University Policy

University Policy No.: UP-04-05	**University Policy Name:** Distance Learning Policy
Initial Adoption Date: February 5, 2024	**Revision Date(s):**
Responsible Unit: Academic Affairs	**Responsible Executive:** Director of Instructional Technology
Authority	Florida Board of Governors 2025 SUS Strategic Plan for Online Education; FAMU Regulation 10.128; FAMU-UFF Collective Bargaining Agreement (Article 18), SACSCOC Standard(s) 10.6
Applicability	University Faculty and Students

I. Policy Statement and Purpose

Florida A&M University (FAMU or University) The University recognizes and develops Distance Learning policies by following the variety of modalities as defined by the Florida Board of Governors, Innovation and Online Committee. This Policy provides for designation of course type, reuse of materials and software, intellectual property rights, and registrar interfaces. This Policy incorporates existing University regulations and policies, such as Florida Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Intellectual Property, withdrawal, academic honor policy, student code of conduct, applicable collective bargaining requirements and information technology. The University's Distance Learning Program is consistent with the University's values and mission. Review and approval processes ensure compliance with the requirements of regulatory and accrediting bodies, as well as the appropriateness of the technology being used to meet program or course objectives.

A. **Principles of Good Practice** – FAMU adheres to The Principles of Good Practice as defined by the Southern Regional Electronic Campus. The expectations and requirements for participation in the Electronic Campus are listed at: https://www.sreb.org/publication/principles-good-practice.

B. **Best Practices for Distance Learning at FAMU -** The Principles of Good Practice for Distance Education provide guidance from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) on how distance education degrees and certificate programs should be offered at an accredited post-secondary institution. The University curriculum governance process ensures the accreditation standards of SACSCOC are met for all academic programs, including distance learning programs. The same processes for program evaluation are used for online and on campus degrees and certificates. By following these procedures, FAMU is able to participate in the Florida Virtual Campus and the Southern Regional Education Board ("SREB") Electronic Campus.

C. **Institutional Responsibilities -** The University is responsible for providing the appropriate instructional delivery systems. Admissions, degree, curriculum, and contact hour policies are equivalent to those used for traditional students. The University ensures that services available

for online students are equivalent to services available to on-campus students. Equivalent services include, but are not limited to online access to admission processes; financial aid services; academic support; library resources; career and job counseling; advising services; online tutoring; online testing; online access to counseling and psychological services; and complaint resolution services. The Office of Instructional Technology (OIT) collaborates with the various departments to ensure that online students receive the same services that face-to-face students receive. The Office of Information Technology Services provides technology infrastructure (facilities, equipment, and technical expertise) to support online student access to instruction and services. Infrastructure and procedures are in place to verify the students' identity and protect their privacy.

D. **Department/College Responsibilities –** The Department/College is responsible for working with the Office of Instructional Technology and the Division of Academic Affairs (Program Quality) to identify degree and certificate programs that are appropriate for online delivery, and for development of new online programs that support local community needs, state workforce goals, and/or the University mission. New online degree and certificate programs follow the curriculum proposal processes established by the University Faculty Senate. The addition of online delivery modality to an existing degree program follows approval processes as established by the Office of the Provost. The Department works with the OIT to ensure the Department meets and adheres to SACSCOC requirements for online delivery, state authorization requirements for out-of-state online students, state High Quality Standards for online course delivery, and state goals for online faculty development. The Office of Instructional Technology helps with identifying faculty who desire to complete the requirements for Quality Matters (QM) program certification.

E. **Student Responsibilities –** Distance learning students are responsible for personally completing all of the academic requirements of that course/program and for adherence to the principles of academic integrity as outlined in the University's Academic Dishonesty Policy. Like on-campus students, distance learning students are expected to comply with other applicable policies including, without limitation, the FAMU's Student Code of Conduct, attendance policies, financial responsibility policies, graduation and other academic policies.

F. **Faculty Development -** Florida A&M University supports the delivery of high-quality distance learning courses. Faculty engaged in delivering online courses and programs must meet the same requirements as those teaching face to face courses. As with all courses, FAMU recognizes that the quality of online courses and student success is dependent on well-trained faculty who are provided the support necessary to excel.

1.   Approval from the department chair and dean are needed to allow faculty to teach an online course. As such, faculty must demonstrate their skills and ability to effectively deliver the curriculum. The OIT provides faculty with the support needed to hone the skills necessary to deliver effective online courses. OIT provides a certification program to facilitate faculty's ability to develop the skills necessary to teach online. Faculty are encouraged to recertify their credentials every three years thereby ensuring their skills are updated to meet the changing demands of online learning. The Teaching and Learning Center further supports faculty by providing opportunities for them to develop innovative teaching methods that enhance instruction and improve student outcomes.

2.   FAMU is a Quality Matters subscribing institution and provides ongoing instructional design services, external course review and faculty development opportunities.

G.   **Accessibility -** The Office of Instructional Technology offers multimedia, distance learning, audiovisual, and video conferencing services to support all modes of student learning. Accommodations are provided for students who meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students who have a documented disability should contact the Center for Disabilities Access and Resources (CeDAR), at 850-599-3180 or cedar@famu.edu, regarding eligibility for academic accommodations.

H.   **Evaluation** - The State University System Student Assessment of Instruction allows student to assess the quality of instruction received in their classes. The FAMU Student Assessment of Instruction is administered in the last three weeks of instruction every semester through a survey provided to each student who is enrolled. Faculty are encouraged to solicit students' participation in the survey and are kept abreast of the response rate. The data from the survey is provided to the instructors. The results show the composite ratings by the students and any comments made. Information gleaned from this survey is used to help improve instruction going forward.

