

Florida State University

**Frequently Asked Questions
About Drones or Unmanned Aircraft Systems**

What is an unmanned aircraft system (UAS)?

An unmanned aircraft system (commonly referred to as a “drone” or “UAS”) 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.

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.

Are there any restrictions on flying UASs at the University?

UASs may be flown by faculty, students, staff, and Approved Vendors *if and only if* the flight (1) is approved in advance by the University, (2) has a nexus to the University’s mission or community, and (3) adheres to any limits prescribed by the University to ensure safety and compliance with all applicable laws.

What if I see a drone flying around the University, and I’m not sure whether it has been approved for flight?

Approved operators are required to carry proof of flight operations approval on their persons. If you have concerns, call the FSU Police Department on the non-emergency line at (850) 644-1234.

What if I see a drone flying dangerously close to people or posing serious imminent dangers?

Call 911 or the FSU Police Department on the non-emergency line at (850) 644-1234 to report the observation.

What is the Operation of Unmanned Aircraft Systems Over People Rule?

The *Operation of Unmanned Aircraft Systems Over People* final rule was effective April 21, 2021, and amends part 107 by permitting routine operations of small unmanned aircraft over people, moving vehicles, and at night under certain conditions. It also changes the recurrent training framework, expands the list of persons who may request the presentation of a remote pilot certificate, and makes other minor changes. See the requirements at https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial_operators/operations_over_people.

What kind of components, payloads, or modifications are not allowed?

FSU will generally not approve flight requests for UAS's that include commercial components or payloads that are regulated under the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) as export controlled defense articles. Because FSU's foreign national community is prohibited from openly flying UAS's entailing commercial ITAR controlled components or payload, or UAS's that are modified for a specific military or intelligence gathering purpose, the University will not sanction flights that would run counter to its policies on openness and nondiscrimination. Additional information about the ITAR and FSU's export control program is available at <https://www.research.fsu.edu/research-compliance/export-controls/>.

How long will my approval be valid?

The University will approve only the necessary duration for the proposed activity. Recurring flight approvals may be requested. Maximum period of approval for ongoing activities will be for one fiscal year.

Do I need approval even though I am not flying above University lands? What if I'm flying outside the U.S.?

If you are flying on behalf of the University, as part of your duties, or as part of your course/curriculum, you need approval regardless of whether you are flying above University lands in light of risks associated with this activity and complex regulations. Rules outside the U.S. vary widely, and you will be expected to show an understanding of foreign requirements and evidence of compliance with foreign requirements in your application.

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 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?

Instructions for requesting approval are published at drones.fsu.edu.

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 published in the [Code of Federal Regulations Title 14, Chapter 1](#) and the [FAA Modernization and Reform Act 2012](#). In addition, the State of Florida has published [Florida Statute 934.50](#).

For more information, 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?

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

Faculty conducting research or other activities pursuant to professional responsibilities will need to follow Title 14, Part 107 of the Code of Federal Regulations ([14 CFR Part 107](#)). 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.

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 FSU 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, for example, 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 minimal. 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 University for approval in accordance with the Policy.

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

A request to engage a third party supplier to use a UAS on campus should be submitted to the University for approval in accordance with the Policy.

Can I use my personal drone for my class or research?

No. In order to sanction drone flights on campus, the University has to assure that any liability resulting from the flights is appropriately managed. Drones owned by the University and used for University-related activities will be covered by University insurance. Privately owned drones cannot be covered by

University insurance, regardless of the purpose of the flights.

Are there any restrictions on which drone/UAS I can purchase with University funds? What about third-party drone services?

All procurement transactions related to UAS and third-party drone services must abide by FSU Procurement's policies and procedures. Newly purchased UAS must be registered immediately in accordance with FSU's Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operation Policy (4-OP-E-7).

In accordance with section 934.50, Florida Statutes, as of January 1, 2022, a governmental agency (which includes FSU) may only purchase or otherwise acquire a drone from a manufacturer on the approved list. Governmental agencies may continue to utilize drones not on the department's approved list until January 1, 2023. The Florida Department of Management and Services provides list of approved manufacturers whose drones may be purchased or otherwise acquired and used by a governmental agency [here](#).

This list provides approved manufacturers but does not guarantee that all models produced by these manufacturers meet an individual governmental agency's specific needs or security requirements. Beginning July 1, 2022, all governmental agencies using drones not on the department's approved list must submit a comprehensive plan for discontinuing their use to the department.

Can I go ahead and purchase my drone while I'm waiting for the review of my application?

Yes, you can purchase the UAS. You just cannot fly it until your flight is approved.

Can I fly a drone in my classroom or in a building on campus?

Use of drones indoors is allowed, subject to the internal approval process. Any flights of drones that have not been approved by the University will still be prohibited. That will include flights by students in dormitories or other University owned or controlled buildings.

All I want to do is to use a small drone in my class as a demonstration. FAA regulations don't apply. Why do I have to go through the campus registration and approval process?

You can lecture about drone use and technology, but you cannot fly a drone indoors or outdoors on campus without obtaining the necessary approvals. This is to protect you and your students should an accident occur. The University cannot assume liability for injury or damage to property for drone flights that have not been approved.

Why can't I be the drone pilot for my project?

You can, if you meet the FAA requirements. Currently, the FAA requires that anyone piloting a drone outdoors (the Pilot-in-Command) must be certified as a Remote Pilot. This is a relatively easy process, but does require completion of an FAA test.

