

ACCESS

Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, & Students Statewide

DISTANCE LEARNING

Policy Manual for

STUDENTS

2009-2010





ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
JOSEPH B. MORTON, STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

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No person shall be denied employment, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in any program or activity on the basis of disability, sex, race, religion, national origin, color, or age. Ref: Sec. 1983, Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C.; Title VI and VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964; Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Sec. 504; Age Discrimination in Employment Act; Equal Pay Act of 1963; Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972: Title IX Coordinator, P.O. Box 302101, Montgomery, Alabama 36130-2101 or call (334) 242-8444.



ACCESS DISTANCE LEARNING

POLICY MANUAL FOR STUDENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

POLICIES FOR STUDENTS

| | |
|--|---|
| NETIQUETTE/ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY (AUP) | 1 |
| RESPONSIBLE USE OF ACCESS RESOURCES | 2 |
| CODE OF CONDUCT | 2 |
| ACADEMIC INTEGRITY | 3 |
| RIGHT TO PRIVACY | 3 |
| STUDENT ELIGIBILITY | 3 |
| PREREQUISITES | 3 |
| COURSE REQUIREMENTS | 4 |
| TRANSFER CREDIT | 4 |
| EXAM EXEMPTION | 4 |
| GRADES | 4 |
| DROPS/WITHDRAWALS | 4 |
| STUDENT/TEACHER COMMUNICATION | 5 |
| SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS | 5 |
| ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) COURSES | 6 |
| HOMEBOUND STUDENTS | 6 |
| ON-SITE CLASSROOM FACILITATORS | 6 |
| TEXTBOOKS AND OTHER MATERIALS | 7 |
| LAB SAFETY | 7 |
| TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT | 7 |

STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PAGE



PREFACE

Welcome to the world of distance learning with ACCESS (Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, and Students Statewide). With a vision for providing equal access to high quality instruction and a wide range of course options, ACCESS is providing additional educational opportunities for students throughout Alabama. We are pleased that you have chosen to join the increasing number of students in Alabama who are participating in the ACCESS program—taking courses through ACCESS that may not be available at your local school.

Personal characteristics and actions will influence your success as a distance learning student. In general, to be successful in an online environment, you will need to be an independent learner, computer literate, and an effective communicator. You should also be interested in the concept of online learning and be willing to ask for help and share problems and/or concerns with others. We encourage you to work hard, to maintain a pace that will allow you to complete your assignments on time, and to maintain daily communication with your teacher. Personal characteristics and actions such as these will not only provide you with a rewarding classroom experience but will also enable you to be successful in the online or interactive videoconferencing environment.

This manual is designed to provide answers to questions you or your parents or guardians might have about the ACCESS Distance Learning program. It identifies general policies for the program and the specific policies that may be important to you as you register for courses, complete course assignments and exams, and utilize resources needed for course completion. We hope you will find the manual useful.

Thank you for being a part of the ACCESS experience. We hope your use of 21st century technologies in this program will help prepare you for future endeavors.

ACCESS DISTANCE LEARNING POLICIES FOR STUDENTS

NETIQUETTE/ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY (AUP)

GENERAL REGULATIONS

Internet access is required for students enrolled in ACCESS Distance Learning courses taught by both Web-based instruction (WBI) and videoconferencing instruction (VCI). The Internet and other online resources provided by ACCESS Distance Learning are intended to be used to support the instructional program and further student learning. ACCESS retains the right to monitor all classes, computer usage, and files for compliance with regulations and/or procedures.

ACCEPTABLE USE AGREEMENT

Online learning resources, including the Internet, are to be used in a responsible, efficient, ethical, and legal manner in accordance with the mission of ACCESS Distance Learning. ACCESS cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information or the appropriateness of any material on the Internet. Therefore, a local AUP, signed by both the student and his or her parent or guardian, must be on file with the local school. This agreement shall specify user (student) responsibilities and shall indemnify the local school and the ACCESS program from any damages. By signing, the parent or guardian understands that ACCESS Distance Learning is not responsible for materials acquired by the student on the Internet, for violations of copyright, users' mistakes or negligence, or any costs incurred by the user.

