



Vernon College Distance Education Student Manual

2013-2014

To meet the changing educational needs of its service area, Vernon College provides distance education (DE) opportunities to students with special scheduling needs, at remote locations, and at high schools and other regional centers. Distance education courses are available through the Internet (online), hybrid, or by two-way interactive video (ITV) classrooms at area high schools and other selected sites.

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Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to online learning at Vernon College! We are excited that you are interested in our college.

Distance Education (DE) provides learners with a convenient and flexible opportunity to go to college in a non-traditional environment. To meet the changing educational needs of its service area, Vernon College provides distance education (DE) opportunities to students with special scheduling needs, at remote locations, and at high schools and other regional centers. Distance education courses are available through the internet (online), hybrid, or by two-way interactive video (ITV) classrooms at area high schools and other selected sites.

Our ultimate goal is student success! Vernon College recognizes distance learners, like all students, need the access to a host of services. Distance Education provides many of them from student services to technical support to online tutoring services.

Thank you for your interest in Vernon College Distance Education Courses.

Mission Statement

The distance education program at Vernon College provides access to college courses and support services for students who are separated by time and physical location from a faculty member and/or instructional location. Courses taught via distance education are the same as Vernon College courses offered on site in terms of academic quality, credit hours, and transferability.

Distance Education Overview

Definitions

Online

Instead of attending regular classes on site, student's access lessons and assignments through the Internet. While class information may be obtained online, proctored testing may be required for online courses. Some courses require students to purchase and install software on their computers.

Hybrid

Hybrid courses may have online course component additionally, the course requires students to attend scheduled class sessions at the appropriate instructional location. While class information may be obtained online, proctored testing may be required for hybrid courses. Some courses require students to purchase and install software on their computers. The following is a list of specifications for Blackboard users.

Interactive video (ITV)

Interactive television instruction provides two-way, real-time communication between instructor and students who are separated by geographical distance. VC's interactive television classrooms send and receive instruction from other colleges and universities and area independent school districts. The classrooms are located on the Vernon campus and the Century City Center.

Virtual College of Texas (VCT)

VC partners with other Texas community colleges as a host college. Students will only be allowed to take VCT courses through Vernon College after they have completed six (6) semester hours of college-level courses in residency at VC. VCT courses will only be made available to students in subject areas where VC does not normally offer courses within a given calendar year. Exceptions to this rule may be made when the student needs a course in the VC inventory in order to graduate prior to the next scheduled offering of the course. In those cases, the VCT course will be made available through Vernon College if VC is not offering the course that semester or if the course is offered but all sections of the course are closed (including Internet, face-to-face, and ITV). All VCT registrations will occur during the late registration period. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Dean of Instructional Services.

Distance Education Readiness (Smarter Measure)

Online learning requires motivation, self-discipline, and good computer proficiency, as well as effective time management. Strong study habits are also important because online courses require self-directed learning and time commitment.

SmarterMeasure (SM) is a tool that helps students determine their level of readiness for taking online courses. Students are asked questions regarding their computer proficiency, motivation, organization, self-directedness, and learning styles. Students are even able to measure their on-screen reading speed and comprehension.

Before you enroll in a DE course, students are strongly encouraged to utilize the SmarterMeasure self-assessment tool. SmarterMeasure may be accessed at <http://vernon.smartermeasure.com/>

Use the first time user log in tab: USERNAME: vernon PASSWORD: student.

Student Orientation

A Student Orientation will be provided to you by your instructor(s). Basic log in and navigation information can be located in the [Distance Education Student Orientation Guide](#).

Computer Requirements for Distance Education Courses

Vernon College uses Blackboard Learn 9.1 learning management system (LMS) for distanced education courses. A high speed internet connection is suggested for best results with the applications available within the LMS. To determine whether or not your computer system is sufficient for the distance education course OR to locate free software downloads which might be added in some of the Vernon College distance education courses, visit the [Vernon College Distance Education](#) web page.

