

Distance Education Faculty Manual

2023/2024

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# [Introduction to SCTC Distance Education](#_top)

Welcome to Distance Education at Southern Crescent Technical College (SCTC). This manual provides information about resources and support available through SCTC as well as best practices for developing and delivering effective online courses.

# [The SCTC Distance Education Department](#_top)

The SCTC Distance Education department is located in the back of the library on the main campus in Griffin. We are committed to providing individualized instruction and support to faculty who are developing and teaching our online programs. We invite you to contact us at any time.

**Jennifer Edwards,** Director of Distance Education

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[Charles.Bowman@sctech.edu](https://southerncrescent-my.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/g/personal/jennifer_edwards_sctech_edu/EcWxNeWq9zhDsujMKaro0gcBe4VB-bo1wxwMbomtzXaQKA) (770) 467-4487

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Faculty Resources are available on the Georgia Virtual Technical Connection (GVTC) website at: <https://gvtc.tcsg.edu/>

Student Resources are available on the SCTC website at:

<https://www.sctech.edu/online-learning/>

The Distance Education department is committed to expanding SCTC’s mission of providing students with increased access to high-quality educational experiences using online delivery tools. We support faculty in the design, development, and delivery of online courses. We also provide workshops and training materials to ensure faculty and students are successful in teaching and learning online.

# [Distance Education Mission Statement](#_top)

The mission of the Southern Crescent Technical College Distance Education Department is to provide support, guidance, and assistance to the College in the design, development, and delivery of distance education and technology-based learning initiatives, manage the college-level online learning student portal, and serve as a conduit for distance and technology-enhanced education.

The office of Academic Affairs has established a procedure for review of all Southern Crescent Technical College courses offered in a web-based format. As with on-campus courses, distance education courses provide the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for its graduates to obtain initial employment and offers opportunities for students to participate in a general education curriculum that fosters the development of intellectual, personal, and social values, and an understanding of society.

**The Distance Education Program Supports the SCTC Mission by:**

* Providing a variety of courses, via the Internet, that offer a depth, rigor, and experience equal to those same course offerings on campus;
* Offering continuing education and training to allow experienced employees to acquire and maintain advanced levels of competency; and
* Developing both full- and part-time faculty and support staff who are trained in online instructional theories and best practices.

# [Purpose](#_top)

The purpose of this manual is to assist the faculty, adjuncts, and staff of SCTC in delivering online credit-based programs and courses that adhere to the Technical College System of Georgia’s (TCSG) program standards, accrediting agencies’ online policies, and the Georgia Virtual Technical Connection’s (GVTC) Best Practices for Online Courses, while upholding the mission, vision, and values of the college.

# [Defining Distance Education](#_top)

The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) defines *distance education* as: A formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time or both for the majority of the instructional period. Distance education materials can be delivered through a variety of media including, but not limited to, print, audio recordings, video recordings, broadcasts, computer software, internet-based programs, mobile applications, and other online technology. Teachers support distance learners through communication via mail, email, text messages, telephone calls or conferencing, video calls or conferencing, and other online technologies and software.

# [Distance Education Goals](#_top)

For any program to be successful, it must have the full backing of the college in which it will be implemented. Thus, in support of the focus, vision, and direction of the distance-learning program, Southern Crescent Technical College has adopted the following goals:

* Southern Crescent Technical College will provide distance-learning courses that are equal in quality to those offered on campus.
* Students must meet the same criteria as students enrolled in on-campus courses.
* Southern Crescent Technical College online instructors must meet the same criteria as instructors teaching on-campus courses.
* Southern Crescent Technical College will mirror anticipated student outcomes for both on-campus and online students.
* Southern Crescent Technical College will provide library and instructional support resources to students enrolled in distance learning courses that are comparable to those offered for on-campus programs.
* Southern Crescent Technical College will provide students enrolled in distance learning courses with student support services comparable to those in on-campus programs, including access to admissions, registration, advisement, financial aid, textbooks, job placement and career services.
* Southern Crescent Technical College will work with the Georgia Virtual Technical Connection (GVTC) to identify and market to students whose academic strengths and career goals are compatible with distance learning.
* Southern Crescent Technical College will work with the GVTC and Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) to provide human and technical resources necessary to reliably deliver distance-learning courses that maintain a high-quality standard.

# [Distance Education Committee & Faculty Governance](#_top" \o "Return to Cover Page)

The Distance Education program at Southern Crescent Technical College is evaluated regularly to determine the effectiveness at which it functions and if course continuation is indicated. The evaluation of the distance-learning program is primarily faculty-driven and is coordinated by the Distance Education Team. The team operates with the full support and advisement of the Director of Distance Education, hence becoming part of Southern Crescent Technical College’s overall structure in faculty responsibility and authority in academic and governance matters.

# [Blackboard](#_top)

Southern Crescent Technical College participates with Georgia Virtual Technical Connection (GVTC) by offering courses over the internet. Blackboard Learning Management System (Blackboard) is used by SCTC and GVTC as the primary form of Learning Management System (LMS).

Online courses should be delivered using the campus course management system, Blackboard. From Blackboard, instructors can link to external websites and resources, post course documents, conduct asynchronous discussions, administer online exams, and collect digital assignments.