USER OBLIGATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The use of e-mail is essential for communication between teachers and students. Students must use computers appropriately, agree to all rules of etiquette established by ACCESS, and sign a statement acknowledging their understanding and acceptance of these rules. These will include the following:

- Students will use ACCESS Distance Learning and its resources only for purposes related to

education. Commercial, political, and/or personal use unrelated to an educational purpose is strictly prohibited.

- Students will use computers with consideration and respect. They are prohibited from accessing, posting, submitting, publishing, or displaying harmful matter or material that is obscene, threatening, disruptive, or sexually explicit; that could be construed as harassment, disparagement, or cyberbullying of others (based on their race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, or political beliefs); or that is intended to annoy, harass, intimidate, disrupt the operation of the program, or interfere with the rights of other students or ACCESS staff.
- Vandalism will result in the cancellation of user privileges. Vandalism includes the intentional uploading, downloading, or creating of computer viruses and/or any malicious attempt to harm or destroy materials, data, or equipment.
- Students will give credit to others whose work is used. Neither Internet content nor the work of WBI or VCI classmates will be cut, copied, or plagiarized. Students will abide by all copyright rules and regulations.
- Students will consider the social consequences of work completed and any programs written in conjunction with classroom assignments.
- Students will communicate via e-mail cautiously and with discretion. ACCESS Distance Learning reserves the right to monitor any online communication(s) for improper use. Electronic communications and downloaded material, including files deleted from a user's account, may be monitored or read by ACCESS officials or their designees. Student responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Refrain from including information in e-mail messages that is not appropriate for printing or discussion in a public setting. Privacy cannot be assured in e-mail communications.
 - Send no unsolicited e-mail to distance learning classmates. All e-mail



communication among classmates must be course related.

- Protect the confidentiality of other users’ mail or files. Students will not read the mail or files of others and shall not attempt to interfere with another user’s ability to send or receive electronic mail, nor shall they attempt to delete, copy, modify, or forge the mail of others.
- Keep personal account numbers, home addresses, and telephone numbers private and protect and keep secret any passwords issued for course access.
- Report any communications that are inappropriate or which make them feel uncomfortable to the classroom teacher, facilitator, or other local school officials. Students should exercise caution in supplying information requested in e-mail communications, especially when such e-mails are from adults who ask for personal information, attempt to schedule meetings, or encourage personal contact.
- Students will accept responsibility for any charges incurred for phone usage, line costs, or usage fees incurred as a result of using the Internet for any purpose other than that required as a part of the course taken. ACCESS will assume no responsibility for such charges.
- The use of ACCESS Distance Learning resources is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use may result in cancellation of those privileges. Students who fail to abide by ACCESS Distance Learning policies shall be subject to disciplinary action, revocation of the user account, and legal action as deemed appropriate.
- Students will abide by all local, state, and federal laws and policies related to Internet usage. ACCESS administrators will cooperate fully with local, state, and federal officials in the investigation of illegal activities conducted through the use of the Internet.

Students suspected of violating the Netiquette/ Acceptable Use Policy will be notified of the suspected violation and given an opportunity to

respond. If violations are confirmed, students will be removed from the course, assigned a failing grade, and subjected to other disciplinary and/or legal consequences as determined by local, state, or federal authorities.

RESPONSIBLE USE OF ACCESS RESOURCES

All content and resources, digital and otherwise, provided through the ACCESS Distance Learning Program will be used in adherence to copyright laws and restrictions. Such materials include, but are not limited to, commercial software, copyrighted materials, and/or materials protected by trade secret.

Use of ACCESS resources in an inappropriate manner will result in legal action where appropriate based on local, state, and/or federal law.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Students will be responsible for their own behavior, will properly handle and use all classroom equipment, and will show respect for others in the classroom. Students will:

- Be attentive.
- Actively participate in the learning experience.
- Complete all assigned homework, projects, and assessments on time.
- Have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty.
- Follow all rules established by ACCESS, the school, and the delivery teacher.

