



DISTANCE EDUCATION

FACULTY HANDBOOK

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Introduction

The University of Arkansas at Monticello is committed to offering quality distance education to accommodate its students' interests, lifestyles, and academic needs. These faculty guidelines (a supplement to the [UAM Faculty Handbook](#)) address policies and procedures that enable faculty and students to benefit from the opportunities afforded by distance education. These guidelines also provide information faculty will need in order to develop and teach effective, interactive online courses.

UAM Definitions of Digital Learning Formats

It is important for faculty, as well as students, to understand the variety of online learning UAM offers and to adhere to expectations for each format.

Online

An online course is web-based and can be participated in mostly or solely on a computer or tablet. Most or all course activities are online.

Prior to taking an online course, students should make sure that this form of distance learning is a good fit for them. It is critical that students communicate with Information Technology and/or the instructor of an online course no later than the first day of class to assure that they possess the technologies and skills necessary to succeed.

The student learning outcomes for an online course are the same as for an in-person offering of the same course. Course grading standards are the same as in an in-person course.

Hybrid

Hybrid classes blend in-person and online learning. This blended learning requires students to spend some of their time in class in person. The remainder of their learning takes place online.

For students who feel uneasy about taking a purely online class but need or want some flexibility in their class schedule, hybrid classes are an option. With a hybrid class, students get the in-person classroom time they may need. Students should consult Information Technology, course instructors, and their advisors about class format and delivery options.

The student learning outcomes for a hybrid course are the same as for an in-person offering of the same course. Course grading standards in a hybrid class are the same as in an in-person course.

Hyflex

A hyflex course permits flexible learner attendance. Each class session and learning activity is offered in-person, synchronously online via Blackboard Collaborate or a similar technology, and/or asynchronously online. The hyflex model requires instructors to design for this flexibility.

Depending on individual instructor requirements, students can determine at least to some degree when and how they attend and participate in a hyflex class. They might be allowed to change how they attend and participate daily but must meet deadlines and all other course requirements regardless of this

flexibility.

The learning activities of a hyflex course support the same learning outcomes as other formats in which the course might be offered.

The same lectures, exercises, activities—whatever means the instructor uses to make learning happen—are the same for all students in all participation modes.

The instructor must clearly state in the syllabus the required technology, skills training, and support necessary for a student to be successful.

Developing an Online Class

A new online class must be developed in accordance with the full [OSCQR](#). The dean of the relevant department ensures that all requirements are met before a course is approved.

Class Rosters and Attendance Verification

A student whose name is not on the roster and who attempts to participate in the class should be immediately referred to the Registrar to resolve the problem. Students will not have access to the Blackboard course unless they are on the roster.

Verified Participation is the process of confirming that a student has actively engaged in an academic activity within your course, typically during the first few weeks of class.

It is not enough for a student to simply log into Blackboard — they must complete an academically related activity that demonstrates they are meaningfully participating in the course.

Verified Participation is required by federal regulations (U.S. Department of Education) and enforced by accrediting bodies to:

- Ensure financial aid compliance
- Students must show participation in their courses to remain eligible for federal financial aid.
- Confirm enrollment accuracy
- Prevents students from being counted as enrolled if they never participate.
- Support student success
- Early participation checks help identify students who may need intervention or support.
- Protect institutional funding
- Without verification, institutions risk penalties, financial aid paybacks, or audit issues.

To meet the standard, the activity must be academically related. Examples include:

- Submitting an assignment (even a short syllabus acknowledgment).
- Completing a quiz or test (like a syllabus quiz or technology check).
- Posting in a discussion board (such as an introduction discussion).
- Writing in a journal (e.g., a reflection on goals for the semester).
- Communicating with the instructor through Blackboard Messages.

Not Accepted as Verified Participation:

- Logging in without any activity.
- Viewing a course announcement or content page without interaction.
- Opening but not submitting an assignment or quiz.

When to Verify

- Participation should be confirmed within the first few weeks of class and submitted by Census date.
- If a student does not complete the participation activity by the deadline, report them as “Never Attended” or per our institution’s guidelines. List the first day of class date as their never attended date.

Faculty Tips

- Keep the first activity simple, clear, and low-stakes.
- Communicate expectations in the syllabus and first course announcement.
- Set a firm but reasonable deadline (typically the end of Week 1).
- Follow up quickly with students who have not participated.
- Document completion in your gradebook or through attendance reporting tools.

Class Size

Class size for a distance education course is determined by the academic dean in consultation with the faculty member. Of particular consideration is how students’ academic experience will be affected by class size.