Policies and Procedures

Registration for Distance Education Courses

Registration for Distance Education courses will be conducted in the same manner as for traditional, face-to-face courses.

Register for Classes

At the beginning of each enrollment period, registration for classes will be held. Registrations will normally be conducted through Campus Connect/MyVC, Vernon College's on-line registration process, at the discretion of the College's administrators. Students should apply for admissions early to facilitate course selection and availability.

The time, place, and method of each registration will be designated by Vernon College officials and published in an appropriate manner together with information about courses offered during the upcoming enrollment period.

A schedule of classes is published, as well as available online, for the campus and learning centers so that students may, with the assistance of their course schedule advisor (CSA) or counselor, select courses which will meet the requirements of their chosen certificate or degree program. Lists of Internet and interactive video classes are also published in the class schedules and are available online.

Class Schedule includes:

- Course offerings
- Additional course information including time, days, semester hours, location, and instructor.

Additional Information/Dates for Registration includes:

- Registration and Advising Calendar
- Student Instructions for Campus Connect/MyVC

Academic Integrity Policy

Violations of academic integrity include but are not limited to the following:

Plagiarism and other forms of scholastic dishonesty are serious academic violations that will not be tolerated. Scholastic dishonesty encompasses, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and other acts designed to give an unfair academic advantage to the student.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

To stay in compliance with state and federal regulations, Vernon College is required to maintain accurate attendance records in all courses. Online courses are no different from classroom courses in this regard; however, participation must be defined in a different manner. Student "attendance" in online courses will be defined as active participation in the course as described in each course syllabus.

Online courses will, at a minimum have weekly mechanisms for student participation, which can be documented by any or all of the following methods: student tracking in Blackboard; submission/completion of assignments; and communication with the instructor. Students who do not log on to the course within the drop/add period for the course will be dropped from the course. (Drop/add and withdrawal dates are listed in the published campus calendar and the course syllabus). Students who fail to maintain active participation in an online course as defined in the course syllabus will be processed in accordance with the College's current attendance policy.

Hybrid courses have classroom and online attendance requirements. Refer to the individual course syllabus for more specific information about hybrid attendance requirements. The syllabus should include the dates that students are required to be on campus. Students enrolled in a hybrid course will meet with their instructor on the first day of the class.

Authenticating the Identity of Distance Education Students

Vernon College uses Blackboard Learn 9.1 learning management system to manage all Distance Education course. Blackboard Learn 9.1 is also used to support hybrid courses. All Blackboard courses are accessed through <https://vernoncollege.blackboard.com/> and require a unique username and password to obtain access. Students will receive a password and account designation upon completion of the admission process. Vernon College supports and maintains the Blackboard system.

Password Security:

A student must not disclose his/her password to any other person. Disclosure of a password may result in administrative withdrawal from Vernon College with forfeiture of tuition and fees. Any student who is aware of a violation of password security must immediately notify either the instructor of the course or the Blackboard Administrator. Your password is the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you have any problems logging-in, please complete and submit the [Help Form](#).

Student Complaints/Grievance Procedures

Issues or complaints against distance education courses or instructors will be directed through respective parties involved. Vernon College has accepted the terminology “grievance” to mean written student complaint. Vernon College has reasonable, just, and timely policies and procedures in place for the resolution of these written completes. All students are encouraged to resolve problems when they first arise with the parties involved. Please consult the [Vernon College Catalog](#) for detailed instructions on the student complaints/grievance procedures.

Privacy of Students Enrolled in Distance Education Courses

The privacy of Vernon College distance education students enrolled in distance education courses is protected in the same manner as those enrolled in traditionally delivered courses. A comprehensive system of storage has been developed which ensures that student records are accessed by authorized persons only, and will be stored in a safe and secure manner.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)

Vernon College does hereby publish its policy regarding implementation of this act. The publication of this policy in the Vernon College General Catalog and the Student Handbook shall be deemed to be annual notification to students and parents concerning this act. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) afford students certain rights with respect to their educational records. Please consult the [Vernon College Catalog](#) or [Student Handbook](#) for full policy.

