

**RESOLUTION OF THE
BOARD OF REGENTS OF
NAVAJO TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY**

Approving the Navajo Technical University Faculty Online Learning Policy and Procedures;
Attached hereto as Exhibit "A"

WHEREAS:

1. The Board of Regents of Navajo Technical University is responsible for the administration, operations and the development of policy as stated in Navajo Nation Council Resolution, CO-58-16, enacted on November 10, 2016, that amended the University's enabling legislation, codified at 15 N.N.C. §§1201-1210; and
2. Pursuant to the University's enabling legislation, Navajo Technical University (NTU) is organized as an institution of higher learning for the primary purpose of providing post-secondary and post-graduate education programs that serve both the academic and vocational/technical needs of the Navajo Nation and its citizens, 15 N.N.C. §1203(A); and
3. Pursuant to the University's enabling legislation, the Board of Regents of Navajo Technical University is authorized to manage and control the University for the effective governance and administration of the University; 15 N.N.C. § 1205(A); and to accept any gift, grant, bequest or devise to or on behalf of NTU, 15 N.N.C. §1205(T); and
4. Navajo Technical University has developed an updated Faculty Online Learning Policy and Procedures to establish standards, procedures, and expectations for the design, delivery, evaluation, and continuous improvement of online, hybrid, web-enhanced, and distance education; and
5. The updated policy is intended to strengthen NTU's compliance with applicable U.S. Department of Education distance education requirements, Higher Learning Commission (HLC) guidelines, and State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) standards, while maintaining alignment with NTU's mission and Diné Philosophy of Education; and
6. The policy establishes requirements for Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) to ensure that faculty initiate and maintain meaningful academic interaction with online students and that such interaction is appropriately documented within the University's Learning Management System; and
7. The policy establishes accessibility and universal design expectations intended to ensure equitable access to online instruction consistent with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and applicable Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG); and
8. The policy further requires that NTU online courses maintain academic rigor and learning outcomes comparable to face-to-face instruction and comply with applicable HLC and SARA requirements for distance education and interstate educational activity; and

9. The policy establishes ongoing review and quality-assurance processes to maintain alignment with federal regulations, accreditation requirements, emerging technologies, faculty and student needs, and the mission of Navajo Technical University; and

10. The Administration of Navajo Technical University recommends that the Board of Regents approve the Navajo Technical University Faculty Online Learning Policy and Procedures to provide an institutional framework for the continued quality, compliance, accessibility, and growth of NTU's online education programs.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Board of Regents of Navajo Technical University hereby approves the Navajo Technical University Faculty Online Learning Policy and Procedures, attached hereto as Exhibit "A,"

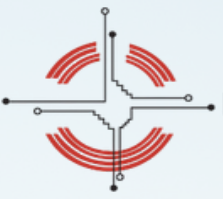
2. The President of Navajo Technical University is hereby authorized, directed and empowered to do all things necessary to effectuate the purpose of this resolution.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby confirm that this resolution was discussed and considered by the Board of Regents of Navajo Technical University at a duly called meeting held via Teleconference Call at which a quorum was present, and that this resolution was passed by a vote of **6** in favor, **0** opposed and **0** abstained, this 3rd day of September, 2026.



Tara Denetsosie-Lovato, Chairperson
NTU Board of Regents



NITSANÁKEES

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NAVAJO TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

ESTABLISHED 1979



Online Learning Department

FACULTY ONLINE LEARNING

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Approved by:

ONLINE EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 04/24/26

FACULTY CONGRESS - 08/13/26

UNIVERSITY CABINET - 08/17/26

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF REGENTS - 09/03/26



Visit Our Website

<https://www.navajotech.edu/online-learning/>

Frequency of Review and Update:

This policy will undergo an annual review by the Information Technology and Online Learning Departments to ensure ongoing compliance with relevant federal regulations and policies, and it will be updated as needed.

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Navajo Technical University Faculty Online Learning Policy and Procedures

Review Cycle: Annual Review by the Online Learning Department, Information Technology Department, Faculty Congress, and University Cabinet

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy establishes the standards, procedures, and expectations for the design, delivery, and evaluation of online and distance education courses at Navajo Technical University (NTU). It ensures compliance with U.S. federal regulations, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) guidelines, and the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) while honoring the Diné Philosophy of Education — **Nitsáhákees** (Thinking), **Nahátá** (Planning), **Íina** (Living), and **Siihasin** (Reflecting).

This policy applies to all NTU faculty, adjuncts, instructional designers, and staff engaged in the development and delivery of online, hybrid, and web-enhanced courses.

2. Mission, Vision, Philosophy, and Core Values

2.1 NTU Mission

Navajo Technical University honors Diné culture and language while educating for the future.

NTU provides quality higher education grounded in cultural values, academic excellence, and community engagement.

2.2 Vision

Navajo Technical University provides an excellent educational experience in a supportive, culturally diverse environment, enabling all community members to grow intellectually, culturally and economically.

2.3 Philosophy

Through the teachings of Nitsáhákees (thinking), Nahátá (planning), Íina (implementing), and Siíhasin (reflection), students acquire quality education in diverse fields, while preserving cultural values and gaining economic opportunities.

The Diné Philosophy of Education (DPE) guides NTU's approach to teaching and learning:

- **Nitsáhákees (Thinking):** Encourages critical and creative thought in course design and pedagogy.
- **Nahátá (Planning):** Promotes intentional planning and organization of learning experiences.
- **Íina (Living):** Embodies active engagement and application of knowledge in real-world contexts.
- **Siíhasin (Reflection):** Fosters self-assessment, continuous improvement, and resilience in teaching and learning.

