

Online Learning Student Handbook

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Introduction

The purpose of this Handbook is to provide students a single point of reference for all policies, procedures, and guidelines governing Online Learning at State College of Florida. More specifically, the Handbook is intended to assist students as they plan, evaluate and choose online learning courses and programs.

Mission Statement

SCF Online facilitates individual student goal achievement by providing online courses and programs equal or superior to face to face courses as measured by tangible measures of student success.

Vision

SCF Online will provide pathways for student goal achievement by providing superior opportunities for time and place-bound students to achieve their educational objectives.

Core Values

- Achieve course and program outcomes that are equivalent or exceed those for oncampus education.
- Be measured against the same Course Performance Standards as all other courses.
- Meet or exceed requirements outlined by Quality Matters and SCF Online for online course design.
- Be developed and delivered by instructors meeting all aspects of qualification for face-to-face courses and who meet SCF Online standards for teaching online.
- Provide an assessable learning environment for all students seeking their education online.

Online Learning Department

State College of Florida's Online Learning department is focused on student success in the online learning environment. The Online Learning department plays a major role in assisting distance learning students while on campus and off with regularly scheduled trainings and support for problems related to course delivery. The Online Learning department is located in Building 6-140 on the Bradenton Campus.

Online Learning Staff

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Why Online Learning?

Online Learning courses are a great choice for students who have limited ability to take advantage of SCF's traditional on-campus courses at Bradenton, Lakewood Ranch, and Venice. Online courses allow you to take credit courses from home via online learning, whether at work or at home. You choose the most convenient time and place to learn.

While online courses are flexible, all SCF support services are available to online students, including microcomputer labs, tutorial centers and the SCF Library. Courses offered through the online learning program are comparable in quality to traditional courses offered in SCF classrooms, follow the same learning objectives, and require at least as much time to complete as traditional courses. Online courses may also require some on-campus work, orientation, review sessions and exams, with details specific to each course listed in the notes on the course schedule. Taken together, SCF online learning classes allows for independent, self-paced learning.

What are the Advantages?

Online learning may work for you if you have work or family obligations preventing you from attending classes during traditionally scheduled hours. SCF's online courses earn the same college credit and are accepted for transfer credit like any other SCF course. The only difference is the delivery

of instruction and the degree of self-discipline needed to complete the course, both of which require you to take charge of your learning experience.

Before You Enroll...Get Prepared!

Complete the **Online Learning Self-Assessment below**. This test will give students important feedback that will let them know whether they are "prepared" to take an Online Learning class.

Go to: Online Learning Self-Assessment

1. Computers are available on campus, but the availability of those computers may not meet an individual student's needs. Students may be required to have access to particular software used in a course.
2. Have both reliable access to the Internet and an email address that will be maintained for the duration of the course. While not required, a high-speed connection (cable or DSL) is recommended. E-mail accounts must be able to accommodate file attachments. Use of the SCF email account is recommended.
3. Have a back-up plan for technical emergencies. (Examples: hard drive crashes, loss of Internet connectivity, other computer malfunctions).
4. E-mail the instructor prior to the first date of classes.
5. Attend all required orientations and/or scheduled on-campus meetings.
6. Access and become familiar with the course web site prior to the first date of classes. You can usually access the class one or two days prior to class starting.
7. Read all of the course syllabus. If you have any questions, be sure to contact your instructor with any concerns or issues you may have as early as possible.
8. Complete and submit all course work by the scheduled deadlines.
9. Adhere to statements regarding student misconduct outlined in official State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota publications including the Catalog and the Student handbook.
10. Regularly check course web site for updates and messages.
11. Keep the college and instructor apprised of all changes (name, address, e-mail, etc.).
12. Arrange personal schedules to accommodate on-site experiences.
13. Contact the SCF Disability Resource Center to determine any needed accommodations if they have a disability.

RECOMMENDED Reading:

The Successful Distance Learning Student by Wahlstrom, Williams, & Shea

Canvas, Our Learning Management System

To limit the amount of new technology students must master to successfully complete an Online Learning course, *Canvas*, a Learning Management System (LMS) has been adopted by State College of Florida for the online delivery of all distance learning and hybrid courses. This degree of

standardization facilitates training and support for faculty and students by providing a consistent instructional and communications interface.

Information for Online Students

Welcome to SCF Online, an alternative to traditional on-campus study. Online learning opportunities at SCF extend educational offerings for students to take credit courses at off-campus locations, including students' home worksites. The flexibility of online learning makes it a wise choice for students who work or have family obligations that make it difficult for them to attend classes during regularly scheduled hours.

Online Learning Types

State College of Florida has adopted the broad term, "Online Learning" to refer to learning activities that utilize electronic technologies in general and the State College of Florida Learning Management System in particular. The term includes, but is not limited to, distance learning courses and programs. Online learning at SCF is offered in a variety of academic programs. The courses cover the same material as on-campus equivalents, but the work is completed through the use of a computer, without coming to campus. Online learning enables you to:

- Take one or more online courses in combination with courses offered in a face-to-face environment to complete degree requirements.
- Complete the majority of a degree in specific programs completely online.
- Access class information and turn in assignments from home or work.
- Have a direct connection to online instructors and advisors to assist you with your online course needs.