Withdraw Policy

Students may drop a part of their course load or withdraw from all classes anytime after they have registered and paid and until the last day to withdraw as documented in the class schedule. **Students are strongly encouraged to visit with their instructor(s) before seriously considering dropping a course or withdrawing from school.**

Please consult the [Vernon College Catalog](#) or [Student Handbook](#) for full procedure.

Refund Policy

If a course does not materialize and is canceled by the College, one hundred (100%) percent of all applicable tuition and fees charged will be refunded. No refunds are made without the honorable dismissal or official withdrawal of the student from the College. No cash refunds or reversal of charges to credit cards will be made. All credits will be applied to any outstanding balance owed to the college before a refund will be issued. Refunds are issued by check mailed to student's address of record, direct deposit to the student's Chaparral ID Card, or other designated direct deposit account. Tuition and fees paid directly to the institution by a sponsor, donor, grant, or scholarship shall be refunded to the source rather than directly to the student. Visit the [Refund Policy](#) web page for full policy and refund schedule.

Student Services

Distance Education Advising and Counseling Services

Questions about admissions, registration, entrance requirements, degree planning, transfer issues, and career counseling can be answered by any Vernon College Counselor. For specific information about "getting started" with Vernon College or contact information, visit the [Admissions and Records](#) web page.

Course Schedule Advising (CSA)

All new students to Vernon College must meet with a Course Schedule Advisor for assistance in planning their course of study prior to being cleared for registration. CSA centers are available at Vernon and Century City campuses. Dates and times the CSA centers are open are posted in the [class schedule](#). The Course Schedule Advisor will help a student choose courses and answer any advising questions. Returning students are encouraged to meet with a CSA.

Career Counseling

Career counseling helps students learn more about themselves through interest and personality inventories, enables them to clarify and evaluate their career and educational goals, provides them with direction and career information on the job market, helps them develop a strategy to reach their career goals, and assists them in the career decision making process. Students interested in utilizing this service should contact the Counseling Office at the appropriate instructional location.

Counseling/Academic Planning

Vernon College offers counseling/academic planning services at all instructional locations. Vernon College Counselors see all students who are NOT Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Clear for academic advising each semester. In addition to academic advising, Vernon College Counselors are available to students for consultation on personal or social matters. The Vernon College Counseling Department realizes that a variety of factors affects a student's success in higher education. Our goal is to help each individual student realize the resources available to them so they can utilize them and develop a support system to help each student achieve their goals.

Group and Individual Counseling

Confidential and professional counseling assistance is available for all Vernon College students. Counselors provide individual and group counseling for social and academic concerns. Specific areas may include stress management, study skills, time management, personality assessment, and test anxiety. In situations where more intensive counseling is required, the counselors in Student Services will assist the student with appropriate referral.

Registration Information

At the beginning of each enrollment period, registration for classes will be held. Each registration will consist of an early (online) registration period, a final regular registration period and a time for schedule changes. Online registrations will normally be conducted through Campus Connect, Vernon College's on-line registration process, at the discretion of The College's administrators. Students should apply for admissions early to facilitate course selection and availability.

The time, place, and method of each registration will be designated by Vernon College officials and published in an appropriate manner together with information about courses offered during the upcoming enrollment period.

A registration guide is published, as well as available online, for the campus and learning centers so that students may, with the assistance of their advisor or counselor, select courses which will meet the requirements of their chosen certificate or degree program. Lists of Internet and interactive video classes are available online.

Financial Aid

Students enrolled in distance education courses with Vernon College who are interested in applying for Financial Aid should begin the application process early to ensure that the process is complete prior to registration. Visit the [Financial Aid](#) web page for specific details on how to apply and deadlines.

Early Alert

Vernon College has instituted an Early Alert process by which your instructor may "alert" you and DE counselors that you might fail a course because of excessive absences and/or poor academic performance. This initiative is designed to provide students with supportive services and resources to assist them in successfully completing their course.

