

Unmanned Aerial Systems (Drones)

Faculty (including part-time, adjunct and visiting faculty), postdoctoral scholars, staff and students (including graduate/undergraduate student workers and graduate assistants) employed by University of Southern California (“USC” or the “University”) and including those working for Keck Medicine of USC (“USC Employees”). This policy continues to apply to individuals who are on sabbatical or other leaves, or who are visiting other institutions

1. Policy

Issued: March 1, 2016

Last Revised: March 1, 2016

Last Reviewed: December 9, 2024

2. Policy Purpose

To define the restrictions and parameters for operating an Unmanned Aerial System, commonly known as a “drone”, on or above University of Southern California (“USC”) property and/or in connection with a USC-sanctioned or affiliated event or other activity to include commercial, recreational, hobbyist and other uses. This policy aims to foster a culture of safety by prioritizing the well-being of the USC community, protecting university property, and maintaining compliance with applicable regulations.

3. Scope and Application

This policy applies to all USC students, faculty, staff, and visitors on all USC properties and/or during USC-sanctioned or affiliated events or activities.

4. Definitions

| Term | Definition |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Unmanned Aerial System(“UAS”) | UASs are also known as or may be characterized as unmanned aircraft systems, model aircraft, drones, quadcopter, quadrotor, etc. According to the Federal Aviation Administration, a UAS is the unmanned aircraft and all of the associated support equipment, control station, data links, telemetry, communications and navigation equipment, |

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| | etc., necessary to operate the unmanned aircraft. |
| Federal Aviation Administration (“FAA”) Regulations | Please visit https://www.faa.gov/uas/ to review current FAA regulations for owning and operating a UAS. |
| USC Unmanned Aerial Systems (“UAS”) Review Board | The UAS Board is comprised of staff members representing the Offices of the General Counsel , Culture, Ethics and Compliance , Risk Management , and the Department of Public Safety . The UAS Board meets regularly to review applications for UAS use on university property and/or during university-affiliated events. Decisions to approve or disapprove UAS applications are based on federal, local and university regulations with the goal of ensuring the safety, security, and fostering a culture of shared responsibility for safety within the university’s community. |

5. Policy Details

Due to safety, security and privacy risks, USC generally prohibits operations of Unmanned Aerial Systems (“UAS”, or commonly known as a “drone”) on or above USC property or in connection with USC-sanctioned or affiliated events or activities to include commercial, recreational, hobbyist, or other uses.

Exceptions to this policy will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the USC UAS Review Board. Those seeking an exception must submit a completed UAS prohibition exemption request form, and drone operating plan to the USC UAS Review Board for consideration.

Please see *Procedures* section below for detailed instructions.

USC is committed to fostering a culture of safety and accountability. Any UAS use must demonstrate adherence to best practices for risk reduction, as well as an understanding of and compliance with university policies and relevant regulations.

USC reserves the right to immediately shut down and confiscate a UAS if it poses a risk to individuals or property, creates electronic interference and/or disrupts any USC activity.

Individuals who violate this policy may be subject to disciplinary actions up to and including termination, suspension, or expulsion from the University in accordance with student code of

conduct and policies (USC Student Handbook), the Faculty Handbook and/or staff employment policies. Non-USC third parties may be subject to legal action if violating this policy, and individuals, schools/departments, or third parties will be responsible for fines or other damages incurred if acting in violation of this policy.

Please submit questions regarding this policy to the USC UAS Review Board at uscdrone@usc.edu.

6. Procedures

[Procedures related to the Unmanned Aerial Systems](#)

7. Forms

UAS Exemption Application Request Form:

[UAS Prohibition Exemption Application](#) UAS Operating Plan Form:

[UAS Operating Plan](#)

8. Responsibilities

| POSITION or OFFICE | RESPONSIBILITIES |
|---|--|
| USC Office of Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) | Responsible for policy implementation and management, including administration of the USC UAS Review Board. |
| USC UAS Review Board | Reviews Unmanned Aerial Systems policy exception requests and plans for approval or disapproval. The UAS Board is also responsible for monitoring this policy and proposing updates as needed. |
| UAS Operators | Required to comply with this policy, relevant Federal Aviation Administration ("FAA") regulations , state and local laws, and any other requirements imposed by the university. |

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| Students, Faculty, Staff and Visitors | Required to comply with this policy, violators may be subject to university disciplinary policies, or legal actions. |
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9. Related Information

USC UAS (Drone) Filming Information:

<https://fsep.usc.edu/filming/>

USC Filming Safety Requirements:

<https://fsep.usc.edu/files/2019/02/USC-Filming-Safety-Requirements.pdf>

California Film Commission UAS Requirements:

<https://fsep.usc.edu/files/2019/02/UAS-Use-Requirements-1.pdf>

USC Student Handbook

<https://policy.usc.edu/studenthandbook/>

USC Faculty Handbook:

<https://policy.usc.edu/faculty-handbook/>

Federal Aviation Administration (“FAA”) UAS Regulations:

<https://www.faa.gov/uas/>

10. Contacts

Please direct any questions regarding this policy to:

| OFFICE | PHONE | EMAIL |
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| USC EH&S | (323) 442-2200 | ehs@usc.edu or uscdrone@usc.edu (UAS Review Board) |