. The published practices include thresholds for student readiness that are routinely analyzed to determine

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that those accepted into undergraduate and graduate academic programs are prepared to succeed.

b. Credit Hour Policy

All courses, including those using an online education delivery method, must adhere to UMU's Credit Hour Policy.

c. Enrollment

Enrollment in online courses will be capped at 20 unless special approvals have been made by the Dean. For additional recommendations please contact the appropriate dean or the Office of the University Registrar.

ii. For Instructors

Instructors in online education courses will meet the qualification requirements laid out in the Higher Learning Commission guidelines. UMU will provide an ongoing program of orientation, training, and support for faculty in online course design and instruction.

a. Availability and Communication with Students

As required by UMU, each instructor should maintain office hours every week during each semester to accommodate student consultations. It is helpful for instructors to post these hours on the syllabus and in the learning management system, as well as submit them to their department chair. It is expected that faculty who are teaching online be just as available to their students as those teaching face-to-face. For their online courses, instructors may use various modes of synchronous online communication (e.g., online chat, instant messaging, Teams, phone).

b. Response Time

Instructors teaching online education courses are encouraged to respond to student inquiries in a timely fashion as well as to grade all assignments in a timely manner. Faculty must post their policy for communication and grading so that students know what to expect.

c. Student Privacy

Faculty must ensure that Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements are always met. Student privacy must always be maintained by keeping grades secure in the LMS & Self-Service tools. Grades must not be viewable to other members of the course and no student grades or information may be posted outside of secured systems any time during or after the semester. Instructor comments and grades on student work should never be made public.

Instructors cannot require students to reveal private information to the class and should respect students' requests to not post information for class viewing.

d. Copyright

Faculty must keep in mind copyright, trademark, and licensing when designing online education courses, and therefore should be familiar with copyright law. Examples include the use of copyrighted photographs, graphics, text selections, audio clips from a song, or video clips from a movie. The usual permissions must be acquired and documented by the faculty member. When in doubt about copyright ownership, it is preferable to be overly cautious. If copyright permission cannot be obtained or if ownership is questionable, faculty should substitute other resources where copyright permission is clear and obtainable, or substitute resources that are in the public domain.

iii. For Students

a. Attendance

Students are expected to attend their online courses regularly by participating in actives such as submitting assignments on time, engaging in discussion boards, completing exams, attending online class sessions, etc. Simply logging into the course does not count as attendance. The student must complete at least one graded assignment each week to be counted "present".

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b. Complaints

Mount Union's policies and procedures for handling student academic and non-academic complaints are applicable to all students, including those enrolled in online programs and courses. Students with complaints about online programs or courses should follow the process described in the student catalogs.

c. Cheating and Academic Honesty

Online students are held to the same academic integrity policies as face-to-face students. Scholastic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, etc. Faculty should take measures to deter cheating as much as possible (open book assignments, proctored exams (Respondus), random quiz or test questions). Mount Union's judicial process will be followed when academic dishonesty is suspected.

d. Student Drops and Withdrawals

Online courses follow the same regulations as face-to-face courses regarding faculty and student-initiated courses drops and withdrawals. Deadlines can be found in the current academic calendar.

B. Technological Standards

i. Digital Accessibility

The Americans with Disabilities Act (Title II and Title III), Section 504 & 508 of Rehabilitation Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Act, the World Wide Web Consortium (WCAG guidelines) and Ohio Law IT-09, require instructors to provide equal access to course materials for all students. These policies are enforced by the Office of Civil Rights. All of our online courses undergo a standard course development process and review by an instructional designer to ensure adherence with these laws and guidelines.

ii. LMS Course Templates

A standard LMS course template will be utilized within the Learning Management System to provide students with continuity between courses. The template for all online courses will be similar in design, ensuring compliance with HLC and accessibility guidelines. The exact template will be selected by the program chair in consultation with the instructional designer. Exceptions to this rule must be approved by the provost.

iii. Publisher Tools and Third-Party Sites

Publisher tools and third-party sites introduce accessibility issues and can sometimes create extra costs for students. Use of such tools in online courses should be reviewed by the instructional designer and approved by program chairs. The technology should be checked for accessibility by the instructional designer.

