

Policy Manual for eLearning Faculty



CREATED AND PUBLISHED BY THE e LEARNING COMMITTEE
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eLearning Faculty Handbook eLearning Policy Statement

Gadsden State Community College uses a variety of course delivery methods to better meet student needs. Courses may be offered online, via video-teleconference, videocassette, or other transmission means. Regardless of the course delivery method, the quality of teaching and learning should be equivalent to traditional classroom courses taught on campus. eLearning students should achieve the same learning goals, objectives, and competencies as described in the Alabama College System's course descriptions.

General Information

It is the policy of Gadsden State Community College to offer eLearning classes in a variety of formats:

1. Online Courses:
 - a. WebCT Courses (text supplied content and instructor developed)
 - b. Instructor Developed Internet/Web Page Courses
 - c. Hybrid Courses (partially online and partially onsite)
2. Video Courses (VCR/CD/DVD-ROM)
3. Multiple Modes (combination of any of the above formats)

All eLearning courses should provide various ways for students to communicate with the instructor and with each other (i.e. mail, fax, chat rooms, threaded discussions, telephone, and face-to-face meetings). Virtual office hours and times of unavailability should be clearly communicated to students. Instructors should also respond timely to student email and questions, usually within a 24 hour period.

eLearning courses use various methods of student evaluation: on-campus exams or exams proctored at approved off-campus sites, research assignments, group assignments, individual assignments, portfolios, and others.

At the end of each semester, students will be asked to complete a *eLearning Evaluation Form* (Appendix A) to ensure the quality of eLearning classes. In addition, online classes will be evaluated at least annually by a peer, the appropriate Department Chair, and Administration.

Orientation

The eLearning Committee recommends that instructors make course information, including orientation information, a part of their online syllabi or listed as a "Read First" item on the WebCT homepage. Consult the appropriate Division Chair to schedule an "onsite" orientation if required.

All students enrolled in a course are entered into the WebCT program from the Student Enrollment System prior to the first day of class. These classes are currently labeled as section "70's" and entered as "WEBCT" in the site field.

New Course Development

Instructors who wish to begin developing an eLearning course should complete the [Course Proposal Form](#). Applicants will be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Division Chair and the Dean of Instruction. Once the course is approved, the eLearning Coordinator or System Administrator will add the course and instructor (designer) to the server. A peer designer may be assigned to aid in course design and development as needed or requested. When the course is fully developed, the course content will be approved by the appropriate Division Chair and the Dean of Instruction before being offered. **The course and its contents are the Intellectual Property of Gadsden State Community College.**

Since eLearning courses are considered part of an instructor's regular class schedule, office hours and "virtual office hours" should be posted as part of the instructor's schedule. The [Online Faculty Time Record](#) should be utilized to document non-traditional hours.

Legal and Copyright Policies

Read Gadsden State Community College's legal policy regarding internet use:
<http://www.gadsdenstate.edu/legal/aup.htm>

Copyright infringement and plagiarism considerations are the same for eLearning courses as for traditional classroom courses. Instructors should be aware that web pages, graphics, and other documents are "owned" material, and as such, they may be copied as "printed" material. eLearning instructors should strictly adhere to the applicable laws and encourage students to do the same. Copyright infringement occurs when documents or other items are published in some way (online or printed) without written permission of the owner.

"Fair Use" laws apply to web page publications. Section 110 of the Copyright Act allows the "performance or display of a work by instructors or pupils in the course of face-to-face teaching activities of a nonprofit educational institution." If an instructor wishes to use a copyrighted work that is not considered under the "Fair Use" policy, or if there is a question regarding a work's copyright status, then the instructor should contact Gadsden State Community College's Director for Library Services, to aid in obtaining permission to use the work from its owner or licensing organization. library@gadsdenstate.edu.

Copyrighted works should not be revised, commercialized, or derivatives created without written permission of the owner. Gadsden State Community College will not interfere with measures used by copyright holders to protect their copyrighted works.

Read the TEACH ACT for information regarding teaching and copyright law:
[http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=Distance Education and the TEACH Act&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=25939](http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=Distance%20Education%20and%20the%20TEACH%20Act&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=25939)

Read the FAQs (frequently asked questions) from the official government page:
<http://www.copyright.gov/>

In addition, as needed, the following government site provides information regarding specific materials, fees, and licensing: <http://www.copyright.gov/circs/>

Service Providers

Educational institutions are defined as “service providers” and to be eligible they must:

- Adopt a policy to terminate accounts of repeat infringers.
- Not interfere with measures used by copyright holders to protect copyrighted works.

Educational Institutions must:

- File with the Copyright Office a designation of agent to receive notice of claimed infringement. (Director for Library Services)
- Have an updated service provider copyright policy.
- Remove or block access to infringed material once notified.

