Elizabethtown College
Verification of Student Identity in Distance Education

Purpose

The purpose of the policy is for Elizabethtown College to comply with the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008) which requires institutions to verify student identity with distance education.

Background

The Code of Federal Regulations 602.17: Application of standards in reaching accreditation decisions requires institutions (g) to have methods to verify students who register for any distance course is the same student who engages academically in the course and (h) to articulate in writing that the institution uses processes to protect student privacy and notify students of any additional fees associated with student identity verification during registration or enrollment.

The Higher Education Opportunity Act requires institutions to use one of three methods to ensure a student who registers for a distance course is the student academically participating in the coursework or receives course credit:

- A secure log-in and passcode;
- Proctored exams; and/or
- New or emerging technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student

Scope

The policy applies to all credit-bearing distance courses offered by Elizabethtown College beginning with the admission application to the student's graduation, transfer, or withdrawal from the program study or college.

Definitions

Distance Education:

Federal Guidelines 34 CFR 600.2 defines distance education as education that uses one or more of the following technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor or instructors and to support regular and substantive interaction between students and the instructor or instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously: (i) the internet; (ii) one-way or two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; (iii) audio conference; or (iv) Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed above.

For purposes of this definition, substantive interaction is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following – (i) Providing direct instruction; (ii) Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework; (iii) Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency; (iv) Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or (v) Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

Distance Education Student:

Distance education students are those students who participate exclusively in a distance education course defined above.

Policy

All credit-bearing courses and programs delivered through distance courses at Elizabethtown College must verify that a student registered is the student academically engaged in the course. Methods used by the college to verify student identification must protect the privacy of student information by complying with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Any associated fees to students with the student verification procedure must be articulated in writing and shared with students.

Students must provide complete and true information to comply with the Student Code of Conduct. Use of any disguise or technology to conceal identity or IP addresses while accessing and/or using college resources is forbidden and considered a violation of this policy, the Acceptable Use Policy, and Academic Dishonesty. Users are responsible for any use and activity of their accounts. Behavior or acts that violate the Student Verification Identification policy will be addressed and adjudicated by the appropriate College judicial or administrative body and could result in the loss of privileges up to dismissal.

Procedure

The procedure for student identification verification begins during the admission process and extends during their tenure at the college. A student's application initiates the creation of a unique student identification number, which is then linked to a secured network account at matriculation.

Elizabethtown College requires all students, faculty, and staff to authenticate using this secure network account along with a complex password to access college resources. These passwords must be changed at regular intervals: 180 days for students and 120 days for employees.

Additional account protection is provided by Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) on a number of systems. MFA adds an additional layer of security by requiring a second method of authentication, independent of the account's password, in an effort to limit malicious actors accessing networks and systems.

All users with a secured network account are responsible for maintaining the security of their log-on information, including passwords and MFA devices. Sharing of log-on credentials for any purpose is not permitted. All methods of

verifying student identity in distance education courses abide by the privacy of student information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Elizabethtown College uses Canvas as its learning management system. Canvas has the ability for administrative staff to review IP addresses related to coursework engagement when a student's identity becomes in question.

Faculty members are encouraged to use various technologies and design courses that use assessments to support academic integrity as technology and personal accountability are not absolute in determining a student's identity. Faculty can apply pedagogical practices such as virtual class meetings with video, reviewing writing samples from written assignments, group assignment participation, and frequent interactions via email, phone, video, and course chatroom to help mitigate student identity concerns. In some instances, academic departments may use a third-party proctoring solution to help verify student identity during online testing.

Elizabethtown College does not charge additional fees for student identity verification at this time. Technology such as web cameras and headsets, often required for distance education courses for course engagement and possibly student identification, are not considered additional fees for the sole purpose of student identity verification.

Responsibility

The chief academic officer, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, is responsible for reviewing and ensuring compliance with this policy.