

# Academic Affairs Policy Statement No. 21

## Online Education

### 1. References

- a. Academic and Student Affairs Handbook, Board of Regents, University System of Georgia, Policy 2.3.7.2, Distance Learning Approval Procedures.
- b. Board of Regents Policy Manual, Board of Regents, University System of Georgia, Policy 3.3.3, Instruction Offered Externally.
- c. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, Principles of Accreditation 2018 Edition, Principle 10.6 a-c.
- d. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, Policy Statement on Distance and Correspondence Education, August 2018.
- e. Bylaws of the University Council of the University of Georgia, 2005.
- f. University of Georgia Academic Affairs Policy 2.01-13, Course Syllabus Policy.
- g. University of Georgia E-Suffix Policy, University Curriculum Committee.
- h. Approved by the University Council on April 27, 2010, and by President Michael F. Adams on May 13, 2010. Effective fall semester 2010.
- i. Revised by the Curriculum Committee and approved by the University Council on September 27, 2017, and by President Jere W. Morehead on October 4, 2017.

### 2. Objective

This comprehensive policy ensures that courses and programs delivered through online education are equivalent in content, level, rigor, and overall educational quality to courses and programs taught in regular classroom instruction. This policy also ensures that courses and programs delivered through online education meet requirements of the University System of Georgia (USG) and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

### 3. Definition

In keeping with Board of Regents and SACSCOC definitions, online education is a formal educational process in which the majority of instruction occurs when students and instructor are not in the same place and instruction is delivered using technology. It may be synchronous or asynchronous. The definition of online education does not include noncredit-bearing courses.

### 4. Responsibility

- a. Instructional Units
  - i. The academic instructional units and faculty are responsible for deciding whether to offer courses or programs through online education, which courses or programs to offer, and what method of delivery to pursue.

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- ii. The substantive content of the courses or programs, as well as the assignment of qualified instructors for those courses or programs, is the responsibility of the academic instructional unit, which has primary responsibility for maintaining the quality and integrity of all instruction in its area regardless of the course format or method of delivery.
  - iii. The instructional unit is responsible for assigning instructors for online education courses and programs who meet the same qualifications as instructors who provide regular classroom instruction.
- b. Identity Verification
- i. Faculty assigned as instructors for online education courses are responsible for ensuring that each student who registers in the course is the same student who participates in, is assessed for attainment of student learning outcomes, and receives credit for the course. This identity verification can be accomplished by using the University-provided learning management system with secure log-in and password, or by using graded tests and assignments that are administered face-to-face, or by using UGA email. Another system may be used under the following circumstances: it must be accessed through the University-provided learning management system or provide for verification of student identity by secure UGA log-in and password. Third-party verification services, emerging technologies and practices shown to be effective in verifying student identity, and pedagogical practices such as video-based assignments that establish student identity may be used to verify student identity for testing and exams.
  - ii. If students will incur any additional fees related to identity verification, the instructor is responsible for providing that information to the course sectioning officer for entry into the Athena systems so that students will be informed of those fees when they register.
- c. Central Administration
- The central administration is responsible for providing instructors access to an online learning management system that can be used for all online education courses and supports student verification by secure log-in and password. The Office of Instruction, through the Office of Online Learning and the Center for Teaching and Learning, has central responsibility for supporting online education and promoting best practices.

## 5. Procedure

- a. A course or program may not be offered through online education unless it has been approved through the University's curriculum approval process.
- b. Courses  
A course in which the majority of instruction is delivered through online technology is considered to be an online education course. At UGA, courses in which more than 95% of the instruction is delivered through online technology require an E-suffix in order to notify students that these courses may be taken from non-campus locations (Appendix A). When

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offering an online education course, units must provide additional information in the syllabus as outlined in the online education individual course syllabus (Appendix B).

### c. Programs

A program in which more than 50% of the courses are delivered through online education is considered an Online Degree in keeping with Board of Regents policies, which require notification of all Online Degrees. The program must be approved through the University's program approval process.

Approvals for courses and programs to be offered through online education will follow the established course and program approval processes. Course proposals will use the CAPA approval process.