Student Conduct

Students enrolled in distance education courses with Vernon College are expected to abide by the Vernon College Code of Student Conduct, outlined in the [Vernon College Catalog](#) and [Student Handbook](#). When interacting with the instructor and fellow classmates, students are expected to follow all guidelines outlined in the Code of Student Conduct. Students who violate these policies and guidelines will be subject to disciplinary action.

Special Services

The Department of Special Services is committed to providing equal access and opportunity to all students through appropriate support services. The Special Services Staff are personnel who are dedicated to providing services to all ages, cultures, races, and socio-economic groups at Vernon College. We are here to help students succeed in acquiring academic or technical skills in order to obtain a successful and productive career or job.

The Special Services Department handles requests for ADA accommodations for qualified students with disabilities and authorizes approved accommodations for all campus locations. Though accommodation requests are made through the Director of Student Services or her secretary, all personnel in the Special Services Department help administer approved accommodations and assist students when necessary.

The New Beginnings Program offers support services to economically disadvantaged students and single parents who are pursuing a technical degree or certificate. This program helps eliminate barriers by offering textbooks and either child care or gasoline reimbursement to all students in the program.

For any student struggling with a class, or anyone who just wants to keep an A in that class, this department offers the Proactive Assistance for Student Success (PASS) Centers at four campus locations. The PASS Centers provide free campus-wide tutoring to all students currently enrolled at Vernon College. Along with free campus-wide tutoring, study skill guides, and time management techniques, free computer and Internet access for homework and college business is available to all students. Visit the [Special Services](#) web page for more information.

Course Grades

At the end of each regular enrollment period, permanent grades are reported, posted to each student's permanent record, and available on the web site through Campus Connect with the use of the student PIN. Grades and transcripts are not released if the student has a hold on his or her records. For more information refer to the [Vernon College Catalog](#) or [Student Handbook](#).

Transcript of College Record

An official transcript bearing the college seal and signature of the Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid/Registrar will be furnished to a student, an employer or an educational institution upon the student's WRITTEN request. Grades and transcripts will NOT be released if the student has a "hold" on his/her records. There is no charge for transcripts.

[Transcript Request Form](#)

In your request for a transcript, include your social security number, approximate dates you attended Vernon College, and the address where the transcript should be sent. If you attended VC under a different name than your current one, be sure to include that information. Sign your request and mail or FAX it to:

Office of Admissions and Records
Vernon College
4400 College Drive
Vernon, TX 76384
FAX: 940.553.1753

Vernon College was formerly known as Vernon Regional Junior College (VRJC).
For further information, call the Office of Admissions and Records at (940) 552-6291.

Graduation Procedures

Application for Graduation

In order to receive a certificate or a degree, it is necessary to pay the graduation fee and apply for graduation prior to published deadlines. Candidates should file for graduation at least the semester before they plan to complete all certificate or degree course work. The graduation fee is paid at the Business Office, and the application for graduation is filed with the Office of Admissions and Records by all candidates.

Attendance at Commencement

Candidates for a certificate or degree are expected to attend commencement ceremony with the exception of those receiving a Skills Certificate of less than 24 semester hours. These smaller certificates do not qualify for participation in the commencement ceremony. Since there is no commencement ceremony for August or December, diplomas are available approximately six (6) weeks after the graduation date.

Course Information

Course Syllabi Listings

To view course syllabi for your Vernon College courses, visit the Vernon College [Instructional Information](#) web page.

Bookstore and Textbook Information

Textbook information for your distance education courses will be provided for you in your class syllabus. Textbook(s) and other required materials can be purchased through the Vernon College books store. Vernon College operates two bookstores for the convenience of the student body. One bookstore is located on the Vernon campus and the other is located in the Vernon College Century City Center facility. Visit the [Vernon College Bookstore](#) web page for hours of operation and contact information.

Enrolled in a Distance Education – Getting Started.....

Note that you will not have access to your online course(s) prior to the first official day of classes. If you do not have access to your online course(s) by the end of the first day of classes – **PLEASE contact your instructor**. Your instructor's name can be located on your course schedule.

