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**Frostburg State University Online Education
Procedures, Guidelines and Information**

Office of the Provost

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FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY ONLINE EDUCATION PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

Online Courses at Frostburg State University

Definition of an Online Course

Fully online courses at Frostburg State University (FSU) have most of their class materials available electronically and use the Internet as the primary means of communication. Regular on-site class attendance cannot be a course requirement.¹

Fully online courses may provide, when appropriate and feasible, occasional on-site contact between students and the instructor (e.g., an orientation session or proctored testing), but faculty must make alternative arrangements for students who cannot attend an on-site meeting. If on-site meetings or alternative arrangements require funding (e.g., proctored testing), the faculty member must obtain the permission of the chair and the dean of the college. Costs associated with approved on-site meetings or alternative arrangements are the responsibility of the appropriate college.

Mission of Online Education at FSU

The principal mission of online education at FSU is to enhance student access to the University's academic programs. Of equal importance, FSU online education is intended to help students acquire the technical skills and online learning strategies important to the pursuit of their academic and career goals. By developing and teaching online courses, FSU faculty also acquire new instructional skills important to their professional growth and development. The University is committed to providing students and faculty the support and resources they need to succeed as participants in online education.

The Blackboard Learn System

The Blackboard Learn System is the University's exclusive Learning Management System. Blackboard is web-based and provides a robust set of tools like posting and accessing course announcements, materials, and assignments; taking online quizzes; communicating with course participants; and sharing documents and projects with instructors and classmates. Additional system functionality includes but is not limited to: note-taking tools, glossary tool, discussion boards, rubrics, group collaboration, testing/assessment, and grade tracking and weighting.

Technology Requirements

In order to access online course materials, students must have access to a reliable computer with broadband internet access. The computer system the student uses must have the minimum hardware

¹ Procedures and guidelines pertaining to "blended or hybrid" courses are presented in a separate section of this document (see page 13).

requirements needed to run an up to date operating system and web browser. All computers available in the computer labs on campus meet these requirements.

Students and faculty log onto Blackboard through the University's website. To ensure proper functionality the following operating systems, web browsers, and plugins are required:

- Windows XP or later
- Mac OS X 10 or later
- Latest release of Firefox, Chrome, Safari, or Internet Explorer (enable JavaScript, Cookies, and Popup Windows)
- Java Runtime Environment 6 or later
- You may need additional Plugins if the course you are taking includes multimedia elements

If the computer you are using has a different browser than those indicated above, you still may be able to use parts of Blackboard. However, you may also experience problems, especially when completing quizzes and tests.

Course Identification

All fully online courses at Frostburg State University are designated by a section number that begins with the number seven (7) (e.g., POSC 113.701)

Online Course Approval, Development, and Instruction

Approval of Online Courses

The appropriate department chair and college dean must approve the scheduling of all online courses offered by the University. To ensure that these courses are taught by FSU certified online instructors, they are also subject to approval by the Office of the Provost.

Frostburg State University's Faculty Online Certification Program

Faculty members wishing to teach online for the University must normally complete the University's Faculty Online Certification Program. Upon the request of the department chair and the dean, and with the approval of the Office of the Provost, experienced online faculty who are new to FSU may teach online without first completing the certification program. However, these faculty members are highly encouraged to gain FSU online certification in order to become more familiar with online instruction and course design at the University.

Professional Development Series and Support of Online Instruction

The Office of Academic Computing and Instructional Technologies also supports online education at FSU by providing professional development opportunities to faculty throughout the year. The OACIT works closely with individual faculty whose course development needs require special technical assistance providing guidance in the use of multimedia and other technologies supporting the

development of quality teaching materials. The Office of Human Resources provides basic instruction in the use of Blackboard that is open to all Frostburg State University faculty and staff.

Online Course Enrollments

During the fall and spring semesters, enrollment in online courses should ordinarily be 21 students. The typical course limit for summer and Intersession courses is 15 students, with a maximum allowable enrollment of 21 students.