Proposals for new online courses will be approved through the Automated Course Approval Process (CAPA). Proposals for new online programs should be routed through the following approval sequence:

- a. Faculty of the academic unit proposing the online program
- b. Department Head or Director of academic unit proposing the online program
- c. Dean or Vice President of academic unit proposing the online program
- d. Graduate School Program Committee, if it is a graduate program
- e. Graduate Council, if it is a graduate program
- f. Dean of the Graduate School, if it is a graduate program
- g. Office of Instruction (for review)
- h. Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
- i. University Curriculum Committee
- j. Executive Committee of the University Council
- k. University Council
- l. President
- m. Board of Regents (for notification)

## 6. Guidelines for Distance Education

- a. Courses and programs offered through online education must comply with SACSCOC policies and principles regarding distance education. In addition, courses or programs must meet the following requirements to be considered appropriate for online education:
  - i. All online education, as defined in this policy, should be offered in conjunction with a UGA degree or certificate program.
  - ii. Online education offerings may be provided only by existing academic units (instructional units, schools, or colleges). No new instructional unit, school, or college will be created for the purpose of offering online education courses or degrees.
  - iii. Online education courses and programs are subject to the same standards, policies, and procedures as all UGA courses and programs, including the protection of privacy for

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students in compliance with the expectations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the accessibility standards in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

- iv. Accreditation standards should be viewed as establishing minimum requirements but not necessarily as high as the standards the University wants to achieve with its online education offerings.
  - v. The syllabus for an online education course should include the additional information listed in Appendix B.
- b. The following factors listed below should be taken into account when deciding whether or not a course or program is appropriate for online education. This is a balancing process that in some cases will point in favor of online education, while in other cases it will not.
- i. Important reasons to offer online education include, but may not be limited to, the following examples:
    - 1. An improved or enhanced learning experience for our currently enrolled students.
    - 2. The ability to reach students the University otherwise would not be able to reach, permitting the University to extend degree programs or course work to qualified students who desire a UGA experience but who otherwise would not be able to access one.
    - 3. An improved learning environment for faculty, who may welcome the opportunity to enhance their instructional or research programs.
    - 4. To assist the University in carrying out its mission of serving the entire state of Georgia, both in terms of our land grant status and our charter.
  - ii. Important reasons to be cautious about online education include, but may not be limited to, the following examples:
    - 1. Dilution of resources.
    - 2. The time-intensive nature of many online education offerings may interfere with faculty time for research and on-campus instruction, resulting in reduced productivity in assigned duties.
    - 3. Less faculty time for on-campus instruction and/or research activities may dilute the educational experience for on-campus students.

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## **PROPOSAL FOR AN ONLINE PROGRAM**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**College/School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department/Divison:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Program (Major and Degree):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Will any approved areas of emphasis be offered under this major?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Proposed Effective Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

The proposal for an online program must include a brief narrative that addresses the following points:

- 1. Assessment**  
A needs assessment demonstrating a sufficient pool of qualified applicants.
- 2. Admission Requirements**  
All requirements for admission to an Online Academic Degree Program will be the same as those for the same degree at an authorized unit.
- 3. Program Content**  
The basic curriculum of the program will be equivalent to the authorized unit's approved program. The criteria for electives or substitutions for specific requirements will be equivalent online.
- 4. Student Support Services**  
Each proposal must describe how students will have access to appropriate learning and student support services to ensure full participation in the learning experience. Services to be considered include academic advising or an advisory committee, technology support, financial aid advising, career planning, and disability services. Any special accommodations made for distance education students must be described.
- 5. Resident Requirements**  
Residence requirements will be identical to those established for the authorized degree program with residence at the approved location serving to meet that requirement.
- 6. Program Management**  
Each proposal must contain a specified plan for program maintenance and program quality. This plan will provide contact persons at cooperating units, a detailed timetable, and complete plans for application and matriculation of students. In addition, specific plans should be provided concerning the schedule of courses, the duration of the program, program review, and possible duplication with other programs in the immediate area.

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### 7. **Library and Laboratory Resources**

The proposal must include a review of existing library and laboratory resources (or other specialized resources) at the host location. If deficiencies exist, the proposal must include a plan, including timetable and budget, for alleviating the deficiencies.

