



## Mississippi Valley State University

# Online Course Policies and Procedures

This handbook of *Online Course Policies and Procedures* is issued by the Department of Distance and Online Education (DDOE) in conjunction with the Office of Academic Affairs. The information contained in this handbook is intended to inform the instructional faculty members and students about the overall guidelines and procedures for online courses and programs at MVSU.

***IHL. 509 DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY.*** All distance learning courses and programs shall be in accord with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), Commission on Colleges Principles of Accreditation and Southern Regional Education Board Principles of Good Practice. Unless otherwise provided, all Board and university policies, standards, and guidelines for on and off campus instruction apply to distance learning.

***SACSCOC. POLICY STATEMENT.*** Definition of Distance Education For the purposes of the Commission on College's accreditation review, distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD's, and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program.

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**The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 123g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.**

**Pursuant to requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, all records pertaining to online courses participation are protected under student privacy rights and are in strict conformity with all federal statutes.**

## **Online Courses Policies and Procedures**

Admissions: Student must gain official admission to the University and must complete the enrollment process: which includes advisement, registration, and payment of tuition and fees.

- As outlined in the general admission policies published in the University's Undergraduate Catalog and in the Graduate Catalog.
- Through the MVSU website <http://www.mvsu.edu> prospective students may apply online.

Advising: The Department of Distance and Online Education (DDOE) assists nontraditional and at a-distance students concerning admissions and registration; academic advising is not a service of this department. DDOE does, however, provide a portal for assistance and information for adults wishing to return to the classroom. Off-campus and on-campus students will be referred to the appropriate academic department.

Adding students to Blackboard: Blackboard is linked to the Student Information System (SIS) but students are not automatically registered for and deleted from Blackboard class rosters; the key principle is: MVSU Online will not make decisions regarding adding/dropping students from the Blackboard system without first referring to SIS. The Student Information System used to verify enrollment status is the official system of record that determines enrollment. By the start of classes an account is established for every student enrolled in SIS for Blackboard courses. Adding and dropping students after the start of classes will be handled as follows:

Requests for changes in class rosters are verified by the Blackboard Manager. To add a student the Student Information System (SIS) and the Registrar's Office verifies that the student is officially enrolled in the course. If the student is enrolled, the Blackboard Manager will put the student into Blackboard. If the student is not enrolled through SIS, we will inform the person making the request that we are unable to add the student to the course until they are officially enrolled.

Beginning Procedures for Online Courses: At the beginning of the course the instructor should strongly encourage students to read the material presented on the "MVSU Online Education" web pages. During the first two weeks of the course, online instructors must advise their students to complete the student survey form, even if they have completed one in previous courses.

It should be emphasized to students that they should read the proctoring information, if applicable (see the section on Proctoring). This information should be included with course materials and made a part of chat sessions prior to the drop date. Many faculty and students find it helpful to post a brief vita and to state from what location they are taking the course. Some classes may have international students enrolled from around the world.

Blackboard: is an integrated set of components for developing and delivering interactive courses or course components over the Web. Blackboard allows instructors to replicate on the Web many aspects of teaching and managing a course in the classroom. It also allows them to use as many or as few of Blackboard's features as they like. Blackboard can enable students to study and participate in lectures and discussions from anywhere, at anytime. The course instructor/designer provides the content of a course. Interactivity, structure, educational tools and administrative tools are provided by Blackboard.

Blackboard Administrator: The Distance and Online Education Program Administrator is the point-of-contact for anyone who needs to obtain information from the Blackboard Manager.

Chat Times: When the course is first set up, the instructor will advise the Blackboard Administrator if chats are to be "optional chats" or "required chats." Course chat times must be announced on the course homepage on Blackboard. Chat times must be scheduled with the Blackboard Manager one (1) month prior to the beginning of each semester. This notification should include the day(s) and time(s) of the chat sessions.

Computer / Software Requirements: Student enrolling in online courses must have basic computer, Internet and keyboarding skills as described in the course syllabus and on the DDOE "MVSU Online Education web pages" < **Student Requirements**>.

They must have access to a computer with an ISP (Internet Service Provider), a web browser and an e-mail account. Microsoft Office 97 software, including Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, are standard in MVSU campus computer labs. Students may use the desktop productivity software of their choice as long as their instructor can access their work. When compatibility issues arise it is the student's responsibility to resolve the problem with their instructor. Specific courses may have additional designated software.

Technical support for course navigation is available through the Department of Distance and Online Education and the Blackboard Administration at e-mail address [Blackboardhelp@mvsu.edu](mailto:Blackboardhelp@mvsu.edu).

