Student Handbook

Northwest Florida State College eCampus

Distance Learning

2011-2012
Please note:

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 to NWFSC distance learning students only 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 on-going communications with faculty, students may take control of their own education by working and learning at times and places convenient to them. E-learning carry the same course numbers and credits as their traditional counterparts and appear on the student’s transcript just as any other course does; there is no designator identifying a class as distance. Credits earned through e-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 e-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. E-learning courses are not easier than traditional college courses—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 e-learning/mixed media experience, others may find it unsuitable. To help determine if it is the right option for you, 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 e-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 NWSC e-learning courses are taught by faculty who hold credentials in the relevant subject matter. The majority are full-time faculty who also teach traditional classes and who distance students can contact or visit during office hours. Students choose traditional classes or courses designed in the Online, Internet-based delivery method.

Adapted from the NWSC Catalog

Distance Learning Support Services

NWSC is committed to offering students the same quality of education through e-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, most e-learning faculty members maintain websites with syllabi and other resources for specific courses; these websites can be accessed from the Academics link on the NWSC website www.nwfsc.edu.

Adapted from the NWSC Catalog
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 help students be successful, e-learning faculty hold mandatory face-to-face orientations at the Niceville Campus. If a student is unable to attend, prior arrangements must be made with the instructor. Orientation sessions contain crucial information such as whether or not the course is self-paced, how to submit assignments, grading requirements, testing arrangements, and strategies for improving student success. In addition, instructors provide course handouts at orientations. Orientation sessions also provide the opportunity for students to meet other individuals enrolling in the same class and to evaluate enrollment in classes they might consider taking in the future. Institutional research has demonstrated that these orientation sessions are a considerable factor in the positive success rates of students participating in e-learning classes. Information about orientation scheduling is provided on the college eCampus website at http://eCampus.nwfsc.edu.
Distance Learning Classes

Online classes allow students to participate in NWFSC classes electronically through the Internet; 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 a student is able to access the online classroom at his/her 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 electronic 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. Class study guides and assignments are available from instructors at orientation.

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. If necessary, 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 rare 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 that classes are may not be accessible until after the mandatory orientation.

Exams in Distance Learning Classes

Distance learning classes may use in-person or online exams. At orientation instructors will inform students of testing methods and the locations, dates, and times. Students can 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 > Departments and locating the department a web class falls under, and then finally on “Faculty Websites.”

**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 convenient, but not any easier than a traditional class. The quality of distance education should be equal to that of a traditional classroom. Therefore, for each credit hour a student takes, s/he should plan to spend at least two additional hours per week on reading, studying, research, and other tasks. So, for a three-hour class, for example, a student would need to allow nine hours per week.

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 good at the subject matter of the course.

Counseling and Advising

Students can get advising by making an appointment to see a NWFSC advisor who can assist 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 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](http://eCampus.nwfsc.edu) and the College Store website at [http://bookstore.nwfsc.edu](http://bookstore.nwfsc.edu) for more information.

Study Guides

Study guides and other course handouts are distributed by instructors or staff at orientation. They are also available from instructors’ faculty websites, their distance learning classrooms if the
class is online, or via e-mail. Students may also contact the eCampus Office at (850) 729-6464 or by using the student e-mail form at http://ltech.nwfsc.edu/forms/studenthelpform.html

Getting More Help

The Academic Success Center in building E, room 158 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 building K 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 the LRC, room 214 on the Niceville campus, (850) 729-6464

The Learning Resource Center (library) in building LRC on the Niceville campus, (850) 729-5392

- Online databases available at http://lrc.nwfsc.edu/ > Find Articles

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


Selected NWFSC Policies

Refund Information can be found at http://www.nwfsc.edu/AtoZ/alphaList.cfm,ID=18. 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.