Finish@UT Academic Affairs Committee Handbook of Operating Procedures

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

A. Introduction

This document outlines the operating procedures and policies developed for the Finish@UT program by the Finish@UT Academic Affairs Committee.

B. Definitions

The Finish@UT program is defined as the collaborative effort designed to enable students to complete their bachelor's degrees online. The *Academic Affairs Committee* is defined as a committee of faculty representatives from participating University of Texas universities who have oversight responsibilities for the Finish@UT program. The Finish@UT curriculum is a collection of online courses offered through the UT Online Consortium (UTOC) and approved for the collaborative by the Finish@UT Academic Affairs Committee. The *home campus* is defined as the university from which the student is seeking the degree. The *host campus* is defined as any university in the consortium from which the student is taking a course other than the student's home campus.

SECTION 2: PURPOSE, MISSION, OBJECTIVES, AND ACCREDITATION

A. Purpose

Finish@UT is a fully online, bachelor's degree completion program for individuals who have already completed their core credit hours. Broad degree options and flexible length courses allow students to tailor the program to meet their interests and career goals.

The Finish@UT program is a collaborative program developed to provide online undergraduate courses through separately accredited University of Texas System universities. The following University of Texas universities participate:

- The University of Texas at Arlington
- The University of Texas at El Paso
- The University of Texas of the Permian Basin
- The University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley

B. Mission Statement

The mission of the Finish@UT online program is to (a) increase students' access to undergraduate courses as they seek to complete their bachelor's degree and (b) to leverage existing courses at participating institutions to introduce efficiencies in course offerings by non-duplication of courses. The program gives diverse learners access to a wide selection of courses. The online course delivery enables students from diverse cultures, locations, and careers to participate in stimulating interaction with faculty and fellow students.

C. Educational Objectives

Students enrolled in the Finish@UT program will obtain a well-rounded, quality education tailored to meet their needs and open doors to a variety of career opportunities or further graduate study.

While the degrees and degree requirements differ among the degree-granting institutions, the courses, singularly and collectively, shall be designed to meet the following objectives.

Students in the Finish@UT program students will:

- Acquire skills and knowledge to pursue a productive career or further education
- Develop the technology skills and knowledge to be effective lifelong learners
- Be independent thinkers who are able to develop ideas and clearly express them in oral, written, and/or artistic forms

D. Program and Institutional Accreditation

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) individually accredits all University of Texas universities, including those participating in the Finish@UT program. Each university is responsible for maintaining its own SACS accreditation. Each university awards its own degrees and is responsible for the application, oversight, and consistency of the Finish@UT program with the institutional mission.

1. Role of Universities
   The role of each university participating in the collaborative program is to meet all institutional standards and responsibilities. The participating institutions are fully responsible for the implementation and control of the degree and may override any policies established by the Academic Affairs Committee.

2. Compliance Monitoring
   The Finish@UT program must meet all SACS standards for accreditation. It is the responsibility of the UT institutions to monitor compliance issues related to participation in the program. In the case of known compliance issues, it is the responsibility of the institution to provide the AA committee with all necessary information related to the compliance issue.

SECTION 3: GOVERNANCE

The faculty of the participating universities through the Finish@UT Academic Affairs Committee jointly administers the Finish@UT Online program.

A. Composition of the Finish@UT Academic Affairs Committee

Because of the collaborative nature of the program, the university faculty and staff representatives form the Academic Affairs Committee. The committee is composed of two representatives from each campus. Each university also has an alternate member who attends meetings when a regular member is unable to attend. In such case, the alternate member has all of the rights and responsibilities of the regular member. Ex-officio members may be included with the approval of the committee. The Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee is elected for a two-year term by a majority vote of the members. An elected Chair may serve multiple terms.

B. Responsibilities of the Finish@UT Academic Affairs Committee

The Finish@UT Academic Affairs Committee will be responsible for policy and oversight of the collaborative aspects of the Finish@UT program. As with traditional on campus programs, the Finish@UT program is committed to faculty governance.

