



Student Handbook

2018 - 2019



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WELCOME

Welcome to the exciting world of digital education! Your school district has chosen to provide these 21st Century technology classes on your campus to offer curricular opportunities that may not otherwise be available to you. To make the most of this privilege, you need to be aware of the structure of the classes, policies, and tools utilized by teachers. All Virtual Arkansas digital learning courses follow a blended-learning model of instruction that includes digital face-to-face time and online time. This handbook is designed to help you become a successful digital learning student and make the most of your technology-based learning experience.

Read this handbook completely. Your parent or guardian will need to read and sign the Audio Visual (AV) Release and provide one email address and one telephone number. You, the student, will need to read and sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and turn the MOU in within the first 10 days of being enrolled in a course. This document is at the end of the handbook, page 10.

STRUCTURE OF DIGITAL LEARNING COURSES

Overview of Technology: Blackboard and Moodle are the Learning Management Systems (LMS) used by Virtual Arkansas and these are where you will access course material and assessments. Zoom is the primary interactive technology you will use to participate in the interactive live Zoom sessions. Zoom allows students and teachers to see and hear each other in real time. Interaction is much the same as in the traditional classroom.

Your Classes: As a student enrolled in Virtual Arkansas, you may have a course or courses in one or more of the three campuses - Core, CTE (Career and Technical Education), and Concurrent Credit. When you participate in the interactive sessions, you will interact with students from other schools. Each course will begin with a Gateway session designed to help you make a successful transition to the online classroom. Please pay special attention to the strategies and tools provided during these sessions.

Your Teacher: Virtual Arkansas employs teachers who are certified/licensed in their subject areas and have the responsibility of teaching and grading in Virtual Arkansas courses. Teachers post their contact information, content resources, and Zoom information to help you succeed.

Your Facilitator: Under the guidance of your teacher, facilitators supervise students at individual schools. The trained facilitator is responsible for printing handouts/lesson plans, maintaining a positive learning environment, collecting student work, managing ethical testing, keeping students on task, and communicating with the teacher. The facilitator has the authority to enforce school, Virtual Arkansas, and teacher policies. Students are expected to behave respectfully towards the facilitators.

Your Grades: You will access your grades through the Power Panel. The Power Panel is updated nightly. Teachers are expected to have all work completed by students during the week graded by the close of business on Friday to give you the most up to date information on your performance. You may check your grades at any time and should communicate any concerns to the Virtual Arkansas teacher immediately. We encouraged students to provide their parents or guardian access to their grades.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Institutions are implementing policies and strategies to address academic dishonesty and to ensure that students do their own work and give credit to the originator of the ideas, when using the thoughts or work of others. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not



limited to, plagiarism, as explained in Expectations for Student Success, stealing academic property, and cheating. Virtual Arkansas subscribes to online services to identify material that may have been plagiarized. Students identified as being in violation of the Academic Dishonesty Policy may not receive credit for that work and may suffer additional penalties based on local school policy. Depending on the severity of the academic dishonesty, you may receive a zero (0) for the assignment.

The Virtual Arkansas campuses may impose, but are not limited to, the following actions in situations involving academic dishonesty.

1. The student may receive a lower grade, with the possibility of revision,
2. The student may receive a grade of zero for the test or assignment,
3. The student may be awarded a failing grade for the course, or
4. The student may be withdrawn from the course.

ATTENDANCE

In an online environment, you assume more responsibility for keeping up with the course requirements. It is critical that you access and interact with the online content on a daily basis and participate in the interactive sessions. If you are absent from a digital learning class, you are responsible for making up the missed assignments, as explained in Expectations for Student Success.

Attendance for the Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit campus is specialized due to preparation for post-secondary involvement. You should communicate in advance with the teacher regarding absences and making up assignments/tests, except in emergency situations. You will be expected to adhere to the specific guidelines given in each teacher’s course syllabus.

Advanced Placement classes do not end until the Advanced Placement exam is given. In the event of absences due to extenuating circumstances (illness, medical emergency, etc.), the supervisors of each Virtual Arkansas campus will work on a case-by-case basis with the local administration to devise a plan for the student.

CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE

Classroom discipline will be in accordance with the policies of the local school district. Each teacher may establish his/her own class rules and procedures as long as they do not conflict with local school policy. In the event of serious student discipline issues, the name of the student and the specifics of the problem will be reported to the local principal. If action is merited, the procedure below may be followed.

1st offense – Facilitator will complete a local school Discipline Report and turn this into the principal.

2nd offense – Facilitator will complete a local school Discipline Report and turn this into the principal. The local school principal should contact the parent and inform the parent of the issue.

3rd offense – Student will be disciplined according to local school policy.

4th offense – Student may be officially dropped from the class. If this occurs, the student may not receive credit for the digital learning course.

**Please be aware that some actions may result in immediate removal from class, regardless of*



whether it is the first, second or third offense. If a student is removed from class, he/she may receive a W, F, or not receive a grade.

COMPUTER USAGE

Your school district’s computer usage policy will be enforced in the Virtual Arkansas digital learning classroom. In regard to digital learning applications (i.e., Zoom), unacceptable usage includes, but is not limited to, using inappropriate language, cyberbullying, harassment, and trespassing in the files of others. These actions may result in the loss of access to these applications and websites. Any communication or content within the digital learning application is subject to access and review by local school and Virtual Arkansas personnel at any time.

COURSE ACCESS

You will access your courses by first logging in through the Power Panel. Once logged into the Power Panel, you will see your dashboard. From the dashboard, you will click on the course you want to access.

DROP/ADD PROCEDURES – CORE AND CTE STUDENTS

All drops/adds in Virtual Arkansas classes are done using the registration system and will be submitted by the school Registrar or Super User.

General Drop Policy - Virtual Arkansas teachers will do everything possible to help students succeed in coursework, but there may be situations when students are dropped from enrollment in Virtual Arkansas Core and CTE classes. These situations are usually failure to complete work, discipline, or an academic dishonesty violation. To be successful, students should not procrastinate in completing coursework, but do it on a timely basis.

Schools may drop students who have not logged in to begin working within the first 10 school days after enrollment, or the instructional start date.

DROP/ADD PROCEDURE – CONCURRENT CREDIT STUDENTS

Please refer to your syllabi or contact the Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit office for information regarding university deadlines to add/drop classes. The school administrator or counselor has access to the withdrawal forms and must follow the university’s procedures for dropping students from concurrent classes. Students are responsible for the partnering university course drop fees and withdrawal from the institution, if applicable. Failure to pay these fees may prevent a student from receiving an official college transcript.

You should be prepared for the academic rigor of concurrent credit courses.

- The partnering universities have different deadlines to drop a course.
- The student must be dropped from the course in the Virtual Arkansas registration system and through the universities.
- Before withdrawing/dropping a course, a student should consider the impact on future financial aid.
- College hours attempted in high school under pre-freshman status count toward the maximum number of hours a student is allowed to attempt under federal and state grant programs.
- Students should use good judgment and consult the post-secondary institution they currently attend, as well as the post-secondary institution they plan to attend after high



school graduation, for advice before withdrawing.

Students are responsible for the partnering university course drop fees and withdrawal from the institution, if applicable. Failure to pay these fees may prevent a student from receiving an official college transcript.

DUE PROCESS

Appropriate conduct is expected of all students at the school. Students are guaranteed due process of law as required by the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution.

EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Attend Class: Attendance is extremely important. If you are absent, review the pacing guide for assignment due dates. You are responsible for homework, notes, and all class-related assignments and materials according to your school’s policy. Check with your facilitator and, if necessary, with the teacher for the materials you need for class.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism continues to be an ever-growing problem in our current world of sharing resources online. Review the Academic Dishonesty section on page 2. Each teacher will provide a review of plagiarism and share resources to assist you in following policies of academic honesty. Consequences for engaging in plagiarism include, but are not limited to re-submitting the assignment for reduced credit or receiving no credit on the assignment.

