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UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION

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E-LEARNING POLICY

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FOREWORD

As higher education adapts to an increasingly interconnected global environment, the digitalization of teaching and learning demands rigorous institutional governance. The University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC) maintains that expanding access beyond physical classrooms must be balanced with strict regulatory compliance and structured operational standards.

This E-Learning Policy establishes the mandatory framework required to institutionalize digital education while safeguarding academic excellence. Flexible learning pathways are designed to accommodate non-traditional learners, working professionals, and remote students, but these modalities must enforce the same instructional quality and academic rigor as conventional programs.

Virtual instruction is an essential strategic component of UniMAC's mission to train professionals in media, arts, and communication. To expand our educational reach effectively beyond our campuses across Ghana, the university must implement standardized, secure digital systems that protect institutional integrity across the region and continent.

Accordingly, this policy mandates strict compliance with comprehensive standards governing technology infrastructure, data privacy, course design, academic honesty, and intellectual property. This document ensures that remote learning options adhere to legal regulations and quality assurance metrics, guaranteeing equivalent credential value for all students.

I acknowledge the Pro Vice-Chancellor, the Policy Development Committee, and the faculty members whose compliance reviews and technical expertise shaped this document. Their structured approach has provided a practical, legally compliant blueprint for the university's digital operations.

As Vice-Chancellor, I direct all faculty, students, and administrative units to fully adhere to the regulations outlined herein. This policy establishes the accountability and governance necessary to safely position UniMAC as an innovative leader in modern higher education.

Professor Eric Opoku Mensah
Vice-Chancellor
University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC)

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This E-Learning Policy represents the collective effort and expertise of the entire UniMAC community. We extend our sincere gratitude to faculty members who shared their online teaching experiences and pedagogical insights, students who provided valuable perspectives on their learning needs, instructional designers and IT professionals who contributed technical expertise, student services staff who identified support requirements, and administrative leaders who provided strategic guidance. Special thanks to the Policy Development Committee for their dedication in researching best practices, facilitating stakeholder consultations, and synthesizing diverse viewpoints into this comprehensive framework. This policy reflects our shared commitment to excellence in virtual teaching and learning at UniMAC.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This E-Learning Policy provides UniMAC's framework for delivering high-quality online education that meets the same rigorous academic standards as traditional instruction while leveraging the unique advantages of digital learning environments. The policy addresses ten critical areas essential for successful e-learning implementation.

The policy begins by defining its purpose and scope, clarifying that it applies to all forms of online and blended learning at UniMAC, serving students, faculty, and staff across all programs. It establishes minimum technology requirements and accessibility standards to ensure equitable access for all learners, while clearly delineating the roles and responsibilities of instructors, students, IT support, and administrators in creating effective learning communities.

Recognizing that quality course design is fundamental to student success, the policy sets standards for content development, instructional design principles, varied assessment methods, and accreditation compliance. It emphasizes the importance of active participation and engagement, establishing clear expectations for attendance, communication protocols, response times, and professional netiquette in online environments.

The policy addresses critical issues of assessment integrity through comprehensive exam protocols, proctoring options, academic integrity measures, and meaningful feedback mechanisms. It prioritizes data privacy and security, ensuring compliance with legal requirements while protecting sensitive information. Intellectual property provisions clarify ownership of course materials, copyright compliance obligations, and the appropriate use of educational resources.

Comprehensive support services-including technical assistance, academic advising, tutoring, counseling, and professional development-are outlined to ensure all community members have resources needed for success. Finally, the policy establishes regular review cycles and amendment procedures, ensuring it remains current and responsive to evolving needs, technologies, and best practices in online education.

CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Purpose

This policy is developed to create a clear framework for how UniMAC delivers and manages online learning. E-learning has become an essential part of 21st century education and training, offering flexibility and accessibility that traditional learning settings cannot always provide. Research shows that well-structured online learning can be just as effective as face-to-face instruction when proper guidelines are in place.

The main goals of this policy are to:

Ensure Quality: Learning online is just as valuable and rigorous as learning in person. Every course would therefore meet high standards regardless of how it is delivered.

Provide Clarity: Both facilitators and learners need to know what is expected of them. This policy sets clear expectations for everyone involved.

Support Services: By establishing consistent practices, UniMAC creates an environment where learners can thrive and facilitators can teach effectively.

Protect Everyone: The policy addresses important issues like privacy, security, and fair treatment to keep the learning community safe.

Scope

This policy applies to all forms of online learning within our UniMAC, including:

Who It Covers: This policy applies to all instructors, trainers, facilitators, learners, and administrative staff who participate in or support e-learning activities. Whether they are teaching a course, taking one, or helping to ensure a smooth delivery of courses in virtual spaces.

Types of E-Learning Included:

- Fully online courses where all instruction happens remotely
- Hybrid or blended courses that mix online and in-person sessions
- Webinars and virtual workshops
- Online training modules and professional development programs
- Any use of learning management systems or digital platforms for educational purposes

What It Does not Cover: Traditional face-to-face instruction and informal use of technology in physical classrooms fall outside this policy's scope, though they may be guided by other institutional policies.

This policy is designed to be flexible enough to accommodate different learning contexts while maintaining consistent standards across all our e-learning initiatives.

CHAPTER 2: ACCESS AND TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Introduction

For e-learning to work effectively at UniMAC, everyone needs reliable access to the right technology. This section outlines the basic technical requirements that students and facilitators should have to participate successfully in online learning. UniMAC recognizes that not everyone has the same access to technology, so the university is committed to supporting those who need assistance in meeting these requirements.

Minimum Technical Requirements

Computer or Device: Students and instructors need access to a computer, laptop, or tablet that can run modern web browsers and applications. While smartphones can be used for some activities like checking announcements or participating in discussions, they are not sufficient as the primary device for most e-learning courses at UniMAC.

Operating System: Devices should run updated operating systems (Windows 10 or later, macOS 10.14 or later, or current versions of Linux, iOS, or Android). Keeping systems updated helps ensure security and compatibility with learning platforms.

Web Browser: A current version of Chrome, Firefox, Safari, or Edge is required. Many e-learning tools work best with up-to-date browsers that support modern web standards.

Software Applications: Depending on the course, students may need access to word processing software, PDF readers, video conferencing tools, and other specialized applications. UniMAC provides access to essential software through institutional licenses where possible.

Internet Connectivity Standards

Minimum Speed: A stable internet connection with a minimum download speed of 3-5 Mbps is necessary for basic e-learning activities. For video conferencing and streaming lectures, speeds of 10 Mbps or higher are strongly recommended.

Reliability: Students should have consistent access to the internet, ideally at home. Research indicates that reliable connectivity is one of the strongest predictors of student success in online learning environments.

UniMAC Support: For students who lack adequate internet access at home, the university provides on-campus computer labs and Wi-Fi hotspot lending programs.

Students facing connectivity challenges should contact the Student Support Services office for assistance.

Required Software and Platforms

Learning Management System (LMS): All UniMAC e-learning courses are delivered through our institutional LMS. Students and facilitators must be able to access and navigate this platform, which serves as the central hub for course materials, assignments, discussions, and grades.

Video Conferencing Tools: Courses that include synchronous (live) sessions require video conferencing software. UniMAC's standard platform should be used unless specific academic needs require alternatives.

Communication Tools: Email access and the ability to use discussion forums, chat functions, and other communication features within the LMS are essential for staying connected with instructors and classmates.

Specialized Software: Some courses may require discipline-specific software such as statistical packages, design tools, or simulation programs. Course syllabi will clearly indicate any such requirements before registration.

Accessibility Accommodations

UniMAC is committed to ensuring that e-learning is accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. Technology requirements include provisions for:

Assistive Technologies: All required platforms and materials must be compatible with screen readers, voice recognition software, keyboard navigation, and other assistive technologies commonly used by students with disabilities.

Alternative Formats: Course materials will be provided in formats accessible to students with visual, hearing, or learning disabilities. This includes captioned videos, text alternatives for images, and accessible document formats.

Technical Support for Accommodations: Students who require assistive technologies or alternative formats should contact UniMAC's Disability Support Services as early as possible. The university will work with students and instructors to ensure appropriate accommodations are in place.

Technical Support and Training

Help Desk: Provision should be made for technical support through our IT Help Desk, available during extended hours to assist students and faculty with technology issues. Contact information and hours are available on the university website.

Training Resources: Orientation sessions, tutorials should be organised to guide and help students and instructors become comfortable with e-learning technologies. First-time online learners are strongly encouraged to complete the "Getting Started with E-Learning" orientation before their courses begin.

Equipment Lending: Students who do not have access to appropriate devices may be eligible to borrow laptops or tablets from the university library for the duration of a semester.

CHAPTER 3: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Introduction

Successful e-learning at UniMAC depends on everyone understanding and fulfilling their roles. This section clarifies what is expected from facilitators, students, IT support staff, and administrators. When each person knows their responsibilities, the entire learning community benefits from smoother operations, better communication, and improved learning outcomes.

Instructors and Facilitators

Instructors are at the heart of the e-learning experience at UniMAC. Their responsibilities include:

Course Design and Preparation: Instructors should design courses that are clear, well-organized, and aligns perfectly with learning objectives, content, pedagogies and assessment practices. This means preparing materials in advance, creating a logical structure for content delivery, and ensuring all resources are accessible before the course begins. Studies show that well-designed online courses significantly improve student engagement and success rates.

Clear Communication: Instructors must communicate expectations clearly from the start. This includes posting a detailed syllabus or course outline, explaining grading criteria, setting deadlines, and outlining participation requirements. Regular announcements keep students informed about course progress and any changes.

Active Presence: Maintaining an active presence in online courses is crucial. Instructors should log in regularly, respond to student questions promptly (typically within 48 hours during weekdays), participate in discussion forums, and provide guidance when students struggle with concepts or technology.

Timely Feedback: Students need feedback to learn and improve. Instructors should provide constructive feedback on assignments and assessments within a reasonable timeframe, generally within one to two weeks of submission. Feedback should be specific and help students understand both their strengths and areas for improvement.

Assessment and Academic Integrity: Instructors are responsible for creating fair assessments that accurately measure learning outcomes. They must also uphold academic integrity by clearly explaining what constitutes plagiarism or cheating in the online environment and using appropriate tools to detect academic dishonesty.

Accessibility Compliance: All course materials and activities must meet accessibility standards. Instructors should work with UniMAC's accessibility office to ensure content is usable by all students, including those with disabilities.

Professional Development: The online teaching environment evolves constantly. Instructors should participate in training opportunities offered by UniMAC to stay current with best practices in e-learning pedagogy and technology.

Technical Troubleshooting (First Level): While instructors are not IT experts, they should be familiar enough with the LMS and course tools to help students with basic questions and know when to refer more complex technical issues to IT support.

Students and Learners

Students have significant responsibilities in making their e-learning experience successful:

Self-Discipline and Time Management: Online learning requires strong self-motivation. Students must manage their time effectively, keep track of deadlines, and complete work without the structure of regular class meetings. Research consistently shows that time management skills are among the strongest predictors of success in online courses.

Regular Participation: Students should log into courses regularly—ideally several times per week—to check for announcements, participate in discussions, and keep up with coursework. Falling behind in online courses is easier than in face-to-face classes and harder to recover from.

Active Engagement: Simply watching videos or reading materials is not enough. Students should actively engage by asking questions, participating in discussions, completing activities, and reaching out when they need help. Engagement leads to deeper learning and better outcomes.

Professional Communication: When communicating with instructors and peers, students should use professional language, proper grammar, and respectful tone. Emails should include clear subject lines and proper greetings. Online discussions should be thoughtful and courteous.

Technical Responsibility: Students are responsible for having the required technology, maintaining their equipment, keeping software updated, and seeking help when they encounter technical problems. They should contact IT support promptly rather than waiting until issues prevent them from completing assignments.

Academic Integrity: Students must complete their own work, properly cite sources, and follow UniMAC's academic integrity policies. The online environment does not change these fundamental expectations.

