VHS Learning Handbook

Date: August 2023

VHS Learning

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Welcome to VHS Learning!

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Since our inception in 1996, VHS, Inc. has expanded opportunities for high school students through innovative programs that prepare them for the future.

Today, we unite hundreds of schools and students from around the world to share resources and ideas, provide new educational options to students and prepare educators with the technological skills necessary to enhance learning experiences both online and in the classroom.

Through our unique collaborative approach to learning, we are helping schools, students, teachers, and families. Our nonprofit is dedicated to education first. Our goal is to provide every student with the opportunity to reach their fullest potential. At VHS Learning, there is no one-size-fits-all model. We work closely with each school, student, and teacher, to provide a personal educational experience. We believe in the value of student-centered learning, where students learn with and from one another. We also believe in the value of teacher-led instruction to help deepen and expand discussions and learning and provide students with guidance and support throughout the educational process.

On behalf of our entire team, I invite you to explore our offerings (VHSLearning.org) and discover how we can help you achieve your educational goals.

Sincerely,
Carol DeFuria

President & CEO
VHS Learning (VHS, Inc.)

Overview, Mission, and Beliefs

Overview

VHS, Inc. is a nonprofit organization providing online courses to schools and students across the country and around the world. Course offerings include hundreds of courses, as well as professional development opportunities for faculty. We offer courses for students at all levels, including Advanced Placement, honors, and credit recovery. We also offer courses for student enrichment, initial credit, and credit recovery. Schools across the United States and around the world utilize our program, and as such it is each school's responsibility to understand any local requirements for participation in online courses within their state/local district.

The hallmark of our courses is the collaboration between students, teachers, and administration. Students learn with and from their instructor and other students in small online classrooms. Districts participating with us receive not only courses and instruction, but also the infrastructure necessary to operate a robust online program, including ongoing professional development for on-site mentors and teachers, orientation for students, assistance with course selection and registration, and technical support.

Mission and Vision

Our **mission** is to provide high school students with world-class online courses and teachers that ignite a passion for learning.

Our **vision** is to cultivate a diverse global learning community and foster a safe and supportive learning environment that nurtures students and gives them the unique educational choices they need to be successful in careers and life.

Beliefs

- All students deserve equal access to quality educational choices that help them reach their fullest potential.
- Every student should be inspired by an educational experience in high school.
- Diverse classroom communities help students value differing perspectives, develop empathy for others, and thrive and succeed in our global society.
- Students learn best when they are supported by caring and dedicated faculty who guide and nurture their development.
- Supportive, human connections and flexible online experiences expand educational opportunities and encourage lifelong learning. and prepare students for the future.

Strategies for Success

What's Unique about Us

We are unique because we offer courses where learning with and from each other is important! In our cohort-based classes, you will have a teacher who works with you and your classmates to create a community where you will have regular class discussions and opportunities to work in groups. Given this unique aspect of our courses, it is essential that you stay on track. Here are some tips to help you have a successful experience in your class.

Pace Yourself

Former students shared the most important lesson they learned from taking an online class. Almost every student gave the same advice: **Don't save all your work till the last day of the week!** Often what might look like a quick assignment takes a bit of time. If you leave assignments until the last day of the week, you will likely not have time to pass in high quality work. **Help yourself by planning ahead and setting goals for due dates throughout the week.**

Attend Class Regularly

Our classes are more flexible than typical classes, allowing you to do your work in the evening or on the weekends. With flexibility comes responsibility. Though the minimum login requirement is 3x per week, students who are successful login at least 4-5 times per week. Honors and Advanced Placement students should login 5x per week to maximize success.

Plan Ahead

There are times when life is hectic – **if you have a valid reason why you might not meet course deadlines, communicate with your teacher ahead of time**. Often your teacher will be accommodating to your needs, but it is difficult to adjust after you've been absent without notice.

Get to Know Your Site Coordinator

Your site coordinator is the person at your school (or at our office, for individually enrolled students) who can help you sort out any problems you may encounter. Check-in with your site coordinator regularly and ask them for help prioritizing your work or for tips and strategies for success. Don't wait until you are really struggling before you ask for help!

Suggested Plan: How you might approach your week

- **Check the News area for messages from your teacher**, such as reminders or important updates.
- If it is the first visit of the week, **review the Weekly Overview** to check the table of assignments and activities for the week. Print the table to create a plan and track your work.
- As you begin the week's activities **pay close attention to due dates.** Although most activities are due at the end of the week, some (in particular, discussions) have mid-week due dates.
- **Check your Private Topic daily** to see if you have messages from your teacher!
- **Focus on your goals of the day**: participate in class discussions, complete a written assignment, check in with a group. Your work will vary each week, so tackle assignments consistently and be sure to read and post to discussions at least a few times during the week!

Getting Help

Self-advocacy

In addition to time management skills and strong work habits, our students develop self-advocacy as part of taking an online course. Self-advocacy means taking responsibility and initiative to get what you need, not waiting for others to act for you. For some students this skill comes naturally, while for others it takes effort to improve in this area.

One way to be a strong self-advocate is to ask questions of your teacher and site coordinator. It is natural to have lots of questions. The answer to some will be clear, but when the answer is not, communicating with your teacher or site coordinator is key. **We can't answer a question or solve a problem if we don't know the question or problem exists!**

Tips for Requesting Help

Here are some tips for getting help from your teacher or site coordinator:

- Don't be shy! Other students probably have the same question as you.
- Make your questions specific – providing detail helps your teacher solve your problem or provide information that will help you understand the concept more fully.
- Ask questions in the right area – read below about different areas for questions in your course.
- Be patient! Your teacher is expected to respond to your questions within 1 day, Monday to Friday. Many teachers respond faster than this, but you should be aware of this expectation.
- Don't be afraid to ask your site coordinator for help. If you are struggling to get answers to your questions, ask your site coordinator to call our office or file a support request. We are always happy to help provide you with additional support.

