



Georgia Northwestern Technical College Distance Learning Manual for Students

This handbook is intended to serve as a resource for students by providing information about resources and support available from the GNTC Distance Learning Team. This handbook does not replace the GNTC Student Handbook and Catalog but should be used in conjunction with them.

Provided by the GNTC Distance Learning Team

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GNTC Distance Learning Team Purpose

The mission of the Distance Learning Team and the Online Mentoring Committee is to provide input, feedback, and suggestions for improvement to the Leadership Team for Distance Learning as well as information for the administration.

Defining Distance Learning at GNTC

All courses are housed in the Learning Management System (currently Blackboard Learn-Bb) approved by the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and housed at the Georgia Virtual Technical Connection (GVTC).

There are four types of Distance Learning courses offered at GNTC:

- **CA - On Campus** (<=50% Online) taught on campus with some components online.
- **BL - Blended** (> 50% Online) taught on campus and online with more than half of the course content being delivered online.
- **OA - Online Asynchronous** (100% Online) all work is completed online asynchronously with course content, activities, and interactions occurring entirely online. This delivery method does not require students to be online at specific dates/times. This delivery method may require proctored work. If you have the exam proctored at GNTC or any other college within the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), there is no fee for the proctoring. However, if you choose to have the exam proctored at a college outside of TCSG, that college may charge you a fee for proctoring the exam.
- **OS - Online Synchronous** (100% Online) all work completed online with course content, activities, and interactions occurring entirely online and sometimes synchronously. This delivery method requires students to be online at specific dates/times throughout the term. This delivery method may require proctored work. If you have the exam proctored at GNTC or any other college within the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), there is no fee for the proctoring. However, if you choose to have the exam proctored at a college outside of TCSG, that college may charge you a fee for proctoring the exam.

Registering for a Class in Distance Learning

Login Problems

For login problems please submit a [Student Help Form](#) for assistance (staffed 7:45-4:15 Monday-Friday). Please include all information requested and an alternate email if you cannot access your GNTC email.

Blackboard Orientation Class

Upon completing the Single Sign On process via Okta, students will see the Bb icon in the Okta menu. Click and enter GNTC's Blackboard. Under Student Tools, students will be able to select "Blackboard Orientation for Students" and self-enroll in the individual-paced orientation course. Students can revisit the orientation as often as needed for a refresher on the Blackboard fundamentals.

Registration

Registration is the process of selecting classes for the upcoming academic term. New students, or returning students who have not been enrolled at GNTC for one year or more, are required to attend a face-to-face orientation and will receive registration assistance at that time.

Returning Student Registration occurs each semester and is an opportunity for currently enrolled students to sign up for classes early. To register for classes during this week, contact your program advisor to set up a registration appointment. The dates for Returning Student Registration are listed on the Academic Calendar. The Academic Calendar can be downloaded for registration dates as well as for other important GNTC deadlines.

Drop/Add Period is the last opportunity for you to sign up for classes for the upcoming academic term. The Drop/Add Period occurs during the first three consecutive instructional days of an academic term. During this time, you can drop or add one or more courses without academic penalty. If you wait until Drop/Add Period or just before the semester begins, class availability is limited since many classes may be full.

The dates for Registration can be obtained by clicking on the GNTC website's My Resource tab and then [Schedules and Calendars](#). The Academic Calendar can be viewed by term for registration dates as well as for other important GNTC deadlines.

Beginning a Class in Distance Learning

Blackboard Learn Learning Management System (Bb)

All courses are offered through the Blackboard Learn Learning Management System through GVTC. Bb is accessible with a secure username and password through the Okta single sign-on.

Chrome, Firefox, and Edge are the recommended browsers for Bb. It is important to clear your cache regularly. Use the links below to learn more about clearing your cache and keeping your Blackboard and internet browser working properly:

- [Clearing Cache Instructions](#)
- [How to Clear Cache Video](#)

If using Chrome, you will need to [enable your pop-ups](#). It is a good idea to use the power button in the top right corner of your Bb account to ~~log out when you are finished~~ to keep cache errors to a minimum. (GNTC is not responsible for changes made to personal electronic devices.)

