

# Miles College

## Distance Learning

### Policies & Procedures

#### Handbook

A Guide to Effective Online Teaching and Learning



Office of the Dean of Online Education  
Miles College

# Introduction and Purpose

The goals of the Miles College Distance Learning\* Policies and Procedures Handbook are to:

- Articulate the mission and goals of Miles College Online Education as an integral part of the overall mission and goals of Miles College
- Inform faculty about mandatory policies and procedures that relate to distance education and how those should be incorporated into online course design and delivery
- Provide up-to-date and effective faculty development resources to enhance online faculty teaching and student learning
- Provide the technological infrastructure, pedagogical support and training required for the success of online faculty and students

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**Definition of Distance Education:** Distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or other digital media if used as part of the distance education course or program.

**Learning Management System:** Miles College Online Education uses the Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS) for the delivery of its Distance Education.

**Mode of Delivery:** Miles College Online Education offers fully online asynchronous classes. However, some classes may require some online synchronous activities. These instances are indicated in the schedule of classes.

**Duration, Rigor and Breath of Online Classes:** Online classes run for 8 weeks. Each distance education program results in learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree awarded. Each program offered through distance education has procedures in place to collect and review identified student learning outcomes and to identify program improvements based on the data collected.

\*Distance Education, Distance Learning and Online Education will be used interchangeably throughout this document.

# Mission and Goals of Miles College Distance Learning



This handbook is current as 2022 and is subject to change.

The Mission of Miles College Online Education (MCOE) is consistent with strategic goal number seven of the college, which is to transform the campus with new and improved infrastructure, facilities, and technology based instruction and learning. By adopting best practices in the distance learning environment, MCOE provides student-focused top quality education to students, anytime, and anywhere.

The Goals of Miles College Online Education are as follows:

- Offer courses and programs to students who are unable to attend traditional face to face classes.
- Provide state of the arts resources and support to enhance student success.
- Ensure faculty effectiveness through up-to-date training, state of the arts resources, and support.

Miles College Online Education is member of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). NC-SARA provides national leadership over the reciprocity agreements for distance education regulation among U.S. member states. In collaboration with four regional compacts and a broad array of higher education stakeholders, NC-SARA helps ensure alignment on core elements and requirements of SARA, supports quality assurance and consumer protections for students, and increases the value of credits earned through distance education programs.

## Miles College Online Education

Miles College Online Education offers three undergraduate programs at the baccalaureate level based on a minimum number of 120 semester credit hours required to complete a specified major. These are Business Administration, Criminal Justice, and Psychology.

The minimum hours to complete a degree program is ensured through the degree approval process. Within this process, the Pre-Instructional Council Checklist Form is used to evaluate the prerequisites to be met before a change in a course or program is considered. One of such requirements is the minimum number of hours offered for the program. Therefore, the plan of the degree includes hours allocated to courses on each level of the degree plan.

The designated numbers range from 100 level courses to 400 level courses that represent the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classifications. Further, a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, through the general education offerings (100-200 level courses), ensures breadth of knowledge. The upper level specific major offerings (300-400 level courses) build on the core competencies of the general education offerings.

Academic credit is awarded on the credit hour system in which one credit hour is equivalent to at least one contact hour per week. Regardless of the delivery method, all instructional courses, weekend and online, are equivalent to traditional classroom courses in terms of desired student learning outcomes, course objectives, assessment of learning, and use of assessment results. Required hours for a program are discussed at the different levels of the process for establishing a new program to safeguard the College's required minimum hours. Program paradigms and degree plans specify the length of time to complete program requirements. A safeguard for program hours that adheres to at least 120 credit hours is indicated in the Miles College Catalog under Graduation Requirements.

Students learn of required hours of programs from the Miles College Catalog and their degree plans, which are provided to them by Program Coordinators. Faculty members learn about the process for establishing new programs and concentrations during new faculty orientation, divisional meetings, and faculty meetings. The process is also published in the Miles College Substantive Change Procedure. To ensure coherent course of study, compatibility with the College's mission and goals, along with course offerings in the fields of study appropriate to higher education, all programs go through a rigorous process of approval as defined by the College. Within this process, a Pre-Instructional Council Checklist Form is used to evaluate the requirements to be met before a change in a program is considered.

