

Operating Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) on University Property or at University-Sponsored Events

(Revised 5/24/2016)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an unmanned aircraft system (UAS)?

An unmanned aircraft system is the aircraft (model airplane, helicopter, quadcopter, etc.), platform, payload and the autopilot, the communications, avionics (the on-board intelligence, communications, radio transmissions), and the human pilot.

Why does the university use the term “UAS” and not “drone”?

The term UAS, or unmanned aircraft system, is in line with the industry standard. The term “drone” is typically associated with just the aircraft and is not an accurate reflection of the capabilities employed on high technology systems. Also, a “drone” is sometimes used by hobbyists to generically refer to a radio-controlled quadcopter (a helicopter with four rotors). These are actually just one type of unmanned aircraft.

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

Yes. The Ohio State University has implemented an unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) Interim Policy to mitigate risks to individuals and organizations potentially affected by UAS operations; to comply with federal, state, and local laws, as well as regulations and contracts; and to enable scholarship.

The university’s UAS Interim Policy can be found online at: <http://go.osu.edu/uas-policy>

The UAS policy ensures that the university has clear lines of authority and well-defined internal processes to identify, manage, and mitigate risk, and for safe and legal operation of UAS in furtherance of its institutional goals and objectives.

Please note that operation of a UAS is also regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and by federal, state, and local laws. Anyone who seeks permission from the university to operate a UAS on Ohio State property or at any university-sponsored event must receive approval from all appropriate agencies (if necessary) in advance of requesting such approval.

What should I do to obtain permission from the university to operate a UAS on university property or a university-sponsored event?

Refer to the “PROCEDURES” section of the university’s unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) Policy and follow the appropriate procedures. One set of procedures is for faculty, staff, graduate associates, student employees, students, volunteers, vendors, and invitees; another set of procedures is for licensees (businesses); and another set of procedures is for hobbyists and recreationalists. Note that all UAS requests require specific periods of advance notice for approval to be considered by the UAS Advisory Committee.

The university’s UAS Policy can be found online at: <http://go.osu.edu/uas-policy>

The university’s UAS Request Form can be found online at: <http://go.osu.edu/uas-request>

Are there any other approvals required outside of the UAS Advisory Committee established in the Interim Policy?

Depending on your intended use and activities associated with the use of your UAS, there may be other university approvals required before you can operate your UAS on university property or at university events. For example, any videography, photography or recording to be obtained through the approved use of a UAS must also have the planned videography, photography or recording approved through the **Office of University Communications** as well as **Trademark and Licensing Services**. The Office of Research Compliance may also conduct an Export Review of a UAS request before final approval is granted. Guidance for this process may be found in the UAS Policy.



Who does the university's UAS Policy apply to?

The policy applies to faculty, staff, graduate associates, student employees, students, volunteers, vendors, and all visitors (invitees and licensees) who acquire or seek to operate a UAS on any university property or at any university-sponsored event.

Is there an exemption to FAA regulations when using a UAS for teaching or research purposes?

Sometimes.

Students can fly as hobbyists (without express FAA approval) for student activities and in course work for credit, provided they do not receive compensation for the flights (apart from financial aid, work study, etc.). Student hobbyists must still register with FAA and provide a registration number.

Faculty can assist in the flights above, and that does not change the hobbyist nature of the flight.

However, faculty conducting research or other activities pursuant to professional responsibilities would still need FAA's approval for the flights.

While there may be exceptions to FAA's approval requirements, anyone operating a UAS on university property or at a university-sponsored event must follow the university's UAS approval process.

Why is the university's UAS policy necessary?

Because unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) are becoming an important tool for many different types of research and businesses, and are becoming more popular as a hobby, it was necessary for The Ohio State University to formalize a policy and a permission process to manage UAS operations on university property and university-sponsored events.

The Ohio State University is committed to providing an academically vigorous, safe, and secure environment for all individuals and organizations. Unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) offer opportunities for teaching and research and provide the university community with valuable experiences in a wide range of academic disciplines.

What UAS activities are permitted under Ohio State UAS policy?

With university permission, common uses of UAS permitted on university property and at university-sponsored events include, but are not limited to, research, teaching, hobby, recreation, advertising, and commercial/business ventures.

What UAS activities are not permitted under Ohio State UAS policy?

Generally speaking, the following activities not permitted on university owned property or at a university activity include, but are not limited to:

- a UAS may not be used to monitor or record activities where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy on university property or at university-sponsored events. (Examples include, but are not limited to, restrooms, locker rooms, residence halls, medical facilities, etc.)
- a UAS may not be flown in a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) area nor in "No Drone Zones" on university property or at university-sponsored events.
- any operation of aircraft that endangers public safety – either on the ground or in the air. This is also prohibited by the FAA and violations carry very stiff federal penalties.

Why is the university's UAS policy currently an "interim" policy?