1) Activate your Vernon College student email account (if not already done). Visit the website below for instructions on how to activate your VC student email account.

<http://www.vernoncollege.edu/Student/Email.aspx>

2) Visit the Distance Education website –access the following

<http://www.vernoncollege.edu/DistanceEducation/>

a. Student Online Course Orientation Guide – Blackboard

b. System Requirements

c. Software Downloads

Class Structure

In a DE course, students complete assignments, take tests, and do other coursework as they would in an on-campus class. They do this mostly within their course website. However, please note that some classes may require students to meet on-campus for orientations, labs, and/or exams.

It is important that you read your course syllabus and course outline thoroughly to anticipate assignments and exams and to complete them on time.

Communication

Communication in Distance Education, primarily takes place via Vernon College student email accounts, or messaging and/or discussion boards within Blackboard. Please read your course syllabus and course outline thoroughly for specific details on modes of communicating with your instructor and classmates.

Courses with a Required Lab Component

Labs are counted as class meetings. Refer to your course syllabi and/or outline for lab details.

Course Grades

At the end of each regular enrollment period, permanent grades are reported, posted to each student's permanent record, and available on the web site through Campus Connect with the use of the student PIN. Grades and transcripts are not released if the student has a hold on his or her records. For more information refer to the [Vernon College Catalog](#) or [Student Handbook](#).

Testing and Exams

On-Campus Testing or Proctored Exams

Exams for distance education may require a proctor. To take a proctored exam in your Vernon College distance education courses, you may visit the Instructional Testing Center (ITC) at the Vernon or Century City campuses.

1. Instructional Testing is for students that have been assigned an exam by your instructor of an Internet or hybrid class.
2. There is no charge for instructional testing services.
3. Please present a picture ID.
4. The Instructional Testing Center must have received a transmittal form from your instructor or you will not be allowed to test.
5. There is no appointment needed for instructional testing UNLESS NOTED BELOW, but please do not show up 1 hour before closing to take an exam that you are allowed 2 hours to complete.

For more information visit the [Instructional Testing Center](#) web page.

Testing Fee

No testing fees are required for testing.

Student Resources

Campus Life

In addition to providing quality academic instruction, Vernon College offers the support resources you need to succeed before, during and after attending VC, as well as activities and opportunities to help you make the most of your campus life and college experience.

Click on the icons below to follow us or to subscribe to our Emergency Notification System (ENS) and check out our College Calendar for important dates!



College Calendar



Twitter



Facebook



RUNsynch Emergency Notification System (ENS)

Other VC News Sources:

Financial Aid Newsletter – emailed to your VC account and posted to the [Financial Aid](#) homepage in April and November. The newsletter contains important deadline information and updates.

Student Activities Update – printed and distributed to all campuses on a weekly basis. This is your source for the activities and organizations available at VC.

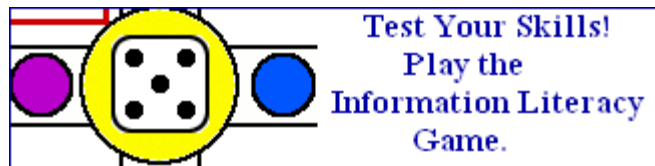
the Chap – published by the office of Quality Enhancement and posted on the [Quality Enhancement Plan Newsletters](#) page. It highlights services and resources available to engage you in your college experience while attending VC

Library

Students enrolled in distance education courses with Vernon College are entitled to the same access to the Vernon College Library Resources that are available to all Vernon College students.

- Off Campus Access to Databases: Login and search the databases for articles on any research topic.
- Ask the Librarian: Visit our chat room for real time assistance or email librarian@vernoncollege.edu.
- Research Assistance: Access tutorials for tips in searching the databases and online catalog.
- Interlibrary Loan: Use our online form to request materials within and outside the VC Library System. Internet students and those attending classes in Wichita Falls and Seymour may request books from the main collection in Vernon.
We also offer four locations to assist you in Vernon, Century City Center, Sheppard Learning Center, and Skills Training Center. You'll find comfortable study spaces and computer resources at all locations.

