

I want to have my students fly DRONES in my class. What do I need to know?

STUDENT USE OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS

Unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) can be part of an effective educational experience for students. As recently announced by the FAA, educational use at an accredited educational institution, as part of a course curriculum, is considered as recreational and the UAS may be operated as a model aircraft. This removes the need for expensive licensing and authorization and enables many opportunity for students.

Example Scenarios

- Students in an engineering class can design, build and fly a drone
- Students in an environmental survey course can use drones to take high resolution imagery of fauna
- Students in a digital archeology course can learn to use drones to survey dig sites
- Students in a computer science class can learn how to program new flight controllers
- Students in a Senior Design/Capstone course can build a novel drone platform

This does not supercede campus policy regarding the operation of UAS on campus property or the operation of UAS as part of a course curriculum. In addition, all UC campuses are in close proximity to an airport which does require additional coordination with local air traffic control to ensure safe operation.

Large athletic fields may be utilized, however the best locations are ones in which access can be controlled to prevent non-participants from getting injured.

Building a successful UAS is not a trivial task, especially for introductory students. Commercially available platforms rather than kits, are recommended.

Unfortunately, when faculty (or other instructors) engage in the operation of a UAS, it is not be considered recreational activity. The instructor must follow the regulations regarding Civil UAS operation, which includes the requirement of the appropriate FAA certificate (currently a Sport or Private Pilot Certificate). An exception is made for faculty to assist students such as stepping in to regain control or terminate a flight.

Please contact your local campus point of contact on UAS operations or the [Center of Excellence on Unmanned Aircraft System Safety](#) for detailed guidance.

Contact the [Center of Excellence on Unmanned Aircraft System Safety](#)

E: UASSafety@ucmerced.edu

T: (209) 201 - 2051

Model Aircraft Operations

- Fly below 400 feet and remain clear of surrounding obstacles
- Keep the aircraft within visual line of sight at all times
- Remain well clear of and do not interfere with manned aircraft operations
- Don't fly within 5 miles of an airport unless you contact the airport and control tower before flying
- Don't fly near people or stadiums
- Don't fly an aircraft that weighs more than 55 lbs.
- Don't be careless or reckless with your unmanned aircraft – you could be fined for endangering people or other aircraft



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