Course Evaluation

All summer term and Intersession online courses are formally evaluated. Formal evaluation of summer and Intersession online courses is necessary to ensure the quality of instruction and to make informed decisions regarding future course offerings. Academic departments should only use Intersession and summer term evaluations for these purposes. They are not to be incorporated, formally or informally, into annual faculty evaluations. Academic departments and colleges may use a slightly modified version of the University's standard *Student Evaluation of Instruction* instrument to evaluate online instruction and have the option to incorporate up to five additional departmental questions. . The evaluation of online courses taught during the fall and spring semesters will be administered online and will follow the procedures outlined in the Faculty Handbook (see, *Faculty Evaluation Process*). The Office of the Provost, with the assistance of the Office of Planning, Assessment and Institutional Research also surveys student opinions of their summer and Intersession online courses.

Intellectual Property and Online Course Ownership

Ownership of intellectual property, including technology-mediated instructional materials (online course materials) is described in detail in the University's Intellectual Property Policy. In general, technology-mediated instructional materials are owned by the creator of such materials unless otherwise agreed to, in writing, with the University, or if such materials are created pursuant to a sponsored research agreement. The University retains the right to use such materials in connection with University programs of instruction and education. University faculty who are creators of technology-mediated instructional materials may not license, sell, or otherwise grant third parties a right to use such materials without the prior approval of the president of the University.

Faculty Compensation and Responsibilities

Faculty Compensation – Summer Term and Intersession

In addition to the course salary as determined by the summer term and Intersession faculty pay schedule, faculty members who have completed the University's Faculty Online Certification Program and who have not previously taught online for the University will receive a one-time planning stipend. This stipend is payable as part of the regular teaching contract and only applies to courses taught during summer term and Intersession.

Faculty Responsibilities

Teaching online is similar in many ways to teaching the traditional face-to-face course. The instructor must develop or adopt appropriate materials, assessments, class exercises, and any other helpful resources that he/she believes will assist in developing a supportive learning community. However, the online environment does provide some unique challenges, most notably the realization that the course or key aspects of the course will be delivered in an electronic format and that the shift in communication among the course participants will be toward an asynchronous format. These challenges make it essential for the faculty member to attend professional development sessions to help acquire appropriate strategies and techniques for meeting the demands of teaching in this new environment.

Given the shift in learning environments, it is important for the faculty member to pay particular attention to orientating the students to the new environment and addressing the strategies that have been found to be effective in what may be a new educational setting for the student. It may be important to track the progress of each student more closely than is done in the face-to-face class to assure the student has become comfortable operating in these new surroundings. Information on where to seek technical assistance should be readily available to prevent technological barriers from becoming a problem to learning.

As with the traditional courses, it is important that a faculty member develops clearly defined outcomes and expectations, opportunities for frequent assessments and feedback, and identifies various ways that the student can communicate with the instructor and the other students in the course. This change from an environment that primarily uses synchronous interactions (the face-to-face classroom) to one that depends primarily on asynchronous communication demands special attention from the faculty member and should be an important part of the orientation process designed by the instructor. The success of the communication processes will most likely determine not only whether a sense of community develops, but also ultimately the success of the course.

Student Admission, Registration, Support, and Responsibilities

Admission to the University

Students wishing to register for online courses must first be admitted to the University. Gaining admission to the University can be accomplished through the following methods:

- (1) As outlined in the general admission policies published in the University Undergraduate Catalog and in the Graduate Catalog.
- (2) Through the “Quick Admit” process which is designed for visiting undergraduate students who attend the University during summer term or Intersession.

For full information regarding admission to the University, contact the Office of Admissions.

Student Registration for Online Courses

During the registration periods set by the University, admitted students can register for online courses using the PAWS Internet-based registration system, by mail, by phone, or in person. Continuing undergraduate students must secure their advisor's authorization to register for classes. Academic departments will conduct overrides to permission-only courses, class limits, and/or course prerequisites, where applicable. For full information on registering for online courses at the University, contact the Office of the Registrar.

Tuition and Fees

All online students are charged standard University tuition and fees. In addition, online students are subject to applicable course fees approved by the University. Students enrolled in online courses are not charged additional fees by the University based on their status as online students.

Student Orientation

All students enrolled in an online course during the summer or Intersession are required to participate in an on-site or web-based course orientation session conducted by the instructor prior to the beginning of the term.

