
ONLINE PROGRAM DIRECTORS' HANDBOOK



DIRECTORS' HANDBOOK



UTEP ONLINE

ABOUT UTEP ONLINE



UTEP has a long history of offering online courses and programs, and in 2014, UTEP Online (formerly UTEP Connect) was established to support, develop, grow, and sustain those programs. As of Fall 2025, we offer nearly 40 undergraduate, graduate, and certificate online programs.

Our goals at UTEP Online are to:

- Provide students with the opportunity to pursue their degrees from anywhere across the globe
- Facilitate access to a high-quality UTEP education
- Provide students with the services they need to enroll in our programs and complete their degree
- Provide academic programs, departments, and colleges with the tools and support needed to run an online program effectively and efficiently
- Provide programs, departments, and colleges with the opportunity to develop an alternative revenue stream

This *Online Program Directors' Handbook* was created to provide guidance to both new and experienced program directors. If there is anything you think is missing or something you would like to know more about, let us know! We are here to help.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Starting an online program	4
2. Running an online program	8
3. Sustaining an online program	12
4. FAQs	13

1. STARTING AN ONLINE PROGRAM

Department's Considerations to Start an Online Program

When deciding whether to launch an online program, academic departments must take several factors into consideration. These include:

- Faculty availability to teach in an online program
- Courses to convert into an online format and into an 8- or 16-week part of term
- Potential changes in curriculum

In addition to program-level considerations, in collaboration with UTEP Online, a program will complete a

- Market analysis
- Financial viability analysis

Market Analysis

Programs interested in transitioning to an online format or starting a new program online must first participate in a UTEP Online-led evaluation process to determine if the program will be competitive in the online market. Programs must go through this process to be approved for fully online delivery.

UTEP Online will collaborate with Anthology Educational Marketing Services and UTEP's Marketing and Communication to consider the following:

- The program's mission and goals
- The program's current enrollment and financial standing
- The current details of the program such as number of hours required, differentiating features, and other factors that might distinguish the program from others
- A comparative analysis of other institutions offering the degree to understand the competitive landscape in Texas and the nation
- Job prospects for graduates using U.S. Department of Labor data

When the evaluation is complete, UTEP Online staff will meet with the program leaders to discuss the options which may include considering adjustments to the program to make it more competitive in the online space.





Financial Viability Analysis

If it is determined that the program will be competitive, we will then work with the academic college's CAO to develop a preliminary financial model to ensure that the program will be able to support itself and eventually generate revenue. While a more detailed financial analysis will be completed in Phase Three below, if the results of this preliminary process are positive, the official online program launch process will begin.

Program Launch

Launching an online program requires a methodological approach and close collaboration between academic departments, UTEP Online, and stakeholders across the university. When a program is approved for UTEP Online, it will engage in the following four launch phases:

Phase One is the information gathering stage.

Building on the information collected for the approval, UTEP Online works with the academic program to understand program goals, curriculum, capacity, and timeline for launch.

Phase Two is the approvals stage.

Simultaneous to the information gathering stage, the academic program director must coordinate and secure approvals from the Curriculum Effectiveness and Improvement Office at curriculum@utep.edu. This is important to do as soon as possible, particularly when any changes to the curriculum are required.

Once all approvals have been secured, a new program code will be generated with -ONLINE to distinguish your online students from the face-to-face populations. This ensures that the online students **a)** are charged the correct tuition and fees **and b)** they are counted in your online program population.

For example: **BA-CRIJ-ONL** for the Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice online

Additionally, Extended University's State Authorization Manager works with the program director to ensure that all federal, state, and licensure requirements are met. Please see the [State Authorization webpage](#) for more information.

Phase Three is the development stage.

The development stage is when the most work is done to create the program, incorporate it into various university-level processes, and begin developing a story for it.

