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### Online Courses at Old Dominion University

Starting in the fall 2026 semester, Old Dominion University will be changing selected courses from having in-person class options to strictly online accelerated 8 week self lead courses. Web conferences will only be available for select courses at the doctoral level. This takes away from the immersive experience of engaging inside a classroom with other students and having direct conversations with the professors. Students and faculty here at ODU have expressed their concerns with the rapid change and added pressure. The faculty stated that to WTKR News 3, “Extending the contract of a president who has lost the confidence of his faculty—without addressing the pedagogical and reputational risks identified overwhelmingly by faculty—represents a clear disregard for the future of the institution.” Despite the pushback from students and over 85% of the ODU faculty senate voting no-confidence in President Brian Hemphill, the Board of Visitors extended the president's contract through 2032 and has supported the rapid change.

For students enrolled into online courses, their only option will be a sped up self driven lesson with the only thing to keep them on track is a deadline. The only way to communicate with the professor will be scheduled zoom meetings, email and canvas. History professor and president of ODU’s chapter of the American Association of University Professors Micheal Carhart stated to WTKR News 3, “Not all courses at the university are suitable to be taught in the same way.” ODU has nearly 30% of students enrolled that are military affiliated. In fact in

2024-2025 ODU earned a gold ranking as a “military friendly school” These active duty service members and veterans have also voiced their opinions stating that juggling a full time job and family while taking 16-week online courses can already be taxing. To reduce that timeframe down to 8-weeks would be nearly impossible to juggle. In addition, the veterans affairs educational benefits pays military students based on full time enrollment and with these courses being cut into half time it could affect their benefits payments. As a military affiliated student myself, I have had the cut on benefit payments and experienced this first handedly.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been studies on students' academic performance online vs in-person. A group of researchers conducted a study on the outcome of compressed online courses to regular length. “We randomized 725 college students into traditional twice-per-week and compressed once-per-week lecture formats in introductory microeconomics. Students in the traditional format scored 3.2 out of 100 points higher (0.21 standard deviations) on the midterm than those in the compressed format but a statistically insignificant 1.6 points higher (0.11 standard deviations) on the final” (Crocket et al., 2015). Another article states, “On average, students have poorer outcomes in online courses in terms of the likelihood of course completion, course completion with a passing grade, and receiving an A or B” (Friedmann et al., 2018). It is reasonable to conclude from the following studies that online accelerated learning courses generally result in lower overall scores than both traditional-length online courses and in-person courses.

With the mission of the Monarchs at the forefront, university leadership should prioritize the decision that best serves the institution and its students. Based on the available evidence, maintaining or carefully evaluating the use of traditional length courses may better support student success, academic performance, and retention while upholding Old Dominion

University's mission and newly awarded Research 1 (R1) classification reputation. Let's continue to be Monarch Strong.

## References

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