Student Technical Support

Students enrolled in Blackboard courses who need technical assistance must first contact the University's Help Desk. Should the issue prove to be a Blackboard problem that cannot be resolved by the Help Desk, it will be referred to the OACIT for attention.

The Office of Academic Computing and Instructional Technologies maintains the computer hardware and software used to deliver online courses. The ACIT is responsible for resolving problems involving the Blackboard Server or software configuration.

Support for Students with Disabilities

A student desiring disability-related accommodation for any course, including online courses, must request that Disability Support Services (DSS) review the accommodation(s) requested and issue a letter approving the appropriate accommodation. This letter must be updated each semester, and it is the responsibility of the student to deliver the letter to the instructor of any course in which he/she may desire accommodation. In those instances when a student is not physically present at FSU, DSS will deliver the accommodation letter at the student's request.

Of utmost importance is that all involved recognize the unique nature of online courses and the potential challenges faced by students with disabilities. Consequently, students who wish to request accommodation for an online course must notify DSS in a timely manner in order to give the University reasonable opportunity to ensure accessibility and/or arrange for appropriate accommodation(s).

Email

All FSU students are assigned an email account by the University. Faculty will use FSU email as one way to communicate with their online students. FSU students are responsible for all online course communications sent to them via their FSU email account.

If a student chooses to forward his/her University email to another account, he/she is responsible for all information, including attachments, forwarded to that account. It is recommended that students maintain their FSU email account by regularly deleting unneeded messages and emptying the “Deleted Items” folder in their accounts.

Withdrawal from Online Courses

Students wishing to withdraw from an online course are to follow the same University requirements and procedures established for on-site courses. Students enrolled in summer term and Intersession courses who do not have ready access to the University’s Office of the Registrar may contact the Director of Special Academic Services to receive assistance in withdrawing from an online course.

Student Responsibility

Generally, student responsibilities in an online or blended course parallel those encountered in the traditional classroom with some variations given the nature of the course environment.

These responsibilities include:

- **Attending the Course Orientation:** Whether on-site or online, students must attend a course orientation to become accustomed to the learning environment in which the course will operate.
- **Reading Course Documents:** It is important that students read all course documents (e.g., syllabus, assignments) to become familiar with course expectations and provide them with the opportunity to clarify any areas that are unclear. This will allow them proper planning of course activities.
- **“Attending” Class:** Students must “attend” the online components of a course just as they would a traditional course. Class participation is essential to course success (see *Student Attendance* section).
- **Organizing and Managing Time:** Courses that have a significant online component do not provide students with as many reminders of course expectations regarding time as do traditional face-to-face courses. Therefore, the student needs to be well organized and must pay careful attention to the course’s schedule and deadlines.
- **Academic Honesty:** As with traditional classes, academic honesty is a cornerstone of student online coursework. Frostburg State University standards of academic honesty and conduct pertain to all online courses taught at the University.
- **Acquiring Needed Materials:** Students must obtain all necessary course materials, including required textbooks, lab materials, and course software. In addition, the student may need to access various library resources. In this instance, a current FSU identification card is required.

- **Evaluating Computer Setup:** Students are responsible for ensuring that they have access to required hardware, software, and an Internet connection. If they plan to use public Internet access (e.g., a public library), they must contact the provider to determine whether the service is a viable option. Since all online and blended courses utilize FSU email accounts as a primary means of communication, students must be comfortable using their FSU email account.
- **Staying in Contact:** Student interaction with peers and the instructor is just as important in an online or blended course as it is in the traditional classroom. Students must take advantage of all the communication options that are available in the course (e.g., email, discussion boards, chat areas) to facilitate learning and complete projects.

Student Attendance

Student attendance in an online class is defined as participating in course activities in the online environment. Whether this means adding to a class discussion, submitting an assignment, or completing an online assessment, the key element is that the student actively engages the course materials and activities. Therefore, in an online course the student's last date of attendance is equivalent to the date on which the student last performed a course activity.

Online attendance has an advantage in that it can occur at a time that is convenient for the student, unless the instructor has a required time for certain course activities (e.g., an online quiz that must be completed at a certain time). Students should not confuse the lack of face-to-face interaction with the notion that attendance is not important.

