

University of San Diego
Unmanned Aircraft Systems Interim Policy
Frequently Asked Questions

What is an unmanned aircraft system (UAS)?

An unmanned aircraft system (commonly referred to as a “drone”) means an aircraft that is operated without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft, as well as the communication links and components that control the aircraft.

Do I need approval from the university to use a UAS on university property or at a university-sponsored event?

Yes. The University of San Diego has implemented an interim Unmanned Aircraft Systems Policy in order to support the university’s mission while also managing issues of safety, privacy, and compliance with applicable laws and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations. The interim policy can be found [here](#).

To whom does the university policy apply?

The policy applies to any university employee, student, vendor, visitor or other third party who seeks to operate a UAS on or above university property or at a university-sponsored event.

How do I seek approval to use a UAS on university property or at a university-sponsored event?

A request for approval should be submitted to the Department of Public Safety at publicsafety@sandiego.edu at least 10 business days prior to the planned operation. The request must be complete, accurate and include the name and contact information of the requesting party and the operator; the date, time and location of the requested operation; the purpose of the operation; the equipment to be used; a description of any data to be collected; and verification that the requesting party operates in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The Department of Public Safety may request additional information in connection with its evaluation of the request.

The Department of Public Safety will consult with other departments as appropriate to evaluate the request. If the request is for research or other academic purposes, the appropriate dean’s office and/or the provost’s office will be consulted before a decision is made. The Department of Public Safety may approve or deny a request or approve the request with modifications, and will notify the requesting party in writing of its decision.

Why is the policy an “interim” policy?

At the time the interim policy was put into place, the FAA was in the process of changing the federal regulations for UAS. The FAA’s new regulations were announced in June

2016, and during the 2016-17 academic year, a committee will review the policy and recommend any appropriate revisions. In the meantime, the interim policy enables the university to manage the safety, privacy, and compliance issues associated with the use of UAS on university property or at university-sponsored events.

What are the FAA regulations addressing UAS?

The FAA has jurisdiction over all navigable airspace in the United States, and all aircraft (whether manned or unmanned) are subject to FAA rules and regulations.

In Section 333 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act (FMRA), the FAA addresses the rules for operating all manned and unmanned aircraft. The FAA is authorized to grant an exemption under Section 333 to enable an individual or an entity to operate a UAS for civil and non-governmental purposes and activities. Hobby and recreational use does not require a Section 333 exemption, but does require registration with the FAA and compliance with certain safety-related and other rules.

In June 2016, the FAA released new UAS regulations that will go into effect on August 29, 2016. The new rules are intended to facilitate the use of small UAS for commercial purposes and replace the Section 333 exemption process.

Under the FAA's new rules, operators of drones for commercial use must hold a remote pilot airman certificate with a small UAS rating, or must operate the drone under the supervision of someone who holds that certificate. In addition, drone operations will be subject to a number of operational limitations. Obtaining a remote pilot certificate requires the completion of an application process, passing an aeronautical examination at an FAA-approved knowledge testing center, completing online training, and passing a TSA security background check.

For more information about the new rules, please see the FAA's UAS website found here: <https://www.faa.gov/uas/>. The website also provides information about how to obtain a remote pilot certificate and the FAA's UAS operational limitations.

Is there an exemption from the FAA regulations when the UAS is used for teaching or research purposes?

No. Using a UAS for teaching or research purposes is not considered by the FAA to be hobby or recreational use. Faculty and others who would like to include operation of a UAS as part of their teaching or research, or for other educational purposes, are subject to the FAA's new rules and USD's interim policy.

Do I need permission even if the UAS is for hobby or recreational purposes?

Yes. While the FAA regulations addressing hobby and recreational use of UAS are not as extensive as those addressing commercial use, any request to use a UAS for hobby or

recreational purposes on university property or at a university-sponsored event still requires advance approval under USD's interim policy.

Is there any other guidance from the FAA on educational use of UAS?

Yes. In a memorandum dated May 4, 2016, the FAA addressed certain types of educational uses of a UAS at educational institutions. The memorandum clarifies that student use of UAS at accredited educational institutions as a component of science, technology, and aviation-related educational curricula, or other coursework such as television and film production or the arts, is hobby or recreational use. The student may not receive any form of compensation, directly or incidentally, arising from or related to such operations, including, e.g., the reimbursement of costs or an honorarium. The memorandum also clarifies that faculty teaching aviation-related courses at accredited educational institutions may assist students who are operating a UAS under section 336 and in connection with a course that requires such operations, provided the student maintains operational control of the UAS and any instructor participation is de minimus. For a more detailed description of the clarification and the permissible uses, please review the FAA's memorandum which can be found here:

http://www.faa.gov/uas/resources/uas_regulations_policy/media/interpretation-educational-use-of-uas.pdf

Please keep in mind that all student or faculty member requests to use a UAS, including those that rely on the FAA clarification memorandum, must be submitted in advance to the Department of Public Safety for approval.

Can I hire a third party to use a UAS on campus?

A request to engage a third party vendor to use a UAS on campus should be submitted to the Department of Public Safety for review and approval under USD's interim policy.

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