# Miles College Online Privacy Policy and Procedures

Miles College online education understands the importance of privacy and security for distance education students. To protect student privacy and security, Miles College adopted an online privacy policy and procedures. This policy explains how the College collects, uses, and safeguards the personal information provided by our students, faculty, staff, and administration. Miles College's Online Privacy Policy and Procedures are continually assessed against new technologies and business practices. The College uses several methods for protecting the privacy of students, including authentication procedures through the Miles College Student ID system, proctoring services, Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS), and live audio and video features within Blackboard LMS.

Some personally identifiable information will be used by Miles College for the purpose of contacting students regarding requested information and for improving our educational services, marketing, and online services. By using this website, visitors expressly consent to the use of personal information for the purpose of marketing. No confidential, fiduciary, contractual, or other relationship is created between visitors to the website and the College, other than pursuant to this privacy policy and procedures.

## **Collection of personal information**

Miles College collects personally identifiable information that students voluntarily choose to disclose and aggregates information that is automatically collected when the website is visited. Personally identifiable information refers to information that is specific to an individual and is collected when information is requested from the College. This information can include the name, address, phone number, current email address, programs of interest, and other information that is provided. Email addresses and messages may be retained from correspondence with the College. Like many websites, the College uses "cookies." Cookies are small programs that are used to identify website visitors. These programs are stored on the visitor's hard drive, enabling the College to recognize visitors and pass information to different portions of the College's website. Users must be aware that aggregate information that is automatically collected can be tied back to them. Cookies can be disabled by going to the toolbar and clicking on the "help" button. Users can then follow the instructions given to prevent the browser from accepting cookies.

## **Use of personal Information**

Personal information is used to contact students regarding educational opportunities and products offered by Miles College. Miles College may store collected information for the purpose of communicating with students about the programs and services offered by the College. Page 2 of 4 Additionally, the College uses personal information for purposes of administering business activities and providing customer service to our students. Occasionally,

the College may also use the information collected to notify students about important changes to the website, new services, and other opportunities.

### **Sharing information with third parties**

Miles College may share collected information with third-party service providers for the limited purposes of communicating with students regarding the educational programs and services offered. The College cannot and does not make any representations about the practices and policies of these companies which are not subject to the Miles College privacy policy.

### **Protection of personal information**

Miles College may utilize encryption/security software to safeguard the confidentiality of personal information collected. This software provides a limited degree of protection against unauthorized access or disclosure, as well as accidental loss, alteration, or destruction.

### **Legally compelled disclosure of information**

Miles College may release any private information about students when the College believes release of information is appropriate to comply with the law; to enforce or apply the College's privacy policy and/or other agreements; or to protect the rights, property, or safety of faculty, staff, students, and others.

### **Sites linked to this website**

Users should be aware that upon navigating from the College's website to another site, the College's privacy policy is no longer in effect. The College is not responsible for the privacy practices employed by other sites, nor the information or content contained therein. Please read over the rules and policies of these other sites before proceeding.

### **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

Miles College complies fully with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. 1232g. This act protects the privacy of student education records by requiring, with certain limited exceptions, that the student's consent must be obtained before disclosing any personally identifiable information in the student's education records.

The Registrar has been designated as the FERPA officer for the College. Further information about policy and procedures with respect to privacy of student records may be obtained from the Office of Academic Records. The Office of Academic Records will inform college division chairs, deans, and administrative officers when changes to the policy are made.

### **Miles College Student ID Number**

Prospective students, both distance education and traditional on-ground, are assigned a randomly selected 5-digit M-Number, formally known as a student identification number, after acceptance to the college. The number is created by the College's Client Relationship

Management System and is maintained by the College's Information Technology Department. The M-Number is the student's official college identification number used to access the student's information and other College resources.