Backup Plans: Students should have backup plans for technology failures, such as knowing where they can access alternative internet or computers if their primary setup fails. Technical difficulties are rarely accepted as excuses for late work unless properly documented and communicated promptly.

Seeking Help When Needed: Students should reach out to instructors, tutors, or student services when they struggle academically, face personal challenges, or need accommodations. Waiting until problems become severe makes them much harder to resolve.

IT Support Staff

UniMAC's IT department plays a critical supporting role in e-learning:

Platform Maintenance: IT staff must ensure that the LMS and other e-learning platforms are running smoothly, perform regular updates and maintenance, and minimize downtime. When maintenance is necessary, adequate notice should be given to avoid disrupting courses.

Technical Assistance: The IT Help Desk provides technical support to both students and instructors. This includes troubleshooting login issues, helping with software installation, resolving connectivity problems, and guiding users through platform features. To ensure a more robust support structures, help desks must be created on all UniMAC campuses to make services accessible.

Security and Privacy: IT staff are responsible for maintaining the security of e-learning systems, protecting user data, ensuring compliance with privacy regulations, and responding to security incidents promptly.

Training and Documentation: IT should provide training sessions periodically, create user guides, and maintain up-to-date documentation to help the UniMAC community use e-learning technologies effectively.

Accessibility Support: IT staff work with instructors to ensure that technological tools and platforms meet accessibility standards and are compatible with assistive technologies.

Innovation and Improvement: IT should stay informed about emerging e-learning technologies, evaluate new tools that could benefit UniMAC, and recommend improvements to existing systems.

Response Times: IT support should respond to help requests promptly, with urgent issues affecting access to courses receiving priority attention.

Administrative Staff

Administrators ensure that e-learning at UniMAC operates within institutional policies and supports university goals:

Policy Development and Oversight: Academic administrators develop, review, and update e-learning policies to ensure they remain relevant and effective. They also ensure that policies are communicated clearly and implemented consistently across departments.

Quality Assurance: Administrators monitor the quality of e-learning courses through reviews, student feedback, and learning outcome assessments. They work with instructors to address quality concerns and promote best practices.

Resource Allocation: Administrative leaders ensure that adequate resources—including technology, training, and support services—are available to sustain quality e-learning programs.

Faculty Support: Administrators should provide instructors with professional development opportunities, instructional design support, and recognition for excellence in online teaching.

Student Services Coordination: Administrators ensure that student support services—including advising, tutoring, library resources, and counselling—are accessible to online learners, not just campus-based students.

Compliance Monitoring: Administrators ensure that e-learning programs comply with accreditation standards, regulatory requirements, and institutional policies regarding accessibility, academic integrity, and data privacy.

Strategic Planning: University leadership should integrate e-learning into the institution's strategic plans, setting clear goals for online education and measuring progress toward those goals.

Dispute Resolution: When conflicts arise between students and instructors, or when policy questions emerge, administrators provide guidance and resolution processes.

Shared Responsibilities

Some responsibilities are shared across all roles:

Respectful Communication: Everyone in the UniMAC e-learning community or ecosystem should communicate respectfully, value diverse perspectives, and create an inclusive environment where all members feel welcome.

Continuous Improvement: All stakeholders should provide feedback on what works and what does not, participate in evaluation processes, and contribute to making e-learning better at UniMAC.

Staying Informed: All staff and students should stay informed about university policies, platform updates, and changes that affect e-learning operations.

E-learning policy implementation and evaluation

As the expression of senior leadership commitment, the eLearning policy statements articulate the top management commitment and strategic ownership needed at the highest level for the uptake and rapid diffusion of e-learning in all the constituent institutions. University e-learning Policy and its implementation plan overtly address Quality, including Quality processes and their enhancement.

Policy Group (Implementation and Evaluation): This group working with the eLearning center will be tasked by the University to oversee the implementation of the e-Learning policy and will report to Academic Planning and Review Committee and other relevant University groups.

The group working with the eLearning center will oversee the development of an evaluation plan to assess the impact of the policy. Central to this will be a commitment to include feedback from students and staff on all aspects of e-learning.

The group working with the eLearning center will organize periodic exhibition of e-learning materials to facilitate innovation, motivation and to enhance the reputation of those that excel in e-learning implementation and make their accomplishments more visible to the university at large.

The group working with the eLearning center will organize certificate-awarding advocacy seminars, hands-on workshops, etc for faculty and staff to promote the e-learning culture.

CHAPTER 4: COURSE DESIGN AND QUALITY STANDARDS

Introduction

The quality of course design directly impacts student learning and satisfaction in e-learning environments. At UniMAC, we are committed to ensuring that online courses meet the same rigorous academic standards as traditional face-to-face courses while leveraging the unique advantages that digital learning offers. This section establishes the standards and expectations for designing, developing, and delivering high-quality e-learning courses.

Content Requirements

Comprehensive Syllabus: Every e-learning course at UniMAC must begin with a detailed course outline or syllabus that serves as a roadmap for the entire learning experience. The syllabus should include course objectives, learning outcomes, a week-by-week schedule, assignment descriptions and due dates, grading criteria, instructor contact information, and policies on attendance and participation. Research shows that clear syllabi reduce student anxiety and improve performance in online courses.

Learning Outcomes: Courses must have clearly defined, measurable learning outcomes that align with program goals and industry standards. Students should understand exactly what they will be able to do or know by the end of the course. These outcomes should be stated in clear language using action verbs that describe observable skills or knowledge.

Module Organization: Course content should be organized into logical modules or units, typically aligned with weekly or bi-weekly timeframes. Each module should have clear objectives, required readings or materials, learning activities, and assessments. Consistent structure across modules helps students navigate courses more easily and know what to expect.

Content Variety: Effective e-learning courses use diverse types of content to address different learning styles and maintain engagement. This might include video lectures, readings, interactive simulations, case studies, podcasts, infographics, and multimedia presentations. However, variety should serve learning objectives rather than being added simply for novelty.

Appropriate Content Volume: Course content should be substantial enough to meet credit hour requirements but not so overwhelming that students cannot reasonably complete the work. As a general guideline, UniMAC expects students to spend approximately three hours per week per credit hour on coursework, including both direct instruction and independent study.

Current and Relevant Materials: Course materials should be up-to-date, accurate, and relevant to the field of study. Instructors should regularly review and update content to reflect current knowledge, practices, and examples. Outdated materials undermine credibility and student learning.

Copyright Compliance: All course materials must comply with copyright laws and UniMAC's intellectual property policies. Instructors should use materials they have created, obtained proper permissions for, or are available through fair use or open educational resources. The library can assist with copyright questions.

Instructional Design Principles

Clear Navigation: Courses should be easy to navigate, with intuitive organization and consistent naming conventions. Students should be able to find what they need quickly without confusion. A well-designed course reduces cognitive load and allows students to focus on learning rather than figuring out where things are.

Chunking Information: Information should be broken into manageable chunks rather than presented in long, uninterrupted blocks. Studies in cognitive psychology show that people learn better when information is organized into smaller, logical segments. For example, a 60-minute lecture might be broken into four 15-minute videos, each focusing on a specific concept.

Scaffolding Learning: Course activities should be sequenced to build on each other, moving from simpler to more complex tasks. Early assignments might focus on understanding and application, while later assignments require analysis, evaluation, and creation. This scaffolding approach supports student development throughout the course.

Active Learning Strategies: Passive consumption of content leads to surface learning. UniMAC courses should incorporate active learning strategies that require students to engage deeply with material. This includes problem-solving activities, discussions, case analyses, projects, simulations, peer review, and application exercises.

Social Presence: Even in online environments, learning is social. Courses should create opportunities for interaction among students and between students and instructors. Discussion forums, group projects, peer feedback, and collaborative activities help build a sense of community that enhances learning and reduces feelings of isolation.

Instructor Presence: Instructors should maintain visible presence throughout the course through regular announcements, participation in discussions, timely feedback, and personalized communication. Research consistently demonstrates

that instructor presence significantly impacts student satisfaction and learning outcomes in online courses.

Multimedia Principles: When using multimedia, instructors should follow evidence-based design principles such as: presenting words and graphics together rather than separately, eliminating extraneous content that does not support learning objectives, keeping narration conversational rather than formal, and ensuring audio and visual elements complement rather than compete with each other.

Mobile Compatibility: While not all course activities need to work on smartphones, courses should be designed with mobile access in mind where appropriate. Many UniMAC students access courses from mobile devices, so checking mobile compatibility helps ensure accessibility.

Assessment Methods

Alignment with Outcomes: All assessments should directly measure the learning outcomes stated in the syllabus. If an outcome is not assessed, students may not take it seriously, and instructors cannot verify that learning occurred. Assessment alignment ensures that what is taught, practiced, and evaluated are consistent.

Varied Assessment Types: Courses should use multiple forms of assessment rather than relying solely on exams or essays. Options include quizzes, discussions, projects, presentations, portfolios, peer assessments, reflections, case studies, and practical applications. Varied assessments provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate learning and accommodate different strengths.

Formative and Summative Assessment: Formative assessments occur throughout the course and provide feedback to help students improve without significant grade consequences. Summative assessments evaluate overall learning at the end of units or courses. Effective courses balance both types, using formative assessment to support learning and summative assessment to evaluate achievement.

Clear Rubrics: For subjective assignments like essays, projects, and discussions, instructors must provide detailed rubrics that explain exactly how work will be evaluated. Rubrics make grading more consistent and fair while helping students understand expectations. They should be available when assignments are posted, not revealed only after grading.

Authentic Assessment: Where possible, assessments should require students to apply learning to realistic situations or problems they might encounter in their careers or lives. Authentic assessments are more engaging and help students see the relevance of what they're learning.

Academic Integrity Measures: Assessments should be designed to promote academic integrity. Strategies include using original questions, incorporating application and analysis rather than just recall, requiring students to explain their reasoning, using proctoring tools for high-stakes exams when appropriate, and creating assignments that are difficult to complete dishonestly.

Timely Grading and Feedback: UniMAC expects instructors to grade major assignments within two weeks of submission and provide feedback that helps students understand their performance and improve. Delayed feedback reduces its educational value and can frustrate students.

Low-Stakes Practice: Not everything needs to be graded for significant points. Including low-stakes quizzes, practice problems, or self-check activities allows students to test their understanding without anxiety and receive feedback that guides their learning.

Accreditation Compliance

Meeting Standards: UniMAC's e-learning courses must meet the standards set by accrediting bodies (GTEC) and relevant professional organizations. This includes requirements for credit hours, contact time, rigor, and documentation of student learning.

Regular Review: Academic departments conduct periodic reviews of online courses to ensure they maintain quality standards and continue to meet accreditation requirements. These reviews examine course design, learning outcomes, assessment practices, and student success data.

Documentation: Instructors must maintain appropriate documentation of course activities, student participation, and learning outcomes. This documentation may be needed for accreditation reviews, program assessments, or addressing student concerns.

Equivalency: Online courses must be equivalent in rigor and learning outcomes to their face-to-face counterparts. Being online does not mean easier or less demanding; it means delivered through a different modality while maintaining the same academic standards.

Quality Assurance Process

Course Development Support: UniMAC provides instructional designers and educational technologists to assist faculty in developing quality e-learning courses. Instructors, especially those new to online teaching, are encouraged to use these support services.

Peer Review: New online courses and significantly revised courses undergo peer review before launch. Experienced online instructors review course design, materials, and assessments to provide feedback and ensure quality standards are met.

Student Feedback: Student evaluations provide valuable insights into course effectiveness. UniMAC systematically collects and analyzes student feedback on e-learning courses, and instructors are expected to consider this feedback when making improvements.

Continuous Improvement: Course design is not a one-time activity. Instructors should regularly review and update courses based on student feedback, assessment data, technological changes, and developments in their fields. Each course offering provides opportunities to refine and improve.