Not only does the lack of online attendance normally lead to poor performance in the course, the tracking of student attendance may be a requirement in determining the student's eligibility for receiving some forms of financial aid.

Given that in most instances the traditional three-credit course meets for 150 minutes a week (three 50 minute sessions or two 75 minute sessions), this could be viewed as a **minimum** expectation for online attendance. However, it can safely be suggested that the more frequently a student attends an online course, the more likely the course expectations will be met.

University Standards of Personal and Group Conduct

All students enrolled at Frostburg State University are governed by the *University Standards of Personal and Group Conduct*. These standards, which are published in the *University's Pathfinder*, define and establish the consequences for academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, computer misuse and dishonesty, falsification of information, and other prohibited forms of conduct.

The Library and Instructional Resources

Online Access to Library Resources

Access to the Ort Library's resources is granted through the use of a 14-digit number assigned by ID Services when a student first enrolls for courses at the university. This 14-digit number is printed on

the FSU ID card issued from ID Services. Students enrolled in online courses who are also taking courses on campus must obtain an FSU ID card at the ID Services office in Chesapeake Hall. The printed ID card is necessary in order to borrow items from the Library's tangible collections. In order to access the Library's resources remotely, students will be required to log in using their 14-digit number and last name. Students taking online courses off campus without an FSU ID card can locate this 14-digit number through PAWS, the FSU Internet Registration System. Once logged into the PAWS account, users will need to click on "Self Service", then select "Student Center", then scroll down to "Other Areas", and click on "Library Account Information." The 14-digit number beginning with the digits 22060 is listed there. Students can also contact the Circulation Desk directly at 301-687-4395 and provide staff with their 7-digit student PAWS ID number to retrieve the special 14-digit number required for remote access to library services.

Students need to provide up-to-date addresses and telephone numbers to the Registrar's Office whenever a change in information occurs, so that Library circulation records can be accurately maintained. Personal Data Update Forms are available for this purpose in print at the Library Circulation Desk and in PDF format on the Registrar's webpage. In this way students will retain borrowing privileges and remote access to Library resources.

As a member of the University System of Maryland (USM) and other affiliated institutions in the library consortium (USMAI), the Lewis J. Ort Library provides access to scholarly resources in both tangible and online formats via the information systems *CatalogUSMAI* and *OneSearch: Articles, Books & More*.

CatalogUSMAI is the online catalog and an inventory of most of the resources owned by USMAI libraries. By using the "Request" feature of *Catalog USMAI*, students, faculty, and staff can borrow circulating print books located in other USMAI libraries. These items are then sent to any participating library where they can be charged out as easily as items in the Ort Library's physical collection on the FSU campus. Once the items are charged out, the borrower can use the "My Account" feature in the catalog to check their due dates, automatically renew eligible items, and track the progress of their requests. Students attending the University System of Maryland at Hagerstown (USMH) who are enrolled in FSU online courses can find resources available to them in the USMH Library through *CatalogUSMAI*. They can also use the "Request" feature in *CatalogUSMAI* to have books from the other USMAI libraries delivered for pick-up at the USMH Library.

OneSearch: Articles, Books & More provides enhanced access to library collections by bringing together comprehensive content across the broad spectrum of library resources including not only print books available in USMAI libraries but also full-text journal articles, e-books, encyclopedias, statistical data, indexes, and other reference material covering a wide variety of academic disciplines from the many research databases to which FSU subscribes. All of this content may be searched through a single search box. The "Request an Item" feature in *OneSearch* links to the "Request" feature of *CatalogUSMAI* allowing students, faculty, and staff to borrow books located in other USMAI libraries. *OneSearch* has additional personalization features allowing faculty to embed links to full-text articles in their webpages and course materials in Blackboard and other course management software. Individual research databases may also be accessed via the Library's website.

Interlibrary Loan (ILL) services are always an alternative when FSU students, faculty, and staff cannot obtain materials from the USMAI libraries' print collections or electronically through *CatalogUSMAI*

and *OneSearch*. When an item is unobtainable, the "Find It" feature in *One Search* and the research databases directs users to several options for acquiring the items including a link to *ILLiad*, a service that allows users to send and easily track interlibrary loan requests online. The Library's Interlibrary Loan Department further facilitates the ILL process. In the case of journal articles, many of these can be delivered electronically to the user through *ILLiad*. When using *ILLiad* for the first time, users must begin by creating an account via the "First Time Users" link listed below the login boxes on the *ILLiad* home screen. Once the initial account has been created, users will be able to submit requests and access any electronically delivered items through the *ILLiad* interface.

