

Academic Integrity in Online Learning at Hostos Community College

Introduction

The Hostos college community understands 1) the need to protect students' confidentiality and 2) the need to protect academic integrity in the online arena. These guidelines provide recommendations and identify current practices and policy enforcements to preserve academic integrity in online learning.

Verification of Student Identity

The verification of student identity is essentially the confirmation of two conditions: 1) The right student has access to the correct course; and 2) that individual is indeed performing the work during the entire course duration. Fully online courses at the City University of New York (CUNY) are set up and conducted to meet both conditions, and in ways that rival or surpass established practice in classroom-based courses.

All students participating in online instruction offered by any CUNY campus must log in to their course sites using their CUNYfirst credentials. The CUNYfirst system employs IDs and passwords to invoke an authentication triangulated against name, date of birth, and social security number. To ensure FERPA compliance, these credentials are stored in a secure database and generate a unique ID linked to all three data points; it is this ID, invoked by the user's ID/password combination, that grants access to the system. This secure login is a student's only means of access to the learning management system (LMS). Students are registered in their online courses through CUNYfirst, which imports registration information directly into the LMS without any action on the part of students, faculty, or staff beyond the regular registration process. Only duly registered students and the instructor of record appear on the roster of any online course. Furthermore, every action within a course site registers on the extensive tracking features of the LMS, which track each user in terms of time and duration of the action and part of the site involved, even if there is no posting by the student.

Supplementing these technical means of verifying student identity and activity are high degrees of student and faculty interaction that characterize online instruction in CUNY. Students introduce themselves, often in terms of prior knowledge of and current interest in a course's subject, and may write multiple posts weekly, including responses to one another as well to the instructor's assignments and discussion questions. Students may also maintain journals, blogs and/or wikis individually or in group work. Indeed, such interactivity creates a high degree of familiarity and even intimacy within each course. Both student orientation and faculty development stress the importance of "social presence" through self-presentation and transactional interaction, including

- the use of e-portfolios
- the use of student photos and videos, especially in self-introductions, and e-portfolios
- participation in learning communities
- work in groups and teams
- plagiarism checkers (to ensure work submitted by the student is the student's own)

- synchronous ("real-time") conferencing (by both voice and video)
- asynchronous conferencing (by both voice and video)

Not all of these tools and practices are included in all online courses. For instance, some courses may have students who are all local and so in the same time zone, making the use of synchronous communication practicable, while other courses may reach across time zones and around the world, and so may restrict communication to asynchronous modes. Most but not all online courses have just 20-25 students, while larger online courses may use other means of creating intimacy and familiarity (e.g., work in teams and group projects as well as supervision of such groups or discussion groups by teaching assistants). Again, in all cases, the means of ensuring the verifiability of student identity in online instruction meet or exceed those used in in-person instruction.

Prepared by CUNY Committee on Academic Technology, May 2018.

Academic Integrity Policies

Hostos follows and enforces the CUNY-wide Policy on Academic Integrity. The policy is included in the College Catalog, in various areas on the College website, in the Faculty Handbook, in the Student Handbook, and all Blackboard courses. These policies apply to any teaching modality, including online.

Hostos is committed to enforcing the policy and in supporting faculty and staff in the handling of academic integrity matters. The policy encourages faculty to report suspected violations and act upon it by following the procedures in place.

Link to policy: <http://web.cuny.edu/academics/info-central/policies/academic-integrity.pdf>

Protection of Student Privacy (FERPA)

Hostos Community College and the City University of New York have established several methods to verifying student identity and protect their information regardless of the learning modality as described in the verification of student identity section. These methods comply with FERPA rules, protect student privacy, confidentiality, and fraud. These policies are included in the College Catalog, various areas on the College website, Student Handbook, and all Blackboard courses.

Link to policies:

- FERPA: <http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/Administrative-Offices/Office-of-the-Registrar/General-Info/Family-Education-Rights-Privacy-Act>
- IT Policies: <http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/Administrative-Offices/Information-Technology/IT-Policies>

Information Dissemination/disclosure Procedures

The different policies and information are disseminated in, but not limited to, the following places:

- [College Catalog](#)
- [Student Handbook](#)
- Learning Management System courses (Blackboard)
- [Faculty Handbook](#)
- [Information Technology policies](#)
- [Registrar's Office](#)
- [EdTech Online Learning website](#)

Charges Associated with Student Identity Verification

Hostos Community College does not charge a fee for student identity verification. Students would be notified of additional fees, if any, prior to and during the registration process through various publications, i.e. Schedule of Classes, College Catalog, College registration system, and College website.

Credit: Camden County College

Faculty Training

To ensure that faculty enforce the Academic Integrity Policy, they are trained extensively at Hybrid/Asynchronous Institute training and during their Blackboard certification training, and at faculty interest group meetings addressing issues of teaching with technology.

Library faculty members are available to work with teaching faculty members to offer workshops on finding library resources, and on understanding plagiarism. The Center for Teaching and Learning and the Office of Educational Technology invite library faculty members to co-present during New Faculty Orientations and other events so that librarians can promote the library's resources and services.

- Link to Hostos Online Learning: <http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/online>
- Link to Center for Teaching and Learning: <http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/ctl>
- Link to Office of Educational Technology: <http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/edtech>
- Link to Hostos Library: <http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/library>

Last updated: 12/17/19