Note

Distance Learning refers to any course, curriculum, or methodology that relates to online or internet-based delivery of courses, course material, or Learning Management System related idea. Distance learning policies and procedures are always subject to review by Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC), and new editions of this handbook may be published at any time. Students should contact the eCampus Office at (850) 729-6464 to receive the most updated information.

All student rights and responsibilities are described in the NWFSC student handbook, which can be found at http://www.nwfsc.edu/catalog/. Situations unique only to NWFSC distance learning students are addressed in the handbook.
Distance Learning at Northwest Florida State College

Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) offers students the convenience and flexibility of earning course credits through various forms of distance learning. Through a creative mix of textbooks, online classrooms, study guides, written assignments, exams, e-mail, and ongoing communications with faculty, students may take control of their own education by working and learning at times and places convenient to them. Online learning at NWFSC is also known as online, distance learning, eCampus. Online courses carry the same course numbers and credits as their traditional counterparts and appear on the student’s transcript just as any other course; there is no designator identifying a class as distance. Credits earned through distance learning classes are transferable and are applicable to graduation requirements in the same manner as traditional classes as well. Students can search for these classes by clicking the Class Schedules link at http://eCampus.nwfsc.edu.

The distance learning experience is different from the traditional college classroom experience, but the learning should be equivalent. While it offers students greater freedom, it also requires more self-discipline to be successful. Distance learning courses are not easier than traditional college courses; in fact, students should be prepared to spend as much time or possibly more when learning at a distance. While many students thrive in and may even prefer the distance learning experience, others may find it unsuitable. To help determine whether it is the right option, students should take the time to complete the brief questionnaire linked from the Student Resources menu of the eCampus website at http://eCampus.nwfsc.edu.

Both general education and elective courses are offered as distance learning. Selected business, computer science, drafting, biological sciences, allied health, education, mathematics, and physical and social science courses, as well as general education courses, such as English Composition I and II, Art Appreciation, American Government, are offered in various delivery formats. Selected upper-division nursing and business courses are also available to students pursuing the Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Bachelor of Applied Science in Project and Acquisitions Management programs. All NWFSC distance learning courses are taught by faculty credentialed in the relevant subject matter. The majority are full-time faculty who also teach traditional classes and whom distance learning students may contact or visit during office hours. Students may choose traditional classes or courses designed for online delivery.

Distance Learning Support Services

NWFSC is committed to offering students the same quality of education through distance learning courses as it offers in the classroom. To that end, distance students have full access to college services at all locations. They may use a variety of on-campus resources, such as the Academic Success Center, the JOBS Center, advising services and computer labs. Many other services, such as library resources and databases, Ask-a-Librarian, interlibrary loans, enrollment and fee payment services, financial aid applications, request forms for unofficial transcripts and grades, and a listing of remedial and supplemental resources available at the college are all available both at locations and online at www.nwfsc.edu. In addition, all distance learning
faculty members maintain websites with syllabi and other resources for specific courses; these websites can be accessed from the Academics link on the NWFSC website www.nwfsc.edu.

The Purpose of Distance Learning at NWFSC

The mission of Northwest Florida State College is to provide quality educational programs and services whereby students may achieve their goals and the community is enhanced through academic, vocational, cultural, economic, and personal development opportunities. The mission of distance learning at NWFSC is to help the college achieve its goals relating to access and quality instruction. Specifically, distance learning helps the college achieve the following goals:

- To provide a variety of continuing education and distance learning opportunities
- To provide an environment that promotes equity and access to college programs for all members of the community

Specific target groups for distance learning include but are not limited to the following:

- Shift workers
- Military personnel
- Earners who must hold more than one job
- Parents with small children in the home
- Single working parents
- Individuals whose jobs require frequent travel
- Students who experience difficulty in securing the classes they need in the traditional format
- Students who prefer the distance learning delivery methods

Adapted from the Operational Plan for Distance Learning

Distance Learning Class Orientations

To ensure the success of all distance learning students, faculty offer an optional in-person orientation or an alternative online orientation through faculty websites. Instructors provide information, handouts, and other materials accessible from their website or through the campus email system. Program-specific orientations, such as in nursing, may be required.

