

# GCS VIRTUAL LEARNING HANDBOOK

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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 Blended Learning Director**

Virtual Learning Stakeholders:

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

Our goal is to provide you with the skills and the support needed to succeed in this environment and provide opportunities that are not available in the traditional school setting. This handbook serves as a guideline for our virtual program and provides you with answers to questions that you may have.

Our program supports the traditional approach to learning while also providing the opportunity to provide 21st Century delivery options to our students. 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 21st Century.

The landscape of virtual learning has changed dramatically in recent years. GCS prepares students for online or virtual learning and encourages 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,

Janiese McKenzie, Ed.D.

Director of Blended Learning

## **GCS District Contact Information:**

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

## **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 Richard McGoogan, Lead Teacher Blended Learning [mcgoogr@gcsnc.com](mailto:mcgoogr@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 Technology Responsible [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

## **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 Edmentum 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. The GCS AUP may be found in the GCS "Student and Family Handbook."

## **Enrollment**

- 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.
- 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.
- GCS does not offer a full virtual option for High School students. No more than 1 or 2 online courses are recommended to be taken during semesters or summer school. However, due to special circumstances, families may request to be approved for 3 or more courses. If approved, this would be considered a fully virtual arrangement.
- Students may take courses not provided by GCS
  - Prior approval for courses outside of GCS is strongly recommended.
  - Accredited institutions are strongly recommended.

## **Flexible Enrollment**

- Edmentum has flexible (flex) enrollment for scheduling needs outside of the regular calendar.
  - Flexible enrollment courses are 18-weeks long or until the end of the virtual school year if it is less than 18 weeks.
  - 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 eLearning Advisor may withdraw students from the registration system for a semester course with no academic penalty on or before the **10th day**.
- The school counselor or eLearning Advisor may 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.
- Edmentum has open enrollment. Students can be enrolled up to 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 eLearning Advisor.

## 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.
  - o [Prior Approval Guidelines](#)
  - o [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 Edmentum 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 Edmentum Accommodation Plan page [here](#).
- You can review the NCVPS Special Education/504 Services page [here](#).

## **Course Extensions**

Edmentum 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*

Edmentum 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. They will work with NCVPS for an extension.

## **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](#). Both calendars can be found on [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 also 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.
- Some courses may require a final exam from the teacher

## Student FAQs

### Q: What courses are offered?

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

### Q: How do I register to take a virtual 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. 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 vary depending on traditional calendars and the calendar of our providers. Flex courses are typically 18 weeks but may be shorter if schedules do not permit a full 18 weeks.

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

Edmentum/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 number@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. Edmentum courses can be accessed from the Edmentum.com website. [EdOptions Academy | Login](#)

# Helpdesk Contact Information

## Edmentum Support

- o Log into Edmentum, from the dashboard choose Contact Support.
- o Recover a lost Username/Password go to <https://edm.geniussis.com/> use the recover password link. Provide the email address you gave to your counselor when you registered.
- o 1-800-453-1454
- o Check your school email for login information

## 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 may be resolved.

## Appendix A

### Guilford County Schools Edmentum & NCVPS User Agreement

Carefully read and consider the following virtual learning commitments. All participating students & their parents/guardians must sign this before participating in Edmentum or NC Virtual Public School (NCVPS).

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ ID Number \_\_\_\_\_

Course(s): \_\_\_\_\_ CIRCLE: **Fall Spring Summer Yearlong Flex**

I understand that by submitting this application I am not guaranteed a spot in an online course and that this application is subject to administrative approval.

#### By signing below, I accept the following terms.

1. **TIME:** I will spend at least ten (10) hours weekly on the Edmentum or NCVPS website and/or assigned modules until all course requirements are completed. More time each day may be needed if I am not making good progress after the mid-term reporting period.
2. **ENROLLMENT:** I will be dropped from the Edmentum or NCVPS course if I fail to log on during the first 10 days and/or my name appears ALVS or NCVPS Inactive Reports, and this will result in the grade of WF (Withdraw Failing) on my high school transcript.
3. **INSTRUCTOR:** I will email or call the assigned Edmentum or NCVPS teacher anytime I have questions or need help; my school will not be able to provide assistance or support with course content.
4. **PROGRAM:** I have read, understand and will obey all rules set forth for participation in the Edmentum/NCVPS programs.
5. **TESTING:** I will take all required EOC or VOCAT examinations in person at a location designated by my high school counselor or eLearning Advisor (ELEARNING ADVISOR). I understand that EOC and VOCAT examinations count as 20% of my final grade. Failure to take required tests will result in a grade of "0" for each exam.
6. **GRADING:** I will earn the grade as determined by Edmentum/NCVPS. I understand that all grades in online courses will be recorded on my High School transcript and will be factored in my GPA/Class Rank calculation. I understand that a failing grade/drop in GPA will negatively affect my chances of financial aid in college. Failing this course will impact my high school GPA, my permanent college transcript and could impact my future athletic eligibility and/or financial aid.
7. **INTEGRITY:** I will do all work myself. Allowing another student to perform work for courses for which I am registered is cheating and a violation of the Student Code of Conduct. Such actions will result in a grade of "F" for the course as well as disciplinary consequences.
8. **WITHDRAWING:** I will receive a grade of "F" for any course I do not complete, or a grade of "WF" (withdraw failing) if I drop outside of my schools' schedule-change process & timeline.
9. **BOOKS/MATERIALS:** I will check with my school's counselor or eLearning Advisor (ELEARNING ADVISOR), regarding required books and materials.
10. **COST:** Guilford County Schools pays tuition for me to take this course, so I must take it seriously and do my best. I understand that Apex Learning Virtual School or North Carolina Virtual Schools Programs or my high school may terminate my enrollment should I fail to abide by this contract. Termination of my enrollment will result in a grade of "WF" for the course that will be recorded on my permanent high school transcript.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Email Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone Number/Cell Phone