The Finish@UT Academic Affairs Committee shall be responsible for:

- Establishing policies and procedures for the collaborative
- Online course inventory
- Online course scheduling
- Program assessment as needed

The Finish@UT Academic Affairs Committee may make recommendations to the universities on issues related to program management.

C. Finish@UT Online Program Advisor(s)

Each participating university provides a Finish@UT program advisor(s) who assists students with issues related to enrollment and degree plan fulfillment. This campus representative is the students' primary contact with the Finish@UT program and UTOC.

D. Campus Review and Approval

Degree-granting authority rests with the component campuses in the UT System participating in the collaborative program. Campus review and approval of changes to existing degree programs is accomplished through the university's regular curricular review processes.

SECTION 4: PARTICIPATING UNIVERSITIES

A. New Universities

Any University of Texas System university wanting to join the Finish@UT program, either as a degree-granting institution or course-contributing institution, must submit a proposal to the Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee. This may be done at any time.

The proposal must contain the following: a statement expressing interest, the degree plan that will be offered (if appropriate), a list of courses by area to be offered, course descriptions for each course, and a proposed schedule of course offerings for the next academic year. The courses should not be repetitive of courses already offered by the Finish@UT program.

The Academic Affairs Committee will review the proposal and vote. A majority vote is required for acceptance into Finish@UT.

B. Departing Universities

Any participating university wishing to leave the Finish@UT program may do so by written notice at least two semesters prior to the departure.

Any participating university wishing to delete a concentration from the Finish@UT program may do so by written notice at least two semesters prior to deletion.

SECTION 5: FACULTY

A. Faculty Credentials and Qualifications

All faculty teaching courses in the Finish@UT program must be credentialed and meet SACS criteria at the university where appointed.

B. Recommendation for Faculty who Teach Online Courses

Individual campuses have the responsibility of assigning faculty to the online program. Faculty should participate in professional development and training relative to online teaching.

SECTION 6: CURRICULUM

A. Course Prerequisites

It is preferred that courses offered through Finish@UT do not have prerequisites. However, some online courses have prerequisites which students must complete prior to enrolling. When courses in a concentration require prerequisites, they must be clearly articulated so that advisors can prepare students effectively.

B. Course Approval

In order to ensure quality and flexibility, courses/concentrations added to the Finish@UT course menu require approval from the Academic Affairs Committee. Considerations for approval include the uniqueness of the courses/concentrations in combination with the current course offerings as well as the value (flexibility, career advancement, etc.) it/they add to the Finish@UT program. If needed, proposals for new courses/concentrations will be returned for revisions prior to voting.

Proposals can be accepted at any time. Proposals of up to two pages must include a short description of the courses including prerequisites (if any), how the courses will be positioned in the offerings (new concentration, combined with existing concentration), any restrictions to be placed on enrollment, an indication of expected course caps, a projection of how many sections will be offered and in which semesters the course(s) will be offered, and course length (accelerated or regular term).

Proposals must be submitted by a university representative (not individual faculty) to the Academic Affairs Committee chair via email. The chair will distribute the proposals for committee review and call a vote via email, phone, or face-to-face discussion.

C. Curriculum Review

The Finish@UT Academic Affairs Committee is responsible for curriculum review. Through its curriculum review process, the Academic Affairs Committee:

- Accepts new course and concentration proposals to be added to the Finish@UT program.

- Considers the needs of members of the collaborative when developing and revising the course inventory.
- Solicits input from current and former students regarding course offerings.

D. Frequency of Course Offerings

The Finish@UT Academic Affairs Committee will review the course rotation schedule as needed. A schedule for the delivery of online courses shall be developed and updated each semester. If possible, this should be posted two semesters in advance. Generally, courses will be offered every other semester including summers (i.e., three times in two calendar years).

E. Minimum and Maximum Class Size

While the class size and number of sections is determined by each university, sections should be designed and staffed to provide students sufficient interaction with faculty and fellow students. Courses may be canceled due to small enrollment at the university's discretion. It is the responsibility of the Finish@UT program advisors to notify UTOC staff and the appropriate university contacts at partner institutions of their intent to cancel a scheduled class at the earliest possible date.