Be Considerate: You may be in class with students of varying backgrounds from different schools. Treat everyone in your class with respect at all times. This includes teachers, facilitators and students from all sites. Disrespectful or derogatory comments toward the digital learning community members are not acceptable and will be dealt with appropriately.

Be Prepared: Come to class prepared and on time. You should bring all required materials to class every day and begin work immediately when class begins.

Be Responsible: Take responsibility for your learning and managing your time. The pacing guide is your tool to organize your school week and to help with managing your time. You are expected to be mature learners by paying attention, asking questions, completing homework, studying for quizzes/tests, and checking your inbox, messages, and announcements from teachers daily.

Engage in Developing 21st Century Technical Skills: By nature, digital learning courses will provide you with the opportunity to master keyboarding skills, creating files, saving files, uploading files, electronic communication, and basic software utilization.

Know Your Policies: Become familiar with your local school student policies, the Virtual Arkansas operating policies, and teacher procedures. In order for you to be fully enrolled in the course, the signed Audio Visual (AV) release and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) should be returned within the first 10 days of your enrollment and given to your facilitator. Failure to return these forms, signed, within the time frame required, may delay your accessing the course content or may result in you being dropped from the class.

Participate: Participation involves attending Zoom sessions, sending and responding to messages from the teacher, paying attention during instruction, answering when called upon, engaging in all lesson content, including readings and videos, and watching the recorded lessons. To ask a question, wait to be recognized and speak politely. You are encouraged to attend all Zoom sessions. You are also expected to know your teacher’s Zoom schedules, enter the Zoom room on time, and follow your teacher’s Zoom room procedures and expectations.



Data indicates there is a direct positive correlation between student engagement and grades.

Practice Ethical Testing Procedures: Follow the teacher’s procedures for ethical testing, which may include utilizing a cover sheet, forbidden usage of electronic devices, such as cell phones and smartwatches, and clearing your desk. The best practice is to not engage in academic dishonesty of any kind.

EXTENSIONS/EARLY TESTING

There will be situations when a student, school, or parent requests an extension or early testing. Virtual Arkansas instructors are to follow the following procedures if this form of request arises:

1. Local students must first receive permission from their local administrator prior to receiving approval from Virtual Arkansas.
2. VA instructor must receive, via email, approval for any extension requests originated from a local administrator (the email shall include the student's name, a statement of approval, and the approved extension final date or window.)
3. Upon receipt of the approval, instructor will contact the student and facilitator confirming the approval and the approved extension deadline. The Director of Academics or designee will be copied on this email.

GRADE REPORTING – CORE AND CTE STUDENTS

In Core and CTE courses, teachers will provide numerical grades based on a range from zero to one hundred in four nine-week periods based on the Virtual Arkansas academic calendar. Semester averages will be calculated using the 40 – 40 – 20 formula (1st or 3rd quarter grade = 40% of final grade; 2nd or 4th quarter grade = 40% of final grade; semester exam = 20% of final grade).

Virtual Arkansas adheres to the Virtual Arkansas calendar posted on the Virtual Arkansas website and released through the newsletter. Official nine-week and semester grades are released on specific dates each semester. Grades accessed prior to the release of official grades may not reflect the official grade.

For concurrent credit courses, consult the course syllabus for the semester grade calculation.

GRADE REPORTING - CONCURRENT CREDIT STUDENTS

The Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit campus operates on semester calendars. College grades earned through the Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit campus are part of your permanent college transcript. The grade will affect your college grade point average. The effect of pre-freshman status grades varies from one post-secondary institution to another. If you are concerned about the grade that you receive, you are encouraged to check with the post-secondary institution you plan to attend after high school graduation for advice.

MAKE-UP POLICY

For Virtual Arkansas Core and CTE classes, if you have an excused absence, you should complete all graded assignments as allowed by your school’s make-up policy. In cases of an extended excused absence, the Virtual Arkansas campus director will consult with the local principal to develop a plan for you to complete the coursework.

If you are enrolled in a Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit course, you must follow the guidelines set by the partnering institutions of higher education in regards to makeup policies. These guidelines are listed in each course syllabus.



PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Virtual Arkansas teachers utilize the information provided by local schools to attempt parent/guardian contact regarding student performance and achievement. If parent/guardian contact is not provided, Virtual Arkansas teachers will attempt to obtain this information from the local schools. Parents/guardians will have the opportunity to provide an email address and a phone number at the beginning of the year while signing the Virtual Arkansas Student AV Release and MOU. The primary means of parent contact will be via email, but phone calls may also be made by Virtual Arkansas teachers.

Parent-Teacher conferences are an excellent time to provide parents an opportunity to experience the digital learning environment and to see how technology is integrated into their child’s education. Local personnel should be involved in advocating these opportunities with parents and stakeholders whenever possible. The classroom facilitator, Super User, or Registrar should be present during these conferences. At any time, parents may request that the Virtual Arkansas teacher contact the parent by telephone or email to discuss the grades or behavior of their child.

Virtual Arkansas concurrent credit teachers must abide by federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations. FERPA is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The regulations are found at [Ed.gov](https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html?src=rn) (<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html?src=rn>).

REPORTING CONCERNS

Most issues or questions can and should be resolved at the lowest level. Your first point of contact for classroom issues or concerns is the teacher.

There may be a time when you or someone from your school will need assistance beyond the teacher. Below you will find the steps to take when you need further assistance beyond the teacher:

1. **Contact the Virtual Arkansas instructor to seek a resolution.**
2. If you need further assistance, contact the applicable Virtual Arkansas campus supervisor to seek a resolution.

CTE Campus Director: James Malcom, CTE Campus Supervisor
 Phone: 870-260-6046
 Email: james.malcom@virtualarkansas.org

Core Campus Director: Jason Bohler, Core Campus Supervisor
 Phone: 501-477-2781
 Email: jason.bohler@virtualarkansas.org

Concurrent Credit Campus Director: Ellora Hicks, Concurrent Credit Campus Supervisor
 Phone: 870-224-3299
 Email: ellora.hicks@virtualarkansas.org

If a resolution is not reached through the individuals above, contact the Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

Director of Curriculum and Instruction: Kirsten Wilson
 Phone: 501-477-2781
 Email: kirsten.wilson@virtualarkansas.org



STUDENT SAFETY TIPS

As a student in a digital online class, please remember how easy it is for information to be spread in a digital world. Pictures and text can easily be copied and/or pasted into many public places, such as social media sites, and easily distributed. Please keep in mind that you are responsible and are accountable for any such action if you choose to distribute inappropriate or private media or information.

Keep Your Accounts Secure – Each time leave your computer or electronic device, be sure to log out of your classroom and any other sites you are using for course work. Also, remember to log off the computer or electronic device itself each time you leave the device so that the next student to use the computer or electronic device will not have access to your course under your username and password. Never share your username or password with anyone in order to protect your accounts.

Maintain Privacy – It is fun to meet new people in an online course, but you should not share your age, telephone number, email address or home address anywhere within the online digital learning sites.

Don’t Respond – If you receive an inappropriate message that makes you feel uncomfortable or is hurtful, do not respond. Take a screenshot of the offensive message if possible and notify the facilitator or teacher right away.

Don’t Participate in Cyberbullying – Inappropriate pictures or writing are not allowed within the digital learning coursework. Screenshots may be kept of all student work and will be utilized in discipline referrals, if necessary.

Stay on Task - When students have an individual computer to access coursework, there is sometimes the temptation to “surf the web” or visit non-instructional websites. In order to be safe and engaged in the instruction, refrain from visiting non-instructional websites.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Hardware – Participating schools are responsible for maintaining local equipment for their students enrolled in Virtual Arkansas courses. In order to support a 21st Century blended-learning experience, it is required that each student have daily access to a computer connected to the internet, a headset with a microphone, and webcam. We recommend computers be hard-wired to the network in the digital learning classroom. Schools may use a wireless configuration, but performance may be negatively impacted as the number of students increase in a wireless setting. Districts should ensure that the technology requirements are satisfied prior to classes beginning. A computer specification sheet is available at the [Virtual Arkansas \(http://virtualarkansas.org\)](http://virtualarkansas.org) website. Students may need access to certain technology based on specific course enrollments. Please consult the textbook and resources list, as well as the course catalog, for any special hardware or software needed for a course.