Blackboard is accessible through the Okta dashboard. A username and password are required to access Blackboard. Contact the IT Help Desk at techsupport@sctech.edu if you do not know your account information or encounter issues with OKTA or your email. Contact the Distance Education Helpdesk at encounter issues using Blackboard.

Course links, also known as term shells, are automatically created for class sections set up in Banner. Although students are enrolled in course sites when they register for classes, they do not have access to a Blackboard course until the first day of the semester.

# [Supported Browsers](#_top)

Blackboard supports five primary browsers. Links to the vendor sites for the browsers are included in this handout.



\*\*\* Google Chrome versions 42+ and Microsoft Edge do not support NPAPI-type plug-ins, including Java plug-ins and many media browser plug-ins. Blackboard doesn't support these browsers for use with the Virtual Classroom and Lightweight Chat tools, the multiple-file upload interface, or embedded media that require NPAPI plug-ins for viewing.

# [Tested Devices and Operating Systems](#_top)

A variety of devices and operating systems were used to test the supported browsers. Support is not limited to these specific operating systems. The desktop browser versions above are supported regardless of the device or operating system on which they run.



# [Help for Problems in Blackboard](#_top)

Report any problematic features to your Point of Contact (POC), Support Staff or Director of Distance Education as soon as possible. When requesting assistance, please be sure to provide the following information to the POC:

* When the problem occurred
* Nature of the problem
* What operating system you are running
* What internet browser (and which version) you are using
* Which course is involved (provide CRN)

To submit a helpdesk ticket, please send an email to blackboardhelp@sctech.edu with the information above and a good contact number for you. Be sure to be as specific as possible with what the problem is. You’ll receive a confirmation email with your ticket number.

# [Class Types](#_top)

We offer three types of distance education courses at SCTC:

**On Campus (Banner code “CA”):** Courses that are taught primarily in the classroom or lab with 50 percent or less of instruction online. On campus courses may include lecture, labs, internships, clinicals and other in-person instructional modalities. On campus courses are not considered distance learning courses.

**Blended (Banner code “BL”):** Blended courses are distance learning courses with the majority of the course content, activities and interactions occurring online (>50% but <100% online) but may require students to come on campus for specific labs, assignments, activities, or events. Blended courses must detail any on-site course components in the course catalog.

**Online Synchronous (Banner code “OS”):** Courses taught fully online synchronously with course content, activities and interactions occurring entirely online. This delivery method requires students to be online at specific dates/times during the term. Online synchronous courses may require proctored events, which must be detailed in the course catalog. Be sure to provide information about the day and time of the virtual meetings and how to access them.

**Online Asynchronous (Banner code “OA”):** Courses taught fully 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, and students may participate in class activities and complete course assignments asynchronously. Flex courses that that allow students the option of coming on campus, taking the course online synchronously, or taking it online asynchronously should be coded as online asynchronous (‘OA’) provided that the student is not required to be online or on campus at specific dates or times during the term. Online asynchronous courses may require proctored events, which must be detailed in the course catalog.

This manual uses the general term “online course” in addressing the development and delivery of both online and hybrid courses.

# [Other Online Options for Students](#_top)

**NC SARA**

The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (NC SARA) was created so states can easily monitor and oversee the delivery of postsecondary distance education. SARA establishes a state-level process that makes state authorization more uniform, easily obtainable, and higher quality. Southern Crescent Technical College is a member of NC SARA, allowing students from other SARA states to take online courses at Southern Crescent Technical College.

**Online with Another TCSG College**

If all sections of a course are filled at SCTC, students search availability at another technical college in our system. To be admitted through the Georgia Virtual Technical Connection (GVTC) to one of the Technical College System of Georgia's (TCSG) 22 technical colleges, students must meet the following admissions requirements:

* Complete and submit the online application form with a non-refundable application fee.
* Submit high school, technical school, and/or college transcript.

NOTE: Home school student’s acceptance requirements, in lieu of a high school diploma or transcript, are as follows:

* Letter from superintendent's office showing that the parents conformed to the requirements of the Georgia Department of Education.
* Final or exit exam scores from an accredited state and/or national testing program.
* Annual progress reports for the equivalent of the home schooler's senior year.

NOTE: Students with diplomas from secondary schools located outside the United States may have their transcripts evaluated for equivalency by an approved outside evaluation organization or attain a General Education Development High School Equivalency Diploma (GED).

* Submit assessment test scores within the last five (5) years. These may be COMPASS/ASSET, SAT, ACT, PSAT, PACT or ACCUPLACER/COMPANION. You can find more information about admission requirements at sctech.edu/admissions/new-student/
* Sixteen (16) years of age or older.

# [Basic Technology Skills and Training Requirements](#_top)

Faculty members who wish to teach online should not only possess basic proficiency in computer skills but should also be acquainted with and feel comfortable using more advanced programs and applications. The following technical skills, listed from least to most complex, are examples of what would be needed to teach online and hybrid courses:

Basic Computer Skills – Keyboarding, as well as recording audio via a microphone.

Database Management – Data entry, data editing, and database creation.

File Management – Create and name files, understand file formats (doc, .docx, rtf, text, JPG, GIF, PDF, MPEG etc.), and organize and manage files.

Word Processing – Create, edit, and save documents; use formatting techniques such as bulleted or numbered lists, page numbers, paragraph styles, and more; insert tables, graphs, and graphics into documents; and create Table of Contents (TOCs) and Indexes.