C. Role of the Instructional Designer

Instructional Designers help faculty create effective learning courses and materials to meet their intended goals. These professionals have backgrounds in both learning design and technology. They assist faculty with the following:

- Develop Online courses and programs
- Design and find digitally accessible resources
- Evaluate new eLearning materials and technologies
- Create effective assessments
- Design and revamp both new and established courses
- Implement feedback from program reviews

Instructional Designers also review and provide feedback to faculty on their course design utilizing Quality Matters.

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The Instructional Designer acts as the supervisor and project manager for all course developers, whether they are internal or external, as they navigate the course development process. When necessary, the Instructional Designer, in consultation with the appropriate Dean or provost, may terminate a course development agreement/contract.

When faculty have questions, they may make an appointment with the instructional designer, who will offer regular office hour appointment bookings for faculty questions. It will be the instructional designer's responsibility to make sure faculty know how to edit the UMU online LMS course templates, to work with faculty to customize course templates for particular needs, and to assess with HLC and QM standards in mind the course map and all weekly/modular materials for accessibility and alignment with course objectives, activities, and assessments. It is the course developer's responsibility to make necessary changes and revisions based on the instructional designer's feedback and guidance.

A typical workload for an Instructional Designer assumes 15-20 online courses in development at any given time, so that adequate support can be offered to faculty in the process of developing an online course.

Support for Online Learners

Online students are expected to have appropriate supports that are equivalent to resources that other students are offered. Academic student support planning is conducted by the administration to identify and respond to emerging needs and evaluate current practices. Changes are implemented by those responsible for online curriculum development, such as faculty, and student and faculty support services.

A. Student Resources

i. Student Support

Students enrolled in online courses and programs are provided access to student services available at Mount Union. This includes, but is not limited to the library, the University Store, Student Success, Career Services, IT Helpdesk, etc.
Questions regarding the learning management system, email and other technological issues can be sent to the IT Helpdesk via phone or email.

ii. Library and Learning Resources

To promote learning, students enrolled in online courses/programs have remote access to scholarly information, resources, and research instruction through the UMU library. Full-text databases, bibliographic indexes, and an online catalog are available on the library's website. The library provides a wide range of online research guides and individualized research consultations by online chat, text, email, phone, or in-person. Librarians are available to faculty teaching in the online environment, assisting them in acquiring online materials, providing library instruction sessions, and holding student research consultations.

Cost to Students

All undergraduate online education courses at UMU are assessed the same tuition as any in-person course, per credit hour. Graduate programs have their own tuition and fee structure per program. For additional information contact the UMU Business Office.

Cost to the University

A. Course Load & Compensation for Development

Online course developments must be approved by deans and program directors or chairs. Faculty participating in course development must meet the qualifications set forth in this document. If a course development is approved, the development contract/agreement will be presented to the faculty member to sign. Compensation and a basic timeline will be outlined in this contract/agreement. The dean and program chair will also sign the contract/agreement

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and the instructional designer will coordinate the development process with the faculty member. Courses can be compensated at three levels of work:

- Full Course Development: the course has not been offered online before
- Extensive Revision: the course has been taught online before and has materials available, but content, delivery, and/or design need to be updated and reviewed
- Minor Revision: The course is mostly complete but something within the course needs to be updated/revised
  - Example:
    - A new version of a book becomes available so the content and assignments in the course need to be updated.
    - The course needs to be migrated into an updated course template.

  - Minor course maintenance such as updating links or replacing minor outdated content or activities does not constitute a Minor Revision

Compensation for course development will be based on the above levels of work as well as the program type (graduate /undergraduate) and number of credits assigned to the course. Course developers must satisfy all terms of the contract to receive compensation.

B. Course Load & Compensation for Instruction

Online learning courses are typically part of a faculty member's regular teaching load, with the same rate of compensation as face-to-face courses. Online learning courses may also be taught as an overload, at the same rate of compensation as face-to-face courses taught as an overload. Any exceptions (e.g., reassigned time for developing courses using new online technologies) are reviewed on a case- by-case basis, and as per current procedure, must be approved by the chair, the dean, and the provost.