Asking Questions

Each class has discussion boards for specific types of questions. Students will be provided with additional information in the course. **We ask that students not use email to communicate with teachers.** When students post questions within the course we can assist as needed.

- **Have a Question?** – In this discussion board, students post questions about course navigation, problems locating or posting assignments, or more details on assignment expectations.
- **Private Topic** – Each student has a private topic (PT) – this is where the student can communicate privately with the teacher if there are questions about grades, information about absences, or other private matters.

Additional Suggestions

- Complete assignments in a word processor, then cut/paste the work into the assignment. This is helpful in case a technical issue creates a problem for posting work.
- Don't forget to click "Post" when you upload assignments, and for Dropbox work, check to make sure your files have uploaded before submitting your work.
- Don't be afraid to use the help link in your course to file a support request for technical support.

If all else fails, call our office for support. We can be reached at 978-897-1900 between 8AM and 4PM Eastern time, Monday - Friday.

Enrollment Policies

Add/Drop Period and Withdrawals

The first week of each semester in the fall and spring is the add/drop period. Students may add courses within the first week of class start. Add/drop deadlines are outlined in the calendar.

After the fall semester add/drop period ends, all fall, and full-year seats are considered used. Should a student in a fall semester course (1 seat) or full-year course (2 seats) drop their course after the fall add/drop period, these seats may no longer be used.

Before the add/drop deadline, students who withdraw from a course will not receive a grade for the course. After the add/drop deadline, students who withdraw will receive a grade of 'W' for Withdraw, which will be reported to their school's administrative office.

Tuition refunds, if applicable, are dependent on the date the student dropped. The official student drop date is the date on which the student was dropped from his or her course, as noted within the Student Information System. Refer to the Tuition Refund Policy for more information.

Advanced Placement (AP): Fees

All AP enrollments are subject to an additional AP fee, to cover the additional costs of managing the AP program. Certain AP courses also require a lab fee. Refer to our catalog for pricing and details.

Age Requirements

All VHS Learning course descriptions include the appropriate grade-level for students. In some cases, students must be aged 13 or over to enroll in a VHS Learning course to ensure students meet COPPA requirements for software being used in the course. Please check the course descriptions carefully to ensure age and grade requirements are met. VHS Learning does not enroll students aged 21 or older.

Audit Requests

VHS Learning does not have an audit status, though we support a school's decision to allow a student to remain enrolled in a class for the purpose of enrichment rather than earning a grade and credit. If a student wishes to audit a course, the site coordinator must submit a support request so VHS Learning staff can communicate with the teacher about the student's status. The following guidelines apply:

- VHS Learning will tell the teacher:
  - the school will interpret the grade locally as a withdrawal or audit,
  - they should award grades of zero for missing work, and
  - they do *not* need to email the site coordinator and inform them the student is not submitting work.
- The site coordinator will tell the student:
  - the teacher will not grade work unless it is submitted before the late work period for the assignment has expired,
  - they should not engage with other students in discussion boards or blogs/wikis,
  - they can attend virtual classroom sessions that are scheduled for the class, and
  - they should disregard the weekly grade email sent from the student information system.
- The site coordinator will disregard the weekly grade emails for the student and will ensure the parent/guardian are aware of expectations and the student's status.

Canceling Courses with Low Enrollments

VHS Learning reserves the right to cancel courses with fewer than 8 students enrolled in a semester. If canceling a course is necessary, VHS Learning will do everything possible to place students in a future offering of the same course or enroll students in a similar course. Any canceled enrollments will be eligible for a full refund.

English Language Learners (ELs)

The VHS Learning program is offered in English. To successfully access course content, students must possess appropriate English language skills. Teachers are provided with guidance on accommodating students with minimal to moderate language needs. Schools should assess student language level prior to enrollment to ensure students are able to understand course materials. We recommend that students are assessed and meet or exceed a WIDA score of 4 in reading and writing. By enrolling an English Language Learner, schools acknowledge they are willing to and capable of support language needs for their students locally. It is expected that communication between teachers, students, families, and school administrators will be in English.

General Enrollment Protocol

Site coordinators enroll students in VHS Learning online courses by accessing the VHS Learning Student Information System. It is the site coordinator's responsibility to manage their school's enrollments and to understand the local requirements for enrollment in online courses at their school district.

- Student enrollments are processed through the end of the add period, as noted in the published academic calendar. After the add period, students are only added to classes at the discretion of VHS Learning staff.
- After the fall semester add period, all fall and full-year seats are considered used. Should a student in a fall semester-length course (1 seat) or full-year course (2 seats) drop his/her course after the fall add period, these seats may no longer be used.
- There is a seven day drop period for Flexible courses; all Flexible seats are considered used as of the end of the drop period.
- Drops and withdrawals (drops after Week 1) are processed by the site coordinator, after communication with the student. If assistance is needed, please visit the Service Center and submit a support request.
- Registration is always the most current source of enrollment information; to see current class lists, teachers should view registration in the Student Information System.
- There may be differences between the class roster in the course and registration during the add/drop period, due to a delay between registration updates and class roster updates within the Student Information System. In the case of discrepancies, the Student Information System is considered the most accurate class list.
- Registration for school-year courses occurs between May and September (fall courses), and May and January (spring courses). Site coordinators may register students for spring courses in the fall.

Individual Enrollment: School Contact Policy

When a student enrolls directly with VHS Learning, the student is provided a site coordinator by VHS Learning. The VHS Learning site coordinator will be the student's primary point of contact and will engage with the teacher as needed to discuss student progress.

If a student or parent provides contact information for an employee