Presentation Software – Create, edit, and save presentations; add multimedia to presentations; and record audio narration for presentations.

Email – Send and receive email; attach documents and pictures; participate in email discussion groups/listservs; and create and manage contact and discussion groups.

Internet – Understand and use different browser types; know how to do targeted searches; understand how to use online databases; and be familiar with YouTube, podcasts, blogs, webinars and wikis, social networking, Facebook, and Twitter.

Learning Management System – Upload content to create, design, and edit course modules; make content accessible; create announcements, discussion forums, blogs, and wikis; create assessments, surveys, and polls; use the Grade Center; upload multimedia; and use IM (instant messaging) or chat.

# [Online Instructor Training](#_top" \o "Return to Cover Page)

**All** SCTC faculty members must complete two faculty Blackboard training courses offered and facilitated by GVTC by the end of the second semester of teaching an online course with SCTC. Additionally, the SCTC Distance Education department provides training sessions with SCTC’s Points of Contact (POCs) and by GVTC. Most training sessions are done in groups of five (5) or more; however, one-on-one sessions can be arranged by special request with a POC or a Distance Education Specialist.

Additionally, each term, the Distance Education department conducts workshops to teach faculty how to use Blackboard. Instructors may also request individual training by contacting the Distance Education department.

# [New Hires Teaching Online](#_top)

All faculty members must complete the Blackboard Faculty training courses offered by GVTC prior to the end of their second semester of teaching at SCTC.

All new faculty members must:

* Meet with Distance Education within 7 days of the first day of a regular semester (3 days for a mini-mester or summer term),
* Complete online Blackboard Essentials Training within 14 days of the first day of a regular semester (7 days for a mini-mester or summer term), and
* Attend personalized Blackboard training with Distance Education.

**OR**

* By the third day of the semester, provide Distance Education with evidence of experience that has occurred within the past year in Blackboard (v. 9.1 or higher) at another accredited postsecondary institution.

Faculty hired after the commencement of a term, who are assuming responsibility for a Blackboard course, should not be given primary responsibility for that course unless they provide evidence to Distance Education of teaching experience that has occurred within the past year in Blackboard (v. 9.1 or higher) at another accredited post-secondary institution.

# [Course Requirements](#_top" \o "Return to Cover Page)

All courses at SCTC have a Blackboard component, even face-to-face, on-campus courses. Although an instructor may teach classes on campus, Blackboard serves as an additional resource to the classroom. Each course type has a minimum requirement.

**On Campus** courses are traditional, face-to-face classroom courses that use the Blackboard LMS as an important component of the course. Therefore, the following items are the minimum requirements for all courses at SCTC:

* SCTC Master Template – Complete all modules on the master template course homepage
* Syllabus – Post a course syllabus that includes a calendar with assignment due dates
	+ The syllabus template may be found by going to the Faculty Resource Center in Blackboard or by going to TigerNet > Paper Forms > Academic Affairs. Look for the most recent syllabus template.
	+ A screenshot follows at the end of this section
* Syllabus Verification – Require students to complete the syllabus verification quiz.
* Welcome Letter – Create and post a welcome announcement that provides information about class policies (attendance, late work, etc.) and due dates.

**Blended (Banner code “BL”)** courses are distance learning courses with the majority of the course content, activities and interactions occurring online (>50% but <100% online) but may require students to come on campus for specific labs, assignments, activities, or events. Blended courses must detail any on-site course components in the course catalog. The following items are the minimum requirements for Hybrid courses:

* SCTC Master Template – Complete all modules on the master template course homepage
* Syllabus – Post a course syllabus that includes a calendar with assignment due dates
	+ The syllabus template may be found by going to the Faculty Resource Center in Blackboard or by going to TIgerNet > Paper Forms > Academic Affairs. Look for the most recent syllabus template
	+ A screenshot follows at the end of this section
* Syllabus Verification – Require students to complete the syllabus verification quiz
* Welcome Letter – Create and post a welcome announcement that provides information about class policies (attendance, late work, etc.) and due dates
* Grade Book – Use the electronic grade book
* Weekly Electronic Communication – examples:
	+ Weekly discussion
	+ Course announcements
	+ Email communications
* Testing – Optional utilization of online testing
* Post Assignments, Course Material, or Additional Supplemental Resources
* Assignments – Ensure the course is designed with a logical flow so that a student would find it easy to navigate the Lessons, Units, or Modules
* Proof that Blended courses include over 50% of instruction through distance education

**Online Synchronous (Banner code “OS”):** Courses taught fully online synchronously with course content, activities and interactions occurring entirely online. This delivery method requires students to be online at specific dates/times during the term. Online synchronous courses may require proctored events, which must be detailed in the course catalog. Be sure to provide information about the day and time of the virtual meetings and how to access them.

**Online Asynchronous (Banner code “OA”):** Courses taught fully 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, and students may participate in class activities and complete course assignments asynchronously. Flex courses that that allow students the option of coming on campus, taking the course online synchronously, or taking it online asynchronously should be coded as online asynchronous (‘OA’) provided that the student is not required to be online or on campus at specific dates or times during the term. Online asynchronous courses may require proctored events, which must be detailed in the course catalog.