Quality Checklist: UniMAC must provide a quality checklist based on nationally recognized standards for online course design. This checklist covers areas such as course overview and introduction, learning objectives, assessment and measurement, instructional materials, learner interaction and engagement, course technology, learner support, and accessibility. Instructors can use this checklist for self-review and improvement.

Support for Course Development

Professional Development: UniMAC must periodically offer workshops, seminars, and resources on effective online teaching and course design. Topics include creating engaging content, facilitating online discussions, using educational technology tools, designing effective assessments, and building community in online courses.

Instructional Design Assistance: Faculty can request one-on-one consultations with instructional designers who provide expert guidance on pedagogy, course structure, technology integration, and best practices specific to their discipline.

Technology Training: As new tools and features become available, IT and instructional design staff provide training to help faculty incorporate them effectively into courses. However, technology should always serve pedagogical goals rather than being used simply because it exists.

Time and Compensation: Developing a quality e-learning course requires significant time investment. UniMAC recognizes this through appropriate compensation, course release time, or other support mechanisms as outlined in faculty agreements.

CHAPTER 5: PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

Active participation and engagement are fundamental to successful e-learning at UniMAC. Unlike traditional classrooms where physical presence naturally creates structure and accountability, online learning requires intentional effort from all participants to create a vibrant learning community. Research consistently shows that student engagement is one of the strongest predictors of learning outcomes, satisfaction, and course completion in online environments. This section establishes clear expectations for how students and instructors should participate in and contribute to UniMAC's e-learning courses.

Attendance and Login Expectations

Regular Course Access: While e-learning offers flexibility, it does not mean students can disappear for weeks and catch up later. Students are expected to log into their courses at least three to four times per week to check announcements, review new materials, participate in discussions, and complete assignments. Regular engagement helps students stay current with course content and maintain connection with the learning community.

Defining Attendance: In online courses, attendance is measured differently than in face-to-face classes. At UniMAC, attendance would include logging into the course, viewing or downloading course materials, participating in online discussions, submitting assignments, taking quizzes or exams, and communicating with the instructor or classmates about course content. Simply logging in without engaging with course activities does not constitute meaningful attendance.

Absence Notifications: If students must be absent from course activities for an extended period due to illness, family emergencies, or other significant reasons, they should notify their instructor as soon as possible. Instructors can then work with students to develop plans for making up missed work when appropriate. Studies show that students who communicate proactively about challenges are more likely to succeed than those who disappear without explanation.

Consequences of Non-Participation: Prolonged absence or non-participation can result in academic consequences including lower grades, withdrawal from the course, or academic probation according to UniMAC's attendance policies. Some financial aid programs also require regular participation, so extended absences may affect funding eligibility.

Instructor Presence Requirements: Instructors and facilitators must also maintain consistent presence in their courses. This means logging in at least four to five times per week, posting regular announcements, responding to student communications promptly, and actively facilitating learning activities. Instructors who will be unavailable for extended periods should arrange for substitute coverage or notify students in advance.

Flexibility Within Structure: While regular participation is required, e-learning offers flexibility in when students engage. Students can typically choose whether to study early in the morning, late at night, or during lunch breaks-as long as they meet deadlines and participate as required. This flexibility is one of e-learning's greatest advantages for working professionals, parents, and others with complex schedules.

Communication Protocols

Primary Communication Channels: At UniMAC, the LMS messaging system and university email are the official channels for course communication. Students and instructors should check these regularly and use them for all course-related correspondence. Personal email, text messages, or social media should not be used for official course communication as they lack appropriate documentation and security.

Email Etiquette: Professional communication is essential in academic settings. Emails should include clear subject lines that reference the course name or

number, a proper greeting, a clearly stated purpose or question, relevant context, and a professional closing with the sender's full name. Students should avoid informal language, text-speak, or demanding tones. For example, “I need this ASAP!!!” is inappropriate, while “I’m working on Assignment 3 and have a question about the requirements. Could you please clarify when you have a moment?” demonstrates professionalism.

Discussion Forum Guidelines: Online discussions are valuable learning tools when conducted thoughtfully. Posts should be substantive-going beyond simple agreement to add new insights, raise questions, make connections to other materials, or provide examples. Students should read what others have written before posting to avoid repetition and build on the conversation. All discussion contributions should be respectful, well-written, and relevant to the topic.

Synchronous Session Protocols: For live video sessions, students should join on time, ensure they are in a quiet environment with minimal distractions, use video when possible to create a more personal connection, mute microphones when not speaking, and use the chat or hand-raising features appropriately. Technical difficulties happen, but students should test their equipment before important sessions and have backup plans ready.

Asking for Help: Students should feel comfortable asking questions when confused or struggling. However, questions should be asked appropriately-checking the syllabus and course materials first, asking publicly in discussion forums when the answer might benefit others, and contacting the instructor privately only for personal matters. Research indicates that students who ask questions early and often perform better than those who struggle silently.

Group Communication: For group projects, teams should establish clear communication norms early, including which platforms they’ll use, how often they’ll communicate, and how decisions will be made. All group members should participate actively in planning, contributing to the work, and communicating with teammates.

Response Time Standards

Instructor Response Times: Facilitators are expected to respond to student emails and questions within 48 hours during regular business days (Monday through Friday). For questions posted on Fridays or weekends, responses should come by the following Tuesday. During holidays and break periods, instructors should inform students of modified response times. Urgent matters, such as technical issues preventing access to time-sensitive assignments, should receive priority attention.

Student Response Expectations: When instructors or classmates reach out with questions, requests for peer review, or group project communications, students should respond within a similar timeframe—generally within 48-72 hours. Timely responses show respect for others' time and keep collaborative work moving forward.

Discussion Forum Participation Windows: For discussion assignments, instructors typically require initial posts by mid-week (often Wednesday or Thursday) and follow-up responses by the end of the week (Sunday). This staggered timeline ensures genuine discussion rather than everyone posting at the last minute. Students should check back after posting to engage with responses to their contributions.

Setting Boundaries: While timely communication is important, instructors and students should also respect reasonable boundaries. Instructors are not expected to respond to emails at midnight or on weekends, and students should not feel pressured to be available 24/7. E-learning requires balance between responsiveness and personal wellbeing.

Emergency Communication: For truly urgent situations affecting student safety or wellbeing, UniMAC provides emergency contact information through campus security and student affairs. The course instructor's email is not the appropriate channel for emergencies.

Netiquette Guidelines

Respectful Tone: Online communication lacks vocal tone and body language, making misunderstandings more likely. Students and instructors should write with care, assuming positive intent from others and using respectful language even during disagreements. What seems obviously sarcastic or joking to the writer may not be clear to readers.

Constructive Disagreement: Academic environments thrive on diverse perspectives and healthy debate. Disagreeing with ideas is acceptable and encouraged, but personal attacks, dismissive language, or hostile tones are never appropriate. Phrases like “I see it differently because...” or “Another perspective might be...” facilitate productive discussion, while “That’s stupid” or “You’re wrong” shut down dialogue.

Cultural Sensitivity: UniMAC’s e-learning community includes people from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences. Students and instructors should be mindful of this diversity, avoid assumptions, and approach differences with curiosity and respect. Language that demeans or stereotypes any group violates both netiquette guidelines and UniMAC’s broader policies on discrimination.

Privacy and Confidentiality: Students should not share personal information about classmates publicly in discussions or share course materials outside the class without permission. What happens in course discussions should remain within that learning community. Similarly, instructors maintain confidentiality regarding student grades and personal matters.

Professional Representation: Students should remember that their online posts represent them professionally. Future employers, graduate programs, or professional contacts may search for people online. While course discussions are typically private, students should write as though their contributions might be more widely seen.

Avoiding All Caps and Excessive Punctuation: In online communication, writing in ALL CAPS is perceived as shouting, and excessive punctuation (!!!! or ????) can seem aggressive or overly emotional. Standard punctuation and capitalization maintain professional tone.

Proofreading Before Posting: While online communication can be somewhat informal, posts should still be clear and relatively free of errors. Students should proofread before submitting discussions or sending emails. Sloppy writing suggests lack of effort and can obscure intended meaning.

Engagement Strategies

Discussion Participation: Quality matters more than quantity in online discussions. UniMAC expects students to contribute thoughtfully rather than simply meeting minimum post counts. Strong discussion contributions connect course concepts to personal experience or current events, raise thought-provoking questions, respectfully challenge assumptions, synthesize ideas from multiple sources, and build on what classmates have said.

Collaborative Learning: Students should actively engage in group work, peer review, and other collaborative activities. This means meeting commitments to teammates, providing constructive feedback to peers, being open to others' ideas, and doing one's fair share of group work. Research shows that collaborative learning enhances critical thinking and prepares students for workplace environments.

Instructor-Student Interaction: Beyond asking questions when confused, students should engage with instructor feedback, participate in office hours (virtual or in-person), and seek opportunities for mentorship. These interactions deepen learning and help students develop professionally.

Self-Directed Learning: E-learning requires students to take initiative in their learning. This includes seeking additional resources when topics are challenging, exploring areas of interest beyond minimum requirements, connecting course content to personal goals, and reflecting on what and how they're learning.

Multimedia Engagement: Students should engage actively with all types of course materials—not just skimming readings but annotating them, not passively watching videos but taking notes, not merely completing activities but reflecting on what they learned. Active engagement leads to deeper learning and better retention.

Building Community: Creating a sense of community in online courses requires everyone's participation. Students can contribute by introducing themselves thoughtfully, responding supportively to classmates, participating in optional social discussions or activities, and approaching the class as a learning community rather than isolated individuals.

Managing Engagement Challenges

Technology Issues: When technology problems interfere with participation, students should document the issue (with screenshots if possible), contact IT support immediately, inform their instructor promptly, and use alternative methods to participate when possible. Instructors should be reasonable when legitimate technical issues are promptly reported, but technology problems should not become routine excuses.

Time Management Struggles: Students who find themselves falling behind should reach out to instructors, academic advisors, or student support services early rather than waiting until situations become desperate. UniMAC provides resources to help students develop time management skills and balance competing demands.

Feeling Isolated: Online learning can sometimes feel lonely, especially for students accustomed to campus environments. Students experiencing isolation should actively reach out to classmates, participate fully in discussions, attend virtual office hours, and consider joining online study groups. UniMAC's student services also offer support for mental health and wellbeing.

Language Barriers: For students whose first language is not English, participating in written online discussions may be challenging. These students should know that perfect English is not expected and that instructors value their contributions and perspectives. UniMAC provides writing support services and language assistance for students who need additional help.

Varying Comfort Levels: Some students naturally thrive in online discussions while others feel more comfortable speaking in person. Instructors should use varied

engagement methods—written discussions, recorded presentations, small group work, one-on-one communications—to accommodate different comfort levels and communication styles.

CHAPTER 6: ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Introduction

Assessment is central to the learning process at UniMAC, serving both to measure what students have learned and to provide feedback that guides their continued development. In e-learning environments, assessment takes on particular importance because it often provides the primary evidence of student learning and engagement. This section outlines UniMAC's standards and expectations for how student learning is assessed, evaluated, and reported in online courses. Effective assessment practices ensure academic integrity, provide fair and meaningful evaluation of student work, and support continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

Assessment Philosophy and Principles

Assessment for Learning: UniMAC views assessment not merely as measurement but as an integral part of the learning process. Assessments should help students understand what they know, identify areas needing improvement, and develop skills in self-evaluation. Research in educational psychology demonstrates that well-designed assessments with meaningful feedback significantly enhance learning outcomes.

Alignment with Learning Outcomes: Every assessment in a UniMAC e-learning course must directly connect to stated learning outcomes. If students are expected to analyze data, assessments should require analysis rather than just recall. If outcomes emphasize application, assessments should present realistic scenarios requiring application of knowledge. This alignment ensures that assessments measure what they're intended to measure and that students focus their efforts appropriately.