Copyright and Fair Use

Under Section 107 of the copyright law (<https://www.copyright.gov/>) passed in 1976, educators are given special exemptions from the law under the Fair Use Doctrine (<http://fairuse.stanford.edu>). Educators may use copyrighted works without first obtaining permission of the copyright holder, within limits. There are four criteria for determining whether copyrighted materials have been used legally under this doctrine:

- (1) Purpose and character of the use;
- (2) Nature of the materials used;
- (3) Amount and importance of the part used; and
- (4) Effect on the market of the use.

The following site provides illustrations of the amounts of copyrighted work that may be used under the Fair Use Doctrine: <https://www.copyright.gov/fair-use/more-info.html>

Copyright and Online Instruction

The Technology, Education and Copyright Harmonization Act (TEACH Act) passed in 2002 expands the Fair Use Doctrine to cover distance education. Generally, exemptions given for face-to-face instruction will apply to online instruction. Faculty should visit the American Library Association website for more

information: <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/copyright/teachact/distanceeducation>

Copyright Permission

The Fair Use Doctrine currently enables educators to use copyrighted materials without first seeking permission. An educator can also use any materials where copyright permission has been obtained. The following sites offer more information.

The Copyright Clearance Center (www.copyright.com) will obtain permission for educators; a fee is attached to this service.

The Copyright Management Center at Indiana University/Purdue University site has information on how to seek copyright permissions <https://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/introduction/getting-permission/>

The US Copyright Office (<https://www.copyright.gov/>) allows one to search a database for copyright ownership.

Does a faculty member need a copyright for his/her original materials?

The Library of Congress (<https://www.copyright.gov/>) provides information regarding registering a work for copyright. Posting a copyright notice on a work, whether or not it is registered, may deter academic and intellectual piracy.

Course Management

Each instructor of an online course must maintain adequate electronic records of course materials including but not limited to:

- Reporting progress report and final grades and “last date of attendance” as required;
- Making sure that each student is encouraged to complete course evaluations;
- Remembering that a student can take the course from anywhere in the world; and therefore, assignment and test deadlines need to be specific and explicit in regard to time zone.

Course Ownership

The University of Arkansas at Monticello follows the University of Arkansas Board of Trustees Policy 210.1 regarding course ownership. The link below provides more details. ([Board Policy-Patent and Copyright](#))

Faculty Office Hours

Faculty members are expected to maintain a reasonable number of office hours to facilitate student academic counseling and advising. Faculty members must host a minimum of ten office hours per week, with at least eight hours of face-to-face time in faculty offices from Monday through Thursday. The remaining hours may be scheduled face-to-face, virtual, via text, or by phone. All ten office hours must be posted in all syllabi and other locations as indicated in the current policy. Face-to-face hours in faculty offices should be flexible enough to provide reasonable access to students and in consideration of class schedules. Faculty with responsibilities for laboratories, clinical and intern supervision, and/or research

duties, or internship duties should consult with the unit head to design a plan to meet the required time. Faculty with joint appointments should consult with the unit head to determine office hours. Office hours must be approved by the unit head. A schedule of office hours must be posted on the faculty member's door, listed in the course syllabus, and a copy filed in the unit head's office.

Faculty Workload

Any distance education course may be part of a teaching faculty member's standard workload. The faculty member's teaching in an online course should be evaluated as part of Annual Faculty Evaluation and in the context of promotion and tenure considerations.

Expectations

Faculty are expected to develop and maintain proficiency in online pedagogy and the best practices of online course delivery. This involves staying informed about the latest educational technologies and methodologies for effective online teaching. Developing skills in digital communication, course design, and student engagement strategies are essential. Continuous professional development in these areas ensures that educators can provide high-quality education in a virtual environment, meeting the diverse needs of learners.

Instructional Practices and Policies

An instructor is obligated to develop and to teach each distance education course with the same level of expectation as an on-campus course. Each instructor must prepare a course syllabus using the syllabus template (Online/Hybrid Course Syllabus) based upon student learning outcomes for the course. A syllabus should fully disclose the faculty member's expectations and requirements of the students enrolled in the course. A syllabus for each course must be submitted to the unit's academic dean in a timely manner so that the dean can submit each syllabus to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs no later than the first day of class each semester. A course outline will not suffice as a syllabus. The course syllabus must be posted in Blackboard no later than the first day of class.