### 8. **Budget**

The budget must provide a realistic estimate of the costs of developing and implementing a quality program. Consequently, each program budget must contain detailed estimates—specified separately for authorized and cooperating units—concerning faculty and staff positions, library, laboratory, and other specialized facility resource requirements, travel and other significant operating expenses. If the support for the program is the result of an internal reallocation of resources, explicit details should be included in the proposal. The budget must reflect the start-up costs of the program, projected costs for completion of the first cycle of students, and additional costs associated with any future cycles of students.

### 9. **Program Costs Assessed to Students**

Any costs beyond those normally associated with the program on campus must be spelled out and justified.

### 10. **E-Rate**

If an e-rate will be charged, an approved e-rate form must be submitted to the Office of Instruction with the proposal form.

# Academic Affairs Policy Statement No. 21

## ~~Distance-Online~~ Education

### 1. References

- a. Academic and Student Affairs Handbook, Board of Regents, University System of Georgia, Policy 2.3.7.2, Distance Learning Approval Procedures.
- b. Board of Regents Policy Manual, Board of Regents, University System of Georgia, Policy 3.3.3, Instruction Offered Externally.
- ~~c. [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, Principles of Accreditation 2018 Edition, Principle 10.6 a-c.](#)~~
- ~~d. [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, Policy Statement on Distance and Correspondence Education, August, 2018.](#)~~
- ~~e. [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, Principles of Accreditation 2012 Edition, Federal Requirements 4.8.1-3.](#)~~
- ~~d. [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, Policy Statement on Distance and Correspondence Education, July, 2014.](#)~~
- e. Bylaws of the University Council of the University of Georgia, 2005.
- f. University of Georgia Academic Affairs Policy 2.01-13, Course Syllabus Policy.
- g. University of Georgia E-Suffix Policy, University Curriculum Committee.
- h. [Approved by the University Council on April 27, 2010, and by President Michael F. Adams on May 13, 2010. Effective fall semester 2010.](#)
- i. [Revised by the Curriculum Committee and approved by the University Council on September 27, 2017, and by President Jere W. Morehead on October 4, 2017.](#)

### 2. ~~Background~~

~~The University of Georgia first developed formal policies for distance education in 2001, which were further codified through the curriculum approval process in 2010. The current policy updates the 2010 policy based on evolving distance education practice at the University, the creation of the Office of Online Learning, and revised requirements of the University System of Georgia (USG) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The current policy also integrates previously separate policies related to distance education into one comprehensive policy.~~

### 3.2. PurposeObjective

This comprehensive policy ensures that courses and programs delivered through ~~distanee~~ online education are equivalent in content, level, rigor, and overall educational quality to courses and programs taught in regular classroom instruction. This policy also ensures that courses and programs delivered through ~~distance-online~~ online education meet requirements of the [University System of Georgia \(USG\)](#) and [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges \(SACSCOC\)](#).

### 4.3. Definition

In keeping with Board of Regents and SACSCOC definitions, online distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of instruction occurs when students and instructor are not in the same place and instruction is delivered using technology. It may be synchronous or asynchronous. The definition of online distance education does not include noncredit-bearing courses.

### 5.4. Responsibilities Responsibility

#### a. Instructional Units

- i. The academic instructional units and faculty are responsible for deciding whether to offer courses or programs through online distance education, which courses or programs to offer, and what method of delivery to pursue.
- ii. The substantive content of the courses or programs, as well as the assignment of qualified instructors for those courses or programs, is the responsibility of the academic instructional unit, which has primary responsibility for maintaining the quality and integrity of all instruction in its area regardless of the course format or method of delivery.
- iii. The instructional unit is responsible for assigning instructors for online distance education courses and programs who meet the same qualifications as instructors who provide regular classroom instruction.