SCF offers many levels of online courses. These definitions may help you decide which type of class is right for you:

- **Online courses:** Classes that are delivered 100 percent online. An instructor may meet the students face-to-face for an initial session; testing may be at a proctored site. The material covered is equivalent to normal full-time class delivery for the same number of credits. Specific details of each online course, and any other requirements are listed in the course notes on the course schedule lookup page. Any requirement for any course meeting on campus or at a particular location for test proctoring is also listed in the course notes.
- **Blended courses:** Classes that combine the use of a classroom and the use of online coursework. Blended courses typically make up approximately 50% of the class. Details of each blended course, and any specific requirements for that course, are listed in the course notes on the course schedule lookup page.

- **Technology-enhanced courses:** A class in which the instructor uses the Web as an additional resource for students who still meet in a classroom in a face-to-face environment. 100% of these courses are conducted in class sessions, but homework or other class assignments may require the use of a computer with internet access.

Technical Support

There are a variety of different types of Canvas support and help that you may need.

SCF Instructional Technology Service Help Desk – The Help Desk is the only place where you can receive assistance on logins to SCF Connect and to access Canvas. They cannot assist you with any issues that you have once you have accessed Canvas itself. For issues with specific to your class, you must contact the Canvas 24/7 Support noted below. We recommend using the chat feature, as it also provides you with a transcript of your help session. Canvas' techs can access your particular course and answer any questions that you may have.

- **Hours:** Mon.-Thurs., 7a.m.-7p.m., Fri., 7a.m.-5p.m.
- **Phone:** 941-752-5357 (x65357)
- **Create a Help Ticket:** A help ticket allows you to submit a detailed explanation of your particular concern. It creates a record for the ITS Help Desk, and triggers an investigation of your individual issue, and provides you with an Incident Tracking Number that you can use for reference. At this time, you can only submit a help-ticket from on-campus. This information may be important for documenting your Canvas or SCF Connect access issue if you are unable to reach your instructor.
- More information on support provided by SCF is located at: [Information Technology Services](#)

Canvas 24/7 Canvas Support – [Live Chat](#) or 844-920-2764

Your Course Instructor- Questions about assignments, quizzes, or anything related to your specific course requires that you contact your course instructor. Only they have the ability to answer course-specific issues with questions, assignments, about the course materials and content.

Email or Call your Instructor:

None of the support options listed above will be able to assist with your particular class or issues with your forums, due dates, assignments being visible when scheduled, or issues about your specific class. For these types of issues, be sure to check your course syllabus and email or call your instructor- depending on the instructions in your syllabus. SCF Online recommends that you always be sure to email your instructor both in your Canvas email and via SCF mail. These emails demonstrate and create a record of your actions and attempts to solve your specific technological issues.

Course Evaluation

Evaluation of Online Learning courses is very important. Consequently department heads and instructors are encouraged to find ways to ensure that all students complete an evaluation each semester. Faculty, department heads, and the Online Learning Department are also expected to act on the results of all evaluations to ensure continuous improvement of distance learning and hybrid courses and to thoroughly document this part of the process for future SACS accreditation.

Textbooks

Distance learning courses may use a different textbook than the corresponding on-campus section of the same course. Be sure to check with the SCF Bookstore for the correct book information, available at least 45 days prior to the start of each class.

Academic Integrity

Student identity is validated through multiple secure means in order to protect access to and the use of academic and financial resources of the college. Fraudulent use of any college, state, or federal resources by anyone other than the registered student, instructor, or authorized staff member is punishable by criminal prosecution. The College Learning Management System (Canvas) provides one barrier to such behavior via user IDs and passwords. Please remember to always log off the LMS system and your computer, especially when working in an open-use computer lab. If you have questions (or ideas) regarding the maintenance of academic integrity at State College of Florida, or if you suspect any fraudulent activity in your Online Learning courses(s), please contact the Director of the Online Learning.

Distance Learning Student Privacy Procedure

State College of Florida is committed to protecting the privacy of its distance learning students. Under the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, a distance learning student's academic files at will not be released to any third party without the written consent of the student. All state and federal laws and regulations, and regulations and policies concerning the privacy of student records, shall apply with equal force and effect to distance learning student records.

Student handbook and Planner: <http://www.scf.edu/content/pdf/epublications/SCFHandbook.pdf>

Student Technology Requirements

You should be able to take an SCF online, blended, or technology enhanced class from almost any computers using common technology available to access the internet. Most of our courses utilize equipment and software commonly found pre-loaded on any computer with internet access using an up-to-date browser.

Office 365 Availability for all SCF Students and Faculty

All SCF students, faculty, and employees have access to the Microsoft Office Suite of products to install on your own personal devices- including desktop computers, laptop computers, and tablets. You can install up to 5 copies of MS Office on your own computers free of charge so long as you are a student at SCF.

