

WGTC 6.16

Online Teaching and Learning

Types of Courses

The following terms describe the delivery methods of online courses offered at West Georgia Technical College, all of which have some component of online learning:

On Campus – A course that is taught primarily in the classroom or lab with 50% 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 even though as much as half of the course contact time is devoted to online instruction. The Banner classification for this class type is “CA.”

Blended – A course that is classified as a distance learning course with a majority of the course content, activities, and interactions occurring online (greater than 50% but less than 100% online). To satisfy course contact and competencies, students may be required to come on campus for specific labs, assignments, activities, or events. Blended courses must detail any on-site course components in the course catalog and syllabus. The Banner classification for this class type is “BL.”

Asynchronous Online – A course that is taught completely online allowing a student the ability to complete course content, activities, and interactions occurring entirely online. The delivery method does not require students to be online at a specific date or time, and students may participate in class activities and complete course assignments asynchronously within the limits of posted submission deadlines. Any instructional component that allows students to come on campus for assignments or assessments, participate in synchronous activities, or any other course participation must be completely optional and just as easily achievable asynchronously. Online asynchronous courses will require at least one proctored event, which must be detailed in the course syllabus. The Banner classification for this class type is “OA.”

Synchronous Online – A course that is 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 will require at least one proctored event, which must be detailed in the course syllabus. The Banner classification for this class type is “OS.”

As part of the Georgia Virtual Technical Connection system, courses must use the online Learning Management System identified by the Georgia Virtual Connection – currently Blackboard LMS.

Online Faculty Qualifications

All full-time and part-time faculty teaching courses in any format must meet the same qualification criteria according to the *Faculty Qualifications Manual*. Based on instructional need, faculty are given the opportunity to instruct courses for online delivery with the approval of the Associate Dean.

Selection of faculty for online course delivery takes into consideration their personal interest in instructional innovation, demonstrated ability to adapt instruction to non-traditional or innovative delivery, and their successful record of teaching on campus and blended courses. This is verified through required LMS training and with satisfaction of acceptable student perceptions, course observations, and performance evaluations. In addition, the online instructor must have satisfactorily completed the appropriate online course development training.

Adjunct faculty teaching online courses are held to the same academic and professional qualifications as full-time faculty members. Adjunct faculty must have received the required online training before attempting to teach a course. Adjunct faculty teaching online courses are expected to work closely with the full-time faculty subject matter expert (SME) in order to ensure academic comparability.

Faculty Training using Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS)

Faculty training is the key to a successful online education program. A comprehensive program of professional development for delivery of online courses incorporates training about the modes of delivery; developing, building, effectively delivering, and evaluating online teaching and learning; and updating online courses using the latest technology, software, etc.

Faculty must be trained and proficient in the usage of the Blackboard LMS before being permitted to teach a class using a Blackboard course shell. All courses taught at WGTC use the Blackboard LMS for some or all of the course information needed for the course. Courses may be taught on campus, blended, asynchronously, or synchronously online.

Online Teaching Load

Regardless of instructional delivery mode, all full-time faculty have the same required teaching load according to the College faculty load policy. However, with the exception of completely online instructors, full-time faculty may teach no more than 50% of their courses as part of their faculty load in a blended or online course format as part of their standard semester load without written permission. The Associate Dean must have approval in writing from the Assistant Vice President and the Vice President for Academic Affairs to exceed this threshold. All courses carry the same credit/contact hour course requirement regardless of delivery method.

Instructor Availability

The flexible nature of online instruction inherently requires faculty teaching courses with an online component to be available outside normal college operating hours. However, online instruction should not be misconstrued by students to mean that instructors should be available 24/7 or even be available any more than they would be available to other traditional course students.

The instructor is expected to specify in his or her syllabus an availability range during week nights or the weekend to avoid any undue expectations from the student. The instructor may modify the weekend hours of availability provided the minimum hours of availability are met and notification has been given to the students in advance by announcement or email.

Institutional NC-SARA Membership for Online Instruction

Students taking courses outside of Georgia may take those courses at WGTC with the understanding that WGTC is a participating member of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement is a voluntary agreement among its member states and U.S. territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance-education courses and programs. It is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state. The benefit of this reciprocity consortium memberships is that reciprocating states cannot impose additional requirements, fees, or other related restrictions to students taking online courses outside of their current state of residence. NC-SARA membership provides a way for states to oversee the delivery of postsecondary distance education and, in doing so, a method of monitoring and maintaining consistency to help enhance online instructional effectiveness.

Online Course Perceptions and Evaluation

Students taking completely online courses provide input for instructional enhancement through a student perception instrument designed specifically to evaluate online course instruction. The instrument is used to evaluate synchronous or asynchronous online course attrition rates and grade distributions and compare them to those of on campus or blended similar courses. Results are then reported to the respective Associate and Academic Deans and the online faculty for consideration in delivery improvement.

All faculty, both full-time and part-time, must receive a formal evaluation once each year. Full-time and adjunct faculty teaching online courses are evaluated by their divisional Associate Dean in consultation with the Director of Online Learning concerning performance in their online courses. Annual evaluations should assess the performance of instructors in all courses taught, whether online or on campus traditional.

Admission and Graduation Requirements

Students enrolled in online courses must meet the same requirements for admission and degree/diploma/TCC completion as students enrolled in campus-based programs. The curriculum of each program must be the same regardless of course delivery mode. The instructional content and academic credit of online learning courses must be equivalent to that of corresponding on-campus courses.

Online Student Requirements

Online courses offer students an alternative form of course delivery that is more flexible and convenient since students can complete most or all of their coursework on their own schedule, within material completion deadlines. As a trade-off, however, online courses generally require a greater time commitment than courses requiring on campus participation. Students who take online courses need strong skills in studying, time management, Internet navigation, and reading comprehension to be successful. It is not recommended for students with difficulty in learning independently to register for online courses. Individual courses may require additional specific skills, such as proficiency in word processing. Following instructions, working independently, and submitting assignments by due dates are an important part of online learning. Students must have frequent access to a computer (preferably at home), updated software and operating system, and a reliable Internet provider. Outdated operating systems or certain internet browsers may not be compatible with the online platform.

Proctored Examinations

All students taking an online course are required to take at least one assessment through an approved proctor as a proctored activity. A proctor verifies the identity of the enrolled student and matches them to enrollment in the online course as well as monitors the student during the assessment. The proctor also helps ensure that the assessment is taken per requirement of the instructor to include restrictions on the use of other technology, resources, or printed material. Students may choose to take their proctored assessment either in a campus library or off campus using a WGTC approved proctoring vendor. As a third option, if students have a verified compatibility issue and live a long distance from a physical campus, students may choose to have their assessment proctored by an approved external proctor administered at an approved testing location. Any costs or fees associated with the external proctor or location are the responsibility of the student, and the proctoring procedures must be followed. Information on proctoring including potential fees are published on the Proctoring page on the school webpage.

eCampus Online Course Options

In addition to traditional online course offerings, West Georgia Technical College offers online courses through the “eCampus” platform, which allows students to enroll in online courses that are not currently offered at WGTC, their home college, but are offered by another Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) college. Upon completion of the eCampus course, students will earn credit at their home college. eCampus courses are designed to ensure a seamless experience for the student regardless of which technical college they call home.

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