2.4 Core Values

Core Values: Bitsé Siléí (Core Values)

The NTU core values are in addition to its mission, vision, and philosophy statements, and help guide the university's day-to-day operations. They apply to students, faculty, staff, and the board of regents, and help us achieve our intended goals.

1. Íhoo'aah: Learning - We are passionate about knowledge and continue to learn throughout our lives. We pursue new experiences and ways of thinking. We appreciate that much of our learning will occur by interacting with others, inside and outside of the classroom.
2. Éédééhtí: Innovation - We encourage and support our faculty, staff, and students in all forms of scholarship, including the discovery of knowledge in teaching and learning, and in developing innovative products and processes.
3. Ałk'izhdiití: Communication - We strive to practice honest and open exchanges of ideas in an environment where encouragement serves as the basis for our communication.
4. Ahítna'anish: Collaboration - We work together towards the common goals of the university and our larger communities, while valuing teamwork, participation, and a wealth of ideas.
5. 'Aditjidlí: Integrity - We seek to reflect integrity by upholding the highest ethical standards in personal and professional behavior, and in our commitment to transparency and accountability.

6. Athidilzin: Respect - We strive to be a community that appreciates the gifts and unique contributions of each person. We honor the Navajo way of life while also welcoming diverse perspectives.

7. Na'alkaah: Research - We create new knowledge that benefits the Navajo people and all human beings through ethical research practices.

3. NTU Online Learning Department Goal, Mission, and Objectives

3.1 Online Learning Goal

The goal of Navajo Technical University's Online Learning Department is to expand equitable access to higher education for individuals and communities within the Navajo Nation and beyond through high-quality, electronically delivered courses and programs. The department strives to promote academic success by offering culturally responsive curriculum and instruction that meet diverse student learning needs in a digital environment. Through comprehensive student support services, innovative instructional design, and faculty development, the department ensures that distance education at NTU fosters lifelong learning, community empowerment, and professional growth.

3.2 Online Learning Mission

The mission of the Online Learning Department at Navajo Technical University is to deliver accessible, high-quality, and culturally grounded online education that empowers students to achieve their academic, professional, and personal goals. The department is dedicated to advancing student success by integrating technology, innovation, and the Diné Philosophy of Education—Nitsáhákees (Thinking), Nahat'á (Planning), liná (Living), and Sihasin (Assurance)—into teaching and learning. By extending NTU's accredited programs to learners across the Navajo Nation and beyond, the department supports the university's vision of self-reliance, sustainability, and community advancement through education.

3.3 Objectives

1. Program Development, Accreditation, and Quality Assurance:

- Support the continuous growth and internal development of NTU's online learning programs through structured training, policy development, and quality assurance processes.
- Ensure that all online courses and programs meet the standards of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), and U.S. Federal Guidelines on distance education and accessibility.
- Maintain compliance with federal and state regulations regarding student authentication, regular and substantive interaction, and accessibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Implement quality assurance measures that align with best practices in online education, ensuring academic rigor, cultural relevance, and technological accessibility.

2. Faculty Support, Professional Development, and Innovation

- Provide ongoing training, resources, and technical assistance to faculty for effective online teaching, course design, and compliance with HLC, SARA, and federal standards.
- Encourage the integration of innovative technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), to enhance teaching effectiveness, student engagement, and personalized learning experiences.
- Support faculty in developing culturally responsive and accessible course materials that reflect the Diné Philosophy of Education and uphold NTU's mission.
- Recognize and support faculty contributions to online education through inclusion in workload planning, professional development, and institutional recognition.

3. Student Support, Accessibility, and Engagement

- Offer comprehensive academic and technical support services to online learners, including orientation, tutoring, advising, and access to digital resources.
- Ensure that all online learning environments and materials meet accessibility standards in compliance with Section 508 and WCAG 2.1 guidelines.

- Promote student engagement and retention through interactive learning experiences, culturally inclusive content, and community-building activities.
 - Expand access to technology resources, such as the NTU Student Laptop Program, to ensure equitable participation in online learning.
4. Technology Integration, Artificial Intelligence, and Digital Literacy
- Encourage the effective use of the Learning Management System (LMS) and emerging educational technologies to enhance teaching and learning.
 - Integrate Artificial Intelligence tools responsibly to support adaptive learning, academic integrity, and data-informed decision-making while maintaining ethical and cultural considerations.
 - Support the development of digital literacy skills among students, faculty, and staff to strengthen online learning outcomes and prepare learners for a technology-driven world.
5. Community Outreach, Cultural Relevance, and Access
- Increase educational opportunities for students residing in remote chapter houses and underserved areas through online learning tools and community-based partnerships.
 - Extend NTU's online programs to reach learners across the Navajo Nation and globally, fostering community development, cultural preservation, and lifelong learning.
 - Embed the Diné Philosophy of Education into online course design and delivery to ensure that learning reflects Navajo values, worldview, and ways of knowing.
6. Accreditation, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement
- Achieve and maintain accreditation for certificate, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees offered online through NTU's LMS in alignment with HLC and SARA standards.
 - Conduct regular evaluations of all aspects of the online learning program, using data-driven insights to enhance course quality, student satisfaction, and institutional effectiveness.

- Use assessment results to restructure and improve online learning programs, ensuring alignment with NTU's mission, accreditation requirements, and federal guidelines.

7. Collaboration, Knowledge Sharing, and Institutional Integration

- Promote collaboration among faculty, staff, and administrators to share best practices in technology-enhanced teaching and learning.
- Foster a culture of innovation, inclusivity, and continuous improvement within the online learning community at NTU.
- Strengthen partnerships with academic departments, tribal organizations, and external agencies to expand online learning opportunities and uphold compliance with HLC, SARA, and federal standards.