Course carousel

UTEP Online courses are offered in 8- or 16-week terms. This provides flexibility for online students and enables them to focus on 1 or 2 courses at a time. For online students, it is imperative that they do not experience any bottlenecks or roadblocks that may impede their progress. It is also important that the online program does not offer too many course options relative to the size of enrollment. Therefore, the course carousel is a cornerstone to a successful online program at launch. It is required to develop the financial model and begin course development.

A course carousel identifies and sequences the courses offered in the online program. They are mapped for the first three years to make sure that the program is offered as efficiently as possible and to ensure that students can make progress toward completion. The course carousel also includes an estimate of instructional costs associated with teaching the courses.

Planning the course carousel also considers the number of starts, or the number of entry points, into the program. Many online programs benefit from as many starts as possible so that admitted students do not have to wait to begin. For graduate programs, that is usually 3 starts (start of fall, spring, and summer). For undergraduate programs, it can be as many as 6.

Additionally, online programs with few or no prerequisites are preferred so that students can jump into the program at any time and do not have to sit out a term to wait for the course they need to make progress.

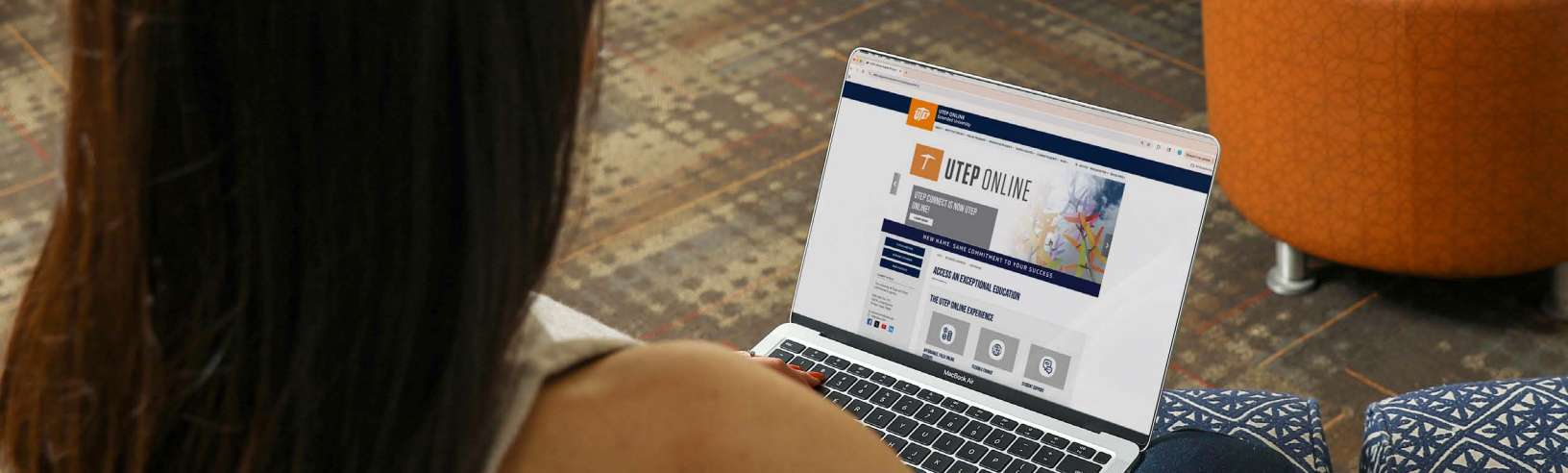
Once the course carousel is approved by the program director, several other processes can begin:

Financial model

The Extended University Business Center will work with the program and its college CAO to ensure financial viability. This includes:

- Establishing a detailed budget outlining costs for course creation, marketing, technology, and staff, along with a realistic timeline for launch
- Determining the tuition and fees for the program with the Division of Business Affairs
- Assessing the financial viability of the program, forecasting future revenues and rates of return to ensure it makes sound financial sense to offer the program online

If all is positive, we will request approval of the financial model from the Vice President of Business Affairs. Please note that it is possible at this point to determine that the program may not be financially viable. In that case, either adjustments will need to be made to the course carousel, or we will conclude the process and not launch the online program.