Online courses are taught through Blackboard via the Internet. Required elements are:

* SCTC Master Template – Complete all modules on the master template course homepage
* Syllabus – Post a course syllabus that includes a calendar with assignment due dates
	+ The syllabus template may be found by going to the Faculty Resource Center in Blackboard or by going to TIgerNet > Paper Forms > Academic Affairs. Look for the most recent syllabus template
	+ A screenshot follows at the end of this section
* Syllabus Verification – Require students to complete the syllabus verification quiz
* Welcome Letter – Create and post a welcome announcement that provides information about class policies (attendance for synchronous courses, late work, etc.) and due dates
* Electronic Communication (announcements)
* Grade Book – Use the electronic grade book
* Interactive Media – Post videos and media material (YouTube, audio files, games, SoftChalk, etc.)
* Weekly Electronic Communication – examples:
	+ Weekly discussion
	+ Course announcements
	+ Email communications
* Testing – Utilize online testing. May use proctoring or LockDown Browser for proctoring)
* Assignments – Ensure the course is designed with a logical flow so that a student would find it easy to navigate the Lessons, Units, or Modules
* Community Building – Create discussion forums, wiki, chat, etc.



# Course Requirement Checklist

| On Campus | Blended | Online Synchronous and Online Asynchronous |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Course Syllabus:*** The course syllabus must be located in the “Start Here” folder
* Syllabus must be updated each semester and must include current dates
* Do not use a generic syllabus

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Follow your syllabus |
| **Syllabus Quiz*** The syllabus quiz must be located in “Start Here” folder

This assignment is used for ensuring that students have read the syllabus and determining which students should be listed as a “no-show” | **Syllabus Quiz*** The syllabus quiz must be located in “Start Here” folder

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| **Welcome Letter with Course Instructions*** Post a welcome letter / announcement on the first day of class
* Update this letter or announcement each semester – the date on the announcement must be current
* After you post your announcement, click “email to all users”

Provide clear instructions on course navigation and an introduction to course requirements, course materials, due dates, etc. | **Welcome Letter with Course Instructions*** Post a welcome letter / announcement on the first day of class
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* Update this letter or announcement each semester – the date on the announcement must be current
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Provide clear instructions on course navigation and an introduction to course requirements, course materials, due dates, etc. |
| **Instructor Biography with Contact Info** | **Instructor Biography with Contact Info** | **Instructor Biography with Contact Info** |
| **Email Link*** Tell students when you will reply to their messages.

Stick to what you say. | **Email Link*** Tell students when you will reply to their messages.

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Stick to what you say. |
| **Grade Center & Grades:*** Include a calculating grade column that matches the formula stated in the course syllabus.
* Be prepared to explain to students how to calculate grades based on your formula.
* Check the formula to make certain is set up correctly.
* Grades and feedback should be provided in a timely manner (1-2 weeks if possible).

Be fair. If you do something for one student be prepared to do the same for all students (within reason). | **Grade Center & Grades:*** Include a calculating grade column that matches the formula stated in the course syllabus.
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* Check the formula to make certain is set up correctly.
* Grades and feedback should be provided in a timely manner (1-2 weeks if possible).

Be fair. If you do something for one student be prepared to do the same for all students (within reason). |
|  | **Communication/interaction:*** Discussion Board(**required** if not using Collaborate)
	+ Weekly or per module
	+ Consider using an “Introduce Yourself” discussion at the beginning of term
	+ Encourage students to respond to one another
* Course Announcements(**required**) – post a course announcement at least every week or every module; it is not enough to post one announcement at the start of the term or to simply copy an announcement from a previous term.
* Collaborate (**optional**)– if using Collaborate, post videos for students not able to attend
* Emails – answer student emails in a timely manner –within 24-48 hours
 | **Communication/interaction:*** Discussion Board(**required** if not using Collaborate)
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* Collaborate (**optional**)– if using Collaborate, post videos for students not able to attend
* Emails – answer student emails in a timely manner –within 24-48 hours
 |
|  | **Assignments**: * Include a variety of assignments as appropriate for your course / subject matter.
* Assignments must not all be of the same nature (i.e., all tests, all essays, all discussion, all projects etc.). Rather assignments should be a mixture of assignment types (tests, essays, discussion, projects, etc.) Remember, attendance cannot be graded for most classes.
* Post a graded assignment every other week (ideally every week). For students who stop attending, who fail a course, or who withdraw, a student’s LDOA will be determined based on the date of the last assignment completed.
 | **Assignments**: * Include a variety of assignments as appropriate for your course / subject matter.
* Assignments must not all be of the same nature (i.e., all tests, all essays, all discussion, all projects etc.). Rather assignments should be a mixture of assignment types (tests, essays, discussion, projects, etc.) Remember, attendance cannot be graded for most classes.
* Post a graded assignment every other week (ideally every week). For students who stop attending, who fail a course, or who withdraw, a student’s LDOA will be determined based on the date of the last assignment completed
 |
|  | * Proof that courses include over 50% of instruction through Blackboard
* Must detail any on-site course components in the course catalog
 | **Community Building**:* Provide opportunities for students to interact with one another and with you.
* Discussion boards, wikis, journals, etc.
 |
| **Check for these items in your course menu:** Libguide, Tutor.com, Work Ethic Lessons, Collaborate link & instructions | **Check for these items in your course menu:** Libguide, Tutor.com, Work Ethic Lessons, Collaborate link & instructions to find recordings | **Check for these items in your course menu:** Libguide, Tutor.com, Work Ethic Lessons, Collaborate link & instructions to find recordings |
|  | Third Party instructions from publisher. Provide a link with clear instructions for connecting to it and entering the access code. | Third Party Instructions from publisher. Provide a link with clear instructions for connecting to it and entering the access code. |

# [Course Content](#_top)

Most SCTC online courses have a Master Course that has been designed with accessible content by Program Coordinators and Department Chairs. Master Courses meet the State Standards requirements and have been approved by Distance Education and the corresponding Academic Dean.