Expectations for Developing Online Courses and Programs

A. Requests to Develop and Teach Online

- Faculty proposing to move a course from face-to-face to online delivery (or to create a new offering online) must have already taken the prerequisite UMU Online Development and Instruction Orientation.
  - Contact the Instructional Designer for more information.
- The development request must be approved by the faculty member's chair and Dean.
- Requests to develop a course for online will only be granted if they add strategic value to UMU and our students, otherwise the request will be refused. The proposed course developer will need to articulate this reasoning to those approving the request. Examples of strategic value:

  - The course is being built specifically to run in summer and/or winter terms
  - The course is occurring at a time in the specific program where students are busy and in need of flexibility, e.g., they are student teaching, participating in internship, job searching
  - The asynchronous online modality is a superior delivery method for the requested course's content

B. Use of Outside Contractors

UMU may seek and contract with outside developers to create online courses. These outside developers will sign and agree to the UMU External Course Developer contract. All UMU policies and procedures must be followed by said contractors. Contractors cannot be hired without the approval of the college dean and input from the Instructional Designer.

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C. Course Development

UMU has developed a pathway that will assist instructors in aligning their online courses with the best practices in online teaching and learning. All online courses will undergo a development process overseen by an instructional designer. This process is outlined in the Companion Document to this policy. Each course will utilize templates and other tools provided by UMU to help instructors to follow HLC guidelines. Because this process is rigorous, instructors may be compensated for their participation in additional training and course development. Example of some of the steps in the process:

- Course Development Orientation
- Design Process Meeting
- Proficiency Check
- Course Objectives Check
- Course Map Check
- Module/Week One Check
- Halfway Point Review
- Halfway Point Revisions
- Final Review
- Final Revisions
- Academic Review

For a more detailed outline of that process instructors may contact the Instructional Designer or look at the Online Education Policy Companion.

D. Course Review

Each course will be carefully reviewed by an instructional designer. The designer will review the course to make sure it is meeting Federal/State Law, Quality Matters, and HLC Guidelines. The quality assurance process addresses many components. Below are some of these components:

- Course Overview and Introduction
- Learning Objectives (Competencies)
- Assessment and Measurement
- Instructional Materials
- Learning Activities and Learner Interaction
- Course Technology
- Learner Support
- Accessibility and Usability

E. Registrar

The Registrar must be given approval by the Faculty Senate and a completed, signed copy of the completed course development contract prior to listing the online course in the catalog and in the online system for course registration.

F. Authority and Control

The institution ensures that faculty design and implement online learning processes that meet accreditors' demands and observe the need for rigorous assessment of student learning outcomes. Academic program review processes led by the administration and facilitated by faculty committees are carried out to track the effectiveness of online offerings.

Contractual arrangements (such as those with technology providers) are carried out within the parameters of accreditation and institutional standards. All online and hybrid courses must be taught using the institution's current learning management environment. If a main course shell has been created and approved by the university that main

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course shell must be used when that course is taught online.

Though it is the intention of the university that those who develop a course will be the ones to teach it, there are times when the university may ask another qualified instructor to teach the course. The university may also require that the course be made available to broader populations than UMU students through consortia such as Acadeum.

Course developers will be credited for the course development within the main course shell if they so choose.

G. Intellectual Property (IP) Policy for Online Courses

- External course developers will be subject to the External Course Developer Contract that they sign.
    - Pertains to anyone not currently employed full-time by UMU
- Internal course developers will be subject to the specific Internal Course Development Agreement that they sign.
    - Pertains to anyone employed full-time at UMU
    - Clause on IP from Internal Agreement:
        - This course development is a joint effort. Both the Course Developer and UMU will be contributing resources to the final resulting work. The Course Developer retains copyright for material they own and their contributions to the final work. The Course Developer grants a continuous, non-exclusive, royalty-free license to the University to use their contribution. The Course Developer will be compensated for the development of the course.

Offering the Online Course Once Developed

A. Verification of Student Identity in Distance Education

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that UMU operates in compliance with the provisions of the United States Federal Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) concerning the verification of student identity in online education. All credit-bearing courses and programs offered through online education methods must verify that the student who registers for an online education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives academic credit. According to the HEOA, one or more of the following methods must be used:

- An individual secure login and password
- Proctored examinations, and/or
- Other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

All methods of verifying student identity in online learning must protect the privacy of student information. If any fees associated with the verification of student identity will be charged to students, they will be so indicated to the student.