Library Resources

The Fred J. Taylor Library and Technology Center and its website provide access to materials students may need for a course. Library materials can be directly embedded into a Blackboard course using LibGuides. Hardcopy books, periodicals in print or microfilm, links to all e- journals, e-newspapers, electronic databases, etc. are available at the library website:

<https://www.uamont.edu/academics/library/index.html>

The Learning Management System

The University of Arkansas at Monticello supports only Blackboard for online course development and delivery.

The Office of Information Technology is an immensely valuable resource to faculty developing and teaching online classes.

It is the faculty member's responsibility to prepare the content in the learning management system *prior* to the official start date of the course.

Universal Design and Accessibility

The University of Arkansas is obligated to follow federal regulations for accessibility of digital content. All online course content should strive to meet impeccable standards of accessibility. Blackboard provides a tool for accessibility remediation called "[Ally](#)". Faculty are encouraged to run their own reports and make remediations. UAM also runs institution wide reports to monitor and report bi-annually to the U of A systems office regarding progress toward full accessibility on online courses.

Universal Design is closely related to accessibility but promotes providing content and assignments in different modalities to support differentiation of learning styles and capabilities.

Computer and Software Requirements

Although software requirements can vary by course, having the right technology and skills is crucial for online teaching. A reliable computer and high-speed internet ensure smooth communication and access to resources. A web camera is useful for creating an engaging and interactive learning environment. Fluency in media creation will benefit the instructor during the course design phase. Strong technical skills and digital literacy are essential for navigating various online platforms and tools, making the teaching process efficient, effective, and less frustrating.

Textbooks and Instructional Materials

Textbooks can be adopted through Blackboard using Follett Discover by clicking on tools and then choosing the Follett Discover icon.

Follett Access Program

The [Follett Access](#) program is an inclusive access initiative that provides students with all their required course materials, including textbooks and digital content, at a significantly reduced cost. These materials are delivered directly to students on or before the first day of classes, ensuring that they have what they need to succeed from the start. The program often includes various types of content such as eBooks, digital courseware, and physical textbooks.

Benefits of the Follett Access Program:

- **Cost Savings:** Students can save a considerable amount on course materials compared to traditional purchasing methods.
- **Convenience:** Students receive their materials automatically, eliminating the need to shop around for books and resources.

- Preparedness: Having materials on the first day of class helps students start their courses on the right foot.
- Enhanced Learning: Access to digital content and interactive courseware can enhance the learning experience and improve outcomes.
- Consistency: All students have access to the same materials, promoting equality in the classroom.

Steps on Adding the LTI Link for Follett Access into Blackboard Shells

1. Log into Blackboard:
 - Login to your myUAM portal using your employee credentials
 - Verify your identity using Multifactor Authentication Verification (MFA)
 - On your Apps Dashboard, click on the Blackboard app
2. Navigate to Your Course:
 - From the navigation menu, select “courses” then select the course where you want to add the Follett Access link.
3. Access the Course Content Area:
 - In the course content area, click on the small plus sign (+) to add content
 - Click the Content Market option
 - On the LTI menu page, find the BryteWave Course Materials LTI
 - Click the small plus sign (+) to add the link to your course
 - If desired, you may rename the link to something more suiting for your course
4. Submit and Confirm:
 - Confirm that the link appears in the selected content area and test it to ensure it directs students to the correct Follett Access content.
5. Communicate with Students:
 - Inform your students about the new link and how they can use it to access their course materials.

By following these steps, faculty can seamlessly integrate Follett Access into their Blackboard courses, ensuring students have immediate and convenient access to their required materials.

Tests and Examinations

Tests and examinations are the responsibility of the instructor unless the academic unit requires a mandated final exam. Each instructor is encouraged to administer a sufficient number of tests and/or evaluated assignments to provide immediate feedback to a student indicating his/her progress in the course. It is important to have enough graded activities prior to the last date to withdraw from a course to permit a student to make a decision about withdrawing from the course with a “W” grade. The instructor should check with his/her supervisor concerning specific departmental test policies. If the instructor requires any exam to be proctored, this policy must be clearly stated in the course syllabus and emphasized to students the first day of class.

Regular and Substantive Interaction

The federal US Department of Education regulatory definitions of distance learning require that institutions ensure regular and substantive interaction between a student and instructors for the institution to maintain access to financial aid eligibility. RSI standards can be achieved by addressing the specific OSCQR standards addressed at this location: <https://oscqr.suny.edu/rsi/rsi-standards/>

University Support for Distance Education

The Office of Information Technology is located on the second floor of the Student Success Center Suite 207. Their phone number is 460-1036. The Office of Information Technology provides support for distance education faculty and students. This office also provides training for online course development and teaching.

Compensation

See [UAM OPERATING PROCEDURE 440.2](#)