### **College Student Portal (Bears Den)**

Bear's Den is the college's official student portal to a variety of self-service tools. Students are granted access to Bear's Den after the student ID number is assigned. To access Bear's Den, students will use their M-Number as the User ID and their six-digit date of birth for their pin number, in the form of two digits for the month, two digits for the date of birth, and the last two digits of their birth year. After the initial sign in, students are prompted to create a new password. The student-created password can be reset at any time back to the date of birth, if necessary.

### **College Email Account**

Official college email accounts are available to validated students. Student's college email addresses are in the form of student's first initial, student's full last name and the last 4 digits of the student's M-Number, from their student account number, @miles.edu. The official college email address will be maintained by the college's Information Technology Department and is automatically generated by the college's Client Relationship Management System.

# Miles College Online Education Attendance Policy

Miles College expects students to participate in all instructional activities irrespective of delivery method. Miles College Online Education understands the importance of attendance for distance education students and applies this to the virtual environment.

An academic week for Online courses is from Monday 12:00 am EST to Sunday at 11:59 pm EST (7 calendar days). Attendance is recorded for the day the action was completed regardless of the day a particular assignment or item was due. Additionally, items submitted prior to the official start date or after the official end date of an academic week do not record attendance for that week; rather, they record attendance for the academic week submitted.

In order to satisfy weekly attendance requirements, Online students must complete one or more of the following actions as directed by the instructor: (1) submit an academic assignment; (2) submit a quiz or an exam, or; (3) participate in a posted online academic discussion.

Weekly attendance participation must be within the Blackboard online learning management system. Logging into the online class without active participation (as described above) does not constitute official weekly attendance.

## Emergencies

Students are advised to work directly with their instructor as personal emergencies arise that prevent satisfactory class attendance. A student who expects to be absent due to extended mitigating circumstances should contact his/her Success Coach / Advisor, or the Dean of Online Education. Miles College has defined the following as possible extenuating circumstances: serious illness of the student, serious illness of a member of the student's immediate family for whom the student is the primary caregiver, death of a member of student's immediate family, military deployment, unforeseen travel requirements, or relocation related to the student's employment. To request an accommodation or waiver based on mitigating circumstances, the student must provide the Success Coach / Advisor, or the Dean of Online Education, and instructor with the appropriate written documentation supporting the student's claim of mitigating circumstances. If the student's request for an accommodation is granted based on the documentation provided, the Success Coach / Advisor, or the Dean of Online Education will notify the student. Students may be required to submit additional documentation before enrolling in subsequent terms to demonstrate that the mitigating circumstance has been alleviated or no longer exists.



# Responsibilities of the Online Faculty

The goal of Miles College Online Education is to provide an effective alternative to traditional face-to-face teaching and learning through the use of a web-based distance delivery module. The online faculty and the office of the Dean of Online Education, are responsible for ensuring, through faculty training, best practices, quality of content, effective instruction, student support, and a top-notch infrastructure that all online students receive the same level of education as their traditional counterparts.

## Before Class Assignment

Only duly certified instructors are permitted to teach online at Miles College. All prospective online instructors must pass the Miles College Online Education Online Instructor Certification Examination, and meet all requirements established by Miles College Online Education department. This includes a demonstrated competence in the Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS). Online instructors are required to take a refresher certification examination annually in order to continue online teaching.

## Before Class Starts

1. Review the Master Class Template.  
Log into the Master Class Template in which you have been registered to get an understanding of what your course shell should look and feel like.
2. You may copy a previously created course if it is exactly the same as your current course. Ensure that all edits have been made to update the new course with the latest, content, e-text books, faculty information, dates, schedule.... etc. This could be a major source of student confusion if attention is not paid to even the most minute detail.
3. Post your picture so that students can know you even better. It is also a way of setting a good example since you would be requiring them to post theirs.
4. All course shells should have completed and published at least three week days before the class starts.

## Before the first day of Class

Below is a list of items that you are required to complete in your course shells before the first day of class:

1. Professor Information
  - a. Please only use your Miles College email address ([joe.doe@miles.edu](mailto:joe.doe@miles.edu))
  - b. Add your office hours under the Student Center/Professor Information (phone, and/or virtual, etc.).
  - c. Let your students know your preferred method of contact. For example, email, text, or phone conversations.

d. Include a short bio with your photograph.

