

Verification of Student Identity and Assessment Security in Distance Education

Purpose

This policy establishes Plaza College's commitment to ensuring the authenticity, confidentiality, and integrity of student participation and assessment in distance and asynchronous learning environments.

Policy Statement

Plaza College verifies the identity of students at the time of enrollment and issues a unique student identification number. Students are registered for courses using their unique identifier. This verification is achieved through secure authentication, system monitoring, and pedagogical design practices that collectively maintain the soundness of asynchronous assessment and uphold institutional integrity.

Identity Verification Methods

1. Secure Authentication

All students are issued unique credentials through the College's single sign-on (SSO) environment, integrated with Microsoft Entra ID (previously known as Azure Active Directory). Multi-factor authentication (MFA) is enforced to prevent unauthorized access. Students are responsible for safeguarding their credentials and must not share them with others.

2. System-Level Verification and Audit Trail

The Learning Management System (Canvas) maintains comprehensive audit logs—including IP addresses, timestamps, and device identifiers—to verify student activity and detect irregularities. The Information Technology Department and the Dean of Academic's office can review and monitor these logs when needed.

3. Asynchronous Assessment Security

Faculty employ assessment design strategies that reduce opportunities for academic dishonesty. Examples include randomized question pools, individualized writing prompts, time restrictions, and reflective assignments that demonstrate personal engagement and authorship.

4. Data Security and Privacy Protection

All student information, including identity verification and assessment data, is encrypted in transit and at rest, consistent with Plaza College's Information Security Policy. Verification procedures comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and are reviewed periodically to ensure the protection of personally identifiable information (PII).

Transparency and Student Notification

Students are notified of identity verification requirements during the enrollment process. Plaza College does not charge a fee for student identity verification. If it becomes necessary to adopt another means to verify student identity, including travel to campus, and the methods involve additional costs to the student, adequate notice will be provided in semester registration materials, emails to distance education students, and/or course syllabi.

Oversight and Review

The **Office of Academic Affairs** and the **Office of Information Technology** share responsibility for implementing and maintaining identity verification procedures. This policy is reviewed biennially or upon the introduction of new verification technologies to ensure continued compliance with federal and accreditation standards.

Verification of Student Identity and Assessment Security in Remote Synchronous Courses

Purpose

This policy outlines Plaza College's standards for verifying student identity and maintaining the security of assessments conducted in **remote synchronous (real-time online)** learning environments.

Policy Statement

Plaza College ensures that the student who registers for and attends a remote synchronous course is the same individual who participates in class sessions and completes related assessments. Verification is achieved through secure authentication, visual identification, and the use of monitored proctoring technology.

The College employs secure tools such as **Respondus LockDown Browser** or other comparable proctoring systems to ensure fairness and protect the integrity of all high-stakes examinations conducted in real time.

Identity Verification and Class Participation

1. Authenticated Access

- Students must log into remote sessions using their official **Plaza College single sign-on (SSO)** credentials integrated with Microsoft Entra (previously known as Azure Active Directory).
- **Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)** is required for all remote course access through Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or other approved platforms.
- Students must use their **official display name** and are prohibited from sharing login credentials or allowing unauthorized participants in any session.

2. Visual and Behavioral Verification

- Instructors may require students to activate their **webcams** at the beginning of class or during assessments to verify identity and engagement.
- Students may be asked to briefly display a **student ID** or government-issued ID to confirm identity.
- Persistent refusal to comply with verification procedures may result in academic penalties as outlined in the Academic Integrity Policy.

Assessment Security and Proctoring

1. Secure Proctoring Technologies

- High-stakes assessments in remote synchronous courses are administered using **LockDown Browser, Respondus Monitor**, or other College-approved proctoring solutions.

- These applications restrict computer functions (e.g., access to external sites, screen capture, or other software) and may record video, audio, and screen activity for review by authorized faculty.
 - Students must complete a **pre-exam environment check** and follow all on-screen instructions to ensure compliance with testing security standards.
2. **Assessment Design**
- Faculty design assessments to minimize the risk of academic dishonesty by using a mix of question randomization, time limits, and critical thinking prompts.
 - Live assessments may include **oral defense, screen-sharing demonstrations, or breakout room interviews** as additional integrity measures.
3. **Recording and Monitoring**
- All proctoring recordings and logs are securely stored within Plaza-College-controlled or vendor-compliant environments.
 - Access to recordings is strictly limited to faculty and designated administrators for academic integrity review purposes.

Data Security and Privacy Protection

All verification and proctoring activities comply with **FERPA** and Plaza College's **Information Security Policy**. Data—including video recordings, identity scans, and login metadata—is encrypted in transit and at rest, and it is retained only for the period necessary to complete grading or resolve integrity disputes.

Transparency and Student Notification

Students are informed of all identity verification and proctoring requirements during the enrollment process. Plaza College does not charge a fee for student identity verification. In the event that it becomes necessary to adopt another means to verify student identity and the methods involve additional costs to the student, including travel to campus, adequate notice will be provided in semester registration materials, emails to distance education students, and/or course syllabi.

Oversight and Review

The **Office of Academic Affairs**, in coordination with the **Office of Information Technology**, is responsible for implementing and reviewing this policy. The policy is reviewed biennially or upon changes in technology, regulatory requirements, or institutional practice to ensure its continued effectiveness and compliance.