

10.6 Distance and correspondence education

An institution that offers distance or correspondence education

- (a) ensures that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit.
- (b) has a written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance and correspondence education courses or programs.
- (c) ensures that students are notified in writing at the time of registration or enrollment of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity.

Compliance Judgment: In Compliance

Rationale

The University of South Carolina Aiken (USC Aiken) offers distance education but does not offer correspondence education. With regard to distance education students, the university has adopted best practices to assure proper identification, protection of privacy, and notification of all educational costs.

Student Identity Assurance. USC Aiken has systems in place to 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 the credit. USC Aiken is committed to helping students uphold the ethical standards of academic integrity in all areas of study regardless of delivery mode. The honor code, which is provided to students through the [USC Aiken Student Handbook](#) ^[1] and on course syllabi (e.g., [EDEX A425](#) ^[2], [NURS A413](#) ^[3], and [PSYC A300](#) ^[4]) requires students to, “conduct all academic work within the letter and spirit of academic integrity, which prohibits giving or receiving unauthorized aid in all academic endeavors.” This prohibits students from allowing another individual to access or complete their online coursework. Students

agree that their enrollment in a course allows the professor the right to use electronic devices to help prevent plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty.

USC Aiken utilizes USC system-wide login and pass code security systems to verify the identity of a student registered in distance education courses or programs. USC Aiken's secure data management infrastructure is comprised of four main systems, each requiring independent logins created and maintained by students. These systems consist of: (a) [network login \(wired/wireless\)](#) ^[5]; (b) Banner's student intranet data system accessed through the [One Carolina portal called Self Service Carolina](#) ^[6]; (c) [Blackboard's course content management system](#) ^[7]; and (d) [Microsoft's Office 365](#) ^[8] which includes student email. USC Aiken employs multifactor authentication through which a call is sent to the individual's phone number on record to ensure authorized access. Each of these systems, working in tandem, provides USC Aiken assurance of network security including student identity. The USC Aiken Registrar, working with the Computer Services Division is responsible for ensuring compliance with student identity security policies and procedures.

USC Aiken provides faculty with access to Respondus Monitor and Respondus Lockdown Browser. To use Respondus Monitor, students have to download Respondus Lockdown Browser using a unique link specifically for USC Aiken and login to Blackboard through that browser. LockDown Browser is a custom browser that locks down the testing environment in Blackboard Learn. When students use LockDown Browser to take a Blackboard test, they are unable to print, copy, go to other websites, access other applications, or close a test until it is submitted for grading.

An instructor can employ authentication methods using Respondus Monitor, the use of which requires a video camera. Within the Respondus settings in Blackboard, the instructor can select a startup sequence which includes a webcam check, student photo, student ID, environment check, and additional instructions, as applicable. This sequence establishes that the student photo matches the student ID and that the test environment is clear. Once students complete the startup sequence they can begin the test in the lockdown browser. Because LockDown Browser uses a special password that is unknown to students, they are unable to access the test with a standard browser.

Respondus make use of built in facial recognition software that will automatically flag timestamps of the video where the student's eyes are not focused to the camera or they are out of the view of the camera. If students are out of the view of the camera the test will pause until the facial recognition is reestablished. Instructors can access information about the exam sessions and can review the recorded videos.

Further, as stipulated in [USC Aiken Policy AACAF-103](#) ^[9], some faculty may elect to proctor exams making use of ProctorU services in which students must meet identification requirements by showing their IDs and performing the test in a well-lit environment free of prohibited items such as books, notes, or cell phones in front of a web-cam.

Privacy Protection. [University of South Carolina Aiken policy AACAF-103](#) ^[9] delineates the importance the University places on protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance education courses or programs. The University complies with FERPA, the South Carolina Family Privacy Protection Act of 2002, and USC system policies and procedures ([ACAF 3.03](#) ^[10] and [UNIV 1.52](#) ^[11]) to ensure student record confidentiality, regardless of the delivery format. The USC Aiken Registrar ensures protection of all students' privacy through the data/system safeguards detailed in ACAF 3.03. Upon admission to the University, students have access to policies regarding student privacy (FERPA) in the [Academic Bulletin](#) ^[12], on the [USC Aiken Registrar webpage](#) ^[13], and in the [Student Handbook](#).^[14]

Additionally, all faculty and all staff who access individual student information are required to take and pass an [online FERPA quiz](#) ^[15] before being given access to course rolls or the Banner student database. After passing the FERPA quiz, the individual must print out and sign a [Banner Account Request Form](#) ^[16], a document certifying understanding of the law; this document is then signed by the employee's supervisor and forwarded to the USC system Registrar for processing. All faculty and appropriate staff must retake the quiz annually to ensure continued understanding of the law.

Awareness of Charges upon Course Registration. USC Aiken currently has no additional student charges associated with verification of student identity. If an additional charge for verification of student identity were to be considered, it would have to be approved by the USC Board of Trustees and communicated on the USC Aiken's Business Services webpage prior to implementation. Based on USC Aiken Policy AACAF 1.03, an additional charge for verification of student identity would have to be communicated to students at the time of registration or enrollment. The course registration site does allow for course specific notations. In anticipation of future use of identification software and associated fees, the institution created a [pseudo course online fee notice](#) ^[17] to determine what it would look like from the perspective of a student registering for a course and to ensure compliance with policy.

Supporting Documentation

1. [USC Aiken Student Handbook: Honor Code](#)
2. [Example of Academic Integrity Notice on Syllabus: EDEX A425](#)
3. [Example of Academic Integrity Notice on Syllabus NURS A413](#)
4. [Example of Academic Integrity Notice on Syllabus PSYC A300](#)
5. [Network login site](#)
6. [One Carolina portal called Self Service Carolina login site](#)
7. [Blackboard's course content management system login site](#)
8. [Microsoft's Office 365 login site](#)
9. [USC Aiken Policy AACAF-103 Verification of Student Identity in Distance-delivered Courses and Programs](#)
10. [USC System Policy ACAF 3.03 Handling of Student Records](#)
11. [USC System Policy UNIV 1.52 Responsible Use of Data, Technology, and User Credentials](#)
12. [Academic Bulletin: FERPA Statement](#)
13. [USC Aiken Registrar webpage: FERPA Statement](#)
14. [Student Handbook: FERPA Statement](#)
15. [Online FERPA quiz](#)

16. [Banner Account Request Form](#)
17. [Pseudo course online fee notice](#)