Multiple Measures: Relying on a single assessment method provides an incomplete picture of student learning. UniMAC courses should incorporate multiple

assessment types throughout the term, allowing students various ways to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. This approach reduces the stakes of any single assessment, accommodates different student strengths, and provides more comprehensive evidence of learning.

Fairness and Equity: Assessments should be designed to give all students fair opportunities to demonstrate their learning, regardless of their backgrounds, learning styles, or personal circumstances. This means providing clear instructions, adequate time, necessary accommodations, and using varied assessment methods that do not systematically advantage or disadvantage particular groups.

Transparency: Students should understand from the beginning of the course how they will be assessed, what criteria will be used to evaluate their work, and how assessments contribute to final grades. Surprises in assessment undermine trust and student success.

Types of Assessment

Formative Assessments: These are low-stakes assessments designed to provide feedback during the learning process rather than to assign significant grades. Examples include practice quizzes, discussion participation, draft submissions, self-check activities, and reflective journals. Formative assessments help students gauge their understanding and identify areas needing more attention before high-stakes evaluations. Studies show that frequent formative assessment significantly improves student performance on summative assessments.

Summative Assessments: These evaluate overall learning at the end of instructional periods and typically carry more weight in grade calculation. Examples include final exams, major projects, research papers, presentations, and capstone assignments. Summative assessments should comprehensively measure achievement of course learning outcomes.

Diagnostic Assessments: Sometimes used at the beginning of courses, diagnostic assessments help instructors understand students' prior knowledge, skills, and readiness for course content. This information allows instructors to adjust pacing, provide additional support where needed, or challenge students who enter with advanced knowledge.

Peer Assessment: Having students evaluate each other's work can develop critical thinking, deepen understanding of quality standards, and provide additional feedback. However, peer assessment should be carefully structured with clear rubrics, and instructors should monitor quality and provide final evaluations themselves. Peer feedback works best for formative purposes or as one component of overall assessment.

Self-Assessment: Asking students to evaluate their own work promotes metacognition-thinking about their own thinking and learning. Self-assessment activities might include reflecting on what they learned, identifying strengths and weaknesses in their work, or setting goals for improvement. While self-assessments rarely determine grades directly, they support student development and autonomy.

Authentic Assessment: These require students to apply learning to realistic, complex problems similar to what they might encounter in professional or real-world contexts. Examples include case study analyses, simulations, client projects, portfolio development, and problem-based learning activities. Authentic assessments tend to be more engaging and help students see the relevance of their learning.

Exam Protocols and Proctoring

Exam Design for Online Environments: Online exams at UniMAC should be designed with the online context in mind. This might mean using question types that are difficult to answer through simple internet searches-such as application, analysis, and synthesis questions rather than pure recall. Exams might also be open-book but time-limited, acknowledging that students could access resources but requiring them to think critically under time constraints.

Proctoring Options: For high-stakes exams where security is essential, UniMAC should offer several proctoring options:

Remote Proctoring: Using approved online proctoring services, students can take exams from home while being monitored through webcams and screen-sharing technology. These systems use artificial intelligence and human reviewers to detect potential academic dishonesty. Students must have appropriate technology and private space for remotely proctored exams.

Testing Centers: Students may take exams at approved testing centers on campus or, for distance learners, at authorized testing centers near their locations. Testing centers provide controlled environments with supervision to ensure exam security.

Alternative Assessment: For courses where traditional exams aren't essential, instructors may use alternative assessments such as projects, papers, presentations, or portfolios that better suit online delivery and reduce concerns about proctoring.

Exam Access and Timing: Instructors should make exams available for reasonable time windows-typically 24 to 72 hours-allowing students flexibility while maintaining security. Once started, exams are usually time-limited based on their length and complexity. Clear instructions about access windows, time limits, allowed resources, and technical requirements must be provided well in advance.

Technical Considerations: Before high-stakes exams, instructors should offer practice opportunities for students to test their technology, become familiar with the exam format, and resolve any technical issues. Backup plans should exist for students who experience legitimate technical failures during exams.

Accommodations for Exams: Students with documented disabilities who receive testing accommodations (such as extended time or alternative formats) should receive these same accommodations for online exams. UniMAC's Disability Support Services coordinates these accommodations.

Academic Integrity Measures

Honor Code and Expectations: UniMAC's academic integrity policies apply fully to e-learning courses. Students must complete their own work, properly cite sources, and refrain from unauthorized collaboration or use of materials. The online environment does not change these fundamental expectations. Each course syllabus should clearly state academic integrity expectations and consequences for violations.

Preventive Design: The best approach to academic integrity is designing assessments that discourage dishonesty. Strategies include using questions that require original thinking rather than fact recall, changing exam questions each term, requiring students to show their work or explain their reasoning, using question banks that randomize which questions each student receives, setting reasonable time limits that allow completion but discourage searching for answers, and creating assignments that are personalized or connected to students' own experiences.

Detection Tools: UniMAC provides tools to help instructors identify potential academic dishonesty, including plagiarism detection software that compares student submissions against extensive databases of published works and previous student papers. However, these tools should be used judiciously as they sometimes produce false positives. Instructors should investigate suspicious results rather than assuming guilt automatically.

Teaching Academic Integrity: Many students, especially those new to higher education or online learning, may not fully understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. Instructors should explicitly teach proper citation, explain what collaboration is permitted and what isn't, provide examples of acceptable and unacceptable practices, and create a culture where integrity is valued rather than feared.

Responding to Violations: When instructors suspect academic dishonesty, they should follow UniMAC's established procedures. This typically involves documenting the evidence, discussing the situation with the student, and reporting

the incident to the appropriate academic integrity office. Penalties range from assignment failure to course failure or expulsion, depending on violation severity and whether the student has prior violations. Due process protections ensure students can respond to allegations.

AI and Technology Use: As artificial intelligence tools become more prevalent, instructors should clarify their policies on using AI assistants, citation generators, translation tools, and other technologies. Some assignments may permit these tools while others prohibit them. Both facilitators and students must operate within the confines of university approved AI policy.

Grading Timelines

Return of Graded Work: Timely feedback is essential for learning. UniMAC expects instructors to grade and return assignments within two weeks of submission for major work, and within one week for quizzes and minor assignments. Final exams and end-of-term projects should be graded by the university's grade submission deadline.

Providing Meaningful Feedback: Grades alone provide limited learning value. Instructors should include constructive feedback that explains strengths, identifies areas for improvement, and provides guidance for future work. Comments should be specific rather than generic, focusing on the work rather than the person, and balanced between positive reinforcement and constructive criticism.

Grade Posting: Grades should be posted in the LMS gradebook where students can track their progress throughout the term. The gradebook should be kept current and accurate, with all assignments and grade weights clearly indicated. Students should be able to calculate their current course standing at any point.

Grade Disputes: If students believe grading errors occurred or want clarification about grades, they should first discuss concerns with the instructor in a respectful, professional manner. Most issues can be resolved through conversation. If resolution isn't possible, UniMAC has formal grade appeal procedures outlined in the student handbook.

Incomplete Grades: In exceptional circumstances such as serious illness or family emergencies, students who cannot complete courses by the term's end may request incomplete grades. Incomplete grade policies, including application procedures and completion deadlines, are specified in UniMAC's academic policies. Incomplete grades are not appropriate for students who are simply behind due to poor time management.

Feedback Mechanisms

Assignment Feedback: Beyond grades, instructors should provide qualitative feedback on assignments. This might include marginal comments on papers, audio or video feedback explaining strengths and weaknesses, rubric-based feedback highlighting performance on specific criteria, or written summaries of overall performance. Research shows that specific, actionable feedback is more effective than general praise or criticism.

Discussion Feedback: Instructors should periodically provide feedback on discussion participation, either to individuals or the whole class. This might address discussion quality, encourage deeper engagement, redirect unproductive patterns, or acknowledge excellent contributions. Feedback helps students understand expectations and improve their participation.

Checkpoint Conversations: For major projects, instructors might schedule individual checkpoint meetings with students to review progress, provide guidance, and answer questions. These conversations support success on complex assignments and help prevent students from going too far in wrong directions.

Mid-Term Feedback: Around mid-term, instructors should provide students with information about their standing in the course, including current grades, attendance patterns, and areas of concern. This checkpoint gives students time to adjust their efforts if needed before it's too late to improve their grades.

Student Feedback on Instruction: Just as students receive feedback on their work, instructors benefit from feedback on their teaching. UniMAC conducts formal course evaluations at term's end, but instructors should also seek informal feedback throughout courses through quick surveys, discussion questions about what's working well or could be improved, or individual conversations with students.

Special Considerations for Online Assessment

Time Zone Accommodations: UniMAC's online courses may include students from various time zones. Instructors should consider this when setting assignment deadlines and scheduling synchronous assessments. Using end-of-day deadlines in a standard time zone (with clear specification of which time zone) prevents confusion. For live assessments, offering multiple session times when feasible accommodates different schedules.

Technology Variability: Not all students have identical technology access. Assessments should be designed to work with various devices and internet speeds when possible. Large file uploads might create problems for students with limited bandwidth, and assessments requiring specialized software should ensure all students can access that software.

Documentation Requirements: For certain assignments, instructors may require students to document their work processes—such as showing drafts, saving revision histories, or recording their problem-solving approaches. This documentation helps verify that work is original and supports learning by encouraging reflection on process.

Group Assessment: When assessments involve group work, grading should account for both group products and individual contributions. Strategies include having students evaluate teammates' contributions, requiring individual reflections on what each member contributed, or assessing both the final product and individual components. This approach reduces concerns about unequal participation affecting grades unfairly.

Accessibility in Assessment: All assessments must be accessible to students with disabilities. This includes providing alternative formats when needed, ensuring timed assessments allow appropriate accommodations, designing exams compatible with screen readers, and using clear formatting that assistive technologies can process. Working with UniMAC's accessibility office ensures compliance.

Assessment Data and Improvement

Tracking Student Success: Instructors should monitor assessment data to identify patterns—such as which concepts students consistently struggle with, which assignment types produce the strongest learning, or whether certain students need additional support. This data-informed approach allows continuous course improvement.

Course-Level Assessment: Beyond individual student grading, UniMAC conducts program-level assessment to ensure courses collectively help students achieve program learning outcomes. Instructors may be asked to provide assessment data or participate in program reviews examining student success across courses.

Using Assessment for Teaching Improvement: If many students perform poorly on particular assessments, the issue might lie with instruction or assessment design rather than student effort. Reflective instructors examine their own practices when patterns emerge, considering whether concepts were explained clearly, whether adequate practice opportunities existed, or whether assessment questions were ambiguous.

Student Success Indicators: Beyond final grades other success indicators including course completion rates, time-to-degree, and student satisfaction should be tracked.

These broader measures help the university evaluate e-learning program effectiveness and identify areas needing support or improvement.

Effective assessment practices should ensure that e-learning courses maintain academic rigor, provide fair evaluation of student learning, support student development through meaningful feedback, and uphold the integrity of academic credentials. By implementing thoughtful, varied, and transparent assessment approaches, UniMAC creates online learning environments where students can demonstrate their knowledge and skills authentically while instructors can evaluate learning meaningfully and support continuous improvement.

CHAPTER 7: DATA PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Introduction

In e-learning environments, significant amounts of personal, academic, and behavioral data are collected, stored, and transmitted electronically. UniMAC, recognizes that protecting this information is both a legal obligation and an ethical responsibility. Students, instructors, and staff must be able to trust that their personal information, academic records, and online activities are handled with the utmost care and security. This section outlines UniMAC's commitment to data privacy and security in e-learning contexts, establishes requirements for protecting sensitive information, and clarifies the rights and responsibilities of all members of the university community.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

Compliance with Data Protection Laws: UniMAC complies with all applicable data protection and privacy laws, including national data protection regulations, educational privacy laws, and any regional or international standards that apply to our operations. These laws establish requirements for how educational institutions collect, use, store, share, and dispose of personal information.

