

5.1.2.1. OFTC Distance Education Student Privacy Procedure

This procedure applies to students enrolled in distance education courses at Oconee Fall Line Technical College (OFTC).

Definitions

Distance Education - Distance Education is defined as a formal education process in which the majority of instruction occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Distance education courses at Oconee Fall Line Technical College are online or hybrid courses.

Blackboard Ultra - The learning management system (LMS) utilized by the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and Oconee Fall Line Technical College to offer distance education courses through a web-based platform.

GOLD – Georgia Online Learning & Development – The division of the Technical College System of Georgia that manages the learning management system.

Secure Login/Passwords

When a student enrolls in a class that utilizes Blackboard Ultra, the student is automatically enrolled into that course through the integrated learning platform that allows Banner and Blackboard Ultra to communicate. OFTC utilizes secure logins/passwords, which are automatically generated in the Banner system, to verify the identity of students enrolled in distance education courses. All students enrolled in distance education courses must use their secure login and password to submit assignments and access materials.

All users of the college's learning management system are responsible for maintaining the security of usernames, passwords, and any other access credentials assigned. The credentials may not be shared or given to anyone, for any reason, other than to the user to whom they were assigned. Users are responsible for any and all uses of the account. Students and faculty may change their password at any time if they feel their credentials have been compromised. Any user assigned a college admin account for the LMS reviews and signs the LMS Administrator Acknowledgement and Compliance Statement that protects employees and students.

Proctored Events

All courses offered through distance education require at least one proctored event. Every online student is required to complete at least one proctored test or assignment as a means of verifying identity. Students may secure an off-campus proctor, who must be approved by the course instructor. OFTC does not assess any fees associated with verification of identity of distance education students. Students who choose to use an off-campus proctor may be assessed a proctoring fee by the proctoring site.

Online Courses Backup and Retention

The LMS is managed through GOLD, Office of Technical Education, under an enterprise level contract at the Technical College System of Georgia. Under this agreement, Blackboard, Inc., provides the LMS, services, and backup capabilities coordinated and maintained through TCSG. Blackboard's PostgreSQL database service provides enhanced availability such that in the event of a database failure, the service would cut-over to an alternate availability zone. The PostgreSQL database service also makes nightly backups. The Learn SaaS offering uses Amazon Simple Storage Service (S3) for backups of critical file system data. This data is backed up every five minutes. S3 offers "11 nines" of data durability.

GOLD maintains courses on the college system. Course access is based on the TCSG Student Records Retention policy. Backups of the LMS data are stored and managed by Blackboard. Blackboard Learn automatically backs up all courses with activity within the last seven days and maintains for 30 days.

Family Educational Rights of Privacy Act (FERPA)

All information in Banner, including student identification numbers, is protected in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and is not shared. Any records maintained electronically by Student Affairs or instructors are protected by username and password. OFTC faculty and staff do not have access to students' OFTC passwords. Students must use their unique logon and password combination to access course materials, submit assignments, and review grades.

Third Party Software

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

Graded Materials

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

Adopted: March 11, 2015

Last Reviewed: July 9, 2025

Revised: March 23, 2019; March 3, 2022; July 9, 2025