Masters are not intended to be used for student instruction but serve as the baseline for preparing a course for a new term. Master Courses allow the structure, content, and management of a course to be designed once and shared across various terms and sections. It is highly encouraged and recommended that Master Course content be used by newly hired faculty.



Instructors can request a personal Master Course only with the approval of the Program Coordinator, Department Chair, and Academic Dean.

# [Points to Consider When Building an Online Course](#_top)

Please consider the following points while you are building your online course:

* All courses at SCTC use the Blackboard SCTC master template. This template helps create continuity throughout all classes at SCTC.
* To find out if a course content master—or starter—has been created, contact the Program Coordinator or Distance Education.
* Do not assume students will “know” or “figure out” how to find course material and navigate through the course. Explain thoroughly how to use discussion forums, submit assignments, use system email, etc.
	+ Include information suggesting students enroll in *BBL Student Orientation Self-Enroll* under *Tools* in Blackboard.
		- This basic BBL training will help students be more successful in all classes.
* Make expectations known at the beginning of the course regarding attendance, participation, grading, submissions, etc. and include instructions for each area.
* Plan ahead. Build your course on paper first. Unless you are using third-party software, which provides a structure for the material in the course for you, carefully work out the best outline, or structure, for the content you need to deliver.
	+ Use of Lessons or units
		- Content delivery is through modules, lessons, units, or folders.
		- Do not string material down a single page and hope students will understand the course organization.
		- All material for a lesson or unit should be in one place; this includes lesson objectives, PowerPoint, videos, and exams.
		- Before you build it, make sure the organization you’ve decided upon is consistent with your teaching style, as well as the content itself.
		- Make sure all grading criteria are explained in your syllabus; do not introduce new grading rules in the middle of a semester.
* Build community deliberately. Delivering a fully online course strictly through text is less effective.
	+ Incorporate multimedia, such as graphics, Flash, and other multimedia types that illustrate concepts and encourage students to study and interact with the material.
	+ Do not include multimedia simply for the sake of being flashy or for grabbing attention—choose your multimedia wisely.
	+ Consider the goals of the assignment, as well as the overall goals of the course. Will the multimedia bring the students closer to achieving those goals?
	+ Provide opportunities for one-on-one discussion.
* Responses/feedback to assignments
* Create personalized emails using SCTC student email account or Blackboard email system.
* Incorporate chats that are informal, ice-breaker type sessions.
* Provide opportunities within the online community that encourage interaction
	+ - Chats
		- Live office hours
		- Discussion forums
		- Group/team emails
		- Group projects/assignments

# [Pedagogical Practices that Promote Effective Online Instruction](#_top)

The following pedagogical best practices promote effective online instruction:

**Fundamental Principles**

* Understand the differences between face-to-face and online instruction.
* Utilize learner-centered pedagogy where concepts of interactivity, instructor-led facilitation, and feedback are core elements.
* Create learning activities that actively engage students, and which encourage top-down cognitive processing skills (such as synthesis and problem-solving tasks).
* Accommodate a variety of learning styles and strategies in both content delivery and learning activities.

**Management and Interaction**

* Follow guidelines for regular effective contact with students in synchronous (e.g., chat rooms, webinars) and/or asynchronous (e.g., discussion boards, blogs) modalities.
* Communicate and maintain learning objectives.
* Cultivate and develop a community of learners through group activities.
* Create and maintain an atmosphere of trust.
* Clarify unclear participation requirements; facilitate and monitor interaction accordingly.
* Integrate practical tasks into learning activities to illustrate practical real-world content applications.
* Lead discussions rooted in inquiry that challenge students to question and develop their own conclusions.
* Provide ongoing personalized feedback and suggestions for improving student performance.
* Make additional resources available for learning.

**Technology Integration**

* Identify the most appropriate technologies for content and learning outcomes.
* Determine the modalities that are best used for course communication, discussion and assessment.
* Present content that is easily navigable and accessible to all learners.
* Integrate multimedia content that meets the learning styles and needs of all students, as well as conforming to accessibility requirements.
* Encourage cooperative learning through group activities that utilize current technology.
* Utilize assessments to provide multiple opportunities for ongoing authentic evaluations that measures student understanding of course content and participation.
* Ensure that assessment tools are linked to learning objectives and student learning outcomes (SLOs).
* Use a variety of assessment techniques in which students are able to demonstrate higher-order critical thinking skills.
* Employ multiple assessment strategies to maintain active student engagement.
* Make use of data from the assessment tools to evaluate the validity and reliability of the various assessment instruments.
* Incorporate surveys to receive regular constructive student feedback and integrate it into the course structure.
* Understand the unique challenges that affect academic integrity and student authentication in the online environment.