Course Approval: Existing MVSU academic courses may be considered for conversion to an online format. There is a two-step approval process related to online courses:

- Approval within the University (which includes guidelines provided by IHL), following the same process all academic courses coordinated through DDOE must follow;

- Southern Regional Electronic Campus (SREC).

Faculty considering converting an undergraduate course for total online delivery should receive prior approval from his/her chair and the Department of Distance and Online Extended Education before proceeding. Faculty considering converting a graduate course for total online delivery should receive prior approval from his/her chair and the Department of Distance and Online Education and submit the course for approval through the Graduate Council (subject to Vice-President Approval of this procedure)

All courses presented totally online must be pre-approved by the Southern Regional Electronic Campus (SREC). Submission of this request is carried out through the Department of Distance and Online Education (DDOE).

Course Dates and Completion Timetable: Online courses can parallel the semester schedule for regular courses. The Class Schedule Guide, (schedule supplements) and the course syllabus will indicate the beginning and ending dates.

Course Enrollment Limits: The Department of Distance and Online Education (DDOE) recommends a maximum of 30 students per course. Any course that exceeds 40 will be divided into two sections.

Minimum enrollment is generally set at 10; however courses may proceed with fewer than 10 students if approved by the Vice-President of Academic Affairs Office with the recommendation of DDOE.

Denying Access: Approximately, ten (10) workdays after the beginning of each semester, the Business and Finance Office may purge students who have not paid their fees for that semester.

Before these students can be reinstated, and access course in blackboard, they must pay their fees to student accounts. Students may have their access reinstated by completing the University's "drop and add" form and obtaining the proper signatures for reinstatement. The student must provide the Blackboard Manager with evidence of reinstatement to add the student to the course. (**See Removing Students**)

E-mail Accounts: Students taking online courses will be assigned a MVSU e-mail account. University and course-related emails may be sent to this account unless students choose to designate an alternate e-mail account. The email database will be used as the main communication tool for MVSU Online Learning. All online students are expected to check their e-mail accounts on a regular basis to avoid missing important information sent out by the instructor or by the University.

Evaluations: Students in totally online courses will have the opportunity to evaluate the course, instructor and services or through DDOE at the end of the course. This evaluation is available electronically and anonymity is observed. The Online staff will post the course

and faculty evaluation during the last two weeks of class. Online instructors must, during the time the course evaluation is posted and available, advise students of the importance of these evaluations and encourage them to complete the posted evaluation document. The Blackboard Manager will provide a compilation of the results of the evaluation for each online course to the appropriate instructor and chair/director.

Faculty Compensation:

Extra compensation for faculty teaching over-load follows the same adjustment scale for traditional (face-to-face) courses. These enrollments are verified by course instructors following course drop dates, using the SIS Roster.

Faculty Load Time: Online courses may be offered either as part of faculty's regular load, over-load (in addition to faculty's regular load), or by adjunct faculty.

Faculty Support: Faculty support and training is available. The "MVSU Online Education" web pages at <[Faculty Resource Homepage](#)> provides a listing of other resources. The Blackboard Manager and/or Instructional Tech will work closely with individual faculty concerning course design questions and issues.

Faculty Training: The Department of Distance and Online Education provides faculty Blackboard training for on-line courses only. The Blackboard Manager and/or Instructional Tech is available to work intensively in one-on-one sessions with individual faculty as they design their on-line course(s).

Financial Aid: Students registering for online courses are eligible to apply for financial aid in the same way as all other students. Financial aid services are available for students at <http://www.mvsu.edu/financialaid.html>.

Firewalls: Students attempting to access MVSU Online Education courses from military installations, hospitals, and other special locations should be advised that firewalls will most probably prevent them from participating in chat sessions. In these cases, the students will need to participate from a location/ISP without a firewall.

Hybrid Courses: See Hybrid Principles and Guidelines (See page 9)

Identifying Online Courses: Online course sections are designated within the Class Schedule Guide as E. The "E" defines the course as delivered via the Internet. An example of the course will be the listing as XX102-E01

Intellectual Property and Online Course Ownership: Those course(s) which have been developed by the University are the intellectual property of the University.

Monitoring Course: The Blackboard Administrator will have the authority to review all online courses content. This includes' interaction between student and instructor, and the progression of the course.

Prerequisites: Students taking online courses must meet all course prerequisites before they may register. Course descriptions, stating prerequisites, are published in the Undergraduate Catalog and Graduate Catalog available on the MVSU website <http://www.mvsu.edu>.

Previously Approved Courses: The deadlines to submit changes to previously approved courses are: spring semester third (3<sup>rd</sup>) Monday in September; fall semester, third (3<sup>rd</sup>) Monday in April.