In the event the actions of students cause harm to other students or ACCESS staff, the school (principal) has the right and responsibility to discipline offenders. If a situation occurs where disciplinary action is required, the local school administration will follow local school board policies as applicable. In most instances, the local school administration and ACCESS Support Center staff will jointly determine appropriate

consequences, including the possible removal of a student's ACCESS privileges.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

ACCESS Distance Learning students must sign a commitment form attesting to academic integrity regarding each of the following topics. A copy of this form is provided on the last page of this manual. If a student fails to abide by these policies, the student will be removed from the course with a failing grade and will be subject to other consequences as determined by ACCESS and local school system administrators.

- All work must be completed by the student alone.
- Any collaboration among students must be pre-approved by the teacher.
- Plagiarism will not be allowed in any form. This will include copying or using the ideas or words of others and presenting them as one's own.
- Students will not allow others to copy their work.
- Content from the Internet will not be misused or misrepresented.

All ACCESS Distance Learning teachers utilize a variety of technologies to check student work for authenticity. If an instructor confirms that a student has plagiarized work in any manner, the student will be subject to consequences determined by ACCESS Distance Learning administrative staff, the distance learning teacher, and the local school system, and will be subject to removal from the course with a failing grade.

RIGHT TO PRIVACY

Students will be provided a unique password that provides access to their WBI courses. Protecting the confidentiality of the password is the responsibility of the student.

ACCESS will not publish or display the names of students, their images, or their coursework on its Web site, in videos, or in publications without the consent of the students and their parents (guardians).

In accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), ACCESS will allow access to student records only to those authorized. Authorized personnel include State Department of Education (SDE) staff, school system and local school professional staff (principal or designee, teacher, facilitator, counselor), support center administrative staff, and others with a legitimate educational or legal interest in students' records.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

To enroll in an ACCESS Distance Learning course, students must meet one of the following criteria:

- Be currently enrolled in Grades 9-12 in an Alabama public high school.
- Be a special education student in a state correctional facility and registered with an Alabama public high school.

The SDE reserves the right to deny enrollment to students who have been expelled from previous courses due to misconduct or failure to abide by academic integrity or Internet acceptable use policies.

PREREQUISITES

Schools will ensure that students meet the prerequisite requirements for a distance learning course prior to enrolling a student into a course. Students not meeting the requirements will not be enrolled.



COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students shall complete all scheduled tests, graded activities, and labs during a regular class scheduled within the normal school day, except for related research/homework. The normal school day shall include night school, summer school, and other scheduled extended day periods as approved by the local school.

All ACCESS courses shall have an adult facilitator approved by the local school who has completed ACCESS professional development in online methodology and technical aspects of WBI and VCI instruction and who serves as a liaison between ACCESS teachers and local students.

TRANSFER CREDIT

Grades for students taking an ACCESS course will be transferred in the same manner as those for any other course taken at the local school level. The receiving school will accept and record on the student's transcript the final term/semester grade assigned by the ACCESS teacher.

EXAM EXEMPTION

Students taking ACCESS Distance Learning courses will follow the semester/final exam exemption policies of their local school system. Principals will make the final determination concerning student exemptions, but local schools must follow the timeline established by ACCESS regarding submission of required information and exemption forms. If required information and forms are not received by ACCESS in accordance with the designated timeline, students will be required to take the exam. Any student not taking the semester exam and not having an exemption form on file will receive a grade of zero (0) for that exam.

GRADES

At the end of each term/semester, numerical grades will be provided to the student's school for placement on official school records and distribution to students and parents or legal guardians in accordance with the established policy of the local education agency (LEA). Honor points, weighting, and other special considerations may only be made, when appropriate, in accordance with LEA established policy.

Grades from an ACCESS VCI course section will be calculated following the policies of the sending teacher's school. The sending teacher will provide a copy of the grading policies and course syllabus to students and receiving schools at the beginning of the term in which a course is delivered.