Through these goals, mission, and objectives, the Online Learning Department at Navajo Technical University reaffirms its commitment to providing transformative, accessible, and culturally grounded education that integrates the Diné Philosophy of Education, adheres to national accreditation and regulatory standards, and embraces emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence to empower learners in a digital and interconnected world.

4. Definitions and Terminology

Aligned with **U.S. Department of Education (34 CFR §600.2)** and **HLC Distance Education Guidelines**:

- **Academic Integrity:** Upholding honesty and ethical standards in all academic work, including originality of student submissions and faculty conduct.
- **Accessibility:** The design of digital content and learning environments that are usable by all people, including those with disabilities, in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- **Asynchronous Learning:** Instruction that occurs outside of a "same time" environment, allowing students to access materials, pre-recorded lectures, and assignments at their own pace.
- **Distance Education:** Education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction (RSI) between students and the instructor, synchronously or asynchronously.

- **Students:** Enrolling at least 50% of students in one or more distance education courses. Note: The U.S. Department of Education considers a student “enrolled in distance education if the student enrolls in at least one course offered through distance education.”
- **Courses:** Offering at least 50% of courses through distance education.
- **Programs:** Offering at least 50% of an educational credential (degree or certificate) through distance education.
- **Distance Education Course (Online Course – ONL):** A course in which at least 75% of the instruction and interaction occurs using one or more of the technologies listed in the definition of distance education, with the faculty and students physically separated from each other.
- **Distance Education Program (Online Program):** A certificate, degree, or graduate program in which 50% or more of the courses may be taken as distance education courses.
- **Dual Credit Courses (also called concurrent enrollment or dual enrollment):** Courses taught to high school students for which the students receive both high school credit and college credit.
- **Face-to-Face (F2F):** Courses meet in person at a designated NTU campus or instructional site. Instruction, discussions, and assessments occur primarily in the classroom.
- **Higher Learning Commission (HLC):** An institutional accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. HLC accredits degree-granting institutions of higher education in the United States.
- **Hybrid/Blended Course (HYB):** A course that combines face-to-face instruction with significant online learning activities that replace a portion of classroom time.
- **HyFlex (HYF):** Offers the *choice* of attending in person or online. If the student *can* complete the course without coming to campus, it is, by federal definition, distance education.
- **Learning Management System (LMS):** The digital platform used to deliver, manage, and assess online learning (e.g., Blackboard Ultra).
- **Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI):** Faculty-initiated, scheduled, and meaningful engagement between instructor and student that includes direct instruction, feedback, discussion facilitation, or other academic activities as defined by federal regulation (34 CFR §600.2).
- **SARA (State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement):** A national initiative that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs.
- **Synchronous Learning:** Real-time instruction where students and instructors are present in a virtual environment (or in-person) at the same time. It requires attendance at specific, scheduled times for live lectures or discussions.
- **Web-Enhanced Course (WEB):** A face-to-face course that uses online tools to supplement instruction but does not replace seat time.

5. Federal and Accreditation Compliance

5.1 Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI)

Faculty must initiate and maintain consistent, meaningful interaction with students through at least two of the following:

- Providing **direct instruction** or recorded lectures.
- Offering **timely, individualized feedback** on assignments.
- Facilitating **group discussions** or collaborative learning activities.
- Responding to student questions about course content.
- Conducting **virtual office hours** or synchronous sessions.

Documentation of RSI must be maintained within the LMS for audit and accreditation purposes.

5.2 Accessibility and Universal Design

All online courses must comply with **Section 504**, **ADA**, and **WCAG 2.1** standards. Faculty are required to:

- Provide captions and transcripts for all audio/video content.
- Use accessible document formats (e.g., tagged PDFs, alt text for images).
- Collaborate with the Disability Accommodation Specialist to ensure equitable access.

5.3 HLC and SARA Compliance

NTU adheres to the **HLC Policy FDCR.A.10.050** on verification of student identity and **FDCR.A.10.020** on credit hour assignment.

- Courses must demonstrate equivalent learning outcomes and rigor as face-to-face courses.
- NTU participates in **SARA**, ensuring compliance with interstate distance education standards.

6. Course Development and Approval

6.1 Faculty Training Requirements, Opportunities, and Services

Faculty must complete NTU's **Online Teaching Certification Program**, which includes:

- LMS proficiency training – Anthology Blackboard Ultra offers a variety of webinars and self-paced training courses.
- All faculty, including adjuncts, are required to complete and pass the Blackboard Essentials course.
- RSI and accessibility compliance.
- Quality Matters (QM) or equivalent course design standards.
- Follow the Online Learning Guidelines.

6.2 Course Design Standards

All online and hybrid courses must:

- Align learning objectives, assessments, and activities.
- Include a clear syllabus with communication expectations, grading policies, and RSI commitments.
- Use the NTU-approved LMS for all instructional delivery.
- **Course building (online and hybrid)**
 - Instructional design is important for creating successful online and hybrid courses, which often require more intensive planning than face-to-face classes.
 - Faculty will be trained on purposeful planning, organization, pacing course content, student learning experience and outcomes, design, implementation, and evaluation.
 - The Quality Matters (QM) rubric will be used as a guide when designing and building an online and hybrid course.
 - Participate in two Magna Publication webinars on best practices in one academic year.
 - Use the Faculty E-Learning Guidelines – Checklist, which has resources to ensure all internal templates are used and implemented.

6.3 Course Review, Learning Management System (Blackboard Ultra), Third-party resources, and Approval

The Online Learning Department will assist the university in the development and support of course modules.

- All Faculty (instructor on record) will have access to the Blackboard Ultra Course Shell. Online faculty are required to use NTU's approved LMS for any course online, hybrid/blended/web-enhanced, unless approved by the Academic Dean to use a different learning platform.
- Third-party learning platforms such as Cengage, Pearson, and Evolve are required to use Blackboard Ultra for clear communication and to add content in the 'Start Here'

module to set clear course expectations. Faculty are required to share any associated costs with students.