Login Security

The Blackboard LMS platform supports the delivery of online content by providing students and instructors a secure logon environment into their virtual classroom through Okta multifactor security single sign-on. Instructors design, develop, and deliver their course content and materials in and through the LMS. Students interact with the content, the instructor, and other students while attending their virtual course. Students should never share their username and password. Using the Bb LMS and secure login students can see their own grades only and not that of the entire class.

After login, please review the syllabus for details about textbooks, other required materials, classroom assignments, and due dates, also familiarize yourself with the course layout and design. Get in the habit of communicating with your instructor through the Blackboard email system. Let the instructor know if you have any questions or concerns about the course.

If your course has an access code there should be information on its use in course announcements, on the syllabus, or within the content. Please contact your instructor or the publisher immediately if you have a problem with your access code.

Please Pay Close Attention to the Following:

GNTC Drop/Add Period

Students may add and/or drop courses through the third instructional day of the term without penalty. To make a schedule change during the drop/add period, students must log in to MyGNTC. Any student who enters a course after the first day of instruction is required to complete all missed assignments as required by the instructor and should attend the first available class after registration.

GNTC No Show Policy

Instructors are required to provide students with a graded activity within the first seven instructional days of the term for enrollment verification purposes. After the drop/add and within the first seven instructional days of the term, instructors are required to accurately report students as either "Present" (P) or as a "No Show" (NS).

A "no show" student is a student who fails to verify intent by completing a graded assignment prior to the instructor's no-show deadline. Rosters will be verified in MyGNTC, and any student reported as a "no show" by an instructor will be administratively withdrawn from the course and removed from the official course roster.

GNTC Withdrawal Policy

During the academic term, there are specific deadlines in which a course(s) can be dropped without penalty. The deadline dates for withdrawing can be found on the Academic Calendar located on GNTC's website under the My Resources tab. A student who wants to withdraw from a course or course but remains enrolled in the college must complete a Drop Add form.

The Drop Add form can be obtained on the [Forms](#) page located under the My Resources tab or from any student Help Center. Completed forms must be submitted to a GNTC Help Center for processing. A student who stops attending after the deadline to withdraw may receive a failing grade and/or loss of financial aid.

Succeeding in a Distance Learning Class

Resources

Library Services

Links to Library Services Homepage, Leganto Course Resources, and GALILEO can all be found on the Blackboard homepage under GNTC Library Services.

Proctored Exams/Work

Proctors are available on each campus if a GNTC instructor or an instructor from any TCSG would like

to use them for testing/work in an online class. There is no charge to the student if they are attending a TCSG College. Check the testing dates and times on our website.

NetTutor Online Tutoring

After-hours online tutoring is available to all students through a link located on Blackboard.

Tutoring Virtually and on Campus

In-person and virtual tutoring is available through the Academic Support Centers. Information regarding tutoring can be found on the [Academic Support Center](#), on the GNTC website. Tutoring services are provided on a semester basis. These services are offered for the day and/or evening students on all campuses.

Student Policies and Procedures

ADA Compliance

Blackboard LMS is ADA Compliant. GNTC is committed to providing equal access for participation in all programs, services, and activities. The Accessibility Services Coordinator can provide details about services and accommodations that are available to qualified students with appropriate documentation. Students requesting accommodations should submit an [Appointment Request Form](#) or contact the Accessibility Services Coordinator, [Brittany Elrod](#), for an appointment.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), with which Georgia Northwestern Technical College complies fully, was designated to protect the privacy of educational records.

FERPA Privacy Information for Online Course Options

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act is a federal law that requires colleges to (1) give students access to their education records, and (2) keep personally identifiable education records confidential with respect to third parties.

Because an online environment creates a record of student activity, it is subject to FERPA privacy rights, unlike verbal exchanges in a physical classroom. The following are items for consideration.

- The academic deans and GNTC Learning Management System (LMS) point of contact staff have access to all online courses and archived course documents to carry out their job duties.
- When students submit information electronically (via LMS), the information is accessible to the faculty teaching the section. If the work is submitted via GNTC email, the information is accessible to the faculty and computer system administrators.

In online courses, discussions, postings, and some student work are accessible to other students in class.

