Ventura College
Distance Education Student Handbook
Updated May, 2014

This handbook is a work in progress as we complete a revision to the curriculum appendix for Distance Education.
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Mission Statement

Ventura College Mission Statement

At Ventura College, we transform students’ lives, develop human potential, create an informed citizenry, and serve as the educational and cultural heart of our community. Placing students at the center of their learning experience, we serve a highly diverse student body by providing innovative instruction and student support, focusing on associate degree and certificate completion, transfer, workforce preparation, and basic skills. We are committed to the sustainable continuous improvement of our college and its services.

Ventura College Distance Education Mission Statement
Ventura College Distance Education will increase access to high quality college courses by utilizing educational technologies, emerging content delivery methods, and innovative instruction for all members of the community we serve.

About the Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to serve as a resource for students taking online or interested in taking online. It provides information about resources, support, policies, and procedures in distance education at Ventura College.

The Ventura College Distance Education (VCDE) Handbook was prepared by the college’s Instructional Technologist, Dean of Distance Education, the Distance Education Committee, and the Academic Senate. Special thanks to the Distance Education Committee for the collaboration in the creation of the Student Handbook.
Introduction to Ventura College Distance Education (VCDE)

Welcome to the Ventura College Distance Education (VCDE)! VCDE offers convenient, expanded access to higher education and learning opportunities via distance education. Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology. Distance Education courses are ideal for independent, self-directed, and motivated students who have functional computers at their home or office and have access to broadband internet on an ongoing basis. Distance Education has become a common learning method for students who are seeking to achieve their educational goals.

The distance education/instructional technology department provides support for faculty teaching distance education courses. For obtain more information about distance education at Ventura College than is covered in this handbook, please utilize one of the following resources:

Dr. Gwendolyn Lewis-Huddleston, Dean of Social Sciences, Humanities, & Distance Education
gklewhuddleston@vcccd.edu | 805-654-6388, LRC 353

Rebecca Chandler, Instructional Technologist
rchandler@vcccd.edu | 805-289-6184, LRC 146

Vacant, Instructional Design Specialist
@vcccd.edu | 805-654-6400 x1261, LRC 122
Assessment Readiness Test

Are you ready for an online course?

Online education requires a different skill-set from the traditional classroom to be successful. If you have never taken an online course before you might not know if you possess those skills.

We have created a short assessment to see if you are a good fit for an online course. Please take a few minutes before registering to see if you are ready for an online course.

[http://www.venturacollege.edu/online_services/online_classes/prospective_de_students/index.shtml](http://www.venturacollege.edu/online_services/online_classes/prospective_de_students/index.shtml)

Here are some of the skills that are helpful for online learners:

- Independent Learner
- Well versed in computers
- Excellent reading comprehension skills
- Excellent written communication skills
- Good time management
- Detailed-Oriented
- Self-Motivated
- Organized
- Problem Solver
- Excellent Communication skills
Computer Requirement

If you are taking a Distance Education class, you will be accessing your online course through Desire2Learn (D2L). The following information will help you prepare your computer to ensure the best experience in D2L.

**System Requirements** (As of December 27, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Minimum Requirements*</th>
<th>Recommended*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operating system</strong></td>
<td>Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7</td>
<td>Windows 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mac OS X</td>
<td>Mac OS X 10.7(Lion)</td>
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<td><strong>Video</strong></td>
<td>Minimum resolution of 1024 x 600</td>
<td>Resolution of 1024 x 768+</td>
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<td>56K modem</td>
<td>Cable modem, DSL</td>
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<td><strong>Browser</strong></td>
<td><strong>Windows</strong>:</td>
<td><strong>Mac OS X</strong>:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Chrome</td>
<td>- Chrome (Newest)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Firefox 17.0 +</td>
<td>- Firefox (Newest)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Internet Explorer 9 or 10</td>
<td>- Internet Explorer 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Mac OS X</strong>:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Chrome</td>
<td>- Chrome (Newest)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Safari 5.1 +</td>
<td>- Firefox (Newest)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Firefox 17.0 +</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mobile Web</strong></td>
<td>- iOS 5 with Safari 5.1+</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- iOS 6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Android 2.2+</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Blackberry 7 and 10</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tablet</strong></td>
<td>- Android Browser (newest)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- iOS Safari (newest)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- MS Surface Internet Explorer 10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Playbook Browser (newest)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Javascript</strong></td>
<td>Enabled</td>
<td>Enabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cookies</strong></td>
<td>Enabled</td>
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</table>
Desire2Learn Student Orientations
A technical orientation for Desire2Learn will be held several times throughout the beginning of each semester on campus. This orientation will review accessing Desire2Learn, finding courses, and using various tools.

For specific information about course content, policies, textbook information, or adding a course, students will need to contact the instructor directly.

This orientation is designed for students who are new to distance education classes at Ventura College or students who are in need of a refresher.

Please visit http://www.venturacollege.edu/online_services/online_classes/d2l_orientation.shtml to sign up and get current information on orientation offerings.
Balancing Responsibilities and Setting Priorities
Vital to a successful online learning experience is the ability to balance your responsibilities. Knowing how to set priorities is the key to getting the greatest benefit from your online education experience. Determine early in the semester exactly what work is required and do your best to plan ahead. Do not hesitate to ask for advice or help from your instructor.

*Strategies for managing course related stress include*

Know your deadlines. These include course deadlines as well as deadlines and important events occurring elsewhere in your life while you are enrolled in the course.

Plan ahead. If you know that your time will be consumed by a non-course related activity during a particular week, do your course related activities ahead of time.

Know your available resources, especially technological resources, and have them at hand when you are working in your course.

Keep in touch with your instructor. If you do fall behind, let your instructor know immediately, and ask him/her for assistance in planning how you will catch up.

*Student Accountability*

The further you progress in higher and continuing education, the more responsibility you will need to take for your own learning.

*Self-Directed Learning*

As you explore the many avenues of learning available and begin to define your individual path, you will still need to work with your instructors to make sure you are meeting the requirements of the individual courses.

*Understand Expectations*

In order to meet course requirements and instructor expectations, you will need a clear understanding of these requirements and expectations. Instructors will provide a syllabus which
acts as a contract between you and the instructor. Read through the syllabus carefully and print it out.

Seek Clarification

If you have questions regarding content, contact the instructor immediately. In the online environment instructors have fewer cues to alert them to your confusion. They cannot see your puzzled expression or hear you ask, “What?” If something is unclear to you, it may very well be unclear to the rest of the students in the class. Your questions may help others in the learning process as well. So ask, early and as often as necessary.

Become an “Active Learner”

To be successful in this environment, actively seek ways you can best understand the course material.

Develop Self-Discipline

Self-Discipline may be the most important characteristic of a successful online learner. With it, you have a tool that leads you to become an efficient time manager, and without it you may encounter difficulties. Here are some tips to help:

- Know when assignments are due; print your syllabus and course schedule/calendar
- Set up a schedule of when you will log in to the class and stick to it
- Minimize distractions while online
- Ensure consistent access to a computer
- Have an alternative plan in case you have computer problems
Online Communication Skills

Writing Clearly

Being a productive member of an online learning community requires you to communicate clearly and concisely when you write. A few simple guidelines can help you produce clear, effective written contributions to your course. As always, review guidelines for assignments:

- Be concise.
- Watch for careless errors; check your spelling and grammar
- READ your posting before you submit it
- Correct any awkward or unclear areas before you post the final version in quotation marks and identify the author, so that you do not accidentally plagiarize someone

Discussions

In many courses, you will be required to join in class discussions and respond to classmates’ comments. These discussions may become complex, intense, and even provocative. Here are some tips to help you with discussions: Know what the instructor expects of your discussion responses

- Think before you write
- Reread your response prior to sending
- Before you send off a hastily written, emotionally based reaction to another’s contribution, develop your ideas into a less emotional and more reasonable response.
- Then wait a few minutes and reread what you have written before you submit your response. Learning how to turn a reaction into a response will make your course contributions more meaningful and may earn you a higher mark for participation, if participation counts toward your grade. Pausing and rereading gives you the opportunity to review your writing for organization, clarity, and correctness.
Building a “Classroom” Environment

Online learning does not mean that you are learning alone. You will have a class consisting of instructor(s), fellow students, and perhaps others with whom you will interact. Your instructor will build a class environment through discussion questions, group projects, and other activities. You help build this classroom environment through your participation. Seeing and speaking to others is not a necessary component in getting to know someone. Through your messages and discussions, both delayed (asynchronous) and real time (synchronous), you have the opportunity to develop personal and professional relationships. The classmates you get to know online may come from very diverse situations and can offer a wealth of knowledge and experience. Your fellow classmates and instructors provide resources, information and support. Look for areas where you may post reviews for books you have read on pertinent topics, links to online resources, and observations for specific topics. Within your ‘classroom’, you and your fellow classmates can build a collective knowledge base which may become invaluable even after your coursework is completed.
Resources

There are many good resources available online as well to support students’ needs in distance education and other educational technologies. The following websites may be of use in helping with a first line of support:

General Ventura College Information for Distance Education
http://www.venturacollege.edu/online_services/online_classes/index.shtml

General Distance Education Help from the District
http://www.vcccd.edu/departments/information_technology/distance_education_help/

Online Student Tutorial for Desire2Learn

Khan Academy
https://www.khanacademy.org/
DEFINITIONS

Distance education comes in a variety of different forms. Distance education is defined by the Accrediting Commission for Junior and Community Colleges, a part of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), in its Policy on Distance Education, Including Electronically-Mediated Learning, “as a formal interaction designed for learning in which the interaction principally occurs when the student is separated by location from the instructor, resources used to support learning, or other students.” At its very basic, distance education is instruction in which the student and the instructor are separated by distance and interact through another means. There are multiple methods of delivering a course, or any part of it, from a distance.

**WASC further defines Distance Education**

“Distance education is defined, for the purpose of accreditation review as a formal interaction which uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and which supports regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. Distance education often incorporates technologies such as 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 cassette, DVD’s, and CD-ROMS, in conjunction with any of the other technologies.

**Online**

An online distance education course takes place primarily online through the use of the internet and a learning management system. Face-to-face meetings are not required and all of the work is completed independently and submitted online by the student. A course is considered online when 100% of the instruction is conducted online.

**Partially-Online**

Partially-online courses are typically offered partly online and partly on-campus. Partially-online courses include those courses with required orientations and/or testing sessions on campus. If a course is considered hybrid, 51% or more of the instruction occurs online.
Web-Enhanced

These courses are not distance education courses. Instruction takes place entirely in the classroom with an online supplementary component. For instance, the instructor may use the learning management system to share with students their grades, to upload large files such as a PowerPoint for students to view, or to promote the use of the discussion board (to name only a few).

Desire2Learn (D2L)

Desire2Learn (D2L) Learning Environment is a learning management system that enables you to access course material online. There are a number of learning tools within the system that course content is contained in.

For a brief overview of how to use D2L, please visit http://www.vcccd.edu/departments/information_technology/distance_education_help/D2L_Tutorial/index.shtml
Accessibility for Students with Disabilities

Disabled Students Programs & Services (DSP&S/EAC)

The Educational Assistance Center (EAC) promotes the educational and vocational potential of students with disabilities by supporting each student's integration into the mainstream of college life. Students with learning disabilities, mobility, visual, hearing, speech, or psychological impairments, acquired brain injuries, or other health impairments, such as seizure disorders or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, are eligible for support services and special classes that are needed to fully participate in the educational process.

Goals

- To provide students with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in the educational activities at Ventura College.
- To provide qualified students with disabilities the required services and accommodations to meet their educational needs.
- To provide qualified students with disabilities the special classes needed to prepare them for success in the general college classes.

For further information and assist please visit:

http://www.venturacollege.edu/departments/student_services/dspss_eac/index.shtml
Online Services

Ventura College Library Online
http://www.venturacollege.edu/departments/student_services/library/index.shtml

Online Tutoring
http://www.venturacollege.edu/departments/student_services/tutoring/online_tutoring.shtml

Counseling
http://www.venturacollege.edu/departments/student_services/counseling/index.shtml

Bookstore
http://venturacollege.bncollege.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/BNCBHomePage?storeId=78736&catalogId=10001&langId=-1

Library
http://www.venturacollege.edu/departments/student_services/library/index.shtml

Test Proctoring
http://www.venturacollege.edu/departments/student_services/testing_center/

Online Orientation for Ventura College
http://orientation.venturacollege.edu/college-orientation?destination=node/7
Registration for Distance Education Courses

Before you begin, students with general questions about the college and classes should contact Admissions and Records at 805-289-6457.

1. View the list of courses and decide what courses you want to take. [http://www.venturacollege.edu/online_services/online_classes/course_information.shtml](http://www.venturacollege.edu/online_services/online_classes/course_information.shtml)

2. Make sure that distance education is for you. Distance Education requires good time management, familiarity with Internet technology and a willingness to ask questions and communicate online.

3. Registration: NEW STUDENTS: Go to the college online orientation, then see an advisor to help you with your course selection and the registration process.

4. Contact counseling at (805) 289-6448 or by clicking here for additional information.

Returning Students, if you already have an advisor, see them. If not, go to the Counseling Center as noted above.

5. Online courses begin and end on the same days as on-campus courses. The instructor will determine the day of the final, which will fall sometime during the regular finals week. Note: Course Access in D2L begins one week prior to the start of the class, at the discretion of the instructor.

6. You will access your course by logging in through the MyVCCCD portal.

7. EMAIL YOUR INSTRUCTOR! Check to see if your instructor requires an on campus or online course information session. If you have a conflict with a scheduled on campus time, contact the professor to see what alternate arrangements can be made.

*Please note: Courses are not accessible to students until one week prior to the official start date of the course/semester; instructors may limit access until the first official day of class.*

*Course access ends one week after the official end date of the class unless the instructor has granted extended access.*
Frequently Asked Questions

1) I can’t log in to the MyVCCCD portal. It says that I locked my account or my password is incorrect. Use the "Forgot username?" and "Forgot password?" links on the portal sign in page. If you don’t know or can’t remember the answers to the secret questions you set up, you can visit Admissions and Records and they can reset your password. You will need a valid photo ID.

2) I registered for a class today, and the instructor sees me on his or her classlist, but I still can’t access the Desire2Learn part of the course. There is an approximately 24-hour delay from the time you register until the time you are enrolled in the Desire2Learn course shell. Desire2Learn and the program you use to register for courses only sync up once a day, starting very early in the morning. If you register for a class, you should be able to access it in Desire2Learn the following day.

3) I want to add your course. Can you give me an access code? You will need to speak directly to the instructor for information about adding and dropping courses. They are the only ones with access to add codes.

4) I’m waitlisted for a class. How do I get access? Please login directly to d2l.vcccd.edu and click the waitlist tab on your D2L homepage to access your class. Once you are officially a student your course will show up on the "student tab" and you can access from your MyVCCCD Portal, using the My Courses icon.

5) I’ve never taken an online class before and I have some questions. How do I get started? For information about course content or on campus responsibilities, you need to contact your instructor. There are a few other resources available for you: - Review the page that the District has set up with the basics. - Attend a Desire2Learn technical orientation that goes over accessing and using Desire2Learn.

6) I can’t take the midterm or final on campus. How do I take it? You can work with the instructor and the distance education office to find a proctor. A proctor will need to be someone who works at a local community college, college, university, or library near you. Typically that person works in the office of distance ed or some kind of proctoring center. They must have a work email (no Gmail, Yahoo!, hotmail, etc.) and verifiable contact information. Students in the military can also work with someone on
base/post to arrange a proctor. Once the proctor is chosen, the student should email his or her instructor the proctor’s pertinent information (name, job title, phone number, email address, etc.) The instructor will be in contact with the proctor to make sure the midterm is set up properly and to relay any instructions about the exam to the proctor.

7) I’m authorized for double time or time and a half on a test, or I have some other accommodation. How do I make sure I receive it?
   The fastest way to get it set up is to have the VC counselor who authorized you for the extended time or other accommodations to email your instructor with the pertinent information (your name, student ID, the CRN for the course, and the accommodations).

8) My internet crashed during an exam and then my time ran out so I couldn’t finish my test. Can you reset it for me?
   The Distance Ed office can’t reset quizzes or exams without the instructor’s permission. Please contact your instructor with the situation.
Student Testimonials

Our current Distance Education students offered a few words of advice to be successful in online courses. Please read their advice below.

- "Do the quizzes; keep up. I did this for the first part and got a B on the midterm. I didn’t for the second part, and had to skip a lot of questions on the final."
- "Keep a good schedule and don’t expect to cram all before the test. Space it out and it won’t be too hard."
- "Do the lessons and stay on top of it. Don’t put everything off until the last minute. Keep up with the in-class schedule."
- "Use office hours for questions. Stay up to date."
- "Stick to the practice exams and use the quizzes to reinforce what you’ve learned."
- "You have to pretend the assignments/quizzes are due the day you get them so you can’t procrastinate."
- "Spend a lot of time practicing and going to get help if you need it! Don’t procrastinate. Work on it just like you would a regular class."
- "Do homework! I regret not doing it."
- “Look for your answers in the reading and videos. They are in there, but you have to actively seek them.”
- “Know your due dates.”
- “Ask your professor if you are not sure about something. They are really helpful.”
Glossary

**Accessible** - All programs and multimedia used in online courses must be useable by all students with the aid of adaptive technology if needed prior to the start of class; includes all multimedia and course content.

**Americans with Disabilities Act** - (ADA) This Act requires programs and services, including educational programs to be accessible to qualified persons with disabilities. Additionally, ADA requires also that all telecommunication must be equal and equally effective.

**Desire2Learn** – (D2L) This is the learning management system currently used by the Ventura County Community College District.

**Learning Management System** - (LMS) A program used in training for delivering content and housing course material.

**EAC** - Educational Assistance Center located in the Administration Building (ADM) just south of the Student Services Center (SSC).

**Fair Use** - Part of the United States copyright law that allows for minimal reproduction of copyrighted works without gaining permission from the author(s).

**LRC** - Learning Resource Center is a building on campus where all library resources are housed.

**Online Course** - An online distance education course takes place primarily online through the use of the internet and a learning management system. Face-to-face meetings are not required and all of the work is completed independently and submitted online by the student. A course is considered online when 100% of the instruction is conducted online.

**Partially Online Course** - Partially-online courses are typically offered partly online and partly on-campus. Partially-online courses include those courses with required orientations and/or testing sessions on campus. If a course is considered hybrid, 51% or more of the instruction occurs online.
**Proctor** - A proctor is a person supervising a quiz, test, or exam. The proctor typically works in some role at a university, community college, or library.

**Section 504** – This Law prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in educational settings which receive federal dollars. To learn more about Section 504, please explore the information found at [http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html).

**Section 508** - Part of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 508 requires equal access to telecommunications for students with disabilities. This applies to students with disabilities enrolled in distance education courses. For more information regarding Section 508, please review the information available at [http://www.section508.gov/](http://www.section508.gov/).

**Telecommunications** - The communication of information over a distance can be done through telephone, email, and the learning management system.

**Title 5**- Title 5 is the part of the California Code of Regulations that deals with education in California. The full text of Title 5 can be found by going to this link and click on “TITLE 5. Education.” [http://government.westlaw.com/linkedslice/default.asp?SP=CCR-1000](http://government.westlaw.com/linkedslice/default.asp?SP=CCR-1000)

**Web-Enhanced Course** – These courses use D2L to add depth to their course. No instruction time is eliminated from this use.


http://www.wileyc.net/docs/dlhandbook.pdf