- Faculty, including Adjuncts, are required to pass a Blackboard Essentials and online course delivery/design training before offering an online or hybrid course prior to the term starting. Each faculty will be required to use the Faculty E-Learning Guidelines – Checklist and Quality Matters (QM) rubric for the development, design, implementation, and evaluation of each online and hybrid course.
- Faculty will be responsible for submitting all assessment reports on time to the Academic Dean and Student Learning Coordinator.

Online and Hybrid Courses undergo approval to be offered by:

- The **Department Chair and Academic Dean** approve the Online Faculty to teach.
- The **Human Resources department** will process the hiring paperwork and communicate clearly about the new hire and the requirements for online teaching at NTU.
- The **Registrar** will create the online course once the faculty has passed and completed the Blackboard Essentials course and other required training.
- All **faculty and Adjuncts** are required to use their NTU email with Blackboard access and online resources. Faculty teaching online are required to complete the course approval form to include the modality to be offered. If a faculty has a teaching assistant, the name of the teaching assistant will need to be included on the course approval form. This information will help the teaching assistant to have access to the Learning Management System – Blackboard Ultra.
- The **Online Learning Department** for technical and design compliance, academic integrity, and alignment with HLC standards.

7. Course Delivery and Faculty Responsibilities

Policy

Navajo Technical University (NTU) is committed to delivering high-quality online education that promotes student engagement, academic integrity, and equitable access to learning. Faculty teaching online courses are responsible for maintaining consistent communication, providing timely feedback, ensuring accessibility, and fostering meaningful interaction in compliance with federal and institutional standards, including Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) requirements established by the U.S. Department of Education.

Faculty Responsibilities

Communication: Faculty must maintain weekly communication with students through announcements, discussions, or feedback within Blackboard Ultra.

Response Time: Faculty must respond to student inquiries within 24 hours on weekdays.

Grading Timeliness: Assignments must be graded and returned within seven (7) days of submission, with substantive feedback provided.

Virtual Office Hours: Faculty must hold weekly virtual office hours and post the schedule in Blackboard Ultra.

Course Accessibility: All course materials must remain accessible, current, and compliant with accessibility standards (ADA Section 508).

Syllabus Requirements: Course syllabi are created by faculty and maintained by Instructional Services. Faculty must follow the syllabus template and requirements established by the Curriculum Committee and Instructional Services. The syllabus must include course objectives, grading policies, communication expectations, and instructor contact information.

Contact Information: Faculty must post their NTU Skyhawk email, office hours, and preferred communication method in Blackboard Ultra under the "Start Here" module.

Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI): Faculty must initiate and document regular and substantive interaction with students on a scheduled and predictable basis through at least two (2) of the following instructional activities:

- Providing direct instruction.
- Assessing or providing substantive and corrective feedback on student work.
- Providing information or responding to questions about course content.
- Facilitating group discussions related to course topics.
- Conducting other instructional activities approved by NTU's accrediting agency.

Examples of Regular and Substantive Interaction

a) Direct Instruction: Deliver lectures, tutorials, or demonstrations through Blackboard Ultra, Zoom, or recorded media.

b) Feedback: Provide individualized, detailed feedback on student work using written comments, audio/video notes, or virtual meetings. Feedback should highlight strengths, identify areas for improvement, and guide student progress.

c) Discussion Facilitation: Engage students in course discussions by posing guiding questions, offering counterpoints, connecting ideas, and encouraging participation.

d) Instructional Activities: Conduct review sessions, tutorials, or virtual office hours that supplement instruction and support student learning.

e) Communication Expectations: Clearly outline communication and participation expectations in the syllabus and "Start Here" module, including response times, feedback timelines, and participation requirements.

f) Announcements: Send weekly announcements summarizing key topics, addressing common questions, and previewing upcoming assignments or deadlines.

g) Online Tools: Use NTU-approved tools (e.g., Blackboard Ultra, Zoom, Class Collaborate) that facilitate and document communication and engagement.

Blackboard Ultra Course Access

Instructor of Record: The instructor of record is the faculty member listed on the official NTU course schedule. Access to Blackboard Ultra course shells is granted only after Human Resources processes the instructor's hiring documentation and the assignment is entered into Jenzabar.

Access Timeline: Instructors of record gain access to their Blackboard Ultra course shells up to 30 days before the start of the semester to prepare course materials.

Course Retention: Course shells remain available to faculty for three (3) years (nine semesters) from the current term for reference, assessment, or accreditation purposes.

Team-Taught Courses: When multiple instructors are listed, each instructor of record receives the same level of access and responsibility for maintaining course quality and compliance.

Teaching Online and Course Delivery Strategies

Policy

Faculty are expected to apply effective online teaching strategies that promote engagement, accessibility, and student success. NTU encourages the use of evidence-based practices and instructional design principles aligned with Quality Matters (QM) standards.

Procedures

Pre-Course Preparation:

- One week before the course begins, send a welcome message to students introducing the course, expectations, and key resources.
- Contact the Online Learning Department for guidance on course setup and communication templates.

Introductions:

- Require students to post introductions in a discussion forum to build community and familiarity.
- Encourage students to share their background, interests, and goals for the course.

Feedback and Support:

- Provide formative feedback early and consistently to help students adjust to the online environment.
- Use Skyhawk email or Blackboard messaging for personalized communication.

Announcements and Reminders:

- Post weekly announcements summarizing key learning points, upcoming deadlines, and additional resources.

Course Design and Quality:

- Use the Quality Matters (QM) rubric and NTU Faculty E-Learning Guidelines Checklist to ensure course design meets institutional standards.
- Organize lectures and modules logically, ensuring clear navigation and consistent structure.
- Use multimedia and visual aids to enhance engagement and comprehension.
- Keep content concise, focused, and aligned with learning outcomes.

