Verification of Student Identity Policy

# Overview

Manchester University must operate in compliance with the provisions of the United States Federal Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008, Public Law 110-315, that requires the verification of student identity in distance or correspondence education.

# Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish identity verification procedures for students enrolled in distance education courses. According to the provisions of the HEOA, all credit-bearing courses and programs offered through distance education methods must 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 academic credit. The HEOA has identified the following as acceptable methods of identity verification:

* An individual secure login and password,
* Proctored activities, and/or,
* Other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

# Scope

This policy applies to all credit-bearing distance education courses and programs offered by Manchester University.

# Policy Statement

This policy ensures that Manchester University operates in compliance with the provisions of the HEOA concerning verification of student identity in distance and correspondence education. All methods of verifying student identity in distance education must protect the privacy of student information. The student must be notified of any projected fees associated with student identity verification. Responsibilities for the consistent application of student identity verification procedures must be clearly stated and described.

# Verification Methods

Manchester University uses a secure login and password to ensure that the student who registers for a course is the same student who participates in the course.

* During the admissions process, each accepted student receives a Manchester University network account to include username and email address.
* The network account provides access to a number of systems including Manchester University’s learning management system, Canvas, as well as other major applications (i.e. the student information system, Colleague).
* Each student must establish a unique, self-generated password upon initial login to the Microsoft Office 365 email system. An optional and highly recommended Office 365 self-service portal allows students to manage their own password resets.
* Students that require password reset assistance from the ITS Help Desk must provide three pre-determined identifiers (i.e. birthdate, last four digits of social security number). For in-person Help Desk visits, a valid form of identification (i.e. student ID or driver’s license) is preferred.
* Students must provide a valid set of network credentials to log into the learning management system to access their course(s).
* All online course work that is graded or contributes to a student grade is submitted via a system that verifies the student’s identity through a unique set of network credentials. Faculty may only use third-party apps via the University Learning Management System, so that assignments, submissions and grades are secure.
* Manchester does not support nor assume responsibility for the security of platforms outside institutionally provided systems.
* For courses delivered through interactive video, the student’s identity is verified visually by the instructor. For faculty members with visual impairments, alternative arrangements using a proxy will be made.

# Student Privacy

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 is designed to protect the confidentiality of educational records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the United States Department of Education. Manchester University ensures that FERPA rights of their students through the following methods:

* Students gain access to their education records and courses through a secure login with their unique network credentials. Alternatively, students may visit the Registrar to gain access to their education records.
* Students can manage their password resets through the Office 365 self-service password portal or by visiting the ITS Help Desk.
* Manchester University has installed up-to-date network security that safeguards against unauthorized access that could threaten student privacy. This includes an intrusion prevention system, firewall, and anti-virus software.
* In compliance with Indiana law, Manchester University does not collect any personal identifier information from any visitor to their website except for specific university services, such as admissions applications, campus virtual tour, event registration, or other online forms.
* Strict identity verification methods are employed by the Manchester University ITS Help Desk as described earlier in this policy.

# Fees

Manchester University does not charge additional fees for student identity verification. However, it is routine for students in an online course to employ a headset and web camera for audio-visual participation in the online course. Faculty members provide this specific information in their course materials and syllabi.

# Responsibilities

**Office of Academic Affairs:**

* The Office for Academic Affairs is responsible for defining and publishing acceptable ethical and academic behavior in the Undergraduate [Student Handbook](https://www.manchester.edu/docs/default-source/default-document-library/thesource.pdf) including information on academic dishonesty, plagiarism, and the student code of conduct. These policies are located online at <https://www.manchester.edu/docs/default-source/default-document-library/thesource.pdf>. A Pharmacy Student Handbook is also available upon request.
* The Office of Academic Affairs is responsible for providing instruction and support to faculty members on Manchester University’s online teaching protocols and practices.

**Information Technology Services:**

* The Information Technology Services department is responsible for having an up-to-date Learning Management System, network security, robust password management protocols, and stringent ITS Help Desk procedures

**Faculty:**

* Faculty members who teach online courses at Manchester University can work closely with an Instructional Designer. The instructional designer provides faculty members with best practices in online teaching and pedagogy and can review courses to ensure effective design.
* Faculty members are responsible for applying pedagogical practices that are effective in student identity verification. Possible methods used include: video streaming interaction; reviewing student writing samples from assignments; routine interaction with the student (through email, phone, or video call); group assignments, etc.
* Faculty members are responsible for including information on academic dishonesty in their course syllabus. Faculty members must also include any hardware or software requirements to participate in the course in the syllabus or course materials.
* Faculty members are responsible for using institutionally provided systems for all assignments and grading.
* Because technology and personal accountability may not verify identity absolutely or ensure academic integrity completely, faculty members are responsible for noticing changes in student behavior and coursework such as sudden shifts in academic performance, writing styles, or behaving differently in group assignments.

**Students:**

* Students are responsible for knowledge of the information contained in the Student Handbook and course syllabi. Failure to read university/college/program/course requirements, guidelines, procedures, and policies will not exempt students from responsibility.
* Students have the responsibility to maintain the security of their network credentials and personally identifiable information. Students must abide by the Manchester University IT Policy Guide located at https://chetnet.manchester.edu/dept/its/Public%20Documents/Policies/IT%20Policy%20Guide.docx. The guide states that students should not reveal network credentials (primarily passwords) to anyone including the ITS team. Students are therefore responsible for all activity associated with their network credentials. The guide also states that users will not violate the privacy of others, intentionally or unintentionally.

# Definitions

Distance learning/online course: A method of education or a single course that relies on the Internet for the majority of or all communication, collaboration, participation, and assignment submission.

# Review

Manchester University reviews this policy on an annual basis.

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