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Southern Union State Community College Distance Education Policy Manual

Purpose of Distance Education
Southern Union State Community College offers only traditional (on-campus) degree programs. Thus, the purpose of the College’s distance education program is to support the traditional (on-campus) student with flexibility of course scheduling and delivery modes. The College strives to serve the needs of students who work, have family responsibilities or have other life challenges which limit their ability to attend classes on campus fulltime. The College will ensure that the distance education curriculum and training provided to students is of equitable quality to education and training provided through traditional classroom methods.

Distance Education Mediums
The College offers distance learning via the Internet only. All policies provided heretofore will apply to all areas of Southern Union State Community College’s distance education program.

Distance education courses which utilize the internet for instructional delivery are classified as either online or hybrid. The College has adopted the following definitions for these types of courses:

**Hybrid Course**: A for-credit course that is a combination of online and in-class instruction with reduced in-class seat-time. This excludes web-enhanced courses that do not reduce in-class seat-time. In a hybrid course, approximately 50% of traditional in-class seat-time is replaced with online learning activities.

**Example**: For a typical 3-credit-hour/3-contact-hour theory class which traditionally meets on campus twice weekly in a 15-week semester (30 total instructional sessions), student seat-time would be reduced by half. The hybrid class would only meet in class once a week, but would supplement with weekly online instructional activities.

**Online Course**: A for-credit course in which 85% or more of the course content is taught online. Face-to-face meetings are limited to an on-campus orientation and proctored midterm/final exams and/or hands-on laboratory activities.

**Example**: For a typical 3-credit-hour/3-contact-hour theory class which traditionally meets on campus twice weekly in a 15-week semester (30 total instructional sessions), no more than 5 on-campus sessions will be required. This is calculated as 30 x 0.15 = 4.5 (rounded up to 5).

Any course which requires students to attend on-campus sessions for more than 85% of the total contact time will be considered a **traditional course**, even if the course utilizes online resources for teaching/learning, assessment, or communication.

The College provides a platform for online, hybrid, and web-enhanced traditional courses through the learning management system (LMS), Canvas Instructure, an open-
source software package. The Canvas LMS software, along with fully developed Canvas courses and courses under construction, are stored on a dedicated server and managed by the Coordinator of Distance Education (CDE).

Although Canvas is the primary platform for distance education courses at the College, some online, hybrid, and web-enhanced traditional courses may utilize publisher-provided course management systems such as CourseCompass, the My Lab series and Evolve. Use of such platforms is limited and approved on a case-by-case basis by the Dean of Instruction.

**Student’s Rights and Responsibilities**

**General Information**
Every student enrolled in a distance education course at Southern Union State Community College will be under the same guidelines that apply to traditional, face-to-face instructional courses. All policies that appear in the student code of conduct portion of the Student Handbook, which is available from Student Services and online, are appropriately applied to distance education (i.e., attendance, academic misconduct, plagiarism, cheating, and harassment, etc.).

**Entrance Requirements**
Entrance requirements for distance education courses are essentially the same as the requirements for traditional courses. However, distance education students must also have access to a personal computer with Internet service and must maintain a working e-mail account. Upon admission to the institution, each student is issued a College e-mail account which can be accessed through the College website.

**CS290C (Online Learning Basics) Requirements**
All students are required to take CIS290C as a co-requisite to their first online class at Southern Union. Experience with Canvas or an online course at another college is not a substitute for this requirement. CIS290C is a 1-credit-hour course administered as a completely online class. There are no books for this course. The course will consist of a series of videos and quizzes that students are to complete before the due date published in the course syllabus. These course deadlines are established by college administration. Late submissions/makeup work are not allowed for these classes.

**Electronic Security**
Contact through electronic media is the foundation of distance education. Just as in traditional methods of communication, messages may be intercepted or received by individuals other than the intended recipient. Southern Union State Community College works under the protection of secure passwords and firewalls. However, messages intercepted or received by individuals other than the intended recipient are not the responsibility of SUSCC. Neither is the College responsible for any loss of data or hardware damage due to computer viruses transmitted through online course interactions.
Academic Integrity/Identity Confirmation

Students enrolled in online courses must adhere to the same standard of student conduct that applies to students enrolled in traditional courses, including those related to academic honesty (see College Catalog for more information). In particular, students are prohibited from disclosing user IDs and passwords or enrollment keys that grant access to online courses or assessments within such courses.

Furthermore, a student who enrolls in an online course and receives credit for that course must be the same person who participates in the course activities, completes course assignments, and takes the course exams. To ensure that this is the case, students enrolled in online courses are required to present valid photo identification (e.g. driver’s license, College ID, military ID) at all mandatory on-campus sessions, which at the minimum include a final exam/evaluation. Any student who cannot present such identification may not participate in the activity. Specific courses may require additional on-campus activities and/or technology-based identity authentication measures for online tests. Grades earned at on-campus evaluation sessions will constitute a significant portion of the student’s final course grade to be determined by the instructor.

Course Participation/Attendance

Electronic interaction among learners and the instructor is a viable and vital portion of distance education. Students must actively participate in all aspects of the course, which may include electronic discussions (online forums and/or chat sessions), by providing input and responding to questions presented by the instructor throughout the course.

According to the College attendance policy (see the College Catalog), students must demonstrate a minimum level of participation to receive college credit for a course. Students may be required to attend a mandatory on-campus orientation session and must log in to the online course during the first week of class. All online courses will have an assignment due during the first week of class that will be used to verify attendance. Minimal initial participation is required of students using financial aid. Failure to meet the requirements for the attendance verification assignments will result in withdrawal from the course. Students will also be required to complete an on-campus final exam/evaluation. Specific courses may require additional on-campus tests, labs, or other activities as indicated in the course syllabus. If a student cannot appear on campus at the required time, it is up to that student to contact the instructor in advance to make appropriate arrangements for an approved proctored session. All costs associated with proctoring and with travel to and from the campus or proctor location are the responsibility of the student.

Weekly participation is expected in all online courses. Activities and assignments required for students to demonstrate active weekly participation are determined by the online course instructor and are listed in the course syllabus. They may include discussion forums, chat sessions, group projects, quizzes, homework, tutorials, or any other activity that requires student engagement in the learning process. Course syllabi should clearly state whether or not the instructor will utilize Administrative Withdrawals (based on Southern Union’s Administrative Withdrawal and departmental policy.) For
official records (including financial aid), the last date of attendance for a student withdrawn from an online class will be the last day the student demonstrated active participation in the course.

If a student officially withdraws or is withdrawn prior to Southern Union’s Withdrawal date (see the current semester calendar), he/she will receive a grade of “W.”

Refund Request
Distance education courses are held to the same financial policies and standards as traditional courses. All drop/add dates are applicable to any and all Southern Union State Community College courses. Therefore, all refund and payment deadlines are applicable to distance education courses and traditional courses alike. The College Refund Policy can be found in the College Catalog. Courses that have insufficient enrollment or for which no qualified instructor is available will be cancelled and removed from the listing of course offerings.

Additional Charges/Fees for Online Classes
There are no additional charges/fees for distance education courses. Such is reflected on the student’s statement/schedule at the time of registration.

Grievance and Appeal
Southern Union State Community College recognizes that in order to efficiently and effectively fulfill its mission, its students must feel confident that any valid complaint made concerning the College will be promptly addressed by the appropriate authorities. Therefore, the Grievance and Appeal Procedure outlined in the Student Handbook will also apply to students taking distance education courses.

Students who are enrolled in distance education courses offered by the College are afforded the same rights as those who attend traditional college courses. Students have specific rights, such as the right to adequate contact with their assigned instructor, the right to comparable instruction, resources, and materials, and the right to question the policies and procedures of their respective instructor.

Students are always encouraged to contact their instructor first with concerns. In some cases the department chair or ultimately the Academic Dean may need to get involved with complex or extreme cases.

Access to Campus Facilities and Services
Students who are enrolled in distance education courses are entitled to use all on-campus facilities, such as libraries, bookstores, and computer labs, with a valid student ID. In addition, links on the College’s website provide access to or information on all student resources and services, including the Student Handbook, College Catalog, registration, library/research assistance, advising, financial aid, tutoring, and more.

Internet Access and Hardware/Software Requirements
Southern Union State Community College is not an Internet service provider, nor does the College provide personal computers to distance education students. The College does provide each enrolled student with an e-mail account and maintains open computer labs with internet access in the Learning Resource Center (LRC) on each
campus. Students may use the computers in the LRC for work in online classes within the LRC set hours of operation.

For certain courses, additional software may be required as indicated in the course syllabus. Generally, such software requirements are limited to free “plug-ins” that can be downloaded from a safe website. Instructions for downloading software will be included in the course syllabus and appropriate links posted on the course website. It is the student’s responsibility to download this software to his/her own home computer. Certain online courses may require the purchase of necessary software. Again, students are responsible for the acquisition of such software, which is made clear in the course syllabus. Students are expected to meet the requirements of the College’s online courses. If a student cannot fulfill these requirements, then he/she should not enroll in the online course (or should withdraw from it if already registered).

The College is not responsible for the loss of use of a student’s personal computer through any mishap or misfortune. In such cases, students are obligated to seek alternative access to a computer with internet connection as soon as possible. In almost every case, students have access to a variety of on-campus computer labs in Opelika, Wadley and Valley for use with their online courses.

**Technical Support**

The College is committed to providing quality and timely technical support for students enrolled in any online class. One of the ways the College provides support is through hands-on training in the mandatory online orientation. During the orientation, students learn to do such things as establish their user account, log into the course website, navigate the online course environment, download any necessary software plug-ins, access and use learning resources, complete online assignments, take online tests, communicate with the instructor and other students, and obtain academic help and technical support.

After the orientation, students who experience technical problems in an online course posted on the College’s LMS should first consult the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) module posted on the College’s home page. If this resource does not provide a solution to the problem, then the student should contact his/her course instructor, who has been trained and certified by the College to develop courses and teach online using Canvas. If the course instructor is unable to help the student resolve the issue, the student will contact the College’s CDE. The student should stay in contact with the instructor throughout the support process. Students may also seek assistance, if they desire, through the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) (https://suscc.instructure.com).

Students who experience technical problems in an online course posted on a publisher-provided course management system such as MyLabs or Launchpad should follow the instructions for obtaining technical support that are provided in the course syllabus and discussed in the orientation session. These may include directions to contact the publisher’s technical support team first. Students who seek assistance from such a source should keep their instructor informed during the process in case the problem is not resolved immediately.
Southern Union State Community College under no circumstances provides hardware support for students. A reliable computer and Internet connection are vital to success in online courses. The lack of such is no excuse for poor performance.

**Online Student Profiles**

Students are encouraged to create a personal student profile in the Canvas LMS. Profiles must include the student's name as listed in Canvas. Such profiles typically include a digital photograph of the student. Photos posted in student profiles must conform to the College’s standards for public viewing, which prohibit the depiction of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, profanity, racial slurs, offensive slogans, and clothing that is excessively revealing. Photos should be yearbook style photos (headshots, not group photos) and are subject to review and approval by the course instructor.

**Faculty’s Rights and Responsibilities**

**General Information**

Distance education faculty members of Southern Union State Community College will be held to the same requirements as are faculty members who instruct traditional on-campus courses. They are required to keep accurate records of students’ grades and attendance, provide students with contact information (office phone number and e-mail minimum), and inform their department head concerning any problems related to the course.

Each online course counts toward a faculty member’s workload the same as if the course were delivered by traditional means (unless it is an overload.) Full-time faculty members with course loads that include online courses may schedule contact time outside the normal College operating hours for their online course with the approval of the faculty member’s instructional dean. Since many distance learning students work on their online courses outside of normal operating hours, instructors are encouraged to establish appropriate times when they are accessible to online students in order to respond to e-mails, chats, and discussion boards.

Adjunct faculty will post online office hours in their course indicating when they will be available for student questions, interaction, etc. The number of hours per week will be equal to the course credit hours. For example, there must be three online office hours per week in a three credit-hour course.

**Online Communication/Responding to Student Posted Messages**

Instructors are required to submit quality and timely responses to student communication in online courses. Instructors are encouraged to respond in kind to phone calls or e-mails from students in online courses within 48 hours of receipt of the message. However, individual teaching loads, work schedules, leave times, and holidays are recognized limiting factors for response times. To ensure that students receive assistance in a reasonable time frame, each instructor should publish in his/her online course syllabus a policy establishing acceptable response time parameters. Such policies will be subject to approval under the Distance Learning Committee’s peer review process and by the instructor’s program coordinator, division chair, and instructional dean.
In addition to providing timely responses, faculty members must ensure that their communication with online students is professional, clear, courteous, respectful, and meets the student’s needs for academic assistance. For evaluation purposes, each faculty member must maintain a record of all electronic communication that occurs within an online course for the duration and for one semester following the end of the course. Such records may include either electronic or hard copies of student e-mails, instructor e-mails, online chat session logs, discussion forum postings, posted course announcements, and virtual classroom sessions.

**Professional Quality**

Faculty members are required to maintain and conduct their distance education courses with the same professional quality as they maintain and conduct their traditional courses. Faculty will receive the full support of Southern Union State Community College in the successful execution of maintaining and accelerating the quality and viability of distance education courses. The College will make every effort to maintain and continually upgrade the equipment, support, and materials necessary to conduct distance education courses. Professional development opportunities will regularly be made available and equipment/software upgraded to assist instructors in ensuring that online courses at Southern Union State Community College are of the highest academic quality. Online instructors should make expense and leave requests related to distance education in advance of the fiscal year so that budgets and schedules can be adjusted accordingly.

**Intellectual Property**

SUSCC reserves all rights to online courses created by College employees who use any Institutional resources (i.e. financial compensation, work time, College-owned facilities, equipment, or software) in the development of an online course. Course “shells” used in online courses are the purchased property of Southern Union State Community College.

All online courses developed using the Southern Union State Community College distance education platform or any medium, media, or symbol (icon, logo, letterhead, etc.) used to represent the College shall be the property of the College and must be approved prior to publication. The process of approval will include 1st, the Department Chair, 2nd, the DLC, 3rd, the respective Dean and 4th, the President. Violation of this policy will be considered a misrepresentation of the College, a violation of copyright and subject to all due penalties and procedures.

**Copyright Policies**

Faculty members must ensure that the courses they teach online comply with applicable copyright laws. The college publishes in The Employee Handbook/Policy Manual the P2P/Copyright Policy that addresses the very specific and detailed issues of using the college resources for onsite and/or offsite access to items that are protected under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) and Peer-to-Peer File Sharing Policy. The P2P/Copyright Policy is provided as a public domain notification that Southern Union State Community College complies with the legal and regulatory requirements of all jurisdictions in which it operates, inclusive of its own local jurisdiction as a matter of

Within each of these jurisdictions, the noted documents and policies specifically address how the college complies with the legal and regulatory requirements of the jurisdictions in which it operates. All administrators, faculty, and staff should remain cognizant of these policies and their application.

Furthermore, the college catalog, specifically the Student Handbook provides the college’s Internet Acceptable Use Policy. This policy details the appropriate use of the colleges’ resources to access and use materials of various types in the academic pursuit of a college degree or in college-wide instructional and employee practices.

Additions to the College Curriculum
For any new course not currently in the College curriculum, instructors must follow standard course adoption procedures before making a request to develop the course online. Courses not currently in the College course catalog must be submitted to the Curriculum Committee for approval prior to submission to the Department of Postsecondary Education (DPE). Once a course has been approved by DPE, the College’s Distance Learning Committee will consider the course for development as an online course according to the criteria prescribed on the Proposal for Development of an Online Course application.

Decision Making Authority
The Distance Learning Committee and the Academic Dean shall make decisions concerning the execution of distance learning at Southern Union State Community College. These groups consist of current faculty and staff members of the College. All policy reviews, adoptions, and changes will be processed through the Distance Learning Committee and Academic Dean.

Access to Training and Professional Development
A representative from the distance education office will hold regular training sessions at various times and locations for faculty. Topics covered may include Canvas, SoftChalk, Camtasia Relay, Respondus, Examity, hardware usage, troubleshooting, online course planning and course management. Introduction and advanced sessions are held to ensure that all faculty have access to relevant information. Faculty are made aware of session scheduling through campus email and Canvas announcement postings. Further, distance education staff are available during regular working hours by office/phone/email for faculty technical support.

Procedures/Policies for Course Development and Online Teaching

General Guidelines
All distance education courses for Southern Union State Community College will be developed, evaluated, and taught under the guidelines approved by the Distance Learning Committee. Faculty of Southern Union State Community College must follow all procedures and adhere to all policies for course development, evaluation,
compensation, and online teaching as established by the Distance Learning Committee and published in this manual. Noncompliance with any of these policies or procedures may result in the loss of the privilege of online instruction, as well as the loss of any contracted online course development compensation.

**Staffing**

Course shells are developed by a designated “lead” instructor for each online course. Each course shell serves as the master for all instructors teaching that course online. Online courses must be staffed by qualified personnel who have been Canvas Certified and approved by the appropriate department chair. Lead instructors generally have the first opportunity to teach offered sections of their courses. Additional sections will be added as need is determined by the department chair. Only instructors qualified to teach the subject and Canvas Certified will be eligible.

**Certification Process for Online Teaching**

In effective online classes, teachers provide instruction in ways that actively engage all students in memorable learning experiences. Effective online classes stimulate communication among class members and elicit thought provoking dialogue between the teacher and the student. In such a class, students are challenged to think logically and creatively, and master course content to the same degree of proficiency as students in the same traditional course. It takes a special skill set and a particular passion for online teaching to develop and deliver a course that meets these standards. Therefore, Southern Union State Community College requires training and certification for all instructors who desire to teach an online or hybrid class. The Distance Learning Committee is the College’s agent for developing and managing the certification process.

In 2012, the Distance Learning Committee developed a new plan to certify instructors to teach online and to mentor new and potential online instructors. Under the current plan, an instructor who wishes to teach online completes Canvas Authorized Trainer (CAT) Level 1 Training that certifies proficiency in specific areas of technical competence and general knowledge.

When an instructor completes all of the stages of training and obtains certifying signatures on the areas of the skills check-off sheet that pertain to online instructors, he/she is certified to teach online and may apply to develop an online course.

**Special Certification Cases**

**Instructors Experienced in Canvas:** Instructors who already have experience teaching online using Canvas at another institution may earn certification in an accelerated process. Each such instructor should first provide documentation of his/her online teaching experience to the chair of the Distance Learning Committee, who may approve an expedited certification process.

**Instructors Experienced in Other Platforms:** Instructors who have experience teaching online at another institution using a platform other than Canvas may also earn certification in an accelerated process. Each such instructor should first provide documentation of his/her online teaching experience to the chair of the Distance Learning Committee, who may approve an expedited certification process.
NOTE: Development of new online and/or hybrid courses is governed by separate course development policies which require the instructor to submit an application to develop an online class. Instructors who are interested in developing an online or hybrid class should become thoroughly familiar with those policies, submit an application to develop the course, and receive approval from the DLC before beginning work on the course.
Applying to Develop an Online or Hybrid Course

Instructors who desire to develop an online or hybrid course for SUSCC must follow the guidelines for Canvas instructor check-offs. A detailed outline of the course content and online learning resources that will be posted on the course website must accompany the application to develop an online course. **No new online or hybrid course will be listed in the official College semester course schedule until the course has been fully developed, evaluated by the Distance Learning Committee, and approved for enrollment.** To allow for schedule planning, courses must be fully developed, evaluated, and approved by the end of spring semester for listing in the fall semester course schedule. A similar timetable will apply to courses listed in the spring and summer course schedules.

Compensation for Course Development

Lead instructors will receive a one-time stipend of $500/credit hour for course shells developed and approved through the check-off process. Significant changes may entitle the instructor to additional monies. Complete overhaul of a course (e.g. book changes) may entitle the instructor to the full stipend again. Such determinations will be made by the appropriate department chair.

Evaluations

Each active online and hybrid course will be evaluated at least once per year by students enrolled in the course.

All online courses are subject to periodic evaluation by the CDE/Distance Learning Committee. If a course does not meet minimum quality standards, the course instructor and/or developer will be notified, along with suggestions for improving the course. The course developer and/or instructor may request another evaluation after he/she has made the suggested improvements.

If either course quality or online teaching quality is found to be unsatisfactory based on the results of evaluations, the course may be removed at the direction of the Dean of Instruction from the College’s online course offerings until its quality has reached an approved level.

Policies to Promote Best Practices in Online Teaching

Online Course Syllabus

Each syllabus for an online course should be customized to reflect the online nature of the class. In addition to those items already included in the College’s syllabus template, each online syllabus must include the following:

1. Hardware and software requirements, including instructions for downloading any necessary “plug-ins” required for student participation in the course
2. Attendance and participation policies
3. Instructions for obtaining technical support and academic support
4. A technology back-up plan that tells students how to continue coursework in the event of widespread and prolonged technology failure
5. Rules for acceptable online communication from and between students

6. Instructor contact information, office hours, and a plan establishing acceptable response time parameters for the instructor to respond to student e-mails and phone calls

Online Course Orientations
Each online and hybrid course may include an on-campus orientation with mandatory student participation. Instructors are not obligated to give make-up orientations to students who fail to attend the scheduled orientation session, but may do so if a student has a legitimate excuse for his/her absence.

Student Identity Confirmation Procedures
SUSCC is committed to maintaining the academic integrity of all courses, including online and hybrid courses. The College has established the following policies to ensure that the student who registers for a distance education course is the same student who participates in and completes the course:

1. Students enrolled in an online or hybrid course **must** attend a minimum of 1 on-campus session: a final exam/evaluation. Further, instructors are encouraged to require an on-campus orientation session at the beginning of each term. Students must present a valid photo ID (e.g. driver's license, College-issued student ID, military ID) to confirm their identity at each on-campus session. Students who cannot produce such identification will not be allowed to participate in the activity. Instructors will carefully compare the photo on the ID to the student presenting the identification and verify that the name on the ID matches the student name on the official course roll. Specific courses may require additional on-campus activities within the limitations prescribed by the definition of “online course”.

2. To discourage cheating in an online course, instructors will employ a grading system in which the on-campus exams/evaluations constitute a significant portion of the student’s final course grade.

3. Instructors are encouraged to implement additional specific identity authentication measures within the online course.

Security and Integrity of Online Coursework
Faculty members teaching online courses are responsible for creating and maintaining an online teaching and learning environment that provides for the security of personal data and student coursework and fosters academic integrity in the course.

Faculty members teaching online classes will promote the security of students’ personal data and course grades by (1) utilizing a course enrollment key and issuing it to enrolled students and approved guests only and (2) utilizing a course management system grade book that prohibits students from accessing other students’ grades or posting class-wide grade reports that identify students by confidential code only.

Faculty members teaching online classes will promote academic integrity and security of student work within their courses by implementing appropriate security measures for online testing and assignment submission. Many security features, such as those listed
below, are provided within the course management system. Instructors are encouraged to utilize as many of these as necessary to ensure the safety, security and integrity of student coursework:

1. Embedded automatic “save” mechanisms which record student answers immediately upon entry for homework exercises and assignments to prevent accidental loss of data
2. Frequent back-up of the online course and/or separate back-up of student assignment submissions
3. Algorithmic generation of test and homework items which ensures each student receives a question with a different answer than every other student attempting the same problem
4. Instructor-provided passwords for quizzes, tests, and other graded assignments
5. Time limits for quiz/test attempts
6. Automatic shuffling of questions and shuffling of multiple-choice responses between student quiz/test attempts
7. Browser security settings prohibiting access to other online sites and/or prohibiting printing during quizzes and tests
8. Limiting student access to quiz/test grades or to review of graded quizzes/tests until all submissions have been graded
9. Requirements for specific IP addresses or monitoring and comparing of IP addresses between student attempts of quizzes/tests
10. Quiz/test item presentation options (one question per page, no returning to previous questions, etc.)
11. Limiting number of attempts per quiz/test
12. Time delays between subsequent attempts of quizzes or tests that allow multiple attempts
13. Monitoring of student activity logs which record dates, times, and durations of access to graded assignments

Course Design and Content
Every online/hybrid course offered by SUSCC should be designed to maximize student learning and minimize confusion. The design of each course should reflect principles of organization and consistency to facilitate students’ navigation of the online course environment. Important and commonly needed information should never be more than three mouse clicks away. Specific requirements for course design can be found in the Online Course Evaluation form (see the Appendix of Forms).

For ease of student use and to maintain a sense of consistency among online courses, the instructor of each course will ensure that these items are included in the introductory section of the online course website:

- Instructor contact information (phone number, e-mail address, office location, office hours)
- Link to the course syllabus
**Student Profiles**

Student profiles are a useful tool for promoting peer interaction in online courses. Students should be encouraged to develop their personal student profiles within certain limitations. Specifically, students are prohibited from posting profane, defamatory, or salacious comments. Student photos must be “yearbook” style photos of the students themselves (not group photos). In other words, student photos should be headshots with plain backgrounds and contain no images of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, profanity, racial slurs, offensive slogans, or clothing that is excessively revealing. Online instructors are responsible for monitoring the profiles of students in their online classes and for ensuring that prohibited postings are removed as soon as possible.

**Sharing of Student Information**

Southern Union State Community College will under no circumstances share student account information with parties other than the student. Student data is stored in a secured off-site server protected by SSL encryption. Password information is not available to SUSCC employees and must be maintained by the students themselves. Sharing of account information is strictly prohibited.

**Instructor Profiles**

In effective online courses, students build interpersonal connections with their instructors as well as fellow students. To facilitate this process, each online instructor will complete his/her own profile for the course, which may include the following items:

- Digital photo of the instructor
- Introduction of the instructor to the students
- E-mail address and office phone numbers
Appendix of Forms
1. Every student enrolled in a distance learning course at Southern Union State Community College will be under the same guidelines that apply to traditional, face-to-face instructional courses.

2. Messages intercepted or received by individuals other than the intended recipient are not the responsibility of Southern Union State Community College.

3. Students must attend the online course orientation and log in within the first week of the beginning course date. If a student fails to do so the instructor may withdraw said student from his/her course.

4. Any student who does not interact with his/her enrolled distance learning course for a period of three weeks (consecutive or not) in spring or fall semester may be likewise withdrawn from said course. For summer terms, this period is 2 weeks.

5. All drop/add dates are applicable to any and all Southern Union State Community College courses. Therefore, all refund and payment deadlines are applicable to distance education courses and traditional courses alike.

6. Courses that do not receive minimum enrollment numbers, based on current administrative guidelines, will be removed from the listing of course offerings.

7. Students are also held to the requirements posted in the instructor’s syllabus.

8. All complaints should first be discussed with the instructor. If the issue is not resolved at that level, the student should request a conference with the department/division chairperson. As a last resort, the student should contact the respective Instructional Dean if the situation has not been resolved.

9. Southern Union State Community College does not provide personal Internet access or computer use to distance learning students. The College does maintain computer labs with set hours of operation if the student does not possess a computer with Internet access. However, the College does not hold any responsibility for the loss of use of a student's personal computer through any mishaps or misfortune.

10. Students who are enrolled in distance education courses offered by Southern Union State Community College are afforded the same rights as those enrolled in traditional, on-campus courses.

11. For certain courses, additional software may be required to interact with the course. These additional requirements will be posted in the syllabus. Acquisition of such software is the student’s responsibility.

12. Each student is responsible for maintaining up-to-date, effective virus protection software on his/her own computer. Although the College takes reasonable precautions to prevent transmission of harmful files, no computer network is impenetrable. Therefore, the College assumes no responsibility for loss of data or other damage resulting from the transmission of computer viruses which may occur during online course interactions.
Proposal for Development of an Online Course

Part I: General Information
This application package is to be used by an instructor who desires to develop an online or hybrid course to be taught at Southern Union State Community College. This package must be submitted even if you do not desire compensation for the development work. You, the applicant, are responsible for completing the application package, securing the necessary approvals and signatures, and submitting the application package to the chair of the Distance Learning Committee. Please allow one month for processing, approval, and return of the package.

Part II: Policies and Procedures

1. No release time or reduced workloads are granted for developing an online or hybrid course.
2. No course is to be opened for student enrollment or listed in the semester schedule as an online or hybrid course until it has been fully developed, evaluated and approved for activation by the Distance Learning Committee and the College President.
3. There will be a one-semester gap between the development of a new online course or hybrid course and the activation of the course for student enrollment.
4. The instructor of the online/hybrid course should be the course developer, except in the case of a fulltime instructor developing a course shell for an adjunct instructor to use.
5. First-time course developers must have successfully completed approved training for online instruction and provide documentation of such training with this application package.
6. Compensation for course development will be made at the rate of $500 per credit hour (This only applies to shells deemed necessary by the appropriate department head and approved by the Dean of Instruction.)
7. The course developer is responsible for notifying the chair of the Distance Education Committee when the developer believes his/her course is ready to be evaluated.
8. Both new and existing online courses will be regularly evaluated to ensure that students who are enrolled in online courses receive instruction comparable to that of the course offered by traditional means. The same applies to hybrid courses.
9. By completing, signing, and submitting this application package, the applicant indicates that he/she is thoroughly familiar with the Distance Education Policy Manual, in particular the sections that apply to developing and teaching an online course and the evaluation of online courses.
### Part III: Instructor’s Application to Develop an Online or Hybrid Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Prefix and Number:</th>
<th>Course Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructor Name:</td>
<td>Program Area:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Has Instructor completed training for teaching online?**
- **Yes** – Continue completing this form and attach a copy of the training certificate
- **No** – Stop! Do not submit this form until you have completed training.

**Is this course new to the College curriculum?**
- **Yes** – Stop! Do not submit this form. New courses must be approved by the Curriculum Committee and CDE!
- **No** – Continue completing this form and attach a copy of the current course syllabus

**Rationale for Offering Course Online:**

**Does this course have a lab component?**
- **No**
- **Yes** – Then explain below how laboratory experiences will be handled.

**Online Platform to be Used:**
- **Canvas**
- **Other:** _____

**Special Hardware/Software Needs:**

When do you anticipate the course being opened for enrollment?
- **Fall**
- **Spring**
- **Summer**

**Program Coordinator Approval**

What percent of the degree/certificate program’s total credit hours will be available online with the addition of this course? ______ (If more than 50%, STOP! A Substantive Change report must be completed and sent to CDE for approval before you proceed. Please discuss with Dean of Instruction.)

**Program Coordinator Name (Printed):**

**Program Coordinator Signature:**

**Division Chair Name:** (Print Name)

**Division Chair Signature:**

**Instructor Signature:**

**Submission Date:**

**NOTE:** A detailed outline of the proposed online course structure (organized either by topic or week), must accompany this application. See sample provided after this application.
Part IV: Institutional Approval

Applicant Name: ______________________________Course Number: _____________

Date Completed Application Received from Applicant: _____________________

Distance Learning Committee Members:  □ Approved  □ Disapproved
(3 signatures required for action indicated)

Name: __________________________ Signature: ___________________________
Date: __________

Name: __________________________ Signature: ___________________________
Date: __________

Name: __________________________ Signature: ___________________________
Date: __________

Administration:  □ Approved  □ Disapproved

Dean: __________________________ Signature: ___________________________
Date: __________

(Print Name)  □ Approved  □ Disapproved

President: __________________________ Signature: ___________________________
Date: __________

(Print Name)

If disapproved, give reason(s) in this space:

Special Instructions to Course Developer:

Administration: Please return form to Distance Learning Committee

Date Returned to Distance Learning Committee: _________________
Date Returned to Applicant from Committee: _________________
Notified Date: _______________
# Checklist for Online/Hybrid Course Developers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Read the Distance Education Policy Manual carefully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Attend hands-on training for teaching online (see the certification process described in the Distance Education Policy Manual). Obtain a certificate of successful completion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Prepare an outline for your online course following either a topic or weekly format. This outline will detail and organize the learning resources, assignments, and assessments to be posted at your online course website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Complete the “Proposal to Develop an Online Course” form. Attach a copy of your certificate from training as well as the outline prepared in step 2. Obtain the necessary signatures from your program coordinator and/or division chair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Submit your application package to the chair of the Distance Learning Committee. Allow one month for processing. If your application is approved, continue to the next step.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Create a new Canvas course and begin developing your course. Refer to the Distance Education Course Evaluation Form and Course Check-Off Requirements document to be sure your course meets all requirements. Seek assistance when needed and feedback periodically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>When your course is fully developed, notify the Distance Learning Committee chair that you are ready to have the course evaluated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 8.   | Upon receiving a satisfactory evaluation, your department chair should be sure the appropriate semester schedule reflects the following for your course:  
- lists your course as an online or hybrid course  
- provides the student orientation date/time/location (if applicable)  
- lists information on special software requirements  
- lists prerequisites for your course |
| 9.   | Conduct a preliminary dry-run student orientation session (if applicable). |
Course Check-Off Requirements

The following items will be standard on every online course offered at Southern Union.

- 'Getting Started Guide - Read this First' (see details for the getting started guide)
- Complete Course Syllabus
- Complete List of Course Expectations - This should be a list of items required of students to be successful in the course.
- Instructor Profile - This should include the instructor's preferred means of being contacted.
- Attendance Verification Assignment - Courses should contain some sort of graded assignment to be used to determine that students are "active" in the course. The due date for this assignment should be set to require completion before the financial aid verification cutoff date each semester. **

Example: Practice Quiz - If the course is to use the Respondus LockDown Browser (RLDB), this quiz can be used to orient students to the new software before an actual test. Point values for this quiz are left to the discretion of the instructor. If the RLDB is not to be used a simple quiz may be used to allow student a chance to see what to expect on a real test.

It may be helpful to put all of these items in a module. Instructors can use the settings in Canvas to force students to work through this module before getting to the real content of the course.

** This is actually a federal requirement. As of fall 2013, we are no longer able to simply view the "last login" information for reporting attendance verifications.

The following items are highly recommended but are not required.

- Student introductions discussion (this may be used as your required attendance verification assignment).
- Instructor video introduction.

Suggested Items for the Getting Started Guide

- Student's Rights and Responsibilities document
- Assignment Listing (complete with due dates)
- Complete List of Graded Items (tests, discussions, assignments...)
- Outline of Grading Structure
- Technical Support Contact Information
- Plan B Scenarios - What should students do when something doesn’t work and they can’t contact you
- The Instructor's Policy on Make-up work and Extra Credit
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Assignment Submission Requirements: accepted file types (docx, rtf, pdf...)
- Instructions for Third-Party Applications
  - If the course is to use additional software for labs, then detailed instructions should be included.
Some of the items in this guide may be duplicated elsewhere in the course (the syllabus perhaps). The idea is to provide students with a course cheat-sheet (printer friendly) that they are likely to actually read and refer back to.
Distance Education Course Evaluation Form

Course Number: ___________________________  Course Name: __________________________________________________
Instructor Name: ___________________________  Date of Evaluation: ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus</td>
<td>An electronic version of the syllabus is posted on the course website and meets the following criteria:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Utilizes the College’s syllabus template</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflects current information</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Is customized to reflect the online nature of the course (see Distance Education Policy Manual for a list of required elements)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructor Profile</td>
<td>The course site includes a personalized instructor profile.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>It must include:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal greeting (written, oral, or videotaped)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Contact information (e-mail address and telephone number)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Office hours and office location</td>
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<td></td>
<td>It may also include:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Digital photograph or videotape</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Credentials</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The course site is:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Easily navigable</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Logically organized</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Presents learning modules in manageable segments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Exemplary</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Needs Improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The course website facilitates effective student-to-student and student-to-teacher communication by:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Clearly stating expectations defining minimal levels of student participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Clearly stating the rules/taboos for responses in chat sessions and forums</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Specifying reasonable instructor response time to e-mails, phone calls, and other student inquiries (no more than 48 hours)</td>
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<td>• Including at least 2 mandatory class-wide discussion forums, chat-room sessions, or virtual classroom sessions, where applicable</td>
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<td>Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supplemental Learning Resources</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The course website facilitates mastery of course material through:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Instructions and documents that are free of misspellings and other grammatical errors</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Opportunities for self-assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Workable links to external resources (virtual libraries, relevant websites, publisher-provided materials, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Integrity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expectations for student work and achievement are equal to that for students in traditional on-campus classes and are made clear through:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A clear and highly organized course schedule that includes deadlines for assignments and policies that address late/incomplete submissions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Clearly stated and measurable learning outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A clearly defined academic integrity policy that addresses the unique online learning environment and consequences for violations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Means for authenticating student work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Criteria</strong></td>
<td>Exemplary</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Needs Improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional Strategies</td>
<td>A variety of teaching techniques is utilized, including at least three of the following for each learning unit:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reading assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Slide presentations</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Audio Lectures</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interactive tutorials</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Hands-on projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Collaborative assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Video presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Virtual Classroom sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Chat-room sessions/forums</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Prerequisite computer skills and hardware/software requirements are clearly communicated to the student in the course syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The course website includes links to download sites for tools required for interaction with course content (Examples: RealPlayer, Macromedia Flash, Adobe Acrobat)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The course includes a posted backup plan in the event of widespread technology failure as well as instructions/policies for individual cases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Summary Committee Findings:**

- Course exceeds expectations – recommended for implementation or continuance and for use as a model course
- Course meets expectations – recommended for implementation or continuance
- Course needs improvement – not recommended for implementation or recommended for discontinuance

**Committee Members’ Signatures**

Name: _________________________ Signature: ________________________________ Date: ________________________
Name: _________________________ Signature: ________________________________ Date: ________________________
Name: _________________________ Signature: ________________________________ Date: ________________________
Certification of Mentors

The Distance Learning Committee encourages all instructors who have become certified to eventually become mentors to other instructors who are pursuing certification or who are new to teaching online. To become a mentor, an instructor must have done the following:

1. Developed an online class which was approved for enrollment
2. Conducted an online orientation under the supervision of an authorized mentor (If applicable)
3. Taught an online course for at least 3 semesters
4. Earned favorable evaluations of the course
5. Demonstrated some degree of expertise in an area of online teaching which can be shared with others

As these milestones are met, instructors may have each achievement certified on the skills check-off sheet in the skills area designated for mentors. Instructors who complete the mentoring portion of the skills check-off sheet will be duly certified as mentors and will be awarded certificates verifying their accomplishments.

An instructor designated as a mentor may be assigned to assist a newly certified instructor develop an online class or may simply serve as an open resource person for anyone with questions about online teaching in the mentor’s area of expertise. Mentors may also be asked to supervise the first student orientation that a new online instructor conducts and may be asked to teach Canvas group training courses if the need arises.

NOTE: At such time as sufficient mentors are in place, the DLC will consider adding the following paragraph to the Proposal for Development of an Online Course.

First-time course developers will be assigned a mentor to assist with course development, student orientation, and first-semester questions. The mentor should be the first resource sought for help.
# Certification for Teaching Online and Mentoring
(Required Skills Check-Off Sheet)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Knowledge or Skill</th>
<th>Date Attained</th>
<th>Signature of Certifying Agent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online Instructor</strong></td>
<td><strong>“Introduction to Canvas”</strong> Professional Development Session:</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Understand what a learning management system is and become familiar with options other than Canvas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Enroll in DE 101 (Southern Union’s Distance Education Faculty Resource Center on Canvas)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Navigate the Canvas environment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Customize course settings</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Create an instructor profile</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Upload files from a personal computer to Canvas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Add course activities (assignments, journals, lessons)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Add learning resources (labels, text pages, text documents, slide presentations, links to websites)</td>
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<td>9. Edit the Canvas course calendar</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. Send/Retrieve e-mails and messages from within Canvas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11. Use the help features within Canvas and at the Canvas.org website</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12. Back-up the Canvas course and course documents</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>“Intermediate Canvas”</strong> Professional Development Session:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13. Create different types of questions for the Canvas course test question bank (true/false, multiple choice, matching, short answer, numerical, etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14. Add images or link to files within test questions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15. Create and post quizzes/tests with customized settings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16. Customize and use the Canvas course gradebook</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17. Create and monitor class discussion forums, surveys, and polls</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. Retrieve statistics/data on student activity within the Canvas course</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>General Knowledge of Online Teaching/Learning Issues</strong> (DE 101 Quizzes from Assigned Readings/Viewings):</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. Know common myths about online teaching and learning</td>
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<td>20. Know the most common reasons students enroll in an online class</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21. Know the most common reasons students withdraw from or fail an online class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Know general principles of effective online instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Be familiar with the policies that govern distance education at Southern Union State Community College</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Be familiar with the policies and guidelines issued by the College’s accreditation agency that relate to distance education</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Be familiar with copyright laws that apply to online education</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop an online course and have it reviewed and approved for scheduling by the Distance Learning Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct a student orientation to an online course under the guidance and supervision of an approved mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach online for at least 3 semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement in an online class at least one unique teaching tool that either utilizes cutting-edge technology or uses older technology in an especially unique and effective way that can be shared with other online instructors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earn favorable peer reviews and student evaluations of online courses taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be recommended as a mentor by the Distance Learning Committee</td>
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</tbody>
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PROCEDURE FOR PROTECTING THE PRIVACY OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES

FERPA: Southern Union State Community College protects the privacy of all students, including those enrolled in distance education courses/programs, through strict adherence of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). The official FERPA statement is available for students and public view through the Student Handbook and Catalog.

Secure Login and Password: Each distance education faculty member and student enters his/her unique user identification number and unique password to access the CANVAS learning management system. This combination of user identification number and password identifies faculty members and students to the system upon each visit. All parties accept responsibility for the security of their personal passwords and must not share them with anyone. Student and faculty information is protected and separated from other users within the CANVAS learning/teaching environment and from outside intruders.

Unique Student Number: The College issues each student a unique student number. This number becomes the unique identifier for the student throughout his/her history at the College.

Mandatory On-Campus Sessions: A minimum of one mandatory on-campus session (the final exam/evaluation) is required for all distance education courses. Students attending these mandatory on-campus sessions are required to present valid photo identification (e.g. driver’s license, College ID, military ID) in order to further protect their privacy and to confirm their identity for academic integrity purposes. Any student who cannot present such identification may not participate in the activity.

Additional Security of Online Coursework: Faculty members teaching online classes will promote the security of students’ personal data and course grades by (1) utilizing a course enrollment key and issuing it to enrolled students and approved guests only and (2) utilizing a course management system grade book that prohibits students from accessing other students’ grades or posting class-wide grade reports that identify students by confidential code only. Many security features, such as those listed below, are provided within the course management system. Instructors are encouraged to utilize as many of these as necessary to ensure the safety, security and integrity of student coursework:

- Embedded automatic “save” mechanisms which record student answers immediately upon entry for homework exercises and assignments to prevent accidental loss of data.
- Frequent back-up of the online course and/or separate back-up of student assignment submissions.
- Algorithmic generation of test and homework items which ensures each student receives a question with a different answer than every other student attempting the same problem.
- Instructor-provided passwords for quizzes, tests, and other graded assignments.
- Time limits for quiz/test attempts.
- Automatic shuffling of questions and shuffling of multiple-choice responses between student quiz/test attempts.
- Browser security settings prohibiting access to other online sites and/or prohibiting printing during quizzes and tests.
- Limiting student access to quiz/test grades or to review of graded quizzes/tests until all submissions have been graded.
- Requirements for specific IP addresses or monitoring and comparing of IP addresses between student attempts of quizzes/tests.
- Quiz/test item presentation options (one question per page, no returning to previous questions, etc.).
- Limiting number of attempts per quiz/test.
- Time delays between subsequent attempts of quizzes or tests that allow multiple attempts.
- Monitoring of student activity logs which record dates, times, and durations of access to graded assignments.