Course development

The academic program will identify faculty who will develop the online courses, and UTEP Online will coordinate with the Center for Instructional Design to develop the first courses offered in the carousel. Course development will thereafter be scheduled to follow the carousel; not all courses will need to be developed prior to program launch.

In accordance with [HOOP policy 4.24.3.6](#), the program director or chair must ensure that faculty for the online program complete the Teaching Online Academy (TOA). Faculty can register for the next available TOA on [Minetracker](#).

Marketing, Recruitment and Advising

At this time, the academic program will work with UTEP Online's marketing, recruitment, and advising teams. Marketing will work with the program to develop a webpage and other digital content (one-sheeter, ads, messaging, etc).

The program will be asked to review the documents. The recruitment team will also request information about your program so that the designated enrollment counselor will represent your program positively and accurately.

Finally, if the program is an undergraduate one, the advising team will meet with the program to understand the features of the degree program and explain other services offered to online students.

Phase Four is program launch.

Ideally, several months prior to the first part of term, marketing begins, and the program's application is opened. Enrollment counselors cultivate and follow-up on leads; students are admitted and advised (by either UTEP Online advisors or their graduate program advisor). As noted above, course development follows the course carousel until all courses are developed and offered.

2. RUNNING AN ONLINE PROGRAM

The collaboration between the academic program and UTEP Online continues when the program is launched. This section illustrates the responsibilities of both UTEP Online and the academic program.

UTEP Online Responsibilities

Many of the services below are provided as an incentive to promote and support online programs. UTEP Online manages this work so that the programs can focus on what is most important: developing the curriculum and teaching the students who enroll. We encourage the program's collaboration in these efforts to ensure that we provide the best services possible.

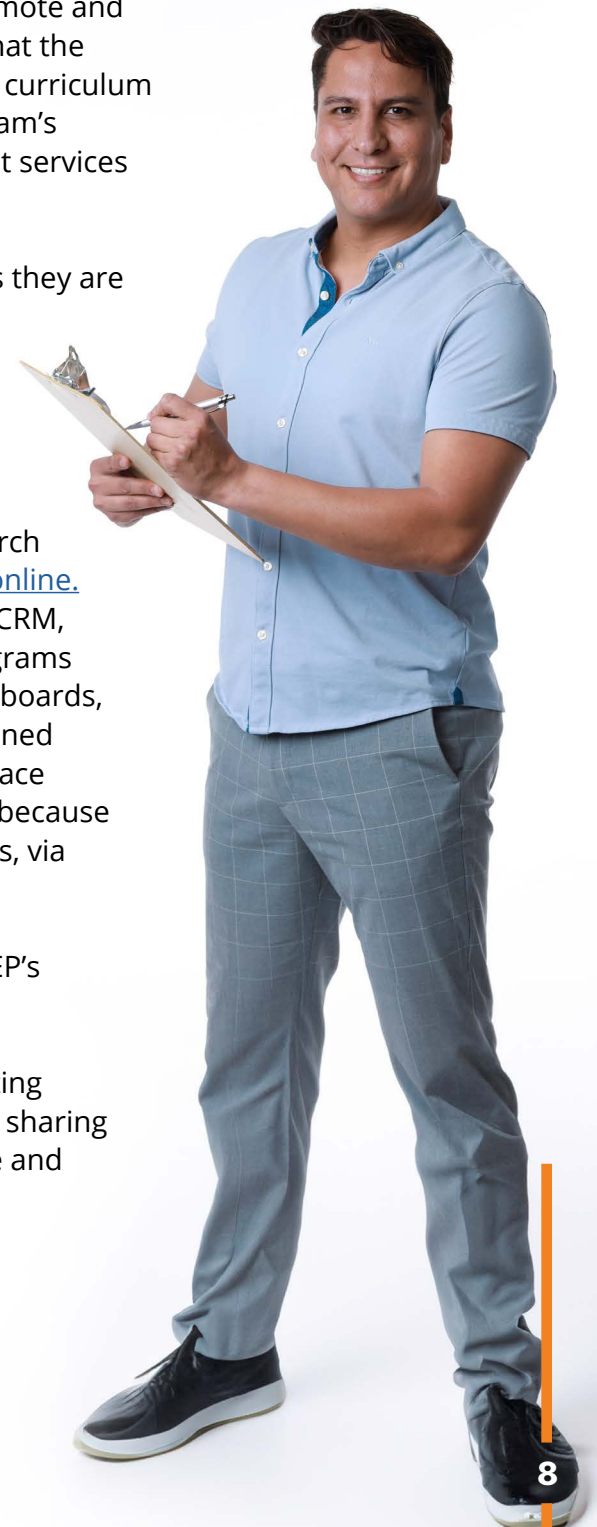
At present, there is no cost to the program for these services as they are funded through the Distance Learning Fee.