Specific information on how to load and access your copies of MS Office can be found at:

<http://www.scf.edu/Administration/InformationTechnology/office365/default.asp>

State College of Florida students are well prepared if they follow the guidelines provided below:

- Internet access at a minimum rate of 56 kbps (broadband preferred)
- Current web browser, Internet Explorer (preferred)
- Common support software (e.g., Adobe *Acrobat* Reader, Microsoft *Word*, *Flash* Player)
- Audio capabilities (speakers)
- Microphone (usually optional, may be required for some courses)
- Other specialized software that might be required for specific courses

Student Attendance

Attendance in your online class is particularly important to be sure that you are keeping up with the class and class assignments. Since there are no regularly scheduled class meeting times in online classes, it is easy to miss important class deadlines and assignments.

Specific attendance requirements, including the possibility of a mandatory class meeting or requirements for a proctored final examination are listed in the instructor's class syllabus. It is important for you to check both the course notes when you register for the class in the online class schedule, and to read the instructor's syllabus for detailed attendance guidelines

Successful Online Learner Tips

- Is responsible for maintaining his/her own equipment and internet connection.
- Is expected to use professional communication at all times.
- Is responsible for meeting all deadlines – plan ahead. Procrastination is the enemy.
- Is expected to have a high speed internet connection, although most SCF courses will run on a dial up connection, it is not efficient.

- Is proficient in the use of computers and productivity software such as email and word processing.
- Participates in the class with the instructor and classmates.
- Takes notes!
- Treat online courses with the same amount of dedication and effort that you would devote to a course on campus.
- Pay close attention to due dates and allow yourself sufficient time to complete your assignments.
- Create a personal schedule for your participation in your online course- and follow it. Just like going to a regular class, setting up a regular schedule for working on your online class can keep you on time and on-track.
- In online courses, participate in course discussions via discussion forums and email. Your class work will require you to use one or more of these communication tools, and they also help you feel like a member of the class.
- Take note of areas in which you have questions or need help and actively seek out the answers by communicating with your classmates and instructor.
- Reads, listens to, and/or watches the course materials as often as required by the course.
- Develops self-discipline.
- Can problem solve
For example: What if you have a family emergency? What if the electricity goes off? What if your computer crashes? What if you lose your jump (or other) drive?

Online Learning FAQ

Many students find that Online Learning courses allow them to accelerate the progress they make toward earning their degrees by enrolling in a combination of Online Learning courses

How are exams given?

Most instructors require that you come to the SCF campus nearest you to take exams. Details will be provided at your orientation session or in your class syllabus. Some instructors may allow you to take a proctored exam through the [SCF Testing Center](#).

How much does an Online Learning course cost?

The [cost](#) is usually the same as for taking on-campus courses.

Will I have the same campus privileges as other students?

Yes. All Online Learning students are welcome to use the college library and other student resources.

Can I get financial aid?

Perhaps. For more information, contact SCF's Financial Aid Office at (941) 752-5037, as early as possible. Financial aid deadlines are often much earlier than registration deadlines. Click here to find out more general information about [Financial Aid at SCE](#). **Can I take Online Learning courses and on-campus courses at the same time?**

Yes! In fact, many students find that Online Learning courses allow them to accelerate the progress they make toward earning their degrees by enrolling in a combination of Online Learning courses.

Will there be an advisor available to help me?

Certainly! If you are working toward a degree, you will want to speak with an advisor. Click here to go to SCF's [Advising and Counseling Center](#).

Will an Online Learning course appear on an official transcript?

Yes, it will appear as a credit course. Content and credit hours are equivalent to on-campus courses. State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award Associate Degrees.

Will more courses be offered by Online Learning in the future?

Yes. Faculty and staff at the college are constantly seeking new delivery systems for courses.

Distance Learning Tuition and Fees:

SCF charges the same tuition and fees all classes, whether online or on-campus. There are no additional fees or charges for an online course. Some courses require you to take your final exam at an SCF site or at an approved testing center. Off campus sites may charge an additional fee for that services. Classes so affected are listed in the notes section of the online course schedule and area established prior to registration.

Disability Resource Center:

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) also provides accommodations for online students taking online coursework by working with individual instructors to provide specific accommodations suitable for online students. SCF is committed to the spirit and the letter of the Americans with Disabilities Act

(ADA), the ADA Amendment Act (ADAAA), and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. SCF has instituted various administrative policies, procedures, and practices to provide meaningful access for individuals with disabilities.

Contact the DRC at: <http://www.scf.edu/student-services/disability-resource-center/default.asp> for current hours and contact information.

Appendix A. General Resources

- [SCF Libraries](#)
- [SCF Online Learning Self-Assessment](#)
- [SCF Student Handbook](#)
- [Learning Management System \(Canvas\) tutorials](#)
- [SCF Online Learning Website](#)

Readers are encouraged to submit questions and/or suggestions regarding this Handbook to the Director of Online Learning, bakerg@scf.edu