Gannon University Distance Education

Procedure Title: Verification of Student Identity in Distance Education

Responsible Division/Department: Academic Affairs, Distance Education

Purpose:

The purpose of this procedure document is to ensure that Gannon operates in compliance with Accreditation-relevant federal regulations and the provisions of the United States Federal Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) concerning the verification of student identity in distance learning.

Procedure:

All credit-bearing courses and programs offered through distance learning 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. One or more of the following methods must be used:

a) A secure login and pass code;
b) Proctored examinations; and/or
c) New or emerging technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

Gannon distance students must login to a secure Blackboard (LMS) Website with a unique username and password to complete distance courses. This login is sent to them on their schedule and student bill.

All users of the University's learning management systems are responsible for maintaining the security of usernames, passwords and any other personal information. Access credentials to any Gannon system or course publisher sites may not be shared or given to anyone other than the student to whom they were assigned for any reason. Students are responsible for any and all uses of their account. Students are responsible for changing passwords periodically to maintain security. Students are held responsible for knowledge of the information contained within the most recent ITS code of conduct as well as the Student Handbook. Failure to read University guidelines, requirements and regulations will not exempt students from responsibility and can result in the disabling of the student's Gannon user account.

When a distance student calls in to the Helpdesk for assistance in resetting their Blackboard LMS password, they are prompted to change their password by visiting the "I forgot my password" Website. This ensures they are entering their credentials directly into the system so that our team does not give out specific username and email information. Thus, the student verifies who they are by following the prompts on the password reset form, which sends an email to their Gannon email address; the student has to click on the unique link provided through the e-mail message in order to reset their password. Campus students registered for online instruction can also visit the ITS Helpdesk in person and provide the last 4 digits of the social security number and birth month to directly reset the password. Finally, students can also setup a pin and challenge question in the GU portal to reset their password more easily on their own. Only the ITS department and the helpdesk staff have access to resetting student passwords.

Most Gannon distance courses make use of student-centered, authentic assessments requiring students to perform work unique to the student, the student's workplace and to the course itself. In rare instances distance courses utilize traditional assessments facilitated with the use of a proctor. Proctors secured by the student are to be reported back to the instructor. Specific information regarding potential extra costs related to online assessments is communicated to the students by e-mail three weeks before the distance course start date.

All distance nursing students are required to acquire a University student identification badge that is to be worn at nursing clinical sites. Students are to e-mail a completed request form, an electronic portrait (.bmp/.jpg) with a plain back ground and a scanned image of a valid driver's license or other form of state identification. The cost of the identification badge is explained as students enter the program.

The procedure in this document is the responsibility of the Distance Education office. Gannon University works with contract providers as necessary to offer distance education courses and the identification verification procedure is still followed and enforced.