#### b. Identity Verification

- i. Faculty assigned as instructors for online distance education courses are responsible for ensuring that each student who registers in the course is the same student who participates in, is assessed for attainment of student learning outcomes, and receives credit for the course. This identity verification can be accomplished by using the University-provided learning management system with secure log-in and password, or by using graded tests and assignments that are administered face-to-face, or by using UGA email. Another system may be used under the following circumstances: it must be accessed through the University-provided learning management system or provide for verification of student identity by secure UGA log-in and password. Third-party verification services, emerging technologies and practices shown to be effective in verifying student identity, and pedagogical practices such as video-based assignments that establish student identity may be used to verify student identity for testing and exams.
- ii. If students will incur any additional fees related to identity verification, the instructor is responsible for providing that information to the course sectioning officer for entry into the Athena systems so that students will be informed of those fees when they register.

#### c. Central Administration

The central administration is responsible for providing instructors access to an online learning management system that can be used for all online distance education courses and



supports student verification by secure log-in and password. The Office of ~~the Vice President for~~ Instruction, through the Office of Online Learning and the Center for Teaching and Learning, has central responsibility for supporting onlinedistance education and promoting best practices.

## **6.5. Procedures**

a. A course or program may not be offered through onlinedistance education unless it has been approved through the University's curriculum approval process.

### b. Courses

A course in which the majority of instruction is delivered through onlinedistance technology is considered to be an onlinedistance education course. At UGA, courses in which more than 95% of the instruction is delivered through onlinedistance technology require an E-suffix in order to notify students that these courses may be taken from non-campus locations (Appendix A). When offering an onlinedistance education course, units must provide additional information in the syllabus as outlined in the onlinedistance education individual course syllabus (Appendix B).

### c. Programs

A program in which more than 50% of the courses are delivered through onlinedistance education is considered an External-Online Degree in keeping with Board of Regents policies, which require notification of all External-Online Degrees. The program must be approved through the University's program approval process. ~~The proposal for an External Degree should be consistent with the University mission and follow the format provided in Appendix C.~~

## **7. Approval Process**

Approvals for courses and programs to be offered through onlinedistance education will follow the established course and program approval processes. Course proposals will use the CAPA approval process. ~~External Degree proposals will be submitted by deans of respective schools or colleges or directors of institutes directly to the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. Graduate program proposals must first be reviewed by the dean of the Graduate School who will then forward them to the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. Proposals will be reviewed by the University Curriculum Committee and subsequently forwarded with a recommendation to the University Council for consideration. University Council recommendations on proposals are forwarded to the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost who will transmit the same to the President of the University for consideration. The President will transmit notification to the Board of Regents. A proposal for a program that will be offered through distance education should follow the format provided in Appendix C.~~

Proposals for new online courses will be approved through the Automated Course Approval Process (CAPA). Proposals for new online programs should be routed through the following approval sequence:

- a. Faculty of the academic unit proposing the online program
- b. Department Head or Director of academic unit proposing the online program
- c. Dean or Vice President of academic unit proposing the online program
- d. Graduate School Program Committee, if it is a graduate program
- e. Graduate Council, if it is a graduate program
- f. Dean of the Graduate School, if it is a graduate program
- g. Office of Instruction (for review)
- h. Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
- i. University Curriculum Committee
- j. Executive Committee of the University Council
- k. University Council
- l. President
- a.m. Board of Regents (for notification)

### **8.6. Guidelines for Distance Education**

- a. Courses and programs offered through online~~distance~~ education must comply with SACSCOC policies and principles regarding distance education. In addition, courses or programs must meet the following requirements to be considered appropriate for online~~distance~~ education:
  - i. All online ~~distance~~-education, as defined in this policy, should be offered in conjunction with a UGA degree or certificate program.
  - ii. Distance~~Online~~ education offerings may be provided only by existing academic units (instructional units, schools, or colleges). No new instructional unit, school, or college will be created for the purpose of offering online~~distance~~ education courses or degrees.
  - iii. Distance~~Online~~ education courses and programs are subject to the same standards, policies, and procedures as all UGA courses and programs, including the protection of privacy for students in compliance with the expectations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the accessibility standards in the Americans with Disabilities Act.
  - iv. Accreditation standards should be viewed as establishing minimum requirements but not necessarily as high as the standards the University wants to achieve with its online~~distance~~ education offerings.
  - v. The syllabus for an online~~distance~~ education course should include the additional information listed in Appendix B.
- b. The following factors listed below should be taken into account when deciding whether or not a course or program is appropriate for online~~distance~~ education. This is a balancing process that in some cases will point in favor of online~~distance~~ education, while in other cases it will not.