Marketing

The UTEP Online marketing team manages digital marketing in collaboration with Anthology. This includes program-specific and brand paid search, paid social, display, retargeting and search engine optimization. All leads are directed to landing pages at online.utep.edu that have an inquiry form that directly feeds into our CRM, Ellucian Recruit, for processing with the recruitment team. Programs are also marketed as a suite in local and regional media like billboards, print, TV, radio, etc. While programs are not individually mentioned in these vehicles, they benefit from this exposure. We do not place advertising for specific programs in traditional media like print because of budget constraints. All programs are also promoted at events, via email, and in email newsletters.

Marketing for some programs is done in collaboration with UTEP's central Marketing and Communications team.

Proactive programs/departments will also contribute to marketing efforts in a variety of ways including promotion at conferences, sharing information about the program on listservs, holding virtual (live and recorded) information sessions, and so on.





Recruitment

UTEP Online supports the recruitment of prospective students into online programs in two primary ways. The first is through the enrollment counselors who nourish leads through digital marketing. When a prospective student completes an inquiry form, enrollment counselors reach out and cultivate a relationship via email, phone calls, texts, or other means. Enrollment counselors typically respond to questions regarding program fit and program investment in terms of cost and time. They assist the prospective student in completing the application, collect and process transcripts (which may come from several institutions for UTEP Online students), and monitor the progress of the application.

Another recruitment strategy is to attend local and state recruitment events, sometimes in collaboration with a faculty representative from the program. These may include events at community colleges such as El Paso Community College and Doña Ana Community College as well as local industries and businesses. They may be specific to one program area, such as Nursing, or more general, such as all undergraduate programs.

Both of these require the involvement of the program to establish the messaging and responses to questions prospective students have. We encourage programs to stay in regular contact with their enrollment counselor to advise of any updates, changes, or ideas to increase enrollment in the program.

Once a student has applied and been accepted to a UTEP Online program, enrollment counselors then assist students in setting up their accounts (email, Blackboard, etc.), connect the student with the appropriate advisor, and remind students of payment deadlines.

Financial Enrollment Counseling

Another service offered by UTEP Online is financial counseling. Our financial enrollment counselor works with students on the registered-not-paid list, provides students with information regarding tuition and fees, and collaborates with Student Business Services, the Military Student Success Center, and the Financial Aid Office to provide students with accurate information about paying for their online degree.

State Authorization

The state authorization manager keeps an eye on the location of any student participating in an off-campus activity. Programs leading to licensure will be in close contact with the state authorization manager to address any concerns that may arise.

Course Development

The quality of online courses is very important to online programs. Because students have choices, a poorly designed and delivered class may cause a student to leave the program and enroll elsewhere. The Center for Instructional Design (CID) is another benefit of working with UTEP Online, and we require the online programs to work with them to ensure the courses are of high quality, engaging, and meet accessibility standards. CID is also available to assist with updates and/or course redesigns.