Educational Records Protection: Student educational records receive special legal protections recognizing their sensitive nature. These records include personally identifiable information such as grades, enrollment status, course schedules, disciplinary records, and financial information. At UniMAC, access to educational records is restricted to authorized personnel with legitimate educational interests, and students have rights to review their own records and request corrections of inaccurate information.

Consent and Notice: UniMAC provides clear notice to students, faculty, and staff about what data is collected through e-learning systems, how that data will be used, who may access it, and how long it will be retained. In cases where consent is required, the university obtains appropriate consent before collecting or using personal information. Students and faculty have the right to understand how their data is being handled.

International Considerations: For students or faculty located outside the country where UniMAC is based, additional data protection considerations may apply. UniMAC ensures that data transfers across international borders comply with applicable laws and that appropriate safeguards protect information regardless of where it is accessed or stored.

Institutional Policies: Beyond legal requirements, UniMAC maintains comprehensive data privacy and security policies that establish standards exceeding minimum legal obligations. These policies reflect our commitment to being responsible stewards of community members' personal information.

Data Protection Requirements

What Data is Collected: In e-learning environments, UniMAC collects various types of data including:

Personal Identification Information: Names, student identification numbers, email addresses, phone numbers, addresses, dates of birth, and emergency contact information necessary for educational operations and communication.

Academic Information: Course enrollments, grades, assignment submissions, test scores, academic progress, degree requirements, transcripts, and other educational records documenting students' academic journeys.

Learning Analytics Data: Information about how students interact with e-learning platforms, including login frequency, time spent on materials, patterns of engagement, discussion participation, quiz attempts, and resource usage. This data helps instructors identify students who may be struggling and improve course design.

Communication Records: Messages sent through the LMS, emails, discussion forum posts, and other communications related to educational activities. These records may be retained for documentation and quality assurance purposes.

Technical Data: IP addresses, device information, browser types, and system logs necessary for platform operation, security monitoring, and troubleshooting technical issues.

Sensitive Personal Information: In limited circumstances with appropriate consent and security measures, information about disabilities requiring accommodations, health conditions affecting academic participation, or other sensitive matters may be collected and stored with heightened protection.

Purpose Limitation: Data collected by UniMAC is used only for legitimate educational purposes such as delivering instruction, providing student services, conducting institutional research, complying with legal obligations, and improving educational quality. Information is not used for unrelated commercial purposes or shared with third parties for marketing without explicit consent.

Data Minimization: UniMAC collects only data that is reasonably necessary for identified educational purposes. Unnecessary collection of personal information is

avoided, and data collection practices are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate and justified.

Retention Periods: Different types of data have different retention requirements. Academic transcripts and degree records are maintained permanently, while learning management system data from individual courses may be retained for a specific period after course completion and then archived or deleted. UniMAC maintains clear retention schedules specifying how long different categories of data are kept and when they are securely disposed of.

Data Accuracy: UniMAC takes reasonable steps to ensure that personal information in its systems is accurate and current. Students and faculty can review their personal information and request corrections if they identify errors. Maintaining accurate data protects individuals and supports effective university operations.

Confidentiality Standards

Access Controls: Access to personal and academic information is restricted based on legitimate educational need. Not everyone at UniMAC can access all information-access is granted according to job responsibilities and educational relationships. For example, instructors can access information about students in their courses but not about students they don't teach. IT administrators may have technical access to systems but are prohibited from viewing content unnecessarily.

Authentication Requirements: All users accessing e-learning systems must authenticate their identity using secure credentials-typically usernames and strong passwords, and increasingly multi-factor authentication that requires additional verification beyond passwords. These authentication measures ensure that only authorized individuals access protected information.

Confidentiality Agreements: Faculty, staff, and others with access to sensitive information sign confidentiality agreements acknowledging their responsibilities to protect private data and consequences of unauthorized disclosure. These agreements reinforce that access to information comes with serious obligations.

Student Privacy in Discussions: While course discussions are viewable by class members and instructors, students should understand that their posts, though limited to the class, are not completely private. Students should exercise appropriate discretion about what personal information they share in discussions. Instructors should establish norms discouraging students from sharing highly personal or sensitive information in public course forums.

Protecting Student Identity: When sharing student work as examples or for educational purposes, instructors must obtain student permission and typically should anonymize the work by removing identifying information. Public recognition of student achievements should also respect privacy preferences-not all students want public acknowledgment.

Communication Confidentiality: Instructors must maintain confidentiality about individual students' grades, academic difficulties, personal circumstances, and private communications. Discussing a student's performance or situation with others who lack legitimate educational need violates confidentiality. Similarly, staff in advising, counseling, or support services maintain strict confidentiality about students they serve.

Family Educational Rights: After students reach adulthood or begin attending post-secondary institutions, their educational records are protected from parental access unless students provide explicit consent. Parents calling to inquire about their adult children's grades or academic standing cannot be given this information without student authorization. This protects student privacy and promotes student autonomy.

Research and Analytics: When student data is used for institutional research, program evaluation, or learning analytics, it should be aggregated or anonymized when possible to protect individual privacy. Research involving identifiable student information requires appropriate ethical review and often requires informed consent from participants.

Secure Access Protocols

Password Security: Strong passwords are the first line of defense for accounts and systems. UniMAC requires passwords that meet minimum complexity standards-typically including a mix of letters, numbers, and symbols, with sufficient length to resist guessing or automated attacks. Passwords should never be shared with others, written down in easily accessible places, or reused across multiple accounts.

Multi-Factor Authentication: For access to particularly sensitive systems or information, UniMAC implements multi-factor authentication requiring users to verify their identity through something they know (password), something they have (such as a phone receiving verification codes), or something they are (such as biometric verification). This additional layer significantly increases security by making unauthorized access much more difficult even if passwords are compromised.

Secure Connections: E-learning platforms and systems use encrypted connections (indicated by "https" in web addresses and padlock icons in browsers) to protect

data transmitted between users' devices and UniMAC servers. This encryption prevents eavesdropping or interception of sensitive information traveling across networks. Users should verify secure connections especially when accessing systems from public Wi-Fi networks.

Automatic Logouts: Systems automatically log users out after periods of inactivity to prevent unauthorized access if devices are left unattended. While this can occasionally be inconvenient, it's an important security measure. Users should manually log out when finished, especially on shared or public computers.

Device Security: Students and faculty are responsible for securing their own devices used to access e-learning systems. This includes using current operating systems with security updates, running antivirus software, enabling device encryption, using screen locks, and being cautious about installing unknown software that might contain malware. Lost or stolen devices should be reported immediately so accounts can be secured.

Network Security: When accessing e-learning systems from public Wi-Fi networks at cafes, libraries, or other locations, users should exercise caution as these networks may not be secure. Using virtual private networks (VPNs) when on public networks adds protection by encrypting internet traffic.

Phishing Awareness: Phishing attacks attempt to trick users into revealing passwords or other sensitive information through fraudulent emails or websites that impersonate legitimate institutions. UniMAC regularly educates users about recognizing phishing attempts, which often include urgent language, requests to verify accounts, suspicious links, or slight misspellings in email addresses or web addresses. Users should never provide passwords or sensitive information in response to unsolicited emails and should report suspicious messages to IT security.

Reporting Security Incidents: Anyone who suspects a security breach, unauthorized access, lost or stolen devices containing university data, potential malware infections, or other security incidents should report them immediately to UniMAC's IT security team. Quick reporting enables rapid response to contain potential damage and protect information.

Third-Party Services and Tools

Vendor Security Requirements: When UniMAC contracts with external vendors to provide e-learning platforms, tools, or services, these vendors must meet rigorous security and privacy standards. Vendor agreements include provisions requiring appropriate data protection, security measures, privacy compliance, and limitations on how vendors can use university data.

Data Sharing with Vendors: Information shared with vendors is limited to what is necessary for them to provide services. Vendors are contractually prohibited from using UniMAC data for their own purposes, selling it to other parties, or using it in ways inconsistent with university policies and applicable laws.

Approved Tools Only: Instructors and students should use only approved and supported e-learning tools and platforms. Using unapproved third-party services for university coursework may expose data to unnecessary risks or violate privacy requirements. If instructors wish to use tools not currently approved, they should work with IT and instructional design teams to evaluate whether appropriate security and privacy protections exist.

Student Consent for Third-Party Tools: When course activities require students to use third-party services—such as creating accounts on external platforms—instructors should inform students about what data will be shared, provide links to third-party privacy policies, and when feasible offer alternative assignments for students who have concerns about using specific services.

Social Media Considerations: Some courses may incorporate social media platforms for educational purposes. However, instructors should be mindful that social media posts may be public and persistent. Students should not be required to post sensitive personal information publicly, and course requirements should not force students to compromise their privacy in ways that may have long-term consequences.

User Rights and Responsibilities

Right to Access: Students and faculty have the right to access their own personal information held by UniMAC, understand how it's being used, and request copies of their records (with some exceptions for confidential letters of recommendation or other protected documents).

Right to Correction: If individuals identify inaccurate information in their records, they have the right to request corrections. UniMAC has procedures for reviewing and addressing such requests, balancing the need for accuracy with the integrity of academic records.

Right to Privacy: Members of the UniMAC community have reasonable expectations of privacy in their communications and activities within e-learning systems, subject to legitimate institutional needs for system administration, security

monitoring, and policy enforcement. UniMAC does not engage in unnecessary surveillance or monitoring of student or faculty activities.

Responsibility to Protect Credentials: Users are responsible for protecting their own login credentials, not sharing accounts, logging out appropriately, and following security best practices. Sharing passwords or accounts violates university policy and may result in disciplinary action.

Responsibility to Report Concerns: If users become aware of privacy violations, security vulnerabilities, unauthorized access to systems, or other concerns related to data protection, they have a responsibility to report these issues to appropriate university personnel.

Consequences of Violations: Unauthorized access to others' information, sharing confidential data inappropriately, violating security policies, or other breaches of data privacy and security standards may result in disciplinary action ranging from warnings to suspension, expulsion, or termination of employment, depending on severity. Serious violations may also have legal consequences.

Transparency and Accountability

Privacy Notices: UniMAC provides clear, accessible privacy notices explaining data practices in plain language rather than dense legal terminology. These notices are regularly updated and made available to students, faculty, and staff.

Data Protection Officer: UniMAC designates personnel responsible for overseeing data protection compliance, addressing privacy concerns, coordinating responses to data breaches, and ensuring that university practices align with legal requirements and institutional commitments.

Regular Audits: The university conducts regular security audits and privacy assessments to identify vulnerabilities, ensure compliance with policies and laws, and continuously improve data protection practices. External audits may be conducted periodically for independent verification.

Incident Response Plans: UniMAC maintains detailed plans for responding to data breaches or security incidents, including procedures for containing breaches, assessing impact, notifying affected individuals, reporting to authorities when required, and preventing similar incidents in future.

Continuous Improvement: Data privacy and security are not static-new threats emerge, technologies evolve, and best practices develop. UniMAC commits to ongoing education, technology updates, policy refinement, and adaptation to maintain robust protection of community members' information.

CHAPTER 8: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Introduction

E-learning courses involve the creation, use, and distribution of various intellectual materials including course content, instructional materials, multimedia resources, student work, and software tools. Understanding who owns these materials, who

can use them and how, and what rights and obligations exist is essential for protecting the interests of creators while facilitating education. UniMAC is committed to respecting intellectual property rights, fostering innovation and creativity, and ensuring that policies balance the interests of the institution, faculty, students, and external copyright holders. This section clarifies ownership rights, usage permissions, and responsibilities related to intellectual property in e-learning contexts.

Ownership of Course Materials

Faculty-Created Content: Determining who owns course materials created by faculty is complex and varies across institutions. UniMAC recognizes that faculty are the intellectual authors of their course materials and generally retain copyright ownership of traditional academic works such as syllabi/course outlines, lectures, scholarly writings, presentations, and educational resources they create as part of their teaching responsibilities. This approach respects academic tradition and faculty autonomy while recognizing their expertise and creative contributions.