Instructors planning to teach a previously-approved online course must contact the Blackboard Manager with course information prior to the deadlines in the previous paragraph. The best time for contact is during the time that the Class Schedule Guide is being assembled for the upcoming academic year.

IHL and SREC must approve major changes and adjustments to previously approved online courses. This approval will require a minimum of three weeks. Each semester a course is taught online, the instructor must send the Blackboard Manager an updated syllabus. Particular attention should be given to changes in textbooks, dates of exams and assignments, etc. Substantial changes to course content or to communication in delivery of the course must be submitted for SREB approval.

Proctoring: Some faculty offering online courses may require their students to take mid-term and final examinations in a proctored environment. To assist the instructor with this process, DDOE acts as a facilitator between instructor, student, and proctor. These requirements must be posted prior to the beginning of the course.

*Faculty responsibility for proctored exams –*

Proctoring information must be specifically stated in the syllabus, and each examination requiring proctoring must be identified.

Instructors must provide necessary proctoring information to students, through use of an icon in the course, during each class meeting through the drop date for that course. After the drop date, at the instructor's discretion students may be periodically reminded concerning proctoring requirements.

No proctored exams are to be scheduled or required before the fifth week of the course during fall and spring semesters. A five- week period is needed to identify and approve proctors, to send all appropriate documents, and to schedule examination dates.

The instructor should forward only paper copies of exams to the DDOE proctor coordinator. Exams should not be transmitted by MVSU email, fax, or computer disk.

If DDOE is unable to provide proctoring services for on-line classes. Instructors should designate a date, time, and MVSU classroom location for their exam to be offered on-campus, and should advise their students.

*Student responsibility in proctoring situations –*

It is the primary responsibility of the individual taking the course to obtain a proctor, if required, and to accurately communicate this information to the DDOE Program Administrator and faculty member in a timely manner, using the appropriate forms for approval. If a prospective proctor does wish payment, it is the student's responsibility to pay.

Students who are outside Mississippi may obtain a testing site by locating their nearest academic community college, academic college, or university. They should make contact with a testing officer on that campus and request that the testing officer proctor the exam. A second option, when colleges or universities may not be available, is to contact the local Superintendent of Education's Office.

Students on military installations may contact their education or testing officer. If on a ship at sea, the ship's captain or known education officer would be the point of contact. Persons in a foreign country and unassociated with the military may contact the U.S. Embassy to seek proctor assistance.

Students on the Itta Bena campus should communicate with their instructor regarding the assigned date, time, and location the exam will be given. MVSU Faculty provides proctoring services for local or on-campus students taking online courses when required.

*Proctor request form procedures –*

The "Examination by Proctor" form may be obtained through the Department of Distance and Online Education (DDOE). The student should print the form and complete the required personal information. At the testing location, the student will ask the testing supervisor to complete the proctor information on the form. The completed form should be mailed or faxed to the attention of DDOE. A separate form must be completed for each exam.

Students' "Examination by Proctor" forms should be received by DDOE as early as possible, but no later than fifteen (15) work days prior to the scheduled date for the examination. For forms received after the stated deadline, it is possible that the exam will be received after the appropriate testing date, thereby affecting the student's grade.

*Department of Distance and Online Education (DDOE) responsibility in proctoring situations –*

The Distance and Online Education Program Administrator will process requests for proctors tendered by students using the "Examination by Proctor" form. Upon receipt of the completed form, the proctor coordinator will verify the identification and authenticity of the proctor and submit the form to the faculty for approval.

Exams will be mailed to the approved proctor 10 to 15 days prior to the examination date prescribed by the course instructor.

Registration: Students must be admitted to the University before they may register for an online course. (See Admission) During the official registration periods each term, eligible students may register for online courses.

Removing a Student from (or their access to) a Blackboard course area: Students who have been removed/dropped from the Student Information System (SIS), for any reason will be marked inactive in Blackboard. If the reason for the drop is due to financial obligations or the student was dropped from the system through records/registration, we will disable the student's access to Blackboard until the student is properly enrolled for the course through SIS. If the student is able to resolve the matter through either the Administration Office or through Student Records/ Registration their access can be reinstated without loss of any work they may have done up to that point.

Reporting No Show: Each semester the instructor must report those students who are on their class roll but have **NEVER** logged onto Blackboard. It is the University policy that such student be assigned "NS" state for the course.

Reviewing Online Course Content: Instructors of online courses are responsible for reviewing and updating their course content according to policies established within the department providing the course.

