
LAMAR UNIVERSITY
MANUAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SECTION: Academic Affairs

MAPP 02.05.02

AREA: Academic Governance & Administration

Academic Continuity

I. POLICY

- A. Lamar University (LU) is committed to maintaining academic continuity during a natural disaster or emergency event that causes the University campus to close. This policy guides university-, college-, and department-level administrators in planning for and maintaining, to the extent possible, continuity of academic operations during an unexpected campus closure.

II. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- A. This policy is part of LU's continuity of operations planning (COOP), which has been mandated for state agencies (Texas Labor Code § 412.054), including higher education institutions (Texas Education Code § 51.217). This policy also falls under the authority of all other applicable federal, state, and Texas State University System (TSUS) statutes, rules, and regulations, including, but not limited to, the following: the TSUS *Rules & Regulations*; Texas Education Code, Title 3, Higher Education; and Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Education.

III. PROCEDURES

- A. When a natural disaster or emergency event is imminent or has occurred, LU's President or designee, in consultation with the TSUS Chancellor, will announce any closure of campus via LU's emergency alert system, email, website, and/or social media channels.
- B. Within five (5) business days following the official closure of campus, or as soon as practicable, the Provost or designee will speak with the President or designee to determine the feasibility of continuing the academic term during the closure. The President or designee will make a decision based on parameters set by federal and state agencies, the TSUS, and LU's health, safety, and risk management guidelines.
- C. If the President or designee, in consultation with the TSUS Chancellor, determines that continuing the academic term is not feasible, then classes and regular operations in Academic Affairs will be suspended until officially notified otherwise.
- D. If the President or designee, in consultation with the TSUS Chancellor, determines that continuing the term is feasible, the Office of the Provost will activate its academic continuity plan. Described below, this plan is presented as a best-case scenario. The Office of the Provost recognizes that, depending upon the aftermath of a natural disaster or emergency event, modifications to these

procedures may be needed. In cases in which the campus remains open but a portion of students are negatively affected by a disaster or emergency, exceptions for students will be made on a case-by-case basis.

1. In the event that instruction needs to be moved (e.g., 100% virtual/online, alternate campus), the SACSCOC Institutional Liaison or designee will submit notification to the Institutional Portal pursuant to SACSCOC's *Emergency Temporary Relocation of Instruction Policy Statement (September 2020)*.
2. The Office of the Provost will inform Deans or their designees that the University will continue the academic term. The Deans or designees will activate their college-level continuity plans and instruct Chairs or designees to activate their department-level continuity plans.
3. The Office of the Provost will coordinate, as needed, with other University offices to manage functions essential to supporting academics (e.g., Information Technology, Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, Human Resources, Payroll).
4. The Office of the Provost will contact faculty and students via LU's emergency alert system, email, website, and/or social media channels to inform them that classes will continue virtually via Blackboard. Faculty and students will receive instructions via LU's emergency alert system, email, website, and/or social media channels for connecting to Blackboard and any other online platforms upon which the University will rely while campus is closed. (Note. If Blackboard is not available, Academic Affairs will determine and communicate an alternate means for delivering instruction to students.)
5. Faculty will be responsible for initiating contact with students in their courses within three (3) business days of the University's announcement that instruction will continue virtually via Blackboard, or sooner when feasible. To support course continuity, faculty should take the following steps:
 - a. As a standard expectation for all courses, and not limited to emergency situations, faculty should maintain a continuous three (3) week span of course content in Blackboard at all times. This expectation includes the current instructional week and should extend through at least two (2) full upcoming instructional weeks, regardless of the day within the current week. Under normal operations, fully online courses are expected to have all course materials posted in Blackboard prior to the start of the semester. However, at minimum, all courses are expected to meet the three-week content requirement described above.
 - b. In the event of an emergency requiring a transition to virtual instruction, faculty are responsible for ensuring that all remaining materials necessary to complete the course are posted to Blackboard as soon as feasible, with priority given to maintaining uninterrupted student access to instruction, assignments, and assessments.
 - c. Faculty who are unfamiliar with Blackboard should seek assistance in advance from the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning or LU Service Desk. These units are available to provide guidance and training; however, during an emergency, they will not be able to upload course materials on behalf of faculty or perform routine course management tasks.

- 6. Students will be responsible for regularly accessing their Blackboard courses and LU email accounts to maintain contact with their instructors and fellow students.
- 7. Chairs or their designees will be responsible for maintaining contact with department faculty and conducting oversight of the department’s virtual courses.
- 8. The Office of the Provost will be responsible for maintaining contact with Deans or designees and conducting oversight of the University’s academic continuity efforts. This oversight may include continued coordination with other University offices to manage essential academic functions so that the term can run smoothly and, to the extent possible, end on schedule.
- 9. After campus reopens and operations have returned to normal, the Office of the Provost will conduct a comprehensive review of its academic continuity efforts. The academic continuity plan may be revised, if necessary.

IV. REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITY

Review Schedule: Every three years on or before the date the policy was last revised and/or approved.

Responsible Party: Academic Policy Advisory Council

V. APPROVAL

Dr. Brett Welch	12/02/2024
Interim Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs	Date

Dr. Jaime Taylor	12/02/2024
Lamar University President	Date

POLICY LOG

Version	Date	Description of Changes
1	03/27/2024	Policy draft completed.
	09/04/2024 - 10/24/2024	Reviews by constituency groups completed.
	10/23/2024-11/23/2024	Review by campus community completed.
	12/02/2024	Policy approved by President.
	04/07/2026	Section III.D.5 – revised to clarify and offer better guidance on actions faculty should take when University moves to fully online/virtual instruction.