I can fly my personal drone without a pilot's license. So why can't I just use my personal drone for my project?

The University has liability for any drone flights that are conducted on University property or for University business. The University is also required to assure that all flights meet FAA regulations. For these reasons, the University cannot allow individuals to fly drones on campus or for University business unless they are properly approved and meet the FAA and University guidelines.

My students want to build a drone for a class project – what do I need to know?

The University can conduct certain activities that employ drones. One of these activities includes the research, design and testing of custom-built drones and related control and sensor systems. Any time a drone is flown, regardless of the location, appropriate safety precautions must be taken. Records must be maintained about the flights and maintenance of the drone and any accidents or incidents related to the flights.

Flights of drones indoors do not fall under FAA regulations. Generally, flights indoors where the environment is controlled tend to be safer than flights outdoors. Students should follow appropriate safety guidelines.

Any time a drone is to be flown on campus, whether indoors or outdoors, custom-built or manufactured, the person responsible for the project (faculty or staff) must submit the proper paperwork and obtain approval from the University before flying the drone.

I am taking a drone with me to conduct field work for my research – what do I need to know?

If you will be conducting research for a University or grant-supported project, you need to obtain approval for the drone use prior to initiating flights. Without approval, any liability for injury to others or damage to property will be your responsibility.

Should I register my university drone through the FAA online portal?

Yes. However, drones purchased by the university are University property and must be registered recording the University as the owner. See [Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operation Policy \(4-OP-E-7\)](#), Article II.3. for registration guidance.

Where can I get more information about drone use on campus?

There is a UAS-dedicated website at drones.fsu.edu. On that page, you'll be able to access information about using UAS at FSU as well as links to relevant FAA and other resources.

Where can I legally and safely fly my drone?

Public areas such as parks and recreational areas might be suitable for flying a drone. However, you should always check with the authority in charge of the facility. For instance, some federal lands restrict drone use. Airports and restricted airspace also take precedence when evaluating possible areas in which to fly. For more guidance on safe drone use, refer to the Know Before You Fly website at: <http://knowbeforeyoufly.org/>.

What UAS activities are not permitted under FSU's UAS policy?

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

- 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.

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 the UAS is privately owned, 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 a privately-owned UAS on non-university property or a non-university event must still comply with all appropriate federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Any flight operation of a University-owned UAS requires prior approval.

How do these policies apply to football games at Doak Campbell Stadium?

The Federal Aviation Administration has classified airspace above Doak Campbell Stadium as National Defense Airspace. A Temporary Flight Restriction (FAA “Notice to Airman” NOTAM FDC 4/3621) forbids all aircraft operations, including UAS operations, within a three (3) nautical mile radius up to and including 3,000 feet above ground level of Doak Campbell Stadium beginning one hour before the scheduled start of a NCAA football game until one hour after the game ends. However, aircraft operations for broadcast coverage or for operational purposes of the event are authorized with an approved airspace waiver from the FAA. These restrictions do not apply to aircraft authorized by and in contact with Air Traffic Control (ATC) for Department of Defense, law enforcement, or air ambulance flight operations. Anyone found operating a UAS in violation of applicable laws or university policies could be asked to leave campus and/or could be subject to arrest or criminal prosecution.

Can I hire a UAS firm to fly over our campus event?

You may hire a company that has their own FAA approval for commercial UAS operation and appropriate insurance. However, since the FSU campus is within 5 miles of the Tallahassee International Airport, it would also require coordination with the local air traffic authority. All UAS flight operations conducted on behalf of FSU requires prior approval.

What is Part 107?

The FAA released the Final Rule for Small Unmanned Aircraft System effective August 29, 2016. This new law introduces a simpler and easier to achieve authorization for *commercial* UAS flights with a new license and simplified rules for operating an unmanned aircraft. The remote pilot certificate replaces

the need for an operator to have a private pilot's license. Similar to a driver's license, this license will require the applicant to pass a knowledge test and pass a security vetting. The FAA provides a summary of the new rule [here](#), while the full text can be found [here](#).

Once I am a remote pilot under Part 107 and have permission from FSU, can I fly on FSU's Main Campus?

Not yet. In addition to having your Part 107 certificate and receiving permission from FSU, you must also receive permission via a waiver from Air Traffic Control to operate in Class E airspace. The area around the Tallahassee International Airport is Class E airspace to ground level, and the University's main campus is within a 5-mile radius of the airport.

Does Part 107 apply to hobbyist UAS operations?

Part 107 does not apply to UAS flown strictly for fun. You must, however, follow FSU procedures for hobbyists if you are operating from FSU property or with an FSU-owned UAS. These procedures require that you receive permission from the University and have insurance. Visit the FAA's "[Fly for Fun](#)" webpage for safety rules and guidelines that apply to recreational UAS operations and [FAA Advisory Circular AC 91-57A](#), "Model Aircraft Operating Standards - Including Change 1".

How do I know where it is OK to fly and where it is not OK to fly?

The FAA has developed a smartphone app called B4UFLY to help recreational UAS operators know whether there are any restrictions or requirements where they want to fly. When flying from FSU property or with an FSU-owned UAS, you may only fly in the location listed on your flight approval. B4UFLY is available for free download in the [App Store](#) for iOS and [Google Play store](#) for Android.