- i. Important reasons to offer ~~online~~distance education include, but may not be limited to, the following examples:
  1. An improved or enhanced learning experience for our currently enrolled students.
  2. The ability to reach students the University otherwise would not be able to reach, permitting the University to extend degree programs or course work to qualified students who desire a UGA experience but who otherwise would not be able to access one.
  3. An improved learning environment for faculty, who may welcome the opportunity to enhance their instructional or research programs.
  4. To assist the University in carrying out its mission of serving the entire state of Georgia, both in terms of our land grant status and our charter.
  
- ii. Important reasons to be cautious about ~~online~~distance education include, but may not be limited to, the following examples:
  1. Dilution of resources.
  2. The time-intensive nature of many ~~online~~distance education offerings may interfere with faculty time for research and on-campus instruction, resulting in reduced productivity in assigned duties.
  3. Less faculty time for on-campus instruction and/or research activities may dilute the educational experience for on-campus students.

~~Approved by the University Council on April 27, 2010, and by President Michael F. Adams on May 13, 2010. Effective fall semester 2010.~~

~~Revised by the Curriculum Committee and approved by the University Council on September 27, 2017, and by President Jere W. Morehead on October 4, 2017.~~

Appendix C

PROPOSAL FOR AN ~~EXTERNAL-ONLINE DEGREE PROGRAM~~  
The University of Georgia

**Institution:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**College/School/Division:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department/Divison:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Degree (please indicate whether this is a stand-alone degree):**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Program (Major and Degree):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Will any approved areas of emphasis be offered under this major?** \_\_\_\_\_

**CIP Code:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Proposed ~~Start~~ Effective Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

The proposal for an ~~External Degree~~online program must include a brief narrative that addresses the following points:

- 1. Assessment**  
A needs assessment demonstrating a sufficient pool of qualified applicants.
- 2. Admission Requirements**  
All requirements for admission to an ~~External-Online~~ Academic Degree Program will be the same as those for the same degree at an authorized unit.
- 3. Program Content**  
The basic curriculum of the program will be equivalent to the authorized unit's approved program. The criteria for electives or substitutions for specific requirements will be equivalent ~~at both (or all) locations.~~online.
- 4. Student Support Services**  
Each proposal must describe how students will have access to appropriate learning and student support services to ensure full participation in the learning experience. Services to be considered include academic advising or an advisory committee, technology support, financial aid advising, career planning, and disability services. Any special accommodations made for distance education students must be described.

**5. Resident Requirements**

Residence requirements will be identical to those established for the authorized degree program with residence at the approved location serving to meet that requirement.

**6. Program Management**

Each proposal must contain a specified plan for program maintenance and program quality. This plan will provide contact persons at cooperating units, a detailed timetable, and complete plans for application and matriculation of students. In addition, specific plans should be provided concerning the schedule of courses, the duration of the program, program review, and possible duplication with other programs in the immediate area.

**7. Library and Laboratory Resources**

The proposal must include a review of existing library and laboratory resources (or other specialized resources) at the host location. If deficiencies exist, the proposal must include a plan, including timetable and budget, for alleviating the deficiencies.

**8. Budget**

The budget must provide a realistic estimate of the costs of developing and implementing a quality program. Consequently, each program budget must contain detailed estimates— specified separately for authorized and cooperating units—concerning faculty and staff positions, library, laboratory, and other specialized facility resource requirements, travel and other significant operating expenses. If the support for the program is the result of an internal reallocation of resources, explicit details should be included in the proposal. The budget must reflect the start-up costs of the program, projected costs for completion of the first cycle of students, and additional costs associated with any future cycles of students.

**9. Program Costs Assessed to Students**

Any costs beyond those normally associated with the program on campus must be spelled out and justified.

**10. E-Rate**

If an e-rate will be charged, an approved e-rate form must be submitted to the Office of Instruction with the proposal form.