Advising

UTEP Online student success advisors advise all undergraduate online students and some graduate online program students. Active students are advised via phone, text, or video prior to each semester of enrollment.

Reporting

Annually, the UTEP Online team will provide an extensive program report to the dean of the college as well as to each online program director and/or department chair. This report illustrates the leads, applicants, accepted, enrolled, continuing, and graduate students over the last three years as well as the financial health of the program. This will be used to plan for the upcoming year.

UTEP Online staff are always available to review any of these details.

Program Responsibilities

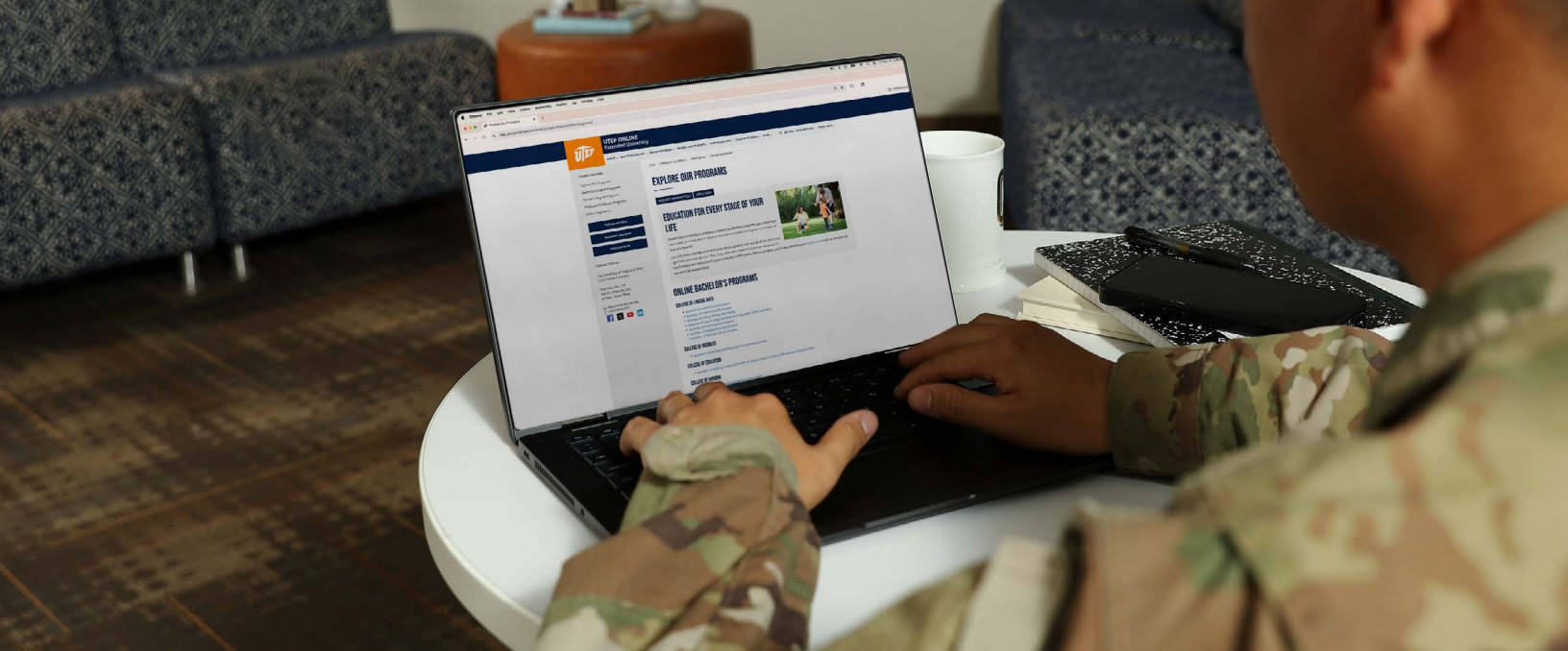
Online program responsibilities are not unlike those required for face-to-face programs.