University Contributions: However, when substantial university resources are used in course development-such as extensive instructional design support, professional multimedia production, significant technology infrastructure, specialized software, or substantial funding specifically for course development-the university may claim shared ownership or specific usage rights.

Work-for-Hire Considerations: In some circumstances, particularly when faculty or staff are specifically hired or assigned to develop online courses as a primary job responsibility, or when course development is funded through external grants or special projects, work-for-hire principles may apply, with the university holding copyright ownership.

Collaborative Development: When courses are developed collaboratively by multiple faculty members, instructional designers, multimedia specialists, librarians, or other contributors, ownership becomes more complex. Clear agreements should establish whether ownership is shared, how decisions about use and modification will be made, how credit will be attributed, and what happens if one party leaves the university or the collaboration ends.

Course Templates and Frameworks: UniMAC may develop standard course templates, learning management system structures, branding elements, assessment frameworks, or instructional design models that are institutional property. Faculty using these templates retain ownership of their specific content while the university maintains ownership of underlying frameworks and institutional materials.

Institutional Archives: Even when faculty retain copyright ownership of their course materials, UniMAC typically retains copies for institutional purposes such as accreditation documentation, quality assurance reviews, continuity when faculty are unavailable, and evidence in academic disputes.

Departing Faculty: When faculty leave UniMAC, they generally retain ownership of course materials they created, consistent with ownership principles described above. However, the university may need continued access to certain materials for purposes such as completing courses in progress, providing temporary instruction until replacements are hired, or maintaining institutional records. Departure agreements should address these transition considerations while respecting faculty intellectual property rights.

Copyright Compliance

Understanding Copyright: Copyright is legal protection for original creative works, automatically arising when works are created and fixed in tangible form. Copyright gives creators exclusive rights to reproduce their work, create derivative works, distribute copies, publicly perform or display works, and authorize others to do these things. Copyright applies to text, images, videos, audio recordings, software, graphics, and other creative expressions used in e-learning.

Duration of Protection: Copyright protection generally lasts for the creator's lifetime plus a specified number of years, or for a set period for works created for hire or by organizations. Older works may have entered the public domain where copyright has expired, but instructors should not assume old materials are freely usable without verification.

Obtaining Permissions: When instructors wish to use copyrighted materials created by others-such as textbook chapters, journal articles, videos, photographs, illustrations, or multimedia content-they generally must obtain permission from copyright holders unless an exception like fair use applies. The library can assist with copyright questions and obtaining permissions.

Licensing Options: Copyright holders can grant permissions through licenses that specify what uses are permitted, for how long, under what conditions, and whether fees are required. Some materials are available under open licenses that pre-authorize certain uses without requiring individual permission requests, while others require negotiated licensing agreements.

Attribution Requirements: Even when materials can be used legally, proper attribution crediting the original creator is typically required and is an ethical standard in academic contexts. Attribution should be clear, accurate, and sufficient to allow others to locate original sources.

Copyright Notices: Course materials should include appropriate copyright notices indicating ownership, such as “© 2025 [Creator Name]. All rights reserved.” or indicating that materials are licensed under specific terms. These notices inform users about rights and restrictions and help protect creators’ interests.

Student Work Copyright: Students retain copyright ownership of original works they create for courses, such as papers, projects, creative works, and presentations. While instructors may use student work for educational purposes within the course-such as sharing exemplary work with permission-broader use requires student consent. Instructors should never publish, present, or otherwise use student work externally without explicit permission.

Institutional Use of Student Work: If UniMAC wishes to use student work for purposes such as marketing, promotional materials, accreditation evidence, or showcasing program quality, explicit permission must be obtained from students. This permission should specify how work will be used, how long the permission extends, and whether students can revoke permission.

Fair Use in Educational Contexts

Fair Use Doctrine: Fair use is a legal principle allowing limited use of copyrighted materials without permission for purposes such as criticism, commentary, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research. Fair use recognizes that some uses benefit society and don't significantly harm copyright holders’ interests.

Four Factors of Fair Use: Determining fair use involves considering four factors:

Purpose and Character of Use: Educational, non-profit uses favour fair use more than commercial uses. Transformative uses that add new meaning, purpose, or character rather than simply reproducing originals are more likely to be fair use. Using material to teach a concept may be more defensible than using it for entertainment or decoration.

Nature of the Copyrighted Work: Using factual, published works favours fair use more than using creative, unpublished works. Using small excerpts from news articles may be more defensible than using portions of novels or artistic photographs where creativity is central to their value.

Amount and Substantiality: Using small portions of works favours fair use more than using large portions or entire works. However, “small” is relative-using one paragraph from an article may be small, but using one photograph is the entire work. Using the “heart” or most important parts of works weighs against fair use even if quantitatively small.

Market Effect: Uses unlikely to harm the market for original works favour fair use. If widespread educational use would replace sales or licensing income, this weighs against fair use. Courts consider both actual harm and potential harm if the use became widespread.

Fair Use Limitations: Fair use does not give blanket permission to use any materials for education. Using entire textbooks or materials specifically marketed for educational use rarely qualifies as fair use because substantial licensing markets exist. Repeatedly using the same materials over multiple course offerings may exceed fair use. Digital distribution to large numbers of students raises concerns that don't exist with showing materials to a single physical class.

Best Practices: To support defensible fair use at UniMAC, instructors should use only the amount necessary for educational purposes, use materials in ways integrated into instruction rather than as substitutes for required materials, limit access to enrolled students rather than making materials publicly available, include appropriate citations and educational context, and consider whether licensed or open educational resources could serve the purpose.

Institutional Support: UniMAC's library provides guidance on copyright and fair use, maintains licensed resources that can be used without fair use concerns, and can help instructors evaluate whether specific uses are defensible. When in doubt, instructors should consult with library staff rather than assuming fair use applies.

Open Educational Resources

What are OERs: Open Educational Resources (OERs) are teaching, learning, and research materials released under open licenses that permit free use, adaptation, and distribution. OERs include textbooks, course modules, videos, assessments, software, and other educational materials. The open education movement aims to make quality educational resources widely accessible and reduce costs for students.

Benefits of OERs: Using OERs provides multiple advantages including eliminating or reducing textbook costs for students, allowing customization to meet specific course needs, enabling updates to keep materials current, supporting pedagogical innovation, and avoiding copyright restrictions that limit educational uses. Research shows that OER use does not compromise learning outcomes and can improve access and success for economically disadvantaged students.

Creative Commons Licenses: Most OERs are licensed under Creative Commons licenses that clearly specify what users can do. Common license types include CC BY (allowing use with attribution), CC BY-SA (allowing use with attribution and requiring derivative works to be shared under similar terms), CC BY-NC (allowing

non-commercial use with attribution), and other variations. Understanding license terms is essential to using OERs appropriately.

Finding OERs: Many repositories and platforms make OERs available including university systems, foundation-funded initiatives, professional organizations, and individual creators. UniMAC's library maintains guides to quality OER sources and can assist faculty in finding appropriate resources for their disciplines.

Creating and Sharing OERs: Faculty who create educational materials may choose to release them as OERs, contributing to the broader educational community while maintaining appropriate credit and recognition. UniMAC supports faculty who wish to develop and share OERs through instructional design assistance, technical support, and recognition of these contributions in tenure and promotion processes.

Institutional OER Initiatives: UniMAC may develop initiatives to encourage OER adoption, support OER creation, reduce textbook costs, and improve educational access. These initiatives align with the university's commitment to affordability and educational quality.

Usage Rights and Restrictions

License Agreements: Many e-learning tools, software platforms, digital content collections, and educational resources are provided under license agreements that specify permitted uses. These agreements are contracts that bind users, and violations can result in loss of access, legal liability, or other consequences. Common restrictions include prohibitions on sharing access with unauthorized users, downloading entire databases, using materials for commercial purposes, or removing copyright notices or watermarks.

Institutional Licenses vs. Individual Use: Resources licensed by UniMAC for institutional use may have different terms than the same resources obtained by individuals. Institutional licenses typically allow broader use by university community members but may restrict uses outside the university context. Students and faculty should understand whether materials they access are available through institutional licenses or personal subscriptions and what terms apply.

Course Material Distribution: Instructors should be mindful about how they distribute materials to students. Posting materials in the learning management system with access limited to enrolled students is generally acceptable. Posting materials on public websites, sharing through non-secure systems, or distributing to individuals not enrolled in courses may violate license terms or copyright law.

Duration of Access: License agreements often specify how long materials can be retained and used. Streaming video services might only permit viewing during

specific rental periods. Electronic reserves might limit access to semester durations. Course materials might need to be removed after courses end. Understanding and respecting these temporal limits is important for compliance.

Accessibility Modifications: Creating accessible versions of copyrighted materials for students with disabilities is generally permitted under copyright law and university licenses. However, accessible versions should be provided only to students who need them, should include appropriate copyright notices, and should not be distributed more broadly.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Defining Plagiarism: Plagiarism involves using others' words, ideas, or work without proper attribution, presenting them as one's own. This includes copying text without quotation marks or citations, paraphrasing too closely to original sources without attribution, using others' data or research without acknowledgment, and submitting work created by others as one's own.

Instructor Responsibilities: Faculty must clearly explain what constitutes plagiarism in their courses, teach proper citation practices, model appropriate attribution in their own materials, design assessments that discourage plagiarism, and address plagiarism consistently according to university policies when it occurs.

Student Responsibilities: Students must understand citation expectations in their disciplines, properly attribute sources in all work they submit, seek help when uncertain about citation practices, complete their own work rather than copying from others, and uphold academic integrity standards even when not being monitored.

Self-Plagiarism: Submitting one's own previous work for credit in multiple courses without permission, called self-plagiarism or double-dipping, violates academic integrity policies. Students should create new work for each assignment unless instructors explicitly permit building on previous work.

Collaborative Work Boundaries: When collaboration is permitted, students should understand what collaboration is acceptable (such as discussing concepts or reviewing each other's drafts) versus what constitutes cheating (such as dividing work without all members understanding all components or sharing written answers). Clear communication about collaboration boundaries prevents misunderstandings.

Protecting Intellectual Property

Respecting Rights: All members of the UniMAC community should respect intellectual property rights of others, comply with copyright law and license

agreements, properly attribute sources, obtain permissions when required, and report concerns about potential violations.

Reporting Infringement: If individuals become aware of apparent copyright infringement, plagiarism, or other intellectual property violations within UniMAC e-learning environments, they should report these concerns to appropriate university personnel such as instructors, department heads, academic integrity offices, or legal counsel depending on the nature and severity of concerns.

University Response: UniMAC takes intellectual property concerns seriously and investigates reports of violations. Responses may include educational conversations, required corrections, removal of infringing materials, disciplinary action, or in serious cases, legal action. The specific response depends on whether violations were intentional or inadvertent, their severity, and whether they represent patterns of behaviour.

Education and Prevention: The most effective approach to protecting intellectual property is education rather than only enforcement. UniMAC provides resources, workshops, guides, and consultations to help faculty and students understand their rights and responsibilities, comply with intellectual property requirements, and make informed decisions about creating, using, and sharing educational materials.

Balancing Interests: UniMAC's intellectual property policies aim to balance competing interests-protecting the rights of creators, respecting the intellectual contributions of faculty and students, fulfilling the educational mission of the university, complying with legal obligations, and fostering innovation and creativity. These goals sometimes create tensions, and the university strives to navigate them thoughtfully and fairly.

Intellectual property issues in e-learning environments are complex and evolving, requiring ongoing attention, education, and adaptation. UniMAC is committed to creating a culture that respects creativity and intellectual contributions, understands and complies with legal requirements, supports teaching and learning through appropriate use of educational materials, and protects the rights and interests of all members of the university community. By establishing clear policies, providing education and support, and fostering ethical practices, the university ensures that intellectual property supports rather than hinders the educational mission.