Engagement and Accessibility:

- Incorporate interactive elements such as discussions, polls, or collaborative projects.
- Ensure all materials meet accessibility standards and are compatible with assistive technologies.

8. Student Verification, Proctoring, and Academic Integrity

Policy

Navajo Technical University (NTU) upholds the highest standards of academic integrity and student verification in all online and distance education courses. This policy ensures that student identity, assessment security, and academic honesty are maintained in compliance with institutional, state, and federal regulations, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA).

Authentication and Identity Verification

NTU Skyhawk ID: All students and faculty must use their official NTU Skyhawk ID credentials for authentication and access to Blackboard Ultra, Zoom, and other NTU-approved instructional systems.

Identity Verification: Students must verify their identity when completing major assessments or proctored exams by presenting a valid photo ID (NTU ID, driver's license, or government-issued identification).

Secure Access: NTU's Learning Management System (LMS) and integrated tools use secure, password-protected logins to ensure that only authorized users access course materials and assessments.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism Detection: Faculty must use plagiarism detection tools such as SafeAssign or Grammarly to verify the originality of student submissions.

Integrity Standards: All students are expected to adhere to NTU's Academic Integrity Policy, which prohibits plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and unauthorized collaboration.

Violations: Any violation of academic integrity will be addressed according to NTU's disciplinary procedures as outlined in the Student Handbook and Faculty Handbook.

Proctored Exams and Major Assessments

Proctoring Requirement: Major assessments, including midterms, finals, and high-stakes exams, must include identity verification through approved proctoring methods or tools.

Instructor Responsibility: Faculty must clearly outline all proctoring requirements, including technical and environmental expectations, in the course syllabus.

Student Responsibility: Students must ensure they have the necessary technology (webcam, microphone, stable internet connection) and meet all proctoring requirements before the exam date.

Proctoring Options and Methods

NTU provides multiple proctoring options to accommodate diverse student needs and ensure exam integrity:

On-Campus or In-Person Proctoring: Students may complete exams at NTU's testing centers or at pre-approved professional locations such as libraries, colleges, or military education offices. Family members or friends are not permitted to serve as proctors.

Remote Proctoring via Video Tools: Instructors may use Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate, or Google Meet as no-cost proctoring alternatives. These sessions may include live monitoring or recording for later review.

Third-Party Proctoring Services: When approved, NTU may use secure third-party proctoring platforms. Students are responsible for any associated fees, as disclosed in the course syllabus.

Privacy and Legal Protections

NTU is committed to protecting student privacy and ensuring compliance with applicable laws:

Room Scan Opt-Outs: Students may opt out of 360° room scans if required by remote proctoring software. Alternative testing arrangements will be provided.

Explicit Consent: Written consent is required for any room scan or recording that captures a student's private environment.

Data Access and Retention: Only authorized NTU personnel or contracted proctoring services may access recorded exam sessions. Recordings are retained only as long as necessary for academic or legal review and are then securely deleted.

Accommodations and Alternatives

To ensure equitable access and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504:

Alternative Assessments: Instructors may provide alternative assessments for students unable to meet standard proctoring requirements due to technology limitations or privacy concerns.

Disability Accommodations: Students requiring testing accommodations must coordinate with NTU's Disability Services Office prior to the exam. Approved accommodations may include extended time, assistive technology, or modified testing environments.

Assistive Technology Exemptions: Students using assistive technologies that may conflict with proctoring software (e.g., screen readers, magnifiers) may be exempted from specific software requirements upon verification by Disability Services.

9. Research and Academic Writing Standards for Online Learning

Policy

This section establishes the standards and expectations for research, academic writing, and the use of APA (American Psychological Association) style in all online and distance

education programs at Navajo Technical University (NTU). It ensures that online students and faculty adhere to ethical research practices, proper citation methods, and academic integrity in compliance with institutional, federal, and accreditation requirements.

9.1 Alignment with Institutional and Federal Standards

This policy aligns with:

Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Criteria for Accreditation, specifically Criterion 2.E and 3.D, which emphasize academic integrity, ethical research, and information literacy.

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) standards for academic quality and student support in distance education.

U.S. Department of Education (34 CFR §600.2 and §602.17) requirements for academic rigor, integrity, and verification of student identity in online learning environments.

NTU's Mission and Diné Philosophy of Education (DPE), ensuring that research and writing practices reflect cultural respect, ethical inquiry, and community responsibility.

9.2 Research and Writing Standards

All online students and faculty must adhere to the following research and writing standards:

A.) APA Formatting and Citation

- All written assignments, research papers, and projects in online courses must follow the most current edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA).
- Faculty are responsible for providing APA resources and tutorials within the Blackboard Ultra "Start Here" module.
- The NTU Online Learning Department will maintain an APA Resource Hub within Blackboard Ultra, including templates, examples, and video tutorials.

B.) Research Ethics and Source Evaluation

- Students must use credible, peer-reviewed, and scholarly sources for research assignments.

- Faculty must guide students in evaluating online sources for credibility, bias, and relevance.
- All research involving human subjects must comply with NTU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies and federal research ethics standards (45 CFR 46).

C.) Academic Integrity in Research

- Plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, and unauthorized collaboration are prohibited.
- Faculty must use plagiarism detection tools (e.g., SafeAssign, Grammarly) for all major written assignments.
- Violations of research integrity will follow NTU's Academic Integrity Policy and may result in disciplinary action.

D.) Faculty Responsibilities

- Incorporate APA instruction and research ethics into course design.
- Provide feedback on citation accuracy and research quality.
- Encourage culturally grounded research that aligns with the Diné Philosophy of Education and community-based inquiry.