Chromebooks are not fully supported at this time in Virtual Arkansas courses.

Software – Some courses require specialized software be installed on the local digital learning room computers. All measures have been taken to reduce the burden on districts, i.e., installing the software on every other computer. **Please check the Textbook List to see if the courses your students are enrolled in require specific software.**

TESTING POLICY

All students enrolled in a Virtual Arkansas Core and CTE courses are required to take all nine-



weeks and cumulative/semester exams as detailed by the teacher.

There are no exemptions for Virtual Arkansas Core, CTE, or Concurrent Credit cumulative/semester exams. However, students who take the AP Exam, may substitute this for the second semester final exam. Students enrolled in an AP course and who do not take the AP Exam must take the second semester final exam for the AP course. If a student misses a major exam and does not make it up during the time frame allowed by district policy, the student will receive a zero for the exam. A school administrator must request that the student be provided the opportunity to make up the missed exam.

Students enrolled in Advanced Placement Courses must take the AP exam for each AP course in which the student is enrolled to receive weighted credit at the district level.

Semester final dates for Virtual Arkansas Concurrent Credit classes are established by the partnering universities and are listed in the course syllabus.

TRANSCRIPT REQUESTS – CONCURRENT CREDIT

Virtual Arkansas does not provide college transcripts for students enrolled in Concurrent Credit courses. To request a transcript, go to the post-secondary institution website. Each institution has specific instructions for requesting a transcript with your college grades.



VIRTUAL ARKANSAS AUDIO VISUAL RELEASE AND MOU

By checking the box to the left, **I am** authorizing Virtual Arkansas to use audio and/or visual representations of my child/legal dependent in class recordings, publications, websites, video presentations or any other electronic or published media, to promote or communicate the advancement of Virtual Arkansas digital courses.

OR

By checking the box to the left, **I am not** authorizing Virtual Arkansas to use audio and/or visual representations of my child/legal dependent in any way, as described above. However, **I DO** give permission for my child to participate in the interactive Zoom sessions.

This Audio Visual release and Memorandum of Understanding must be signed and returned in to the facilitator within the first 10 days of entering a Virtual Arkansas course. This release will be maintained by the local school.

Parents: Please sign below to indicate that you have read and understand the Virtual Arkansas Student Handbook.

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

(Date)

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONTACT INFORMATION

Please provide one parent/guardian email address and one parent/guardian phone that may be used to communicate student progress.

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Email: _____

Parent/Guardian Phone Number: (_____) _____

STUDENT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

1. It is my responsibility to familiarize myself and abide by all Virtual Arkansas policies as outlined in the handbook. The Student Handbook may be accessed at http://www.virtualarkansas.org/docs/s_hndbk.pdf.
2. I will maintain appropriate classroom behavior as outlined by my high school handbook, the Virtual Arkansas Student Handbook, and my digital learning teacher classroom procedures.
3. I will be accountable for all class activities, including online and offline instruction.
4. I will be respectful to all digital learning teachers, facilitators, and other students participating in class.
5. I will actively participate in my digital learning experience.
6. I will not willingly participate in activities that are dishonest, including, but not limited to, cheating and plagiarism.
7. I will follow the computer usage guidelines of my local school district, my digital learning teacher, and make every effort to attend the interactive sessions.
8. I will make my digital learning class a priority and make every effort to access the course content daily.
9. I will take the responsibility to obtain and complete missed assignments when I am absent.
10. I understand that I may be removed from a Virtual Arkansas class and receive a W, F, or no grade, if I am involved in a severe discipline or academic dishonesty incident.

Please sign in pen.

(PRINTED LEGAL Student Name)

(Student Signature)

(Date)

(School/District)