B. International Students
   If they are living in US:

- Only one online or distance learning class can count toward a full course of study for an F-1 student during each term or semester.
- No online or distance learning classes may count toward an M-1 or ESL student's full course of study requirement.

   If they are living outside the United States:

- If a program decides to enroll an international student in an online course or program, UMU requests that you provide a written disclosure statement such as the following:

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- - A country may or may not regulate online education provided to students in its jurisdiction and may or may not require foreign higher education institutions to comply with online education regulations. At this time, The University of Mount Union cannot guarantee that a program meets curriculum requirements or professional licensure requirements in your country.
  - It is expected that the student understands and is aware of their home country's online program regulations. Some countries do not currently recognize credentials earned online.
- Some countries seek to tax students directly for online courses. Students should be aware of potential taxes that may be charged in addition to tuition.
- Some countries may be subject to comprehensive or limited U.S. sanctions. Depending on the sanction category, providing educational services may be prohibited.
- Internet Access: Some countries (e.g., China) block or filter internet content. Use of a VPN in China is generally restricted and is not reliable.
- Data Security: Many countries have stronger data privacy laws than the U.S.
- Canada has specific Distance Education Authorization Requirements that vary by province.

C. State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)

- UMU abides by all requirements outlined in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), which oversees and sets comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. UMU faculty cannot offer online courses and programs in states that do not have SARA approval, unless UMU has received separate approval from that state. Access to UMU's online courses and programs is available to all students in SARA states.

D. Course Availability

The ability of instructors to continue to offer an existing course using an approved online delivery method depends on factors including but not necessarily limited to (a) the results of the instructor's annual evaluations of teaching, particularly with regard to teaching the course in question and the delivery method in question, (b) student needs, (c) department/college/university goals concerning online versus face-to-face delivery of individual courses and degree programs, and (d) resource availability. The department head has primary responsibility for overseeing the scheduling of courses offered through the department each semester and summer, and that includes the scheduling of the course delivery format.

Assessing and Revising Online Courses Once Offered

The Instructional Designer and faculty teaching the newly developed course will communicate with each other after the course has been taught for the first time, to make any essential changes to the main course shell. The course will be reviewed by the Instructional Designer/Faculty Chair every three years to determine if it needs revised. Every 5-6 years the course will be completely redeveloped.

A. For Courses Developed Since this Policy's Inception (DATE)

Courses will be reviewed every three years; required revisions will be completed by a course developer or another appropriate designee. Revisions will need to be made within 12 months from notification date to complete said revisions, per contract/agreement offered to the person.

B. For Courses Developed Prior to This Policy

Existing Online courses that have not yet gone through the official online course development process will have a grace period of three years when the course may continue running without changes. During this grace period faculty must:
- Complete the online course development and instruction orientation

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- Undergo a contracted course development process that is reviewed by an instructional designer and approved by the appropriate dean

If, after three years, the faculty member teaching the course does not complete the revision process, the course shall be transitioned to a face-to-face course.

Faculty shall be compensated for these course developments in alignment with the compensation policy outlined in this document. Exceptions to this must be approved by the provost.

Course Exceptions

Blended or hybrid courses offered less than 75% via online education are not required to follow the Online Course Development Process but must still meet accessibility and accreditation standards.

Responsibilities

Position or Office	Responsibilities
Academic Affairs Staff	Requests policy review and revision by Academic Policies Committee every two years or as changes warrant; updates policy with approved changes and reissues policy

Online teaching resources:
Policies
  Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
  Technology Resources Acceptable Use Policy
  Copyright Policy

Resources:
The Higher Learning Commission
Quality Matters
Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
Center for Faculty Development

Contacts

Subject	Office	Telephone	E-mail/URL
Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs	Academic Systems	330-823-6018	Registrar@mountunion.edu
Instructional Designer	Academic Systems	330-823-4895	centerforfacultydevelopment@mountunion.edu
Center for Faculty Development	Academic Affairs	330-823-4893	centerforfacultydevelopment@mountunion.edu

History

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