

GCS VIRTUAL LEARNING  
HANDBOOK

2019-20

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## **Mission**

Guilford County students will graduate as responsible citizens prepared to succeed in higher education, or in the career of their choice.

## **Vision**

Transforming learning and life outcomes for all children.

## **Core Values**

**DIVERSITY** - We are committed to creating an educational organization where a variety of persons and perspectives are welcome. We are committed to providing an environment where students and staff from all cultures and backgrounds may succeed.

**EMPATHY** - We are committed to developing a culture where our employees identify with and understand the feelings of our students and parents as well as their colleagues.

**EQUITY** - We are committed to creating equitable and inclusive schools where adults take ownership for student learning outcomes and make sure students have what they need to succeed in school and in life. We will acknowledge and dismantle systems, processes and mindsets that perpetuate race, poverty, disability and English language status as predictors of achievement. We will align resources to create equitable opportunities for students and employees. We will eradicate achievement gaps.

**INNOVATION** - We are committed to fostering a work environment where the goal is not to manage innovations, but to become innovative. Problems are identified, adults in the district assume ownership of the problems, and everyone works together as agents of the solution until the problems are solved. We will not stop until obstacles are removed, solutions are found, and clear and compelling goals are established.

**INTEGRITY** - We are committed to creating a school district that acts with honesty and forthrightness, holding ourselves to high academic and ethical standards and treating everyone with respect.

## Welcome from the Blended Learning Director

Virtual Learning Stakeholders:

Welcome to Guilford County Schools (GCS) virtual learning opportunities. Congratulations on making the choice to invest in digital teaching and learning! We look forward to helping you reach all of your goals, in and through our program. It is important to us that you are successful in the online environment, whether it is your first time or a repeat experience.

Information included in this handbook serve as guidelines for our program and provide you with answers to questions that you may have. Our program supports the traditional approach to learning, but we truly appreciate the opportunity to provide 21<sup>st</sup> Century delivery options to our students. Our goal is to provide you with the skills and the support needed to succeed in this environment. GCS encourages its students to not only graduate, but to take advantage of opportunities that allow them to compete locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Enrollment trends show that online teaching and learning is steadily increasing. A large number of community colleges and universities offer online courses and/or programs, and we must prepare our students for these opportunities. GCS prepares students for this method of learning and encourage them to become lifelong learners utilizing modern methods. It is our goal to rigorously challenge students to achieve their full academic potential. It is our job to ensure that they are achieving educational excellence.

Respectfully,



Rashad Slade  
Director of Blended Learning

## **GCS District Contact Information:**

Please [click here](#) to visit the Blended Learning website.

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## **About this Handbook**

Guilford County Schools (GCS) believes in providing students with an opportunity to earn high school credit through approved online course providers. Such opportunities shall include content that fosters student mastery of the concepts and skills necessary for future academic success. This handbook is designed to inform stakeholders of the virtual learning procedures followed in GCS. Any discrepancies or advised revisions to information within this document can be forwarded to Rashad Slade- Director of Blended Learning at [sladea@gcsnc.com](mailto:sladea@gcsnc.com).

## **Is Online Learning for Me?**

Online courses offer students educational opportunities that may not be available at their assigned schools. These courses offer students the flexibility of when and where they access their courses. For many students, the online learning environment may provide better support for their learning styles. It is important to recognize that just as a traditional classroom setting may not be the best fit for all students in all courses; it is also true that online courses may not be best fit for all students.

### **Attributes for Student Success**

Students who may be considering an online course should take time to examine their personal skills and aptitudes for taking a class online. The following attributes will greatly contribute to a student's success:

### **Student Responsibilities**

- Self-motivation
- Ability to learn independently
- Strong personal commitment
- Ongoing communication with your online instructor
- Time management skills (students are expected to spend at least 1.5 hours per day / 5 days a week on a course).
- Successful completion of required assignments
- Willingness to ask for help and be vocal when there are problems, conflicts, or questions
- Basic word processing and Internet skills
- Acceptance of the terms of [Guilford County Schools Acceptable Use Policy](#)

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity means:

- Your work on each assignment will be completely your own
- Your collaboration with another classmate on any assignment will be pre-approved by your instructor
- You will not [plagiarize](#) in any form ([help citing sources](#))
- You will not allow others to copy your work
- You will not misuse content from the Internet (become familiar with [Fair use](#) and [Copyright guidelines](#))
- You will follow the [GCS' student handbook](#) to avoid cheating (pg. 115)

## Cheating and Plagiarism

If students are caught cheating and/or plagiarizing, the course instructor will notify school personnel. The case review may result in issuing the student a "zero" on the assignment. The principal may choose to impose additional disciplinary action and will notify the student of this discipline.