All students in a WBI course section will be graded using the same grading scheme. The teacher will communicate the grading scheme and pacing schedule to the receiving schools and students via the learning management system at the beginning of the term in which a course is delivered.

Each ACCESS one-credit course is divided into two semesters or terms. Student grades are cumulative for each individual semester/term. The local school may average the two grades if a course grade is needed.

DROPS/WITHDRAWALS

Students may drop a course within the timeline established by the SDE and posted on the ACCESS Web site without penalty, unless local school policy establishes an earlier date. Students will begin the drop/withdrawal process with the local school counselor.

Following local policy, students who are enrolled in a one-credit course (traditional or block) and who ask to drop that course at the end of the first semester (or before the established drop date for the next semester of that course) will be allowed to do so without penalty. Students dropping a course under these circumstances will be issued the grade received for the first semester and counted as a withdrawal for the second semester.

Students who withdraw from an ACCESS course after the withdrawal deadline established by the SDE may incur a grade penalty and be assigned zeros for all graded assignments not submitted. Regional support center staff will review all late withdrawal requests, determine the status of each request, and notify the local high school counselor of the student's withdrawal status via the student registration system and/or the telephone. Students whose status is determined as "Withdrawn with Grades" will be assigned zeros for assignments not submitted before a final grade is calculated; students assigned a status of "Withdrawn without Grades" will not incur a grade penalty.

Exceptions to this policy will be determined on an individual basis by the SDE.

STUDENT/TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Communication between ACCESS teachers and students is essential and must be frequent and ongoing. A variety of modes, including e-mail, telephone, discussion boards, Web conferencing, and other appropriate services or tools, may be used by teachers and students to communicate regarding course requirements, expectations, grading, and other issues related to course content and instruction.

SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

The following policies are written for students with disabilities who have either an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan.

1. Prior to registration for an ACCESS course, the counselor shall contact the student's case manager for a review of the educational needs of the student based on the requirements of the IEP or the 504 Plan.
2. If a distance learning course is determined to be appropriate for the student based on the IEP or 504 Plan, and the student takes such a course through ACCESS during the implementation period of the IEP or 504 Plan, the local school will be responsible for providing any supplementary aids and services as required in the IEP or 504 Plan that are not supported within the Web-based environment and for maintaining communication with the ACCESS teacher.
3. Counselors will work with the Special Education case manager to ensure that the IEP or 504 Plan is made available to the ACCESS teacher and support center director. The ACCESS teacher must be informed of his or her responsibilities for implementing the IEP or 504 Plan.
4. If an ACCESS course is taken by a student receiving special education services during the summer, or any time period not covered by the IEP, neither the local school nor ACCESS will be responsible for providing supplemental aids and services.
5. The ACCESS teacher and support center will maintain confidentiality with all personally identifiable educational records received by storing such records in a secure environment. At the end of the term, any personally identifiable educational records received by the ACCESS teacher or support center director will be shredded.



ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) COURSES

It is the school's responsibility to ensure that students meet all prerequisite requirements for an Advanced Placement course. Schools will also provide students with textbooks and any supplementary resources needed for these courses.

Principals and counselors should make students aware of their option to take AP exams, inform them of available AP exam review materials, notify them of the date for the administration of each exam, and order and administer the exams in accordance with College Board policy.

HOMEBOUND STUDENTS

Students who (upon the recommendation of their physician) have been placed on homebound status by their local school system may participate in approved WBI courses upon request and notification to the SDE of students' homebound status by the local school system superintendent. Homebound students must complete all graded activities and quizzes in the presence of a facilitator provided by the local school system and meet the requirements identified in the *Alabama Administrative Code*. School systems will be required to submit documentation from the student's physician and an official exception request from the local school system superintendent to the State Superintendent of Education. If students are approved to receive ACCESS courses at home, it will be the responsibility of the school/school system to determine if adequate Internet access is available and provide a computer and any other equipment needed to ensure successful course delivery.

It is recommended that parents of homebound students attend training provided by the regional ACCESS Distance Learning support center when possible.