Application Review

The application process for UTEP Online students is the same as for face-to-face UTEP students. At the undergraduate level, applications are submitted through Apply Texas and processed by the Admissions Office. Students are notified of their status through Admissions. At the graduate program level, applications are submitted through the Graduate School and students are also notified through that office.

Some UTEP Online programs have an automatic admissions process. In other words, if the student meets certain criteria (GPA, appropriate undergraduate major), the application does not need to be reviewed by the program. Other programs, however, are more selective and review each applicant.

For online programs, timing is of the essence given that students may be applying to several programs and often decide based on the first institution to respond. We ask that, when possible, online programs commit to regular review of the applications and submit the decision within 3 days.



Scheduling of Courses

Only classes scheduled in UTEP Online parts of terms (POTs) will be counted in the enrollment and financial metrics for the online program. It is imperative that all courses belonging to the online programs be scheduled in 801/802/814 in fall and spring semesters and 701/702/714 in summer. (Nursing courses must be scheduled in NU1/NU2/NU14.)

At the undergraduate level, our Advising team completes a course inventory prior to every semester to determine the courses that UTEP Online students need to make progress toward graduation. This includes courses in the majors we offer as well as core and elective courses.

We often assist graduate programs to “reset” the course carousel to maximize efficiencies as well.

Appointment of Faculty

Academic programs will select and appoint faculty who will teach in the online programs. To do this, the CAO of Extended University will work with the college’s CAO to make sure the faculty are accurately appointed.

Allocation of Faculty Costs

Currently, all faculty are paid 100% from the online program cost center, regardless of their teaching appointment. It is imperative for the program director to work with the college CAO and the UTEP Online staff to ensure that instructional costs are appropriate to the program’s potential revenue stream.

3. SUSTAINING AN ONLINE PROGRAM

We want every online program to serve as many students as it has capacity to do so. Additionally, we are obligated to ensure that online programs remain financially viable. When a program is experiencing challenges, we will work with the program director to find solutions to grow enrollment and/or decrease expenses through a variety of different measures.

Rarely, a program may decide that it is time to sunset. In those situations, UTEP Online will discontinue marketing efforts and close the application. We are required to continue teaching the courses until all enrolled students either complete the program or decide to take an alternative path. The program will need to work with the Office of the Provost to deactivate the program code.



4. FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

Do online students pay the same tuition and fees as on-campus students?

For most programs, students pay the same, or very close, tuition rate, regardless of modality. There are several colleges, however, that have permission to charge a higher market rate. This requires approval from the University of Texas Board of Regents.

Online students do pay the Distance Learning Fee (\$75/SCH for undergraduate programs and \$100/SCH for graduate programs). They do not, however, pay the Rec Center, Student Union, Student Health, and Miner Gold Card fees.

Do online program enrollments count towards formula funding?

All Semester Credit Hours (SCHs) produced by online programs are credited to the respective academic department and college for formula funding. Extended University receives no credit for SCHs, nor any formula funding, produced by online programs.

How is UTEP Online funded?

All the services mentioned in this document (marketing, recruitment, advising, reporting, financial services and other administrative functions) are funded through the Distance Learning Fee only.

Can face-to-face UTEP students enroll in UTEP Online courses?

Yes, they can. Undergraduate courses are hidden in the dynamic course schedule so that online students have registration priority. If a class is at risk of not filling, UTEP Online advisors reach out to the department chair and offer to open the courses to all students. Graduate advisors have discretion over the enrollments in the graduate program courses. Currently, some programs are intended for online students exclusively, while other programs cross-enroll fully online and face-to-face students.

How is the online program's financial health evaluated?

While the number of students enrolled in the program is important, financial health is dependent upon the number of student credit hours (SCHs) the program generates relative to the expenses incurred to run the program. For actuals, the number of SCHs is tied to the 100% online students only. For the annual profit and loss statement presented to the Budget Committee, the SCH count is connected to all enrollments in the course.