Because the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) is in the process of changing the federal regulations for unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). If a new rule is adopted by the FAA, which is expected to be sometime in 2016, then the university's policy may need to be changed. Under these conditions, having an "interim" policy is the prudent course of action and could be changed in the future to reflect the FAA's new regulations.

More information on the proposed new rule that would govern unmanned aircraft systems is available online at:

http://www.faa.gov/news/press_releases/news_story.cfm?newsId=18295

What is a UAS platform?

Platform is a generic term for UAS that developed from the context of the aircraft being used as a “platform” to hold a sensor. The platform, or unmanned aircraft vehicle (UAV), is often chosen by what type of information will be collected during the mission and other performance parameters such as range, altitude, and endurance.

What is a UAS payload?

It is any device that is part of the aircraft that is used to gather or collect data external to the aircraft. A payload can consist of a camera; there are numerous types of cameras that capture standard visual images (called electro-optical) or different wavelengths, such as infrared, near-infrared, multispectral, hyperspectral. Payloads can also be radars, air sampling sensors, radiation detectors, and many more.

What if I'd rather operate my UAS off-campus on non-university property or at a non-university sponsored event?

The university's policy would not apply if a UAS is operated on property not owned by the university or at an activity that is not sponsored by the university. However, operation of UAS is still regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and by federal, state, and local laws. Anyone who seeks to operate UAS on non-university property or a non-university event must still comply with all appropriate federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

How do these policies apply to football games at Ohio Stadium?

The Federal Aviation Administration has classified airspace above Ohio Stadium as National Defense Airspace. A Temporary Flight Restriction is in effect one hour before each home football game starts and continues until one hour after the end of the games. All aircraft operations, including parachute jumping, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) and remote controlled aircraft such as drones, are prohibited within three miles of Ohio Stadium. Anyone found operating a UAS (including drones) in violation of applicable laws or university policies could be asked to leave campus and/or could be subject to arrest or criminal prosecution.

What about model aircraft flown for hobby or recreational purposes on university property or at university-sponsored events?

Model aircraft is defined as an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) that is (1) flown for hobby or recreational purposes, per section 336(c) of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012; (2) capable of sustained flight in the atmosphere; and (3) flown within visual line of sight of the aircraft operator. The model aircraft must not exceed a weight of 55 pounds. This type of UAS does not require FAA approval but model aircraft flights are still subject to the FAA's registration process and the university policy on unmanned aircraft systems.

The university's UAS Policy can be found online at: <http://go.osu.edu/uas-policy>

What is the FAA's role in unmanned aircraft systems (UAS)?

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has jurisdiction over all navigable airspace in the United States. Also, all aircraft – whether manned or unmanned – are subject to FAA rules and regulations. The FAA's primary mission is to ensure the safe and efficient oversight and management of the national airspace system (NAS).

The FAA sets the rules for operation of all manned and unmanned aircraft, including model aircraft being flown for hobby or recreational purposes weighing less than 55 pounds. These rules are found in Section 333 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (FMRA). The FAA also has the authority to grant Exemptions from Section 333 of FMRA and Certificates of Authorization (COAs) for systems using a UAS (other than systems using model aircraft weighing less than 55 pounds flown for hobby or recreational purposes).

More information on FAA rules for public (governmental) UAS operation can be found at:

http://www.faa.gov/uas/public_operations/

More information on FAA rules for civil (non-governmental) UAS operation can be found at:

http://www.faa.gov/uas/civil_operations/

In addition, UAS owners flying model aircraft between about a half-pound and 55 pounds may have to register with the FAA for inclusion in a national database. The FAA already has a registration system in place for model aircraft used for commercial purposes.

What is an Exemption from Section 333?

An FAA exemption under Section 333 (of The Modernization and Reform Act of 2012) grants an individual or entity the ability to operate a UAS for civil and non-governmental purposes and activities, other than recreational or hobbyist activity.

Information on Section 333 and obtaining an exemption can be found online at:

https://www.faa.gov/uas/legislative_programs/section_333/

What is a Certificate of Authorization (COA)?

It is a certificate granted by the FAA under Section 333 of FRMA, which allows an entity to legally operate a specific UAS in a certain location for a specific purpose.

A “Public Use” COA is granted to a public agency or organization to operate a specific aircraft (weighing more than 55 pounds) for a specific purpose in a specific location. A Public Use COA for a UAS is only issued by the FAA after the process of determining public status, government use, and an operational and technical review.

More information on COAs for public (governmental) UAS operation can be found at:

http://www.faa.gov/uas/public_operations/

A “Civil Use” COA is granted to a non-government individual or entity to operate a specific aircraft to perform commercial operations in low-risk, controlled environments.

More information on COAs for civil (non-governmental) UAS operation can be found at:

http://www.faa.gov/uas/civil_operations/

How long does it take to obtain a Certificate of Authorization from the FAA?

According to the FAA, the public COA approval process takes approximately 60 to 90 days. Please allow additional time, as you are planning for UAS use, for university review and approval prior to submission of any public Certificate of Authorization (COA) application.