



Georgia Northwestern Technical College

Distance Learning and Quality Assurance Manual

A Resource for Instructors

Provided by the GNTC Online Learning Team Office of Academic Affairs

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Blackboard 2016

Engagement Change 2017 ILP, Accessibility Change 2018

Web-enhanced Change, Mentoring Team 2020, Course Types 2021

Accessibility Change 2023

Introduction

The Georgia Virtual Technical Connection (GVTC) is a consortium of independent technical colleges in the Technical College System of Georgia working in a collaborative manner to create occupational courses and programs, using a standardized curriculum delivered over the Internet and through local centers. GNTC will adhere to these practices.

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

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

- CA On Campus (<=50% Online) meet on campus with some components online.
- BL Blended (> 50% Online) you will still meet on campus.
- OA Online Asynchronous (100% Online) all work completed online with some classes requiring 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), but instructors will have some live sessions with students using video conferencing tools. all work completed online with some classes requiring 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.

Quality Assurance in Online Classes

Quality Assurance Rationale

Quality assurance of distance learning courses is essential on three (3) levels:

1. **Institutional Level:** To advance and protect the reputation of the institution in attracting students, qualified faculty members, and collaboratives with business and industry.
2. **Student Level:** To assure the student that his/her credential is recognized by prospective employers and is relevant in today's workforce.
3. **Faculty Level:** To provide training, resources, and technical support for the development of new online courses and the maintenance of on-going online courses.

Five-Step Procedure

1. **Instructor Training** – The instructor is trained in online learning methodology to include the learning management system and related software either by a GVTC certified trainer or a certified trainer in the instructor's consortium area.
2. **Course Development** – Initial submission for approval is requested with the Course Development Request form. After the course is approved for development, the Online Course Institutional Review Process is started and the course is developed based on the Best Practices Course Development Guide. All classes are approved for CA format because the meeting time is the same.
3. **Review** – The course is then submitted for approval for delivery. The course is reviewed by the Distance Learning Coordinator with any concerns being shared with the AVPAA and dean.
4. **Course Evaluation** – During the initial delivery of the course, the following items are used for evaluation: GNTC Student Satisfaction Survey, review of online learning classes for engagement, and mentor feedback.
5. **Periodic Review** – Deans will review the online classes as part of the overall evaluation process.

Training and Course Development

Distance Learning courses are developed as a part of the approved curriculum within the related academic unit of the college. It is the responsibility of the instructor to obtain consensus from the appropriate Academic Affairs Deans to develop a new format for delivery. All classes are approved for CA format. The dean will forward the course approval form found on the intranet and in the Distance Learning Manual for Quality Assurance as well as the course standards and syllabus with student guide for the semester to be offered. These are sent to the Distance Learning Coordinator who reviews the documentation for clarification. The Distance Learning Coordinator will review classes using a rubric each semester so students are ensured quality and engagement. This information is sent to the Academic Affairs Deans, the VPAA, and the AVPAA with a plan on how to resolve any issues. New instructors are assigned a mentor the first semester to help guide them through the process.

LMS Training for Faculty

Faculty members are asked to complete one of three levels of training before teaching as all courses offered in the above formats are housed in the Learning Management System (currently Blackboard Learn) approved by the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and housed at the Georgia Virtual Technical Connection (GVTC). The training is supervised by the Distance Learning Coordinator and is the same basic training, but the engagement tools are reviewed for Level II and Level III. Instructors typically start in Level I or Level III and training from another TCSG college is accepted.

- Level I – can teach CA classes which house at least a grade center in Bb.
- Level II – if instructor completes Level I and then wants to teach blended/online classes.
- Level III – can teach blended/online classes.

LMS Protocol

Currently, all courses are offered through the Blackboard Learn Learning Management System through GVTC. Blackboard Learn is accessible with a secure username and password and can be accessed through the GNTC website using OKTA single sign-on credentials. Using the Blackboard Learn LMS, students can only see their own grades and not those of the entire class.

New course shells for the upcoming semester are created through the Intelligent Learning Platform (ILP) when the schedule is rolled for the next semester. Copying previously used content should be done before the end of the semester whenever possible. Department Master Shells are encouraged as they allow full-time faculty to develop content consistent with TCSG standards and adjunct faculty the opportunity to teach without much development necessary.

Course Ownership/Responsibility

Course Readiness

All courses must have at least the syllabus, student guide, and grade center set up by the first day of class. Online (OA, OS) classes should have instructions for engagement that meet GNTC guidelines and can be found on the syllabus and student guide. Please check with your dean for more information.

Exams-Proctored

There is no charge to the student for proctoring if they are attending a technical college in Georgia as part of the TCSG system. Charges may apply if using a proctoring site outside of the TCSG system. Instructors are responsible for coordinating proctored events.

Responding to Students

Instructors should initiate contact with students daily during the drop/ add period and at least weekly thereafter. Communication expectations should be listed on the syllabus and in distance learning courses so that students are aware when they can expect instructor responses. Instructors are required to respond to students within 24 business hours or 3 business days. The operational hours of GNTC are 7:45AM-4:15PM Monday-Friday. Instructors should indicate to online students how many hours are expected of them in order to fulfill all of the assignments. A rule of thumb is to double the contact hours listed for the course.

Syllabus Information - Contact information, course requirements, classroom policies, and procedures must be stated clearly in a course syllabus available to each student on the first day of class. The syllabus, including the grading system, should not be altered during the semester. It is an agreement by which the students and instructor follow. If the syllabus must be changed, the change must be given in writing to students and an explanation of why the change had to occur. The syllabus should also indicate that the instructor will be available for consultation if a student has questions about his or her progress in the course. All syllabi and student guides are to be filed as part of the Course ID system on the intranet. The print function will produce a document in .pdf format that can be uploaded and made available to students in the corresponding Blackboard course shell.

Engagement in Online Classes (OA, OS)

It is recognized that most of the engagement for students takes place in the classroom for CA and BL classes, but Blackboard Minimum Requirements for GNTC must be followed.

The course design for all online classes must include weekly engagement through Blackboard Learn as well as any extraneous websites an instructor may choose. This will allow for easy review by accrediting agents and any other monitoring as set forth by the President of GNTC.

Higher Learning in general is demanding that we engage our students on a regular basis with as many tools as possible. Blackboard Learn has tools for engagement that include wikis, blogs, discussions, Collaborate Ultra, journals, and file exchange. One of these tools must be used on a weekly basis to engage students in an online course. The engagement rubric found on the intranet explains the details. Contact your dean for further clarification.

Based on a recommendation from the Distance Learning Leadership Team and the Executive Team, online courses will be checked weeks 5 and 10 during fall and spring semester to ensure weekly engagement has occurred using the approved tools in the Learning Management System (discussions, wikis, blogs, WebEx sessions, journals, file exchange with groups, and approved third-party engagement applications).

Policies and Procedures

Attendance Reporting

Drop/Add Period for GNTC - 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.

No Show Policy for GNTC - 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 period ends 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. Grades can be pushed to Banner through the ILP portion of Bb. 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.

*Failure to accurately report students as either "Present" or "No Show" by the no show reporting deadline may have negative monetary consequences for the student and/or college. NS can be recorded through Bb by clicking ILP Integration (midterm) under course tools.

If a student is reported incorrectly, then the instructor must submit a Registration Status Change Form located on the intranet with the documented reason for the request to either "no show" the student or "reinstate" the student. The form will be routed to the appropriate dean for review, and the dean will forward the documentation to the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs for approval. Students whose names do not appear on the official class roster must not be allowed to continue in the course.

Copyright

The Copyright Act of 1976 grants to copyright owners the exclusive right to reproduce their works, prepare derivative works based upon them, distribute copies of them, perform them, and display them. Anyone who undertakes one of these acts without permission of the copyright holder has infringed upon the copyright.

Family Learning Rights and Privacy Act of 1974

The Family Learning Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), with which Georgia Northwestern Technical College complies fully, was designated to protect the privacy of Learning 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 Learning records, and (2) keep personally identifiable Learning 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 the 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 designated student work are accessible to students in class.
- Public postings and visible 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.
- Third-party (online labs, textbooks specific for online course content) – Students may be instructed to buy/access online resources when purchasing textbooks.
- In the case of students posting a message or blog on a social media site (GNTC Twitter, Facebook), students may not be protected by FERPA if the student submission is not assigned as a part of academic endeavor.

Intellectual Property

In accordance with TCSG policy, Intellectual Property, to further the goal of making Learning accessible to as many people as possible, GNTC and TCSG owns the intellectual property rights in any and all works produced by or for the college.

In order that GNTC and TCSG be able to utilize to the best and fullest extent all works produced for them and all works provided for their use, anyone producing work for the college and TCSG and anyone providing work for the college and TCSG's use must represent and warrant that such works:

- Do not violate any law;
- Do not violate or infringe any intellectual property right (including but not limited to copyright, trademark, patent, or right of publicity) of any person or firm; and
- Do not libel, defame, or invade the privacy of any person or firm.

Request Process for Format Change (BL, OA, OS)

A request for approval to develop a blended or online course must be submitted electronically to the Distance Learning Coordinator according to the following procedures:

1. Initiation- courses should be developed in congruence with the operational and strategic goals of the college. The same rigor and standards apply to courses in any format. Courses can be selected from occupational and general learning curriculum, but lab time must be considered.
2. The instructor initiating the action should complete a request form and submit it to the dean via email. The form should be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Dean. The instructor must develop the course in accordance with guidelines for maintaining the academic integrity, course design, and rigor of the course. The proposal should be sent to the Distance Learning Coordinator with documentation for clarification. Deans will indicate if this course changes a program to 50% online or 100% online so it can be changed internally.
4. The new format will be included in the schedule of course offerings when approved. The instructor and dean will determine offering intervals.
5. Review- courses will require a periodic review as part of the dean's evaluation process.

Requesting Delivery Mode Change after Schedule is Published

This should be in exceptional cases as courses should be approved for delivery format the semester before they are placed on the schedule. The last deadline for approval in delivery format is before the schedule is posted for early registration and must be approved by the AVPAA.

The Importance of Accessibility for All Users

The accessibility team reviews content that is added to the department masters to be sure all content complies with WCAG 2.0 levels A and AA as well as Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. However, instructors are responsible for any course content integrated into a Blackboard course or master from a third-party vendor. If third-party content needs to be reviewed for compliance, instructors should contact [Online Help](#) for assistance. Documents to assist with accessibility can also be found on the GNTC intranet.

ADA Compliance-Blackboard Learn LMS is ADA Compliant. The ADA/Accessibility Services Office at Georgia Northwestern Technical College is committed to working with students to assist with program accessibility and academic accommodations that may be necessary and appropriate due to students' disabilities. Students who have a physical or mental impairment, as defined by the Americans Disability Act, which substantially limits one or more major life activities, are eligible for services.

The primary form of service delivery will be Accommodation Letters, which will describe recommended accommodations. The student is responsible for requesting services and delivering an Accommodation Letter to each faculty member the student is taking a class with each semester.

Instructors do not provide accommodations to a student who has not followed the procedures of self-identifying, providing appropriate documentation and providing an Accommodation Letter from the Accessibility Services office.

Students requesting accommodations should submit an [Appointment Request Form](#) or contact the Accessibility Services Coordinator for an appointment at the campus they are attending or plan to attend:

- [Brittany Elrod](#), Director of Accessibility Services – Catoosa County, Whitfield Murray, and Walker County Campuses
- [Nicole Hutchinson](#), Accessibility Services Coordinator – Floyd County, Gordon County, and Polk County Campuses