E.) Student Responsibilities

- Complete the Online Research and Writing Orientation Module before submitting major research assignments.
- Maintain accurate records of sources and citations.
- Seek assistance from NTU's Online Writing Center or Library Services for APA and research support.

9.3 Research Support and Resources

NTU provides the following resources to support online research and writing:

- **NTU Online Writing Center:** Offers virtual tutoring, APA workshops, and feedback on research papers.
- **NTU Library Services:** Provides access to academic databases, e-journals, and citation management tools.
- **APA Resource Hub (Blackboard Ultra):** Includes guides, templates, and instructional videos.
- **Faculty Development Workshops:** Focus on integrating research literacy and APA standards into online course design.

9,4 Assessment and Continuous Improvement

- The Online Learning Department, Graduate Studies, and Student Learning Committee will review research and writing outcomes annually.
- Faculty will include APA compliance and research quality as part of course-level assessment rubrics.
- Continuous improvement plans will be developed based on student performance data and feedback.

10. Course Evaluation and Assessment

Policy

Navajo Technical University (NTU) is committed to ensuring that all online and distance education courses meet the highest standards of academic quality, integrity, and continuous improvement. This policy establishes the framework for evaluating online courses, assessing student learning outcomes, and using assessment data to enhance teaching effectiveness and program quality. All online course evaluations and assessments must align with NTU's institutional goals, accreditation standards, and the University's Assessment Plan.

Alignment with Program Assessment Plans: All distance education courses must align with and support program assessment plans that are designed, implemented, and continuously improved by NTU faculty. These plans ensure that online learning outcomes are consistent with institutional learning goals and accreditation requirements.

Faculty Evaluation: The Department Chair of the school to which the online course or program belongs will conduct faculty evaluations according to the schedule established by the Academics. Evaluations will include review of course design, student engagement, assessment practices, and compliance with Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) standards.

Training and Support: The Student Learning Coordinator and the Online Learning Department will provide training, resources, and templates to guide faculty in assessing student learning outcomes effectively and consistently across all online courses.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement: Online course evaluations and assessments must reflect NTU's commitment to continuous improvement, academic integrity, accessibility, and student success.

Procedures

Assessment Responsibilities: All faculty are required, as part of their regular teaching responsibilities, to assess student learning in accordance with the University's Assessment Plan, as approved by the Student Learning Committee and the Academic Deans. This plan outlines the minimum standards for conducting both summative (final evaluation) and formative (ongoing feedback) assessments in online environments. These requirements are in addition to existing University policies, procedures, and regulations related to assessment.

Assessment Types: Online learning assessments may include quizzes, exams, projects, discussions, portfolios, and other evidence-based measures of student achievement. Faculty are encouraged to use a variety of assessment methods to promote engagement and accurately measure learning outcomes.

Faculty and Staff Proficiency: All faculty and staff involved in the online learning assessment process must be proficient in the online learning environment and must complete the required NTU training prior to accessing or administering assessments within Blackboard Ultra or other approved systems.

Quality Assurance and Oversight: The NTU Student Learning Committee, in collaboration with the Online Learning Department, is responsible for ensuring that online learning assessments maintain the integrity, validity, and reliability of the University's assessment methodology. The committee will periodically review online assessment practices to ensure compliance with institutional and accreditation standards.

Student Readiness and Orientation: Students enrolled in online courses must complete the Online Student Readiness Quiz, available on the NTU Online Learning webpage under "Student Onboarding," prior to beginning coursework. All students will also be enrolled in the Blackboard Onboarding – Orientation course to ensure they are prepared to engage successfully in the online learning environment. This course is located in Blackboard Ultra under Courses->Term->Orientation.

Use of Assessment Data: Assessment data collected from online courses and programs will be used to inform program review, faculty development, and continuous improvement initiatives across NTU's academic programs. Data will also support accreditation reporting, curriculum enhancement, and institutional effectiveness planning.

Feedback and Improvement Cycle: Faculty will review assessment results each term and collaborate with Department Chairs and the Student Learning Coordinator to identify areas

for improvement. Recommendations for course or program enhancements will be documented and implemented as part of NTU's continuous improvement process.

11. Faculty Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Policy

Navajo Technical University (NTU) is committed to maintaining excellence in online education through continuous improvement, professional development, and systematic evaluation of faculty performance. This policy establishes the framework for evaluating online teaching effectiveness, ensuring compliance with federal and institutional standards, and promoting ongoing faculty growth in digital pedagogy.

Faculty Evaluation Policy

Annual Evaluation: Faculty performance in online teaching will be evaluated annually as part of NTU's faculty review process. Evaluations will include student feedback, peer review, and compliance with Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) and accessibility standards.

Quality Assurance: The Online Learning Department will conduct annual quality assurance audits of online courses to ensure alignment with NTU's Online Course Quality Standards, accreditation requirements, and best practices in instructional design.

Professional Development: Faculty are expected to engage in ongoing professional development to enhance their online teaching skills. Opportunities include Magna Publications, Quality Matters certification, Anthology (Blackboard) webinars, NTU-sponsored workshops, and other approved training programs.

Continuous Improvement: Evaluation results and audit findings will be used to identify areas for improvement, inform professional development planning, and support faculty in enhancing student engagement, course design, and learning outcomes.

Procedures

Evaluation Components

Student Feedback: End-of-course evaluations will assess instructional effectiveness, communication, responsiveness, and course organization.

Peer Review: Department Chairs or designated peer reviewers will evaluate online courses using NTU's standardized Online Course Evaluation Rubric, focusing on course design, RSI compliance, and accessibility.

Administrative Review: The Academic Deans and Department Chairs will review faculty performance data, course audit results, and participation in professional development as part of the annual evaluation process.

