

ALGOMA

u n i v e r s i t y

On-Line Learning Policy

Category:	Information Technology
Number:	IT3
Responsibility:	Academic Dean and Director of Information Technology Services
Approval:	<i>February 3, 2009, Revisions approved April 27, 2010 – Administration</i> <i>March 6, 2009, Revisions approved May 7, 2010 – Senate</i>

Purpose

To define (1) the equipment, training, and support systems that will be used to provide an enriched learning experience to Algoma University students through the use of on-line delivery methods, and to define (2) how on-line delivery methods will contribute to an enhanced sense of academic community.

Scope

This policy is applicable to the entire university community.

Policy

On-line learning refers to any computer-facilitated distance learning. The on-line delivery of courses will meet all of the academic standards and requirements of on-site, in-person delivery of courses. On-line learning can include, but is not limited to, on-line quizzes, on-line tests, on-line chats, complementary on-line course content, on-line lectures, on-line lessons, or on-line assignments. On-line delivery methods can be used for a portion of a course or an entire course (distance education).

On-line delivery includes multimedia, video conferencing, social networking, web-based learning management systems, and/or learning objects (digital and web-based resources that can be used repeatedly to support learning). On-line learning is a form of distance education as defined in the Full-time Faculty Collective Agreement. In addition to the provisions of this policy, on-line courses will adhere to the provisions stated in the Full-time Faculty Collective Agreement.

For on-line courses, or for programs that require all or a portion of the program to be completed using on-line delivery, all material provided to prospective students will

clearly articulate the costs and commitments associated with participation in the program. This will include:

- Full information about the technological requirements of participation and technical competence required of them.
- Information related to the nature of the learning and the personal discipline required in an on-line environment.
- Additional costs, if applicable, associated with on-line learning aspects of course or program delivery.

The course syllabus for courses using on-line delivery methods will include:

- Provisions for instructor-student and student-student interactions.
- Description of technologies that will be used to facilitate interaction among faculty and students (for example, email, phone conferences, chat rooms, web-based discussions, computer conferences, etc.)

Algoma University promotes the use of on-line learning as an alternative delivery method for course material in some disciplines. Algoma University will provide the necessary training, technological support systems, and equipment to make on-line learning a viable and valuable course delivery option in accordance with the principle of academic integrity. On-line learning programs and courses will share a clear and integral relationship with classroom-based learning structures, where appropriate.

Algoma University will provide faculty with regularly scheduled introductory and advanced hands-on training for course management systems. The university will maintain a library of training resources specific to on-line learning, and will provide one-on-one training sessions, for faculty who are using distance technology. The university will occasionally bring in pedagogical experts to facilitate workshops for faculty members. As new software and systems are adopted, Algoma University will provide adequate resources and processes to faculty and course designers.

Algoma University will provide students with ongoing technical support and training in the use of technology. Faculty who are teaching on-line courses will provide an orientation to all students. Algoma University will provide computer labs on campus which contain high-quality, current hardware and software for student use. Algoma University will continue to provide ongoing reinvestment to its hardware and software to support quality on-line learning. The university will also maintain ongoing student support through an Information Technology Help Desk and an Information Technology Services Department.

Algoma University will maintain secure off-site backup systems for faculty and student data in order to maintain reliable, sufficient, and scalable course management systems, and will provide regular maintenance and updates to on-site servers.

Algoma University will maintain an Information Technology Help Desk to provide technical assistance for all faculty, staff, and students during and outside of regular

business hours. 24/7 access to secure online databanks for on-line courses are available.

Algoma University will continue to host its Course Management System (CMS) in a facility with secure access, redundant power generators, and redundant cooling systems. Open source products will be used where possible to provide reliable and efficient community support. A current disaster recovery plan, including emergency back-up provisions and storage technology protocols, is in place to ensure consistency of operations. A centralized knowledge base is maintained to keep track of bugs, workarounds, and common fixes.

Algoma University will strive for consistency across campus in its technology and equipment for ease of use. Leasing will be used where possible to ensure technology is refreshed on a regular basis.

Algoma University has on file and available upon request copies of current software, hardware, and systems agreements that pertain to the delivery of electronic/on-line learning.

Algoma University recognizes that a sense of academic community and collaboration plays an integral role in fostering student engagement for on-line learners. To this end, the university will integrate student support mechanisms such as discussion groups and virtual office hours into all on-line courses in order to provide opportunity for discussion, collaboration, and negotiation among all students and between students and faculty. Instructors are provided with detailed logs of student activity through the Course Management System.