In addition to the resources listed above, the Library's website provides an online reference support system with links to FSU subject and course guides, reliable information websites, and electronic resources. The Library participates in the Maryland *AskUsNow* online interactive information service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via a chat feature on the Library's website. The *Ask a Librarian* service at the Library's website is designed to accommodate users' needs for remote research assistance. This email service puts students and faculty into direct contact with a helpful reference librarian. Additionally, the *Ask a Librarian* service at the website accommodates users' research needs through an email form, putting students and faculty into direct contact with a helpful reference librarian.

FSU ID Cards

In order to remotely access the Ort Library's Research Port databases, users need a current and valid FSU ID card. Additionally, users must register as borrowers through the Ort Library's Circulation Department using the 14-digit barcode number from their FSU ID. This also allows users the ability to borrow materials from the circulating collections of the USMAI libraries.

Students enrolling in online courses who are also taking courses on campus must obtain an ID card at the ID office in Chesapeake Hall. Students who are taking only online classes must obtain their 14 digit barcode for library services by contacting the ID office at 301-687-4196 and providing their seven digit student ID number. After obtaining their ID card and/or barcode number, students should stop by the Circulation desk or call 301-687-4395 for activation.

Students who are already registered library borrowers need to provide up-to-date addresses and telephone numbers on an annual basis at the beginning of each fall semester so that their circulation records can be updated. In this way they can retain borrowing privileges and remote access to the databases.

Textbooks and Course Materials

The Frostburg State University Store (bookstore) can be considered as the main repository of information regarding textbooks, course materials, and classroom supplies for the FSU community. As such, all instructors shall provide the University Store, on a timely basis, with a completed "textbook adoption form" as supplied by the University Store each semester.

Any faculty member shall have the option to place orders for texts and other materials at any retail outlet. However, to serve students who are unable to go to other locations and make multiple

purchases (e.g., parents provide only one check; "Bobcat Express" money is being used; physically challenged students who are unable to obtain transportation), the University Store must also receive textbook adoption requests so that students with particular needs can be served. (FSU Policy PN 3.071).

Faculty may also provide required course materials to students electronically. In such cases, faculty must adhere to all applicable copyright laws and regulations.

Blended Courses

Definition of a Blended Course

A blended course is a combination of online and face-to-face instruction where a significant proportion of student learning activities are online and the time students physically spend in the classroom is significantly reduced but not entirely eliminated.

Approval of Blended Courses

The appropriate department chair and college dean must approve the scheduling of all blended courses.

Blended Course Development

As in the case of online courses, the Office of Academic Computing and Instructional Technologies offers professional development sessions for faculty wishing to offer blended courses. First-time blended course faculty are encouraged to attend scheduled OACIT workshops that focus on blended teaching strategies, use of the Blackboard Learning System, and the development of effective blended course teaching materials.

Course Evaluation

The evaluation of blended courses taught during the fall and spring semesters will follow the procedures outlined under the *Faculty Evaluation Process* in the Faculty Handbook.

Course Identification

All blended courses at Frostburg State University are designated by a section number that begins with the number six (6) (e.g., POSC 113.601)

Modifying the University's Distance Education Course Policies and Procedures

The Distance Education Advisory Group

As part of the University's governance system, the Distance Education Advisory Group includes faculty and administrators and serves as the University's principal body for distance education planning and development.

The Distance Education Advisory Group will: (1) recommend ways the University can take advantage of opportunities for different and better teaching through distance learning technologies; (2) review instructional efficiencies that can be realized through the use of distance learning technologies; (3) evaluate and make recommendations regarding the application of distance learning technologies to specific instructional areas; (4) recommend ways to use distance learning to bring outside instructional programming to campus; and (5) serve as an advisory group on scheduling, registration, technical, and other issues associated with the use of distance learning technologies on campus. Recommendations of the Distance Education Advisory Group are forwarded to the Provost for appropriate action.

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