ON-SITE CLASSROOM FACILITATORS

Schools will provide facilitators who remain in the classroom during the entire class period to supervise and assist students. Local school systems shall develop policies to establish requirements for facilitators. At a minimum, facilitators must be adults approved by the local school who have completed professional development in online methodology and technical aspects of Web-based instruction through ACCESS and serve as liaisons to WBI and VCI teachers and providers. They must have passed mandatory fingerprinting and background checks, have basic computer and e-mail skills, and possess the ability to use a fax machine and a scanner. On-site classroom facilitators or paraprofessionals in Title I schools must be under the direct supervision of a certified teacher who is in close proximity to the distance learning classroom.

It is the responsibility of the local school administrator to assign personnel to monitor student behavior in the physical classroom as well as in the virtual classroom.

The responsibilities of the on-site classroom facilitator are as follows:

- Remain in the classroom during the entire class period to supervise and assist students.
- Monitor academic progress and student behavior in the physical classroom as well as in the virtual classroom.
- Communicate on a day-to-day basis with the e-teacher.
- For Web-based courses, log on to the learning management system each school day to view announcements and track assignments.
- Assist students with minor technology issues.
- Ensure that students remain on task and on pace.
- Ensure the integrity of students' work.
- Support the sending teacher.
- Take attendance and send absentee reports to teachers and school staff daily.

- Provide students with training on the use of e-mails, attaching documents to e-mails, and accessing WBI courses.
- Serve as a resource to the sending teacher.
- Report technical issues to support center staff as well as to the school and/or system technology coordinator.

TEXTBOOKS AND OTHER MATERIALS

It is the responsibility of receiving school systems to provide students with the required textbooks and ancillary materials needed for each distance learning class. When possible, the cost of CD and online texts will be built into course development cost at no expense to schools, but this cannot be guaranteed.

Textbooks and other course materials must be available on the starting date of each class. Local school systems having students enrolled in a distance learning course must adopt the designated textbook (print, online, or CD) at the local level and report this adoption to the Alabama Department of Education's textbook office.

A list of required textbooks for Web-based courses will be provided on the ACCESS Distance Learning Web site. Textbooks for videoconferencing courses will be determined by the sending school. Information regarding these textbooks will also be provided on the ACCESS Web site and updated as courses are revised or as course providers change.

Supplementary materials may be required for some courses. A list of such materials is available to schools and students at <http://accessdl.state.al.us> under the "Courses" tab in the "WBI/VCI Course Descriptions" category from the drop-down menu. Schools will be responsible for costs associated with these additional resources. Check the course information available at the same Web address for more information.

Novels required for English classes (if not available in the local school library) will be considered the responsibility of the student.

LAB SAFETY

Labs are required for all science courses. Some of these may be virtual labs; others will be hands-on. Hands-on labs will be facilitated only by teachers who have training in the proper and safe handling and use of laboratory equipment and other resources. Adequate supervision will be provided for all laboratory activities. The local school will be responsible for securing the lab facilitator and for providing all required laboratory supplies and equipment for hands-on labs.

TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

Schools will provide the hardware, software, and other equipment needed by students in distance learning classes. See the ACCESS Distance Learning Web site (<http://accessdl.state.al.us>) for more information and a complete list of recommended equipment and software specifications.

Sending and receiving schools will provide students enrolled in both WBI and VCI courses with laptops/computers during the scheduled class time.

The local school will also provide technology support for equipment and ensure that software required in ACCESS courses is available to students. Counselors will notify technology support of software downloads as listed in the ACCESS course descriptions found under the "Courses" tab on the ACCESS Web site (<http://accessdl.state.al.us>).

ACCESS DISTANCE LEARNING STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PAGE

I have read the student policies and agree to abide by these policies as outlined by ACCESS Distance Learning. These policies include the Right to Privacy/Access to Student Records, Academic Integrity Statement, Code of Conduct/Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), Student/Teacher Communication, Drop/Withdrawal Policy, and all other policies included in the ACCESS Policy Manual for Students.

Student Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