CHAPTER 9: SUPPORT SERVICES

Introduction

Successful e-learning requires more than well-designed courses and motivated students-it depends on comprehensive support systems that help all actors navigate technology, overcome challenges, access resources, and develop the skills needed to thrive in virtual spaces. UniMAC recognizes that robust support services are essential infrastructure for quality e-learning, not optional extras. Students new to online learning, faculty transitioning from traditional teaching, and staff supporting these efforts all need accessible, responsive, and effective assistance. This section outlines the support services UniMAC provides to ensure that everyone in our e-learning community has the resources they need to succeed.

Technical Support Availability

IT Help Desk Services: UniMAC's IT Help Desk serves as the first point of contact for technology-related issues in e-learning. The Help Desk assists with a wide range of technical matters including login and password problems, learning management system navigation, software installation and configuration,

connectivity issues, browser compatibility problems, file upload and download difficulties, audio and video troubleshooting, and general technology questions.

Hours of Operation: Recognizing that e-learning happens beyond traditional business hours, UniMAC should provide extended IT support availability. During regular academic terms, the Help Desk operates Monday through Friday from early morning through evening hours, with more limited weekend coverage. During peak periods such as the beginning of terms, registration periods, and final exam weeks, additional support staff are available to handle increased demand. Specific hours and contact information are published on the university website and within the learning management system.

Multiple Contact Methods: Students and faculty can reach IT support through various channels including phone support for immediate assistance with urgent issues, email ticketing systems for non-urgent problems that can be documented and tracked, live chat for quick questions during business hours, self-service knowledge bases with searchable articles and tutorials, and video call options for issues requiring screen sharing or visual demonstration. This multi-channel approach allows users to choose the method that best fits their needs and urgency levels.

Response Time Commitments: UniMAC commits to specific response timeframes for technical support requests. Critical issues preventing access to courses or time-sensitive assessments receive immediate priority with response goals within one to two hours during support hours. Standard technical questions typically receive responses within 24 hours during weekdays. Complex issues requiring investigation or coordination with vendors may take longer, but users receive updates about progress and expected resolution timeframes.

Remote Assistance Tools: For complex technical problems, IT support staff can use secure remote assistance tools that allow them to view users' screens (with permission), identify problems directly, and guide users through solutions step-by-step. This capability significantly improves problem resolution efficiency compared to verbal descriptions alone.

Escalation Procedures: When Help Desk staff cannot resolve issues at the first level, clear escalation procedures ensure problems reach specialized technical staff, vendor support teams, or system administrators who can address more complex challenges. Users should never feel that issues are dismissed without adequate attention.

After-Hours Emergency Support: For truly critical situations during hours when regular support is unavailable - such as system outages affecting large numbers of

users or security emergencies-UniMAC maintains emergency contact procedures. However, individual student issues like forgetting passwords generally do not constitute emergencies requiring after-hours response and should be addressed during regular support hours.

International Student Considerations: For international students or faculty in significantly different time zones, synchronous support during UniMAC business hours may be inaccessible. The university provides asynchronous support options, comprehensive self-help resources, and when feasible, occasional support coverage during alternative hours to better serve the global e-learning community.

Student Support Resources

Academic Advising: E-learning students need the same access to academic advising as campus-based students. UniMAC's advising services are available through virtual appointments, email consultation, phone calls, and in-person meetings when students are on campus. Advisors help students with course selection, degree planning, understanding graduation requirements, navigating academic policies, addressing academic difficulties, and connecting with other university resources. Regular advising is particularly important in e-learning contexts where students may feel less connected to the institution.

Tutoring Services: UniMAC provides tutoring support in commonly challenging subjects and general academic skills areas. Tutoring is available through online sessions using video conferencing, asynchronous email exchanges for specific questions, online writing centers where students can submit drafts for feedback, recorded tutorial videos on high-demand topics, and peer tutoring programs that train successful students to assist their peers. Research shows that students who utilize tutoring services demonstrate improved academic performance and persistence.

Library Resources and Services: The university library is essential infrastructure for academic success, and e-learning students need full access to library resources. Services include extensive digital collections of journals, e-books, databases, and multimedia resources accessible remotely; research assistance through virtual reference services via chat, email, or video consultation; instruction in information literacy and research skills through online modules and virtual workshops; interlibrary loan services to obtain materials not in UniMAC's collections; and assistance with citation management tools and research technology. Librarians specializing in online student support understand the unique needs of distance learners.

Career Services: Career development should not be neglected for e-learning students. Career services accessible to online learners include virtual career counseling appointments, online resume and cover letter reviews, recorded interview preparation workshops, access to job and internship databases, networking event participation through virtual platforms, and connections with alumni mentors. These services help students translate their education into career success.

Counseling and Wellness Services: Mental health and wellbeing significantly impact academic success. Counseling services should be provided through telehealth appointments, crisis intervention resources available 24/7, stress management and wellness workshops offered online, peer support programs, and connections to community mental health resources for students not near campus. The university recognizes that online students face unique stressors including isolation, competing demands, and lack of campus community, and works to provide appropriate support.

Accessibility Services: Students with disabilities must have equal access to e-learning opportunities. UniMAC's disability support services office works with students to document disabilities, determine appropriate accommodations such as extended test time or alternative formats, coordinate accommodation implementation with instructors, ensure technology accessibility, and advocate for student needs. Students should connect with accessibility services early in their academic careers to ensure smooth accommodation provision.

Registration and Records: Student services staff assist with registration processes, adding or dropping courses, understanding academic policies, obtaining transcripts, degree verification, and other administrative needs. These services are accessible through online portals, email, phone, and virtual meetings, ensuring that e-learning students can manage administrative requirements efficiently without needing to visit campus.

New Student Orientation: UniMAC provides comprehensive orientation programs specifically designed for e-learning students. These orientations cover navigating the learning management system, understanding university policies and resources, developing online learning strategies, building technical skills, connecting with other students and faculty, and understanding what to expect in online courses. Participating in orientation significantly increases student success rates and confidence.

Student Success Coaches: Some e-learning students benefit from dedicated success coaching that provides accountability, motivation, goal setting, time management strategies, and regular check-ins. UniMAC's student success coaching program

identifies students who may be at risk for academic difficulty and proactively reaches out to provide support before problems become severe.

Training and Professional Development

Faculty Training Programs: Effective online teaching requires different skills and approaches than face-to-face instruction. UniMAC provides comprehensive faculty development including introductory workshops for faculty new to online teaching covering pedagogical principles, technology tools, course design basics, and best practices; advanced seminars on topics like facilitating online discussions, creating multimedia content, using learning analytics, designing authentic assessments, and promoting engagement; one-on-one consultations with instructional designers; peer observation and feedback programs where faculty learn from colleagues; and ongoing learning communities where online instructors share experiences and problem-solve together.

Instructional Design Support: Faculty developing new online courses or significantly revising existing courses can request instructional design assistance. Instructional designers bring expertise in learning theory, course architecture, assessment design, accessibility standards, and effective use of educational technology. They collaborate with faculty to transform course concepts into engaging, effective online learning experiences while respecting faculty's disciplinary expertise and pedagogical autonomy. This partnership approach produces higher quality courses than faculty working alone without support.

Technology Training: As new tools and platforms become available or existing systems are updated, UniMAC provides training to help faculty and staff use them effectively. Training formats include hands-on workshops scheduled at various times, self-paced online tutorials that users can complete at their convenience, quick reference guides and job aids for common tasks, recorded webinars demonstrating features and best practices, and individualized training sessions for specific needs. Training emphasizes not just technical how-tos but pedagogical applications—helping faculty understand not just how to use tools but when and why to use them for educational benefit.

Student Technology Training: Students also need training to use e-learning technologies effectively. UniMAC provides orientations to the learning management system showing students how to navigate courses, submit assignments, participate in discussions, access grades, and use communication tools; introductions to collaboration tools, video conferencing platforms, and productivity software; guidance on information literacy and evaluating online sources; instruction in digital citizenship and online communication etiquette; and

troubleshooting common technical issues independently. Students who complete technology training demonstrate greater confidence and success in online courses.

Accessibility Training: Creating accessible online content is a shared responsibility requiring knowledge and skills. UniMAC offers training on accessibility principles and standards, creating accessible documents and multimedia, using accessibility checking tools, captioning videos, designing with universal design principles, and understanding assistive technologies that students use. This training helps faculty, instructional designers, and staff ensure that all students can access and benefit from e-learning materials.

Professional Development Recognition: UniMAC recognizes faculty investment in developing online teaching expertise through formal acknowledgment in tenure and promotion processes, teaching awards that honor excellence in online instruction, micro-credentials or certificates for completing professional development programs, and support for presenting at conferences or publishing about online teaching innovations. This recognition validates that online teaching expertise is valued scholarly work.

Keeping Current: E-learning technologies, pedagogies, and best practices evolve rapidly. Professional development is not a one-time activity but an ongoing commitment. UniMAC encourages continuous learning through regular workshops on emerging topics, subscriptions to professional development resources and publications, support for attending conferences and webinars, participation in professional organizations focused on online education, and internal communities of practice where faculty and staff share innovations and learn from each other.

Customized Department Training: Recognizing that different academic disciplines have unique needs, UniMAC can provide customized training for departments or programs. For example, science faculty might need specific training on virtual labs, business faculty might focus on case study teaching methods, and arts faculty might explore digital portfolios and multimedia assignments. Discipline-specific training addresses particular challenges and opportunities more effectively than generic approaches.

Support for Diverse Learner Needs

Adult Learners: Many e-learning students are adults returning to education after time away, balancing education with careers and family responsibilities. Support for adult learners includes flexible scheduling and asynchronous course options, recognition of prior learning and life experience, career-focused advising connecting education to professional goals, childcare resource information, and

understanding that adult students bring valuable perspectives and experience to learning communities.

English Language Learners: For students whose first language is not English, academic success may require additional support. Services include English language support programs, writing assistance focused on language development, extended time accommodations when appropriate, conversation partners for practicing English, and cultural transition support for international students navigating unfamiliar educational systems.

Students with Limited Technology Access: Not all students have equal access to reliable technology and internet connectivity. UniMAC addresses these equity issues through equipment lending programs offering laptops and tablets, internet hotspot lending, information about low-cost internet programs, extended access to computer labs and campus facilities, and flexible policies understanding that technology limitations sometimes create barriers beyond students' control.

Communication and Information Access

Centralized Information Portal: UniMAC maintains a comprehensive online portal where e-learning students and faculty can access information about all available support services, contact information, hours of operation, how to request assistance, FAQs answering common questions, and links to self-service resources. This centralized access point makes finding help easier and more efficient.

Proactive Communication: Rather than waiting for students to seek help, UniMAC communicates proactively about available resources through welcome messages at course beginnings introducing support services, periodic reminders about tutoring, advising, and other resources throughout terms, targeted outreach to students showing early warning signs like low login frequency or missing assignments, and regular newsletters featuring success stories, tips, and resource highlights.

Mobile-Friendly Access: Recognizing that many students access information from mobile devices, UniMAC ensures that support service information, contact methods, and resources are mobile-accessible. Students should be able to quickly find a phone number, send a help desk ticket, or access a tutorial from their smartphones.

Multiple Language Support: For universities serving diverse populations, providing support information in multiple languages helps ensure all students can access assistance. At minimum, key information about accessing emergency support, disability services, and critical technical help should be available in languages commonly spoken by the university community.

Feedback Mechanisms: UniMAC regularly solicits feedback from students and faculty about support services through surveys after service interactions, periodic comprehensive service evaluations, suggestion boxes for improvement ideas, and open forums where community members can voice concerns and recommendations. This feedback drives continuous improvement in service quality, accessibility, and responsiveness.

Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Service Standards: UniMAC establishes clear standards for support service quality including response time targets, customer satisfaction goals, accuracy and effectiveness measures, and accessibility standards. These standards provide accountability and help the university monitor whether services meet community needs.