I.   **General Policies on Intellectual Property Rights, Disclosure of Interest**

The University's existing intellectual property regulations, policies and collective bargaining agreement provisions are applicable to distance learning. Such policies include, without limitation, FAMU Regulation 10.128 Copyrights and Patents (Works and Inventions), which establishes the policy and procedures regarding ownership of intellectual property. The Regulation is located at: https://www.famu.edu/about-famu/leadership/division-of-legal-affairs/office-of-the-general-counsel/university_regulations/pdf/Regulation-%20Copyrights%20Patents%20Works%20Inventions-10.128%20final%204-09.pdf. Additionally, Article 18 (Inventions and Works) of the FAMU-UFF Collective Bargaining Agreement.

II. Definitions

A.   A Fully Online Program, as defined by the Florida Board of Governors, means 100 percent of the direct instruction of the program is available using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. All program requirements that cannot be completed online can be completed off-campus. See Florida BOG Innovation in Online Committee 2025 Strategic Plan for Online Education. FAMU further defines a Fully Online Program as a program that is offered 100 percent online with no on-campus presence required by students. In some cases, exam proctoring may be required at an approved testing center proximal to the student's location. All classes in a fully online Program are hosted in FAMU's Learning Management System called Canvas. Courses in a fully online Program are ideally offered asynchronously, but may require some select online synchronous attendance where appropriate. FAMU's online courses require regular and substantive interaction between students and faculty in accordance with US Department of Education Policy.

B.   **Distance Learning Delivery Modes -** The delivery modes at FAMU, as defined by the Florida Board of Governors, follow.

Metric	Courses – definition	Metric	Programs - definition
Fully Distance Learning Course	100% of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. All special course components (exams, internships, practica, clinicals, labs, etc.) that cannot be completed online can be completed off-campus.	Fully Online Program	100% of the direct instruction of the program is available using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. All program requirements that cannot be completed online can be completed off-campus.
Primarily Distance Learning Course	80-99% of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. There is a requirement for the student to attend campus or another explicit geographic location for a portion of the course.	Primarily Online Program	80-99% of the direct instruction of the program is available using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. There is a requirement for the student to attend campus or another explicit geographic location for a portion of the program.
Hybrid Course	50-79% of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. There is a requirement for the student to attend campus or another explicit geographic location for a portion of the course.	Hybrid Program	50-79% of the direct instruction of the program is available using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. There is a requirement for the student to attend campus or another explicit geographic location for a portion of the program.
Primarily Classroom Course	Less than 50% of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. This designation can include activities that do not occur in a classroom (i.e., labs, internships, practica, clinicals, labs, etc.). These course sections are required	Primarily Classroom Program	Less than 50% of the direct instruction of the program is available using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. There is a requirement for the student to attend campus or another explicit geographic location for a portion of the program.

	to have records on the COURSE MEETINGS table.		
Flex Course	Any course section that is delivered using both face-to-face and remote modalities that allows students to switch between modalities during the term. These course sections are required to have records on the COURSE MEETINGS table.		

III. Course Scheduling Procedures

A. **Approval Process** - Credit-bearing courses must be listed in the FAMU catalog before they may be submitted for consideration for delivery by distance learning unless approved as a special topics course. The approval process for distance learning delivery of courses begins at the Department level by submission of a request from the Department Chair to the College/School Dean. Each College/School will establish a procedure for approval of courses for distance learning. FAMU policy requires that a syllabus be on file for all courses regardless of delivery mode. For distance learning, the syllabus of the course and the strategies used to communicate the course content, and testing or student evaluation procedures, i.e. the course format, will be examined against minimum standards established at the University level and any additional standards established by the College/School faculty.

B. Process for Listing Distance Learning Courses in the Class Schedule - The process for listing distance learning courses in the class schedule is initiated by Department Chairs/School directors. Distance learning courses will be developed and entered into the master class schedule with approval of the Department Chair/School director. The University Registrar or designee will review the master schedule in its first and subsequent edits to identify all distance learning courses proposed for offering by the Colleges. The Office of the Registrar, and the faculty member will ensure that appropriate technology capable classrooms are scheduled for distance learning and mixed mode courses or that arrangements have been made to provide academic (e.g., testing or library access) and student support (e.g., registration, financial aid, advisement or orientation) to the distant learners. It is important to make the distinction between determinations of course content and the decision that a course will be offered. The former decision rests with the faculty member. The latter decision is made through the administrative approval process described in this section. In the event of a disagreement over whether the course will be offered, the final decision to offer any course at the University, regardless of delivery mode, is made by the Dean of the College/School in consultation with Department Chairs.

C. **Course and Program Accreditation Standards Compliance** - The University is accredited by SACSCOC, which has that published: The Distance Education and Correspondence Courses Policy Statement, https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/07/DistanceCorrespondenceEducation.pdf

and Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs: https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/commadap.pdf. The University follows these guiding documents for distance and correspondence education.

D.   The Office of the Provost is responsible for determining that the guidelines are met. The general areas of the guidelines that must be addressed include: curriculum and instruction, rigor of program, appropriateness of technologies, currency of materials, interaction between students and faculty, interaction among students, evaluation and assessment (assess student success, educational effectiveness, integrity), library and learning resources (access to library resources and technology support), and student services (financial aid, academic advising, placement and counseling, student grievances, informational materials, student admission standards). The Office of the Provost is responsible for ensuring that the overall systems are in place to support distance learning programs or courses.

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Allyson Watson, Ph.D.   Date
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

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Larry Robinson, Ph.D.   Date
President

Attachment(s)	N/A
Related Resource(s)	• Section 1004.23, Florida Statutes • FAMU Regulation 4.001-Curriculum Requirements • FAMU Regulations 10.128-Copyrights and Patents • Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) • SACSCOC Distance Education and Correspondence Courses Policy Statement • SACSCOC Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs