

# Ventura College



## Distance Education Student Handbook

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## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| MISSION STATEMENT .....                                  | 1  |
| ABOUT THE HANDBOOK .....                                 | 1  |
| INTRODUCTION TO VENTURA COLLEGE DISTANCE EDUCATION ..... | 2  |
| ARE YOU READY FOR AN ONLINE COURSE?.....                 | 3  |
| <i>Quest for Success</i> Course .....                    | 3  |
| Helpful skills for online learners .....                 | 3  |
| Computer Requirements for Online Learning .....          | 3  |
| ARE YOU TAKING AN ONLINE COURSE?.....                    | 4  |
| Canvas DE Student Orientations.....                      | 4  |
| BALANCING RESPONSIBILITIES AND SETTING PRIORITIES .....  | 5  |
| ONLINE COMMUNICATION SKILLS.....                         | 7  |
| Writing Clearly .....                                    | 7  |
| Discussions.....   | 7  |
| Building a “Classroom” Environment.....                  | 7  |
| VC DISTANCE EDUCATION TECHNICAL SUPPORT .....            | 9  |
| VC ONLINE ACADEMIC SUPPORT .....                         | 9  |
| DEFINITIONS.....   | 11 |
| ACCESSIBILITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES .....       | 12 |
| Disabled Students Programs & Services (DSP&S/EAC) .....  | 12 |
| REGISTRATION FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES .....        | 13 |
| FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.....                          | 14 |
| ADVICE FROM DE STUDENTS .....                            | 16 |
| LINKS REFERENCED .....                                   | 17 |



## **MISSION STATEMENTS**

### **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 (VCDE) 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.

VCDE Handbook was prepared by the college's Instructional Technologists, 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**

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. For more information, please visit the [VC Distance Education website](#).

## ARE YOU READY FOR AN ONLINE COURSE?

### Quest for Success Course

Online education requires a different skillset 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. To see if you are a good fit for online learning, please take our *Quest for Success* course and complete at least the first module that includes self-assessments for your online learning readiness.

Visit the [DE Student Orientations](#) page to sign up for *Quest for Success*.

### Helpful skills for online learners:

- Ability to learn independently and be self-motivated
- Familiarity with computers and Internet research
- Excellent reading comprehension skills
- Excellent written communication skills
- Strong organization and time management skills
- Ability to solve problems and be detailed-oriented
- Excellent Communication skills

### Computer Requirements for Online Learning

To find out if you meet the technical requirements for online learning, complete this [Computer Readiness Test](#). It will test your current browser for plugins and versions to help you prepare your computer to ensure the best experience with online learning. To begin, hit the “Start” button. Once complete, the test will output the results.



## ARE YOU TAKING AN ONLINE COURSE?

### Canvas DE Student Orientations

If you sense a need for support with online learning or using Canvas, there are two types of orientations: Self-paced online or live face-to-face sessions. After successfully completing the orientation, you will receive a certificate, which may count towards class credit. Please contact your instructor for more information about whether completing the DE student orientation is required or not.

These orientations will review how to use Canvas and best practices in online learning. They are designed for students who are new to distance education classes at Ventura College or students who are in need of a refresher training.

Please visit the [DE Student Orientations](#) page for more information and to sign up for our current offerings.

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

## 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

- 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.

### Understanding 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 that acts as a contract between you and the instructor. Read through the syllabus carefully and print it out.

## **Seeking 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.

## **Becoming an “Active Learner”**

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

## **Developing 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 that may become invaluable even after your coursework is completed.

## VC DISTANCE EDUCATION TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The following contacts and resources are available to distance education students who need technical support.

| Resource   | Contact Info   |
|--|--|
| VC Distance Education Helpline<br><i>(Available Monday-Friday 8 am- 5 pm)</i>      | 805.289.6452   |
| VC Distance Education Email Support<br><i>(Available Monday-Friday 8 am- 5 pm)</i> | <a href="mailto:vcdestudenthelp@vcccd.edu">vcdestudenthelp@vcccd.edu</a> |
| Canvas Hotline<br><i>(Available 24 hours a day / 7 days a week)</i>                | 844.303.4505   |
| Canvas Self-Help Student Guides  | <a href="#">Link to Canvas Guides</a>                                    |

## VC ONLINE ACADEMIC SUPPORT

The following contacts and resources are available to distance education students who need academic support.

| Resource                   | Contact Info  |
|----------------------------|---|
| Online Academic Counseling | <a href="#">Link to VC Online Counseling</a><br><br>Brandon D'Amico, Counselor<br><a href="mailto:bdamico@vcccd.edu">bdamico@vcccd.edu</a>  |
| MyVCCCD Student Portal     | <a href="#">Link to VCCCD Student Portal</a>  |
| VC Library Online Services | <a href="#">Link to VC Library</a>  |
| Online Tutoring (NetTutor) | VCCCD has access to high-quality online tutoring called NetTutor. You will see this in your Canvas course on the left navigation menu. If you do not see it, contact your instructor. |
| VC Bookstore               | <a href="#">Link to VC Online Bookstore</a>   |



To obtain more information about distance education at Ventura College than what is covered in this handbook, here are additional contacts in the DE department:

Matthew Moore, Instructional Designer / Technologist  
[mmoore1@vcccd.edu](mailto:mmoore1@vcccd.edu) | 805-289-6183, LRC 146

Sharon Oxford, Instructional Technologist / Designer  
[soxford@vcccd.edu](mailto:soxford@vcccd.edu) | 805-289-6233, LRC 147

Ali Olson-Pacheco, Instructional Technologist / Designer  
[aolsonpacheco@vcccd.edu](mailto:aolsonpacheco@vcccd.edu) | 805-289-6568, LRC 124

Dr. Gwendolyn Lewis-Huddleston, Dean of Social Sciences, Humanities, & Distance Education  
[gklewishuddleston@vcccd.edu](mailto:gklewishuddleston@vcccd.edu) | 805-654-6388, LRC 353

## DEFINITIONS

### Online

An online distance education course takes place 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 and submitted online by the student.

### Hybrid / Partially-Online

Hybrid or partially-online courses are typically offered both on-campus and online. On-campus activities may include class sessions, in-person tests, orientations, labs, etc.

### 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, etc.

### Canvas

Canvas is the learning management system at Ventura College that enables you to access course material online. For more information, please see DE Student Orientation.

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

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

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

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

## 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 assistance, please visit [Disabled Students Programs & Services](#).

## 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. To view the list of distance education courses and decide what courses you want to take:
  - a. Go to the [Schedule of Classes](#) and select the appropriate term.
  - b. Choose “Advanced Search” and select “TV/Online Classes”
  - c. Please read the CRN notes for any details about the course (e.g. on-campus meetings)
  - d. Write down the CRN number of the hybrid or online courses you would like to take.
2. [REGISTRATION FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS](#)
3. [REGISTRATION FOR CURRENT STUDENTS](#)
4. Make an appointment for [Online Counseling](#).

### Course Availability:

- *Courses are available on the start date found in the schedule of classes. However, instructors may allow access **up to one week prior to** the official course start date.*
- *Course access ends **one day to one week after** the official end date of the class.*

## 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 can visit Student Connect in the Student Center IN PERSON and they can reset your password with a valid photo ID.
- 2) *I registered for a class today, and the instructor sees me on his or her class list, but I still can't access the Canvas part of the course.*  
There is an approximately 1-2 business day delay from the time you register until the time you are enrolled in the Canvas course.
- 3) *I want to add a 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?*  
All waitlisted students have access to their Canvas course. To view the course, please login directly to Canvas at <https://vcccd.instructure.com> to access your class. You are officially enrolled when you can see the course in the "My Courses" section of your portal. **It is your responsibility to obtain an add code from your instructor and register for the class.**
- 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. Also, register or Enroll for *Quest for Success* Course or the [VC DE Student Orientation](#).
- 6) *I can't take the midterm or final on campus. How do I take it?*  
You will need to find an instructor approved test proctor (test facilitator). Contact the [VC Testing Center](#) for more information.
- 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?*  
In an online class, the teacher can set up extended deadlines for assignments and added time on quizzes. Make sure you provide your instructor with the required documentation from your counselor or the EAC.



- 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 about the situation.

## ADVICE FROM DE STUDENTS

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

- "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."
- "Do 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."
- "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 out."
- "Know your due dates!"
- "Ask your professor if you are not sure about something. They are really helpful."

## LINKS REFERENCED

1. VC DISTANCE EDUCATION: <http://www.venturacollege.edu/online-services/distance-education>
2. VC DE STUDENT ORIENTATIONS AND *QUEST FOR SUCCESS*:  
<http://www.venturacollege.edu/online-services/distance-education/current-students/de-student-orientation>
3. COMPUTER READINESS TEST: <http://apps.3cm mediasolutions.org/oei/tools/computer-readiness.html>
4. CANVAS STUDENT GUIDES: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701>
5. REGISTRATION FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS: <http://www.venturacollege.edu/apply-and-enroll/application-for-admission>
6. REGISTRATION FOR CURRENT STUDENTS: <http://www.venturacollege.edu/apply-and-enroll/registration>
5. VC ONLINE COUNSELING: <http://www.venturacollege.edu/departments/student-services/counseling/online-counseling>
6. DISABLED STUDENTS PROGRAMS & SERVICES (DSPS/EAC):  
[http://www.venturacollege.edu/departments/student\\_services/dsps\\_eac/index.shtml](http://www.venturacollege.edu/departments/student_services/dsps_eac/index.shtml)
7. VC TESTING CENTER: <http://www.venturacollege.edu/departments/student-services/testing-center>
8. ONLINE LIBRARY RESOURCES: <https://my.vcccd.edu/web/ventura-student/library-learning-resources>
9. MYVCCCD STUDENT PORTAL: <https://my.vcccd.edu/>
10. VCCCD CANVAS LOGIN: <https://vcccd.instructure.com/>