# [Quality Assurance Rationale](#_top)

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

1. **Institutional Level**. To advance and protect the reputation of the educational institution in attracting students, qualified faculty members, and business and industry collaborators.
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 ongoing online courses.

Creating an interactive classroom is essential to course quality. Keeping students active within a course not only improves academic achievement, it also improves retention. Blackboard offers multiple ways for instructors to communicate and collaborate with students, for students to participate in group projects, and for instructors to offer synchronous class sessions.

# [Tools to Create Continual Effective Interaction](#_top)

The following tools can be very effective at creating continual interaction by the student:

**Student – Instructor Interaction:**

* Course announcements
* Email
* Personalized feedback
* Discussion boards
* Collaborate Ultra
* Phone/voicemail

**Student – Student Interaction:**

* Email
* Discussion boards
* Collaborate Ultra
* Collaborative projects: group blogs or wikis

**Student – Content Interaction:**

* Learning modules on Blackboard
* Lectures (recorded or streaming)
* Podcasts/webinars/screencasts
* Discussion boards
* Collaborate Ultra

# [How to Implement Continual Effective Interaction](#_top)

Continual, effective interaction can be created through:

Initiated Interactions

* Incorporate accessible multimedia
	+ Graphics, Flash, other multimedia can be used to illustrate concepts and encourage students to study and interact with the material.
	+ Do not include multimedia simply for the sake of being flashy or for grabbing attention—choose your multimedia wisely.
	+ Consider the goals of the assignment, as well as the overall goals of the course. Will the multimedia bring the students closer to achieving those goals?
* Provide opportunities for one-on-one discussion.
* Design daily or weekly assignments and projects that promote collaboration among students.
* Model course netiquetteat the beginning of the semester with instructor-guided interaction and critical thinking skills among all course learners.
* Monitor content activity to ensure that students participate fully, and discussions remain on-topic.
* Create a specific discussion board for questions regarding the course.
* Ask students for feedback about the course on a regular basis and revise content as needed.

Frequency and Timeliness of Interactions

* Maintain an active daily presence, particularly during the beginning weeks of a course.
* Establish guidelines for frequency of contact and define what interactions a student can expect each week.
* Make known your response time for student questions/inquiries and assignment feedback (e.g., 1-2 business days).
* Give frequent and substantive feedback throughout the course, such as
	+ Personalized emails using SCTC student email accounts or Blackboard email system.
	+ Chats that are informal, ice-breaker type sessions.

Expectations for Interactions

* Specify, in the syllabus, course policy regarding frequency and timeliness of all contact initiated by the instructor.
* Explain course policy regarding student-initiated contact (where to post questions, assignments, etc.) in the syllabus.
* Outline and explain netiquettein initial course documents.
* Clarify important dates, such as assignment and assessment deadlines, not only in the beginning but also throughout the course.

Absences from Interactions

* Immediately inform students if an illness, family emergency or other unexpected event will prevent you from continuing to provide regular effective contact for a prolonged period of time.
* Let students know when instructor-initiated regular effective contact will resume.

# [Ways to Actively Maintain Your Course](#_top)

Best practices you can use to actively maintain your course, include:

* Keep students informed through weekly announcements of pertinent information.
* Remind students of upcoming tests or due dates.
* Notify students of program-related, on-campus opportunities and events.
* Instruct students on where to locate materials or find grades inside the course.
* Maintain class records.
	+ Backup courses on a weekly basis.
	+ The weekly archiving of classes is a must and can be done under the Manage tab.
* Identify updates.
	+ Anytime updates are made to material that has already been distributed to the students, notify these students of the change. For this reason, instructors may not want to build too many date-sensitive items into the course as they will have to maintain all of these date references each semester. Using a single schedule (in the syllabus), as well as the course calendar, is an effective way of minimizing maintenance on dates inside the course.
	+ Check links inside the course regularly—remove or repair broken links.
* Provide a timeline for feedback on assignments and return work along this timeline so students will know their current standing in the course.
* Double-check settings on assessments and assignments before reporting a problem. Make sure that access, interaction, and calendar items reflect consistent dates and grading criteria.

# [Retention Strategies for Online Courses](#_top)

Retention strategies for online courses include the following best practices:

* Develop a standard format that will be consistent among all course sections.
* Develop a syllabus quiz that reiterates the program requirements and student expectations.
* Use adaptive release on the syllabus quiz to prohibit students from accessing the Blackboard course content before completing the quiz.
* Create a tentative course schedule for all your courses and include it in your syllabus.
* Post due dates on your Blackboard items (modules, lesson folders, etc.) that match your tentative course syllabus.
* Encourage attendance by integrating class activities that will count as a grade.
* Before the semester begins, be sure to use “student preview” to check for accuracy.
* Create practice quizzes from publisher test banks so students can test their knowledge and take the quizzes multiple times.
* Work with Distance Ed to learn more about Retention Tools in Blackboard.

# [Copyright Compliance](#_top)

Instructors of distance education courses are responsible for ensuring that all instructional material and delivery methods for distance education courses are following copyright laws and College copyright policy.

The SCTC Distance Education department and Academic Support Services can work with faculty developing online courses to determine fair use of materials.

# [Intellectual Property](#_top)

Faculty should be willing to share course content of online courses in the same manner they would share face-to-face course content. If a faculty member terminates employment with SCTC, it is expected that they will provide access to a complete course site. The faculty member may also take with them the content developed for the online course.