Note: A recommendation to remove the student from the online course for cheating, plagiarism, or copyright violation is possible.

## Violations of the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)

An AUP is an agreement between students and their schools that outline the rules governing the use of computers and Internet resources. Students enrolled in ALVS or NCVPS courses must abide by the terms and conditions of the district's AUP. If a student violates the Acceptable Use Policy, that student may lose access to his/her course and may be withdrawn from the course depending on the severity of the violation. It will be the school's responsibility to determine appropriate discipline for the student. All students should recognize that loss of these technology privileges may prevent the student from successfully completing his/her course. Please [click here](#) to visit the GCS website to view the AUP.

## Enrollment

- GCS does not offer a full-time online program.
- Online courses may be considered if the course is not available or cannot be scheduled at the school.
- The school counselor or eLearning Advisor must register students for GCS online courses.
  - For courses outside of GCS, prior approval is strongly recommended.
  - Accredited institutions are strongly recommended.
- No more than 1 online course is recommended beyond a student's full course load or during the summer session.
- No more than 2 online courses are recommended as part of a student's schedule in the fall and spring semesters.

## Flexible Enrollment

- ALVS has flexible (flex) enrollment for scheduling needs outside of the regular calendar.
  - Flexible enrollment courses are 18-weeks long.
  - The last day to add a flex course is 8-weeks from the last day of school.
  - Students have the first 10-days to drop the flex course without penalty
  - North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) offers flex enrollment based on students in special situations (refer to [NCVPS website](#) for more details).

## Add/Drop Period

- Students may Add/Drop courses according to the dates noted on the calendar. The calendar can be found on the [GCS Blended Learning website](#) or the [NC Virtual Public School website](#) (NCVPS).
- The school counselor or eLA is able to withdraw students from the registration system for a semester course with no academic penalty on or before the **10th day**.
- The school counselor or eLA is able to withdraw students from the registration system for a yearlong course with no academic penalty on or before the **20th day**.
- Students must remain in the course after the noted timeframes and will receive the grade they earn.
- Students cannot transfer out of courses after the 10-day drop period.
- Apex Learning Virtual School (ALVS) has open enrollment. Courses begin each Monday and students must be registered by noon on the Wednesday prior to. The last day to add a course is 8-weeks from the last day of school.

## Administrative Drop

- Students who do not access their course within the first 10-days will be considered inactive and administratively dropped by the GCS Blended Learning department without penalty.

## Illness/Extended Inability to Participate

If an unexpected situation should arise and there is an extended leave from the course, follow these steps:

1. Contact the course instructor to explain the situation.
2. Report the problem to your school counselor and or eLA.

## Prior Approval

- If students are interested in taking online courses outside of approved GCS course providers, prior approval is strongly recommended to ensure the course will be accepted for credit.
- Failure to receive prior approval may result in the course being denied for credit.
  - [Prior Approval Guidelines](#)
  - [Prior Approval form](#)

## Student Participation

Middle and high school students may earn high school credit through GCS approved online course providers.

### *Middle School*

Middle school students may earn high school credit for a limited number of courses approved under North Carolina State Board of Education [Policy CCRE-001](#).

- Courses taken by middle school students in grades 6-8 will not be calculated in their high school grade point average (GPA).
- Courses taken during the summer following the student's 8<sup>th</sup> grade year will be calculated in their high school GPA.

### *High School*

- Courses taken by high school students in grades 9-12 will be calculated in their GPA.

## NCAA

Online courses taken through Apex Learning Virtual School are NCAA approved. Many courses through NC Virtual Public School are approved. Students should check with their counselors for a full, available list of NCAA-eligible courses for both programs.

