

Policy for Verification of Student Identity in Online Learning - Muskingum University (Aug2022)

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Muskingum University operates in compliance with the provisions of the United States Federal Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) concerning the verification of student identity in distance education.

Overview

All credit-bearing courses and programs offered through distance education methods must verify that the student who registers for a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives academic credit. The verification of student identity confirms that

- (a) the right student has access to the correct courses; and
- (b) that student is performing the work for the duration of the online course

All methods of verifying student identity in distance education must protect the privacy of student information.

This policy applies to all credit-bearing distance education courses and programs offered by Muskingum University.

Verification Methods

In compliance with the HEOA, the following methods are used for each online course offered through distance education:

Secure Login and Password

Each Muskingum student is assigned a unique username and password to log into the University's learning management system (currently Blackboard). Students are responsible for providing their complete and true identity information in any identification verification process.

- (a) Students seeking registration in online courses will be required to provide appropriate identification to establish their identity prior to issuance of an individual secure login and password issued by the University.
- (b) All online courses are delivered through the Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS) or an alternate LMS approved by the Provost or Vice President of Graduate and Continuing Studies. The secure login is the only way to access the LMS.
- (c) Course sections and rosters are populated automatically by the student information system each semester. Information is loaded multiple times per day to account for student adds and drops. This assures student logins are synchronized to class rosters.
- (d) Any online student work, assessments, or activities that are graded, or contribute to a student's grade, must be submitted via the LMS, or other platforms maintained by the university (e.g. Microsoft Teams) which verify the student's identity as noted above.

Social Presence

Instructors supplement these security methods by building a high degree of social presence and interaction into the course. These instructional practices verify student identity and build familiarity of the instructor with the work and authentic voice of each student:

- Multiple weekly posts to discussion boards with student-to-student and student-to-faculty responses
- Student journals, blogs and/or wikis individually or in group work
- The use of e-portfolios
- The use of student photos and videos in activities and assignments
- Participation in learning communities
- Work in groups and teams
- Plagiarism checkers
- Synchronous and asynchronous conferencing and feedback sessions (by both voice and video).
- Proctored examinations and/or identity checks including camera presence

Responsibilities

LMS Users

All users of the University's learning management system (students and instructors) are responsible for maintaining the security of usernames, passwords, and other access credentials as required. An account is given to an individual for the exclusive use by that individual. Users are responsible for all activity on their accounts. It is a violation of Muskingum University policy for a user to give someone their password or allow others to use their account. Attempting to discover another user's password or attempts to gain unauthorized access to another person's files or mail is prohibited.

Instructors

Faculty teaching courses through distance education methods hold primary responsibility for ensuring that students comply with the University's identity verification policy. As technology and personal accountability are not absolute in determining a student's identity, faculty members are encouraged to design courses that use assignments and evaluations that support academic integrity.

Academic Leaders

The Provost, in collaboration with the Vice President for Graduate & Continuing Studies, is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and that division chairs, department chairs, and program directors are informed of any changes in the policy in a timely fashion.

Computer Network Services

This policy will be referenced on the login page of the University's learning management system.