# [Distance Education and Privacy](#_top)

## Purpose of Distance Education Student Privacy Procedure

The purpose of the Distance Education Student Privacy Procedure is to protect the privacy of students enrolled in distance education courses or programs. The procedure will ensure the security of student personal information, academic records, and the dissemination of the information.

All students enrolled at Southern Crescent Technical College, regardless of the mode of instruction (on-campus, blended, online synchronous, online asynchronous), are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). Students are notified of their FERPA rights during new student orientation, and the information is published on the Southern Crescent Technical College website, and the Southern Crescent Technical College Student Handbook and Catalog. In addition, there is an annual notification sent to all students. To ensure that faculty and staff understand and carry out the commitments to confidentiality, integrity, and security of student academic records, Southern Crescent Technical College requires annual FERPA training. SCTC complies with all of the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)and is committed to protecting the privacy of a student’s educational record regardless of delivery method. 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 instructor must not divulge information about a student’s progress to anyone other than the student unless permission has been specifically given by the student. This applies to attendance records, course or test grades, and the student’s presence or activities at that time. Information may not be legally released to employers, friends, or other students unless the student has a signed Consent to Disclose Student Record Form on file.

Confidentiality of student records also applies to the returning of tests, written assignments, or projects. Student grades are to be given only to the student and not shared with other students. If the instructor posts test grades, or end of semester course grades, they should be listed in such a manner that students can determine only their own grade.

Questions about any aspect of the student evaluation system and its implementation or record keeping should be directed to the appropriate Department Chair, Dean, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, or the Registrar.

In addition to FERPA, Southern Crescent Technical College has advanced measures for distance education student privacy protection.

## Secure Login

Southern Crescent Technical College uses Blackboard Learn, a learning management system (LMS) that allows students to access distance education classes. Students use their Single-Sign- On credentials which are created after the student is accepted to the college by the IT department. All users of the college’s learning management system are responsible for maintaining the security of usernames, passwords, and any other access credentials assigned. The credentials may not be shared or given to anyone, for any reason, other than to the user to whom they were assigned. Users are responsible for any and all uses of their account. Students and faculty may change their password at any time if they feel their credentials have been compromised. Any user assigned a college admin account for the LMS reviews and signs the LMS Administrator Acknowledgement and Compliance Statement that protects employees and students.

## Online Courses Backup and Retention

The LMS is managed through GVTC, Office of Technical Education, under an enterprise level contract at the Technical College System of Georgia. Under this agreement, Blackboard, Inc., provides the learning management system, services, and backup capabilities coordinated and maintained through TCSG. Blackboard’s PostgreSQL database service provides enhanced availability and durability such that in the event of a database failure, the service would cut-over to an alternate availability zone. The PostgreSQL database service also takes nightly backups.

The Learn SaaS offering uses Amazon Simple Storage Service (S3) for backups of critical file system data. This data is backed up every 5 minutes. S3 offers "11 nines" of data durability.

GVTC maintains courses on the college system. Course access is based on the TCSG Student Records Retention policy. Backups of the LMS data are stored and managed by Blackboard.

Blackboard Learn automatically backs up all courses with activity within the last 7 days and maintains for 30 days.

## Third-Party Software

The Distance Education department collects and reviews vendor statements for security of student personal information from third-party providers and ensures that all third-party software/sites used by instructors follow the same minimum standards set forth by GVTC.

## Graded Materials

Students are given the role of ‘student’ in the LMS so only the student’s information and grades can be viewed by the student. Graded submissions and the Grade Center categories and columns are archived in the course and retained according to the TCSG Student Records Retention Policy. Program faculty collect and maintain all course material required to verify grades and student performances toward standards that are necessary for accreditation purposes.

## Responsibility

The Chief Information Officer and the Director of Distance Education have the overall responsibility of ensuring that this procedure is implemented.

## [Identity Verification in Distance Learning Courses](#_top)

The identity verification process for online courses protects student’s privacy through the use of a secure portal, with a secure login and password. Access to distance learning courses can only be granted via secure password to students who are properly enrolled. SCTC secures student personal information from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure. SCTC secures the personally identifiable information students provide on computer servers in a controlled environment protected from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure. These measures include Secure Socket Layer (SSL) software which encrypts data during the transmission of information. While all of the above steps are taken, SCTC cannot ***fully guarantee*** that student submissions to the college’s website, any content residing on the college’s servers, or any transmissions from the college’s servers will be completely secure.

## [Student Responsibility](#_top)

It is the student’s responsibility to keep his or her password and other personal information confidential. This includes their student identification number, passwords, or any other information which could conceivably compromise their privacy or lead to identity theft. Students are reminded to log out of all applications whenever using a lab or library computer.

# [Instructor Responsibility – Course Content Maintenance and Accessibility](#_top)

It is the responsibility of the instructor to provide accessible, accurate, and updated course content and maintain all course content items used in a distance education course. The Distance Education department can facilitate in the deployment of instructor content if the instructor wishes it, but the Distance Education department, or IT department for that matter, is in no way obligated to maintain course content. This includes E-Packs through external links to web sites and publisher-provided content, or any other form of course content. It is the responsibility of the individual instructor to obtain training in the use of these forms of course content if he or she wishes to include such content in his or her classes. The Distance Education department is responsible for facilitating the use of SCTC’s LMS by training instructors in operation and best practices and resolving any problems which may arise.