Distance Learning Classes

Online classes allow students to participate in NWFSC classes by using the internet to access course content; NWFSC uses Desire2Learn (D2L) to deliver many of these online classes (see Technical Requirements). Online classes allow much more flexibility than a class on campus as
students are able to access the online classroom at their convenience as well as to communicate with the instructor via e-mail. However, these classes still require the same investment of time and effort as traditional classes, and often more.

Students and instructors interact online by using tools such as e-mail, discussion boards, chat rooms, etc. Online classes tend to be interactive and may offer the opportunity to work closely with the instructor and other students in a collaborative learning environment. These classes are also likely to have homework deadlines throughout the semester. Study guides, assignments, and other course materials are housed within the D2L environment and are accessible to students.

Technical Requirements

- Students should have a basic working knowledge of computers, the Internet, and e-mail.
- Students should access the Internet through a standard, high-speed connection.
- Students whose computers have firewalls may have some problems with the online class software. NWFSC technical support will make every effort to help the student resolve this problem, but if an issue with a student’s home computer or personal laptop cannot be resolved, the student may need to access the class from another computer.

Students whose home computers do not meet the above requirements may use an open computer lab at any NWFSC campus or center. Lab hours and locations can be found at http://www.nwfsc.edu/LearningSupport/.

Technical Tips

Students experiencing technical difficulty (e.g., downloading and/or viewing online class materials/study guides or logging on to an online class) should try these tips:

- Close the web browser (e.g., Internet Explorer) and restart it.
- Do not use a vendor-specific browser, such as AOL’s version of Explorer.
- Restart the computer and log back on.
- Be sure pop-up blockers and spyware are disabled. This is a very common problem; many students think that their pop-up blocker/spyware software is turned off, but the browser may have its own pop-up blocker that is still functioning.
- See the eCampus website (http://eCampus.edu) for help; select Student Resources, then Technical Assistance. Students may use the Student Request for Service form located there.

Logging on to the online classroom

1. From the NWFSC homepage http://www.nwfsc.edu, click eCampus/Distance Learning. This link will take you to the eCampus homepage.
2. Next, click on My D2L Classroom.

3. If you already know your username and password for D2L type them in.

4. If you have not accessed D2L previously, your username will be your first name followed by a period, then your last name (i.e. John.Doe). In occasional circumstances, you may be identified with either a 1 or 2 after your first name (John1.Doe). The password is your student identification number, which will consist of the first letter of your first name followed by an eight digit number (i.e. J05001234). The first letter in your password must be capitalized.

Detailed logon instructions can be found at http://eCampus.nwfsc.edu.

It is important that students understand that gaining access to a class does not constitute enrollment in that class. Students may enroll at any NWFSC campus or center or at: www.nwfsc.edu

Remember, online classes (specifically course material with the D2L environment) will not be accessible to students until the start date of the semester.

**Exams in Distance Learning Classes**

Distance learning classes may use in-person or online exams. Instructors will inform students of exam times and testing policies. Online courses require a method by which student identity is verified, taking the form of a proctored exam or presentation. Each instructor will address the requirements within the individual course syllabus. Students may also check class study guides or the NWFSC eCampus website (http://eCampus.nwfsc.edu) for the scheduled testing dates for specific classes.

**Helpful Tips for Distance Learning**

- The first **point of contact** is the class instructor. Contact information for a given instructor is on class handouts and can also be found by visiting the NWFSC website at http://www.nwfsc.edu, clicking on Academics then Departments and and the link for the Faculty Website Search.

- Distance learning classes require a **great deal of reading**. Students should be able to understand written directions and reading assignments without face-to-face explanations from instructors.