Visit the [Library](#) web page for more information.



Online Tutoring Services

The Proactive Assistance for Student Success (PASS) Centers provide tutoring, study skills guides, essay proofing, and time management techniques that will assist students in learning academic and technical skills as well as life skills that will help them become successful individuals. The PASS Centers also provide free computer usage, including Internet access and supplemental instruction programs, and a quiet place to study or read.

Visit the [Pass Center](#) web page for contact information as well as online and face-to-face tutoring schedules.

Social Networking

DE students are encouraged to become a fan of [VC Facebook](#) and follow [VC on Twitter](#). These social networking sites can provide a sense of community for the online learner, as well as up-to-date information and announcements related to Vernon College and Distance Education.

Online Netiquette

With the onset of the online education environment and online courses a new buzzword has evolved called, *netiquette*. Simply defined, it means etiquette on the Internet (or net). In an online course you will have your communication skills tested! You will be speaking through writing to fellow students and instructors, so it is imperative to communicate well and professionally. Mostly, when speaking in an online course or in any online environment for that matter, the same rules apply for etiquette as in real-time. The golden rule of netiquette in an online class or environment is: *do not do or say online what you would not do or say offline*. Let us look at five important netiquette rules in an online course or education environment:

1- Be friendly, positive and self-reflective. When people cannot see you, and also do not know you, feelings can be hurt if you are not careful in how you express yourself. The old saying, think before you speak is important here. Think before you write. One word of advice is to not respond when you feel angry. Wait. Write it down somewhere and come back to it. When you do, you may find that you no longer feel the same way as you did when you wrote it, because you have had time to reflect about the situation. Last, if you still feel the need to be heard, then edit before you post, and write it in terms that are easily embraced. This is also true when you feel a critique is necessary; say it in a positive tone. Reread what you have written to be sure it is positive.

2- Use proper language and titles. Do not use slang or even profane words in an online education environment, even if they are words you consider, "not so bad," as they will sound offensive to the reader. Do not refer to your professor as "Doc" or by his or her first name, unless it is acceptable with him or her to do so. Also, do not use caps lock when writing, it will insinuate yelling. That would hurt someone's feelings and possibly give an individual the wrong impression.

3- Use effective communication. This takes practice and thoughtful writing. Try to speak and write clearly at all times. Again, reread before you respond. Define and restate your words when necessary. Correct a misunderstanding right away. Chances are, if one person felt a certain way about what you said, then another may have as well. Likewise, be mindful of chosen words and joking. Let's say for example, I write, "get out!" This slang term can be interpreted in several ways, either positively or negatively.

4- Professionalism. Do not use characters like smiley faces, and instant message abbreviations. Save it for personal conversations or definitely ask for permission before using them. They may be interpreted as childish or too casual for the online education environment. Last, always say please and thank you.

5- Ask for clarification. If you are unsure of what was said, or the instructor's directive, or are trying to interpret a person's expressions, then ask again. Do not sit in silence either misunderstanding or feeling offended. Do not interrupt though; wait until there is a break in the conversation, or until the open interaction occurs. Your instructor will appreciate your responsiveness and maturity. A simple way to do this is to say (or write), "I did not understand..." always keeping the onus for the misunderstanding on yourself.

With these top five netiquette rules, you are on your way to online success!

Read more: <http://www.brighthub.com/education/online-learning/articles/26946.aspx#ixzz1IHn1OWm5>

Technical Support

Should you encounter technical problems with the following:

[Student Email Accounts](#)

[Blackboard Learn 9.1 SP 13](#)

[Campus Connect](#)

Please use the form below to report your technical problem as opposed to calling. This will ensure a prompt turnaround time to address your issue.

Complete the Student Support Request Form by clicking on this link, or going to

<http://www.vernoncollege.edu/Student/SupportForm.aspx>