# [Accessibility](#_top)

SCTC is committed to making our website and courses accessible to individuals with disabilities in order to comply with requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). One of the primary concepts of distance education is to offer students "Learning anytime, anywhere." Therefore, all distance education resources must be designed to afford students with disabilities maximum opportunity to access distance education resources "anytime, anywhere" without the need for outside assistance (i.e., sign language interpreters, aides, etc.). Ensuring that distance education courses, materials, and resources are accessible to students with disabilities is a shared college responsibility. All college administrators, faculty, and staff who are involved in the use of this instructional mode share this obligation. In an effort to do so, faculty must:

* Create or modify all course content so that it is accessible to students with disabilities.
* Use the built-in third-party software, Ally, to check for compliance.
* Design the course layout so that it is easily navigable and readable and has alternate options for students with special needs.
* Use the SCTC-accessible syllabus template found in TigerNet. This template contains an accessibility statement that will help protect our College.

# [Student Records](#_top)

It is required that instructors keep accurate and complete records related to student attendance and performance. The student records are held by each individual faculty member in his/her OneDrive. This section delineates the records to be held from the records that are the responsibility of the instructors to keep and maintain. Student records and supporting documentation may be subpoenaed; therefore, it is necessary that instructors take extreme care in maintaining these records. These records must be produced upon the request of college administration. Adherence to the record retention schedules stated below is imperative. Student attendance and grades can be recorded using one of two methods: through Blackboard or through manual record keeping (i.e., a grade book). At the end of the semester, all records must be saved.

**SCTC Student Records Retention Schedule**

It is recommended that all instructors who teach on-campus and blended courses retain the following items in their OneDrive in the event of a grade appeal.

* Original Grade Sheets/Attendance
	+ Explanation: This series provides instructional departments with an official record of attendance and end-of-semester grades for each student.
	+ Record Copy: Instructor’s OneDrive.
	+ Retention: Student Information Database copy – Permanent. Instructor class files – retain for the duration of the grade appeal policy.
	+ Citation or Reference: Professional Standard of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers 2000 Edition, Retention Schedule C, page 16.

The student records listed below are the responsibility of the instructor to maintain. These records do not pertain to student attendance and grades; however, depending on the program, they may need to be retained in order to fulfill state or national licensing agreements or additional program-level credentialing requirements. All faculty-held student records must be shredded upon disposal.

SCTC Student Records Retention Schedule: Faculty Records

* Grievance Supporting Documentation
	+ Explanation: This series documents any grievance brought forward by students against the college which does not result in litigation. Grievances may pertain to academic issues; affirmative action and equal opportunity; student conduct; and other issues. Records include notices of grievance; informal discussion notes; grievance responses; formal hearing notes (including audio tapes); final summary statements; settlement agreements; appeals documentation; and related records. Portions of these records may be exempt from public disclosure.
	+ Record Copy: Faculty Member
	+ Retention: 5 years after graduation or last date of attendance
* Certification Records
	+ Explanation: This series documents the preparation of students earning degrees and/or certification for licenses or certificates to enter a profession and forms the basis of the initial certification for various professions. Records may include, but are not limited to, applications for admission to a program; registration for practicum hours and evidence of the completion of the practicum; transcripts; narrative evaluations on practicum; notice of completion of hours required for certification; recommendations and evaluations; and related correspondence.
	+ Record Copy: Faculty Member
	+ Retention: 5 years after initial certification application by student
* Examinations, Tests, Term Papers, and Homework Records
	+ Explanation: This series documents student subject mastery in college courses. Records may include but are not limited to examinations and answers; quizzes and answers; homework assignments; course papers; term papers; and essay assignments. This series does not include graduate student qualifying or comprehensive examinations.
	+ Record Copy: Faculty Member
	+ Retention: 1 year after course completion for uncontested grade results; until resolved for contested grade results
* Internship Program Records
	+ Explanation: This series is used to provide a record of the administration of student internship, practicum, and cooperative education programs. Programs may be within the college or off-campus and for class credit and/or pay. Records may include but are not limited to applications for internships inside and external to the college; agreements with departments; postings/notices; student resumes; transcripts; copies of contracts; proposed college listings; notes; and related documentation and correspondence.
	+ Record Copy: Faculty Member
	+ Retention: 5 years from date of graduation or last date of attendance
* Specific Program Records
	+ Explanation: This series of documents addresses specific program admission requirements (i.e., immunizations, physical examinations, drug screens, criminal background checks, Motor Vehicle Reports (MVR), psychological evaluations, etc.)
	+ Record Copy: Faculty Member
	+ Retention: 3 years after graduation or date of last enrollment

**Student Records Retention Exceptions**

If a Blackboard course contains the following items, the instructor is not required to retain these files outside of Blackboard.

* Syllabus
* Attendance
* Gradebook
* Sample Assessment
* Completed Assessment

## References

– TCSG Procedure 6.3.1p1. Student Records Procedures

– TCSG Procedure 6.3.2p. Student Records Retention Schedule

# Course Quality

All Master courses undergo an annual review by Distance Ed during Summer term via the **Course Requirements Checklist.**



Southern Crescent Technical College is also in the process of implementing Quality Matters, which will help improve the quality of our distance education courses.