- Public postings and student work do not contain grades.
- Students are required to post an assignment, which may be an introduction when the term begins.
- Discussion requirements are listed in the distance learning courses.
- The posted work is available to members of the class.

- Third Party (online labs, textbook-specific online course content)
- Students are instructed to buy/access the online resources when purchasing textbooks.

In the case of students posting a message or blog on any social media site (GNTC Twitter, Facebook), students may not be protected by FERPA if the student submission is not assigned as a part of an academic endeavor. Every effort is made by the instructor to maintain the confidentiality of the student's grade.

Work Ethics

Georgia Northwestern Technical College agrees with the industry that an important area of student development should be Work Ethics. Work Ethics pertains to those personal characteristics often referred to as good work habits—attendance, character, teamwork, appearance, attitude, productivity, organizational skills, communication, cooperation, and respect. Therefore, the college designed a system for evaluation of Work Ethics in which a student is assigned a grade reflecting Work Ethics in some program classes.

Many instructors create a drop box and after emailing the student the individual evaluation at mid-term and at the end of the course, the student can just reply through the drop box that they have seen the form. There must be an explanation of how the instructor can be contacted if the student disagrees with the evaluation.

Written Student Complaint

Any student at Georgia Northwestern Technical College who feels he/she has an academic complaint should first seek resolution of the complaint with the instructor of the class in which the situation has occurred. The complaint should be presented to the instructor in written form, and dated, in order to better establish a timeline for the resolution of the complaint.

The complaint should be brought to the instructor's attention before the end of the semester in which the situation occurred. In any case, the complaint must be brought to the attention of the GNTC faculty before the beginning of the next academic session. * Failure to lodge a complaint in a timely fashion may preclude the student from filing the said complaint at a later date.

Once a student has notified the instructor of the complaint the instructor has five (5) business days to reply in writing. This reply should list the student's original complaint and the solution offered by the instructor. A copy of the original complaint and a copy of the instructor's response will be forwarded to the instructor's Dean of Academic Affairs.

If the student does not get a satisfactory resolution to his/her complaint, resolution may be sought by appealing to the appropriate Dean of Academic Affairs. A written description of the incident, including all pertinent details and the solution offered by the instructor, must be given to the dean. The appeal must be received within ten (10) business days after the failure to receive satisfaction from the instructor. Once the dean receives the formal complaint, he/she has seven (7) business days to reply in writing to the student.

If the student is still not satisfied with the results of the complaint he/she has ten (10) business days

from the time of the receipt of the decision in which to file a written appeal with the Vice President of Academic Affairs at GNTC.

Once the student has filed a written appeal with the Vice President of Academic Affairs, he/she should expect to receive a reply within seven (7) business days. Once the Vice President of Academic Affairs decides on the appeal, that decision is final. No further appeal is heard.

*Note: If the student's complaint is regarding the final grade awarded for a particular course then the student has ten (10) business days from the time they could reasonably be aware of the final grade. This "reasonable time" is defined as starting once grades are posted and made available to students on the institution's electronic records web page.

Written Student Complaint- Other

Faculty and staff receiving written and signed student complaints, other than those complaints that would be considered academic complaints, should forward the complaint and any clarifying information to the appropriate vice president. The appropriate vice president should investigate the complaint to determine its validity.

This investigation would include, but may not be limited to:

- A meeting with the student (online students can request a phone conference or other electronic communication)
- A meeting with faculty or staff member against whom the complaint was lodged. In case of a complaint regarding procedures, the meeting would be with the individual responsible for the particular program or service in question.
- Meetings or discussions with other appropriate faculty, staff, or students

The vice president, upon clarifying the nature of the complaint, should respond in writing to the student lodging the complaint within seven (7) days. The response should include:

1. Acknowledgment of receipt of the complaint
2. A statement regarding action taken

Copies of the response should be forwarded to:

1. The faculty or staff member involved
2. The student's file

Your GNTC Distance Learning Team

Under the supervision of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, the Distance Learning Team is committed to expanding the college's programs to provide students with increased access to high-quality education experiences using online delivery.

- [Graceful Beam](#) - Director of Distance Learning
- [Adi Baxter](#) - Learning Management System Specialist/Blackboard Help