Assessment and Evaluation: Support services regularly evaluate their effectiveness through tracking utilization rates and trends, measuring outcomes such as problem resolution rates and user satisfaction, analyzing patterns to identify common issues requiring systemic solutions, benchmarking against peer institutions and best practices, and conducting periodic comprehensive program reviews.

Staff Training and Development: Support service staff receive ongoing professional development to maintain expertise, learn new technologies and approaches, understand evolving student needs, develop cultural competency and inclusive service practices, and maintain motivation and prevent burnout. Well-trained, supported staff provide better service to the university community.

Collaboration and Coordination: Effective support requires coordination across departments. UniMAC fosters collaboration through regular meetings of support service leaders, shared data systems allowing appropriate information flow between services, collaborative case management for students with complex needs, and integrated service models that make accessing multiple supports seamless rather than requiring students to navigate bureaucratic silos separately.

Resource Allocation: UniMAC commits to adequately funding and staffing support services recognizing them as essential infrastructure rather than discretionary expenses. Budget decisions consider support service needs and the impact of e-learning growth on demand for services. When resources are constrained, difficult decisions about priorities are made transparently with input from affected communities.

Innovation and Adaptation: Support services continuously evolve to address emerging needs, leverage new technologies, respond to feedback, and incorporate evidence-based practices from research and peer institutions. UniMAC encourages

innovation, pilots new approaches, evaluates results, and scales successful innovations while discontinuing ineffective practices.

CHAPTER 10: REVIEW AND UPDATES

Introduction

E-learning is a dynamic field characterized by rapid technological advancement, evolving pedagogical understanding, changing student needs, shifting regulatory requirements, and emerging best practices. A static policy quickly becomes outdated and loses relevance, potentially hindering rather than supporting quality e-learning. At UniMAC, we recognize that this e-learning policy must be a living document that adapts to changing circumstances while maintaining core commitments to quality, accessibility, integrity, and student success. This section establishes processes for regular policy review, procedures for making updates and amendments, mechanisms for community input, and clarity about implementation timelines and effective dates.

Policy Review Cycle

Scheduled Comprehensive Reviews: UniMAC conducts comprehensive reviews of this e-learning policy on a regular cycle, typically every three years. This timeframe balances the need for policy stability and predictability with the reality that e-learning evolves relatively quickly. Comprehensive reviews examine the entire

policy systematically, considering whether all sections remain relevant, clear, and effective; whether new topics need to be addressed; whether language needs updating for clarity or inclusiveness; and whether the policy aligns with current laws, regulations, accreditation standards, and institutional strategic priorities.

Interim Reviews: Between comprehensive reviews, UniMAC conducts more focused interim reviews annually or biannually. These lighter-touch reviews identify urgent issues requiring immediate attention, monitor implementation challenges, gather feedback on specific policy sections, and make minor clarifications or corrections without undertaking full policy revision. Interim reviews keep the policy current without the resource intensity of comprehensive overhauls.

Trigger Events: Certain developments may trigger policy reviews outside the regular schedule. These trigger events include significant changes in laws or regulations affecting e-learning, such as new data privacy requirements or revised accessibility standards; major technological platform changes, such as adopting new learning management systems; accreditation requirement changes; significant incidents or problems revealing policy gaps or deficiencies; strategic institutional changes affecting e-learning direction or scale; and external crisis situations such as pandemics that dramatically reshape e-learning needs and practices. When trigger events occur, UniMAC convenes appropriate review processes promptly rather than waiting for scheduled review cycles.

Review Committee Composition: Policy reviews are conducted by committees representing diverse university stakeholders including faculty with extensive online teaching experience across multiple disciplines, instructional designers and educational technologists, student representatives who have experienced e-learning as learners, academic administrators overseeing e-learning programs, IT professionals managing technical infrastructure, library and student support service staff, legal and compliance personnel, and accessibility specialists. This diverse composition ensures that reviews consider multiple perspectives and expertise areas, producing more comprehensive and balanced policy recommendations.

Environmental Scanning: Effective policy review requires looking beyond UniMAC to understand broader contexts. Review committees engage in environmental scanning activities including examining e-learning policies at peer institutions and identifying promising practices, reviewing relevant research literature on online teaching and learning effectiveness, monitoring legal and regulatory developments, attending conferences and professional development focused on e-learning trends and innovations, and consulting with national organizations and networks focused on online education quality. This external focus prevents insular thinking and helps UniMAC learn from others' experiences.

Data-Informed Review: Policy review should be evidence-based rather than relying solely on opinions or anecdotes. UniMAC gathers and analyzes relevant data including student success metrics in e-learning courses such as completion rates, grades, and persistence; faculty and student satisfaction survey results; usage statistics for support services; technical system performance and reliability data; academic integrity incident patterns; accessibility compliance assessments; and comparative data showing how UniMAC's e-learning outcomes compare to campus-based instruction and to peer institutions. This quantitative foundation complements qualitative feedback and professional judgment.

Amendment Procedures

Proposal Process: Amendments to this policy can be proposed by various university community members including faculty through governance structures such as faculty senate or curriculum committees, students through student government or direct submission, administrators responsible for e-learning programs, committees conducting scheduled or triggered reviews, and external stakeholders such as regulatory bodies or accreditors requiring policy changes. All amendment proposals should include clear rationale explaining why changes are needed, specific language for proposed additions, deletions, or modifications, analysis of potential impacts on different stakeholders, and consideration of implementation requirements and timelines.

Review and Consultation: Proposed amendments undergo appropriate review processes before adoption. For minor technical corrections, clarifications, or updates reflecting changed contact information or system names, expedited review by relevant administrators may suffice. For substantive policy changes affecting rights, responsibilities, or significant practices, broader consultation is required including review by relevant committees with expertise in affected areas, opportunity for faculty and student input through forums, comment periods, or governance channels, legal review ensuring compliance with applicable laws and regulations, accessibility review ensuring changes don't create barriers, and consideration by senior academic leadership. The consultation scope should match the significance of proposed changes—minor updates need less extensive process than major policy shifts.

Approval Authority: Different levels of policy changes require different approval authorities. Routine technical updates may be approved by designated administrative offices such as the Provost or Vice President for Academic Affairs. Significant policy revisions typically require approval by faculty governance bodies and senior academic leadership. Fundamental changes affecting university mission, values, or major strategic directions may require Board of Trustees approval.

UniMAC's governance documents specify which authorities approve different types of policy changes, and amendment processes follow these specifications to ensure legitimacy and buy-in.

Documentation: All policy amendments are carefully documented creating clear records including exact text of changes with tracked edits showing what was added, deleted, or modified; effective dates specifying when changes take effect; rationale explaining why amendments were made; approval documentation showing which bodies or individuals authorized changes; and version history maintaining records of policy evolution over time. This documentation supports transparency, accountability, and institutional memory about policy development.

Communication of Changes: When policy amendments are adopted, UniMAC communicates changes clearly and proactively to affected parties through announcements via email, learning management system messages, and university news channels; updated policy documents posted prominently on university websites with clear version dates and change summaries; information sessions or webinars explaining significant changes and their implications; FAQs addressing common questions about what changes mean in practice; and targeted communication to groups most affected by specific changes, such as notifying faculty about new assessment requirements or students about modified attendance expectations. Effective communication ensures that community members know about policy changes and understand how changes affect them.

Training and Implementation Support: Some policy changes require new skills, modified practices, or adjusted systems. When amendments have significant implementation implications, UniMAC provides appropriate training for faculty, students, or staff affected by changes; updated resources such as guidelines, templates, or tools supporting new requirements; technical system modifications when policy changes necessitate platform adjustments; and transition periods allowing time to adapt to new expectations rather than expecting immediate compliance with unfamiliar requirements. Implementation support turns policy changes from abstract documents into actual practice changes.

Stakeholder Input Mechanisms

Regular Feedback Channels: UniMAC maintains ongoing mechanisms for community members to provide input about e-learning policy throughout review cycles, not just during scheduled reviews. These channels include online feedback forms accessible from policy documents where users can submit comments, suggestions, or identify problems; email addresses for policy-related questions and feedback; regular faculty forums discussing e-learning issues; student government channels for student concerns; and opportunities during support service

interactions for users to comment on how policies affect their experiences. Continuous feedback helps identify emerging issues before they become significant problems.

Surveys and Assessments: Periodic surveys of faculty and students gather structured feedback about policy effectiveness, clarity, and impacts. These surveys might assess whether faculty feel policies support quality teaching or create unnecessary barriers, whether students understand their rights and responsibilities under policies, whether policies address relevant issues or miss important concerns, and overall satisfaction with how e-learning is governed at UniMAC. Survey data provides quantitative indicators of policy effectiveness and priorities for improvement.

Focus Groups and Interviews: For deeper understanding of policy impacts and improvement opportunities, UniMAC conducts focus groups or interviews with selected faculty, students, and staff. These qualitative methods explore experiences, challenges, and suggestions in more depth than surveys allow. Focus groups might examine how policies affect particular populations such as part-time faculty, international students, or students with disabilities; explore implementation challenges in specific contexts; or test proposed policy changes with those who would be most affected.

Advisory Bodies: Standing advisory groups focused on e-learning bring together diverse stakeholders for ongoing policy dialogue. These might include e-learning faculty committees, student advisory councils, or cross-functional teams including representatives from multiple areas. Advisory bodies provide structured mechanisms for sustained engagement beyond one-time consultations, building expertise and relationships that support thoughtful policy development.

Inclusive Participation: UniMAC strives to ensure that input mechanisms are accessible and inclusive, reaching beyond the most vocal or privileged community members. Strategies include offering multiple participation formats accommodating different preferences and constraints, such as synchronous meetings, asynchronous written input, and brief surveys; proactively reaching out to underrepresented groups whose voices might not otherwise be heard; conducting outreach in multiple languages when serving linguistically diverse communities; ensuring accessibility of participation mechanisms for people with disabilities; and analyzing participation data to identify who is being heard and who is missing from conversations. Inclusive processes produce better policies reflecting fuller range of experiences and needs.

Monitoring Early Implementation: During initial implementation periods, close monitoring identifies problems quickly allowing timely problem-solving.

Monitoring activities might include regular check-ins with key stakeholders about how implementation is proceeding, tracking questions or concerns raised through support channels, analyzing relevant metrics for unexpected patterns, and establishing rapid response mechanisms to address significant implementation problems immediately rather than waiting for scheduled review cycles. Early attention to implementation challenges prevents small issues from becoming entrenched problems.

Accessibility of Policy Documents: Policy documents must be accessible to all community members including those with disabilities. This requires providing policies in formats compatible with screen readers and other assistive technologies, using clear headings and document structure supporting navigation, offering plain language summaries alongside formal policy text, and making policies available in multiple formats such as PDF, HTML, and Word documents. Accessible policies ensure that everyone can know and understand their rights and responsibilities.

Conclusion

This e-learning policy represents UniMAC's commitment to providing high-quality online education that serves students effectively, supports faculty excellence, maintains academic integrity, and fulfills the university's educational mission. However, policies are not static monuments but living documents requiring regular attention, thoughtful revision, and continuous improvement. Through systematic review cycles, inclusive stakeholder engagement, evidence-based decision-making, clear implementation processes, and commitment to learning and adaptation, UniMAC ensures that e-learning policies remain relevant, effective, and aligned with the university's values and goals. The policy review and update processes described in this section embody the university's recognition that excellent e-learning requires not just good policies but also commitment to continually improving those policies in light of experience, evidence, and evolving understanding of how best to support teaching and learning in online environments.

Effective Date: This e-learning policy becomes effective at the beginning of the next full academic term following its approval by Academic Board and ratification by the Governing Council.

Next Scheduled Review: This policy will undergo comprehensive review four years from the effective date, with interim reviews conducted annually. All members of the UniMAC community are encouraged to provide feedback and suggestions for policy improvement at any time through the mechanisms described in this section.

Implementation of policy

This Policy is in effect from the date on which Council approves this Policy.

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