## Individual Education Plan (IEP)/SECTION 504

GCS approved online programs will comply with all federal IEP guidelines.

- You can review the ALVS Accommodation Plan page [here](#).
- You can review the NCVPS Special Education/504 Services page [here](#).

## Course Extensions

ALVS or course extensions may be granted for two weeks for:

1. \*Medical (family medical reasons included)
  2. \*IEP/504 reasons
  3. Senior graduation issues only
- \*Documentation may be requested*

ALVS course extensions may be granted for two days for: technology issues, illness, and/or similar reasons. All requests will be reviewed within the extension request window listed below. Extension requests made after the extension window closes will not be considered.

For NCVPS course extensions, contact your school counselor or eLearning advisor.

## Virtual Learning Calendar

Virtual Learning programs operate on a traditional school calendar and early calendar schedule (yearlong, fall, spring, summer). The calendars are aligned with the NCVPS calendar, which can be found on the [NCVPS website](#). If you are a student enrolled in an early calendar school, you are expected to follow the early calendar. If you are a student in a traditional calendar school, you are expected to follow the traditional calendar. You may also find the calendar on the [GCS Blended Learning Department website](#).

## Inclement Weather

During inclement weather for our district, students who take virtual learning courses are responsible for communicating with their teacher by telephone or email if possible. Assignment due dates are still applicable during inclement weather.

## Course Access and Materials

- Courses are accessible anytime with internet access.
- Some courses require additional materials (example: AP courses). School counselors or eLearning Advisors should review the required materials on the [course offerings list](#) prior to enrolling students.
- Additional materials/cost is the responsibility of the school.
- GCS provides access to computers for students at school to work on their virtual courses. Students may work at home using their own devices.

## Grading

### Standard Grading Scale

Standard GCS grading practices apply, and students will need to take required state assessments.

### Testing

- EOC and CTE assessments are required for all applicable GCS online courses. The exams are administered at the school during the school year and at Washington Street Administrative offices during the summer.
- NC Final Exams **ARE NOT** required for ALVS.
- NC Final Exams **ARE** required for NCVPS courses during the fall and spring (not summer).

## Student FAQs

### Q: What courses are offered?

To view the courses, click [here](#).

### Q: How do I register to take a course a virtual learning course?

Students are registered by their school counselor or school eLearning Advisor.

### Q: When do courses start?

Start dates are based on the GCS early and traditional calendars. [Click here to view the calendar online](#), or access it from the Blended Learning website. Typically, courses begin in January and August of each school year. Summer courses begin in June.

### Q: How long will I have to complete a course?

Fall and spring block-courses are approximately eighteen weeks long. Year-long courses begin in the fall and will take place over the entire school year. Summer courses are approximately eight weeks long.

### Q: Do I work at my own pace?

ALVS and NCVPS students are guided through their courses by licensed North Carolina certified instructors. While students are welcome to work ahead, they must maintain a minimum pace to be successful in the course. Instructors use due dates for coursework to support students' successful completion of the course. Students can work at their own pace within assigned time frames given by the instructor.

### Q: What is my GCS email?

Student's usernames follow this convention: lunch numbe@stu.gcsnc.com (for example: 123456789@stu.gcsnc.com). Your password will be your date of birth (for example: MMDDYYYY).

### Q: Can I drop if I find the course too difficult?

Students may request to drop the course within the first 10 days of the course start date. After the 10<sup>th</sup> day, students **cannot** drop the course. Students should make the drop request to their school counselor.

### Q: Can I access my courses from my mobile phone?

NCVPS courses are hosted in Canvas. The Canvas mobile app can be downloaded in the Apple App Store or Google Play store. Some features may not be available. ALVS courses can be accessed from the Apex Learning website.

## **Helpdesk Contact Information**

### **Apex Learning Virtual School Support**

- Sign-in [www.apexvs.com](http://www.apexvs.com)
- 1-800-453-1454

### **North Carolina Virtual Public School Support**

- Please visit NCVPS' [Student Help page](#)
- 1-919-513-8550
- Contact the school counselor for login information

In any instance where technical difficulties prevent a student from full participation in a course, students are expected to notify their school counselor or eLearning Advisor immediately so that the problem can be resolved.