2. Syllabus

Upload your Syllabus under the Syllabus Link.

3. E-textbooks

Please make sure that all e-textbooks are loaded in your course shells. However, should any student have any e-book challenges, please direct them to me or Dr. Syed Raza.

4. Welcome to Class Announcement

a. Post a Welcome Message in the Course Home / Announcement. Please use a video message for better impact. Request that the students respond with a video message of their own. This would help meet one of our SACSCOC Accreditation standards (10.6), which require identification of online students.

b. In this message you could add a brief explanation of the class objectives and weekly activities to be completed during the term.

c. Please do not just copy and paste the weekly tasks from the syllabus.

d. Post this message before the first day of class in the course shell.

e. Include a short bio with a nice professional picture of yourself.

f. Please present yourself as the academic expert that you are (qualifications and teaching experience, you can talk about your passion for teaching here.)

5. Week by Week link

Please edit the week by week links on the left hand panel to reflect the correct week by date. This link should lead to a page that clearly shows students what is required of them for that week. See example below:

[Click Here for Week 1 \(Jan 10 – Jan 16\)](#)

[Click Here for Week 2 \(Jan 17 – Jan 23\)](#)

[Click Here for Week 3 \(Jan 24 – Jan 30\)](#)

[Click Here for Week 4 \(Jan 31 – Feb 6\)](#)

[Click Here for Week 5 \(Feb 7 – Feb 13\)](#)

[Click Here for Week 6 \(Feb 14 – Feb 20\)](#)

[Click Here for Week 7 \(Feb 21 – Feb 27\)](#)

[Click Here for Week 8 \(Feb 28 – Mar 4\)](#)

6. Plagiarism Policy

Post your plagiarism policy for all written assignments under the Student Center area.

7. Safe Assign

Please enable SafeAssign in Blackboard for every written assignment to avoid

plagiarism. Research shows that most students who plagiarize are unaware of what it is. I recommend you give an opportunity for a resubmission without penalty for a first occurrence.

8. ProctorU Proctoring

Please plan to use ProctorU for two of your tests or exams. This requirement demonstrates the integrity to our assessments and serves as online student identification as required by SACSCOC.

9. Video Presentation

Please require at least one video presentation of your students. This serves to meet an important learning outcome while meeting the SACSCOC requirement of proving that the online student who registered for the course is the one receiving grade for the course.

10. Test Banks

If you plan to use Cengage Provided Test Banks for assessment, please access them through your course shell at "Partner Content," then "Content Market." Do not access them through the Cengage website or MINDTAP

11. Discussion Grading Rubric

- a. Add your class participation guidelines under the Student Center area.
- b. Post your grading rubric.

# **Miles College Online Education Instructor Certification**

Only duly certified instructors are permitted to teach online at Milles College. All prospective online instructors must pass the Miles College Online Education Online Instructor Certification Examination, and meet all requirements established by Miles College Online Education department. This includes a demonstrated competence in the Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS). Online instructors are required to take a refresher certification examination annually in order to continue online teaching. Faculty Examination cover Technological Readiness, Pedagogical Readiness, and Administrative Duties

Technological Readiness requires a demonstration of expert level skills with Computers, Blackboard Learning Management System, Presentation Software, Multimedia Software, Adobe Acrobat, DocuSign Software, Microsoft Word Software, Email, and the Internet.

Pedagogical Readiness requires a demonstration of understanding of Fundamental Principles of Online Education; utilization of Management and Interaction for effective student engagement; integration of technology to enhance faculty teaching and student learning; utilization of different combinations of assessment techniques to meet learning objectives and attain student understanding; and ensure accessibility of all content to students with disabilities through effective design and layout.

Administrative Duties include the participation in the selection of e-textbooks and other learning materials; attendance verification; working with student advisors to enhance student success; submitting midterm and final grades; submitting grade changes and incomplete grades within policy; creating and uploading syllabi, assessments, messages and other required items into Blackboard; and ensuring that all the features of the courses are up-to-date and currently working from both the students' and faculty views.