Revising Online Course Material and Information: Instructors should not revise course material/student submissions from the previous semester's course until after the entire course has been saved by Blackboard Administrator. The Blackboard Administrator will notify instructors when this back up has been accomplished. This saved content may be needed to justify the final grade in the event a student pursues a grade appeal.

IHL and SREC must approve changes and adjustments to previously-approved online courses. This approval will require a minimum of two weeks

Security for Online Tests and Quizzes: Instructors must create online tests or quizzes with white text and a dark background color. When asked to print, the background is not printed and the white lettering does not show. This makes tests more difficult to duplicate.

Student Orientation for Blackboard: During registration, training for on-line courses will be scheduled and made available to students throughout the campus and university media systems. Student may also access a demo of Blackboard on MVSU Online Education website <**Blackboard Demo**> by clicking Demo.

Syllabus: Syllabus is required for online courses and must meet the same content requirements that apply to all campus academic courses. Syllabus must include learning objectives, grading procedures, examinations and dates, number of quizzes, and methods of creating interactivity (chat, bulletin board, e-mail, CD, etc.). The syllabus is posted on Blackboard within the course content and it is the instructor's responsibility to update syllabus information prior to the start of each semester.

The following information should be included when appropriate:

- Proctor requirements for students at remote sites (if required);
- Descriptions of special software, books, downloads, or library requirements;
- Special software requirements for using course materials;
- Email response time of instructor to student within 24 hours;
- MVSU Faculty email address and MVSU office phone number with office hours on the syllabus

Submit syllabus for new courses to the Academic Computing Services according to posted deadlines. Deadlines are: spring semester third (3<sup>rd</sup>) Monday in September; fall semester, third (3<sup>rd</sup>) Monday in April.

Tuition and Fees: The University's published resident tuition fees apply for all online courses. Students at a distance are not charged non-resident tuition for online courses.

Withdrawal: Students who seek to drop an online course will be withdrawn from the University if it is the only course they are taking. This withdrawal process follows the same requirements and procedures that apply to on-campus courses. If the student is at a distance, withdrawal paperwork will be prepared by the Office of Student Records office and forwarded to the appropriate dean, after we have received a written request to do so from the student.

### Hybrid Principles and Guidelines

Hybrid courses offer a number of advantages over face-to face teaching and totally online courses. Instructors from other colleges have reported that the hybrid course model allows them to accomplish course learning objectives more successfully than traditional courses do.

What is the key to developing successful hybrid courses?

To teach a hybrid course an instructor must attend a mandatory MVSU Blackboard Training session. The instructor must invest significant time and effort in redesigning a traditional course. Because class time is reduced and a significant part of learning is moved online, instructors must re-examine their course goals and objectives, design online learning activities to meet these goals and objectives, and effectively integrate the online activities with the face-to face meetings. In addition, many faculty need to acquire new teaching skills, such as learning to facilitate online discussions and assess student online learning; they may also need to acquire some new technology skills.

### Hybrid Course Development Guidelines

In order to ensure quality offerings in the new hybrid format, the following items must be completed by the course completion deadlines for any course supported by MVSU. It is

the responsibility of the Instructors to work with, the Blackboard Manager/Trainer to develop an internal timeline for the completion of the items. Students/Faculty can come by the Department of Distance and Online Education or call at 662.254.3625 regarding training date and time.

As faculty developers build a program to guide faculty through the course design process and prepare faculty for the teaching transitions they will encounter, the developers must realize that structure, format, and types of activities are as important as the topics covered. We recommend faculty developers incorporate the following underlying principles into their efforts to prepare faculty for hybrid teaching:

- Start the faculty development program at least two weeks prior to the time instructors will be teaching their first hybrid courses because of the significant time required to redesign hybrid courses.
- Use the regular training format.
- Ensure that participants leave with concrete results, e.g., a draft syllabus, one or more learning modules, and a plan for continuing the redesign process.
- Provide ample opportunities to learn and practice the new teaching skills needed for hybrid instruction, particularly skills not encountered in the traditional face-to-face classroom, such as facilitation of online discussion.
- Ensure during the program that faculty trainers provide ample and timely feedback for every assignment submitted by participants, and that during the program sufficient time is given for trainers to answer all the questions asked by participants.
- Encourage continued support as faculty prepare to offer their hybrid course by making certain that trainers remain available to respond to questions and offer feedback. Requires departmental chair approval.

Approval of Hybrid Courses: All Hybrid courses follow the same approval process as all other on-line courses. (See approval process)

**The policies and procedures are subjected to change without advance notice; however, when changes occur, the faculty members will be notified of the changes.**

*Questions related to this document should be directed to:*

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