Course Quality Audits:

The Online Learning Department will conduct systematic reviews of a representative sample of online courses each academic year.

Audit criteria will include course structure, alignment of learning outcomes, accessibility compliance, RSI documentation, and adherence to NTU's online teaching standards.

Faculty will receive written feedback and recommendations for improvement. Follow-up reviews may be scheduled to ensure corrective actions are implemented.

Professional Development Requirements:

Faculty teaching online must complete NTU's required online teaching certification (Blackboard Essentials) or equivalent training prior to course delivery.

Faculty are encouraged to participate in at least one professional development activity related to online teaching each academic year.

The Online Learning Department will maintain records of faculty participation in training and workshops for accreditation and reporting purposes.

Continuous Improvement Process:

Evaluation and audit results will be reviewed annually by the Online Learning Department and the Office of Assessment & Accreditation to identify institutional trends and training needs.

12. Technology, Support, and Learning Management System – Blackboard Ultra Course Access

Policy

Navajo Technical University (NTU) provides faculty, staff, and students with access to Blackboard Ultra, Zoom, Class Collaborate, and other approved instructional technologies to support high-quality teaching, learning, and collaboration in online, hybrid, and face-to-face courses. This policy outlines the standards for course access, availability, and support to ensure consistent and secure use of NTU's Learning Management System (LMS) – Blackboard Ultra and related tools.

Course Availability and Access

Course Shell Creation: Blackboard Ultra course shells are automatically generated for all scheduled courses each academic term based on official course listings in Jenzabar.

Course shells include standard templates and institutional resources to promote consistency and accessibility.

Faculty Access: Faculty are granted access to their Blackboard Ultra course shells four (4) weeks prior to the official start of the term. This access period allows instructors to prepare, update, and review course content, ensuring alignment with NTU's online course quality standards.

Student Access: Students gain access to their enrolled courses one (1) week before the start of the term. Early access allows students to review syllabi, announcements, and introductory materials to prepare for the course.

Course Duration: Courses remain active through the official end date of the term. Students who need access days after the term ends to complete any approved incomplete work will need to go through the internal 'Incomplete' grade process.

Archiving: After the term concludes, courses are archived and removed from active student access. Faculty retain access to archived courses for up to three (3) years for reference, assessment, accreditation, or instructional improvement purposes.

Extended Access: Requests for extended course access beyond the standard period must be approved by the Registrar and coordinated with the Office of Online Learning. The LMS automation process follows the access end date recorded in Jenzabar. Extended access applies primarily to students with approved Incomplete grades or special academic circumstances.

Course Retention and Deletion: Archived courses older than three (3) years may be permanently deleted following institutional data retention policies. Faculty are responsible for exporting and saving any materials they wish to retain before deletion.

Support and Resources: Technical Support: The NTU IT Department and Office of Online Learning provide technical and instructional design support for Blackboard Ultra, Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate, and integrated educational technologies. Support is available through the NTU Help Desk, email, and scheduled consultations.

Instructional Design Assistance: Faculty may request assistance with course design, accessibility compliance, multimedia integration, and assessment setup through the Office of Online Learning.

Technology Standards: All faculty and students are expected to meet NTU's minimum technology requirements, including reliable broadband internet, updated web browsers,

and compatible devices. NTU provides guidance on recommended hardware and software specifications to ensure optimal system performance.

System Maintenance and Updates: Blackboard Ultra and integrated tools undergo regular maintenance and updates to ensure security, stability, and functionality. Scheduled maintenance periods will be communicated in advance to minimize disruption.

Data Security and Privacy: All users must comply with NTU's data security, privacy, and acceptable use policies. Course data, student records, and communications within Blackboard Ultra are protected under FERPA and institutional data governance standards.

13. Intellectual Property and Content Ownership Policy

Policy

This policy establishes the rights, responsibilities, and procedures governing intellectual property (IP) and content ownership for faculty, staff, and students engaged in online learning, teaching, research, and creative activities at Navajo Technical University (NTU). The policy ensures compliance with federal and state laws, promotes innovation, and protects the interests of both the University and its community members.

Intellectual Property: All intellectual property created by faculty, staff, or students in connection with their employment, coursework, or research at Navajo Technical University (NTU) is subject to the University's intellectual property standards and procedures. This includes disclosure requirements, royalties and proceeds participation, equity and management, infringement, and the production of creative or scholarly works. NTU retains the right to manage and protect intellectual property developed under its auspices.

Content Ownership: Instructional materials, course content, and digital resources developed by faculty or staff for the purpose of delivering instruction at NTU are considered the property of the University. This includes, but is not limited to, syllabi, course modules, multimedia content, assessments, and other instructional resources created using University time, funding, or resources.

Content Reuse: NTU reserves the right to reuse, adapt, or repurpose instructional materials developed for University courses in other academic programs or course modules. Faculty may request permission to use their NTU-developed materials for external purposes, subject to approval by the Office of Academic Affairs. Students are prohibited from reusing or

resubmitting work from previous courses in subsequent course modules unless explicitly approved by the course instructor.

Disclosure: All individuals engaged in internal or external projects that involve proprietary or confidential information must adhere to applicable non-disclosure agreements (NDAs). NTU will ensure compliance with all NDAs and confidentiality requirements associated with sponsored research, partnerships, or collaborations.

Infringement: NTU upholds all applicable copyright laws and the Technology, Education, and Copyright Harmonization (TEACH) Act of 2002. Faculty, staff, and students are responsible for ensuring that all instructional and research materials comply with copyright and fair use standards. The University will take appropriate action in cases of infringement or misuse of intellectual property.

Royalties and Proceeds: Any intellectual property or content developed under NTU sponsorship or with the use of University resources that generates royalties, licensing fees, or other proceeds will be owned and managed by the University. Distribution of royalties or proceeds, when applicable, will follow NTU's established policies and procedures for revenue sharing and intellectual property management.

14. Compliance and Best Practices Enhancement

14.1 Federal and Accreditation Alignment

To ensure full compliance with national and institutional standards, NTU's online learning policies now explicitly align with the following:

1.) Higher Learning Commission (HLC)

- Compliance with HLC's Distance Education and Correspondence Education Guidelines.
- Verification of student identity (FDCR.A.10.050).
- Credit hour equivalency and rigor (FDCR.A.10.020).
- Documentation of Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) per 34 CFR §600.2.

2.) State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)

- NTU ensures that all online programs meet SARA's interstate distance education standards.
- Faculty and staff must maintain awareness of state-specific requirements for professional licensure programs.

3.) U.S. Department of Education

- Compliance with 34 CFR §600.2 and §602.17 regarding distance education definitions, RSI, and student verification.

- Accessibility compliance under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Adherence to FERPA and HEOA for data privacy and student identity protection.

14.2 Additional Compliance and Best Practice Considerations

To strengthen NTU's online learning framework, the following areas are added or expanded:

1.) Data Privacy and Cybersecurity

- NTU will implement annual cybersecurity training for faculty and students.
- All online systems must comply with FERPA, GDPR (if applicable), and NTU's Data Governance Policy.

2.) Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

- Faculty and students may use AI tools (e.g., for tutoring, feedback, or accessibility) only when aligned with NTU's ethical guidelines.
- AI-generated content must be properly disclosed and cited following APA standards.
- Faculty must include an AI usage statement in course syllabi.

3.) Digital Literacy and Equity

- NTU will expand digital literacy training for students and faculty.
- The Student Laptop Program, hotspots, and broadband access initiatives will continue to ensure equitable participation in online learning.

4.) Cultural Integration

- Online course design must reflect the Diné Philosophy of Education (Nitsáhákees, Nahátá, Íina, Siihasin).
- Faculty are encouraged to include culturally relevant examples, case studies, and community-based projects.

5.) Faculty Workload and Recognition

- Online teaching, course development, and mentoring will be recognized in workload calculations and performance evaluations.
- Faculty contributions to online education will be acknowledged in promotion and tenure processes.

6.) Student Engagement and Retention

- The Online Learning Department will implement analytics-based early alert systems to identify and support at-risk students.
- Faculty will receive training on inclusive engagement strategies and culturally responsive pedagogy.

7.) Accessibility and Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- All online courses must meet WCAG 2.2 standards.

- Faculty will receive annual training on accessible course design and assistive technology integration.

14.3 Continuous Review and Accreditation Reporting

- The Online Education Committee will conduct an annual compliance audit to ensure adherence to HLC, SARA, and federal standards.
- Findings will be reported to the University Cabinet and included in NTU's institutional effectiveness and accreditation reports.
- Policy revisions will be data-driven and informed by faculty feedback, student surveys, and accreditation updates.

14.4 References (APA Format)

American Psychological Association. (2020). **Publication manual of the American Psychological Association** (7th ed.). APA.

Higher Learning Commission. (2023). **Distance Education and Correspondence Education Guidelines**. Retrieved from hlcommission.org

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA). (2023). **NC-SARA Policy Manual**. Retrieved from nc-sara.org

U.S. Department of Education. (2023). **34 CFR §600.2 and §602.17 – Distance Education Regulations**. Retrieved from ed.gov

Navajo Technical University. (2024). **Faculty Handbook**. Navajo Technical University.

15. Online Education Committee

Policy

The Online Education Committee serves as an advisory and oversight body to ensure the quality, consistency, and continuous improvement of online education at Navajo Technical University (NTU). The Committee shall consist of five (5) members of the Faculty Assembly, appointed annually by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies in consultation with the E-Learning Director. Membership should represent a range of academic disciplines and include faculty experienced in online teaching and assessment. One member shall serve as Chair, appointed by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. The E-Learning Director shall serve as a standing member of the Committee.

The Committee's primary purpose is to support the development, evaluation, and enhancement of NTU's online learning environment, ensuring alignment with institutional goals, accreditation standards, and best practices in digital education.

Procedures

Policy and Procedure Review: The Committee shall review and recommend updates to NTU's online education policies, procedures, and guidelines annually or as needed to

reflect emerging technologies, accreditation requirements, and pedagogical best practices.

Course Review and Quality Assurance: The Committee shall review online course syllabi, course design, and instructional materials to ensure alignment with NTU's Online Course Quality Standards and institutional learning outcomes. Recommendations for improvement shall be provided to faculty and department chairs.

Faculty Support and Development: The Committee shall collaborate with the Online Learning Department and the Office of Assessment & Accreditation to identify faculty training needs, recommend professional development opportunities, and promote effective online teaching strategies.

Assessment and Evaluation: The Committee shall review data related to online course evaluations, student learning outcomes, and faculty feedback to identify trends and recommend improvements to online teaching and learning practices.

Technology and Innovation: The Committee shall advise on the adoption and integration of new educational technologies, tools, and platforms that enhance online learning experiences and accessibility.

Reporting: The Online Learning Director shall submit an annual report to the University Cabinet and Faculty summarizing activities, findings, and recommendations for continuous improvement in NTU's online education programs.

This policy ensures that NTU's online education remains rigorous, student-centered, and aligned with institutional and accreditation standards.

16. Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed annually by the **Online Learning Department**, **IT Department**, and **Academic Affairs** to ensure continued alignment with federal regulations, accreditation standards, and NTU's mission.

For more information:

Visit <https://www.navajotech.edu/online-learning/> or contact the **Online Learning Department** at ccarviso@navajotech.edu.