- **Assignment deadlines** for online classes are just as critical as in traditional classes; students will need to turn in assignments by the deadlines specified in the class syllabus.

- Distance learning classes are designed to be equivalent, requiring the same academic rigor as traditional courses. Students must schedule time to complete homework, assignments, reading, or other tasks required of distance learning courses.

- Distance learning classes require certain **student characteristics** because students are in charge of their own learning: lots of independence, initiative and self-discipline. Instructors of distance classes rarely meet with their students, so they cannot know if
students are confused; thus, students must take the initiative and be persistent in getting information or help. Also, choosing the best type of class depends a lot on a student’s preferred learning mode. A person who is comfortable learning independently is likely to be successful in distance learning. Research shows that the following are characteristics of successful distance learning students:

- The student is older than 18.
- The student is organized and persistent.
- The student has been successful in other distance learning courses.
- The student is comfortable or at ease with the course material.

Counseling and Advising

Distance learning students can get advising by making an appointment to see a NWFSC advisor for assistance with the following:

- Program planning for a degree/certificate
- Course selection
- Graduation and transfer requirements
- Admission program requirements
- Explanations of placement testing
- Referrals to appropriate sources for information, assistance, or problem resolution.

Degree- or certificate-seeking students should use this service to get a program of study in their first term at NWFSC. Links to academic advisors’ email addresses can be found at [http://www.nwfsc.edu/Counsel/](http://www.nwfsc.edu/Counsel/).

How to Register for a Distance Learning Course

All students new to NWFSC must apply for admission to the College. Information can be found at the Registrar’s Admissions webpage at [http://www.nwfsc.edu/Admissions/](http://www.nwfsc.edu/Admissions/) or at any NWFSC campus or center.

Once admitted, students must register for all NWFSC courses, including distance learning courses, through the registrar’s office or online. Information can be found at [http://www.nwfsc.edu/New_Students/RegistrationDates.cfm](http://www.nwfsc.edu/New_Students/RegistrationDates.cfm).

Getting Class Materials for a Distance Learning Class

Books

Books for distance learning classes can be purchased at the NWFSC College Stores located at both the Niceville and Fort Walton Beach Campus. Bookstore hours at the Niceville campus are extended during orientation weekends each semester. See the eCampus website at
http://eCampus.nwfsc.edu and the College Store website at http://bookstore.nwfsc.edu/ for more information.

Getting More Help

The Academic Success Center (ASC) in the Activities Center (formerly K Bldg.), on the Niceville campus, (850) 729-5389
- Free tutoring in most general education subjects
- Photo ID required for testing. Hours are as follows:
  - 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday
  - 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. Friday
  - 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Saturday
- Summer hours may vary.
- Allow plenty of time to complete tests before the ASC closes.

The College Store (bookstore) in the Activities Center (formerly K Bldg.) on the Niceville campus, (850) 729-5384 or FWB Campus, (850) 863-6511. Buy books online at http://bookstore.nwfsc.edu/.

The eCampus Office in R Bldg, room 101 on the Niceville campus, (850) 729-6464

The Learning Resource Center (library) in building LRC on the Niceville campus, (850) 729-5392. The LRC’s online databases are available at http://lrc.nwfsc.edu/ with the link “Journal and Magazine Articles (Databases).”

Learning Support Services at http://www.nwfsc.edu/LearningSupport


Selected NWFSC Policies

Refund Information can be found here. Distance learning students should note that the last day to drop a class with a refund often falls immediately after distance learning orientations. Check the semester calendar for exact dates at http://www.nwfsc.edu/calendar/.

Internet Privacy Information can be found at http://www.nwfsc.edu/PrivacyPolicies.cfm.

Student Privacy Information can be found at http://www.nwfsc.edu/PrivacyPolicies.cfm and select “Student Privacy.”

Guidelines and Responsibilities for the Use of College Computer and Network Resources can be found at http://www.nwfsc.edu/col_info/GuideNetworkindex.cfm.