Defamation

Defamation is a published statement that is untrue or hurts one’s reputation. Examples might be accusing someone of committing a crime, being unchaste, or being professionally incompetent. With online defamation, this could be placing a defamatory statement on a web page, in an online newsletter, on an internet bulletin board, or in a chat room. A person is liable for defamation if he or she knew or had reason to know that a statement was defamatory. Stating “in my opinion” does not change a statement from being defamatory. **The person held liable is the one who has editorial control over the site.** Instructors should be in control of all material and communication in a eLearning course. Instructors should also know the internet is highly visible worldwide and respond accordingly.

Privacy Issues

Privacy issues include the disclosure of embarrassing facts, whether true or untrue, which are not of legitimate concern to the public. More specifically, “false light publicity” usually involves publishing a picture of someone with a controversial story. In addition, court rulings have established that there is no reasonable expectation of privacy regarding email. Email messages sent over the internet can be intercepted at many different points and can be stored and resurface later without warning; therefore, instructors should use email cautiously. A general rule is “Do not send any information that could not be written on a postcard.” **College employees should understand that email is in no way private, may be monitored, and is the property of the college. In addition, all college employees must sign a policy statement which acknowledges awareness of such a policy.** Violations will result in disciplinary action. The Gadsden State Community College *Student Handbook for eLearning* contains a section on “Netiquette” (Network Etiquette) which explains what should and should not be included in email, messages, chat sessions, and discussion boards.

Web Page Design

All web pages of federally funded institutions must meet the guidelines of Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act) and must meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) guidelines. Web pages should provide equivalent alternatives for all auditory and visual information. They should also be designed so that all moving, blinking and scrolling objects can be paused and should not rely solely on color. Features should be used to allow activation through a variety of input devices (mouse, keyboard, head wand, voice, etc). Instructors should strive to provide information that will help students better understand course content and delivery.

Visit the following site for a complete list of web accessibility guidelines:

<http://www.w3.org/TR/1999/WAI-WEBCONTENT-19990505/>

Visit the following site when developing a website and identifying possible disability access violations: http://www.icdri.org/section508/section_508_summary_table.htm

At this time there has not been a court case brought to the attention of the Gadsden State Community College ELearning Committee to set precedent for linking to other sites from web pages, but a general rule is to ask the person who owns the site for permission to link to it.

Internet or WebCT Course Development

Some class materials may be provided by the author or publisher of the text used for the class and some are developed by the instructor to supplement the text. If an instructor uses an E-Pack (course software) or a text that requires an online Access Code, then he or she should make the students aware in the course syllabus, and note that the text cannot be returned to the book store if the packaged materials have been opened. The text and the access code can be “bundled” with separate ISBNs. This way a student can buy a used textbook and then buy the access code separately if so desired.

Steps to Take When Considering Teaching a Distance Course

The college encourages instructors to complete the following steps when preparing to teach using eLearning technology.

1. Consult the appropriate Department Head for permission to offer the course through one of the current distance formats.
2. Contact the eLearning Committee for individual training.
3. Consult the eLearning Coordinator for assistance in instructional design.
4. Once the course has been approved, the instructor's department enters the course on the Master Schedule, using appropriate section numbers, abbreviations, and codes for

- specific eLearning formats and /or location(s).
5. The instructor's department notifies the eLearning Committee that the course has been approved and entered on the Master Schedule.
 6. If the course is a WebCT course, the eLearning Coordinator enters student roster, user IDs, and passwords the first day of class and updates the roster the day after the Drop/Add period ends.
 7. Monitor the official roster, especially during the Drop/Add period at the beginning of the semester (instructors are the primary point of contact for students regarding course information and assistance).
 8. Maintain frequent communication with students throughout the semester. If an instructor has had no correspondence or evidence of course activity from a student in a reasonable amount of time, then the instructor should attempt to contact the student and offer appropriate assistance or instruction. The *Student Handbook for eLearning* contains a *Student Profile* sheet that instructors may want to use for additional means of contact (Appendix E).

Proctored Exams

Students who are unable to travel to a Gadsden State Community College campus have the option of setting up a proctored exam. A proctored exam is one that is supervised by an impartial individual (called a proctor) who monitors or oversees a student while he or she is taking an exam. The proctor ensures the security and integrity of the exam process. Student should complete and return the Proctor Agreement Form least five (5) business days before the first scheduled exam.

Workshops and Training

The college offers frequent workshops and training opportunities for WebCT and various online teaching tools. The WebCT Faculty Course provides step-by-step instructions for using the various WebCT tools (managing students, making assignments and quizzes, and providing helpful links) and provides a means to update instructors concerning eLearning issues.

The eLearning Committee would like to thank and acknowledge those who contributed to the handbook. Much help came from "*Legal Landmines.*" *Understanding the Law and Distance Education:* presented by Deb Moon and Stella Smith, Georgia Perimeter College at the 2000 Annual Meeting of the Commission on Colleges and "*Copyright Law and the Teach Act*" GSCC 2006 A-Team workshop with Dr. Glenda Colagross, Dean of Instruction, Northwest-Shoals Community College.

Forms Appendix

[Proctor Agreement Form](#)

[Course Request Form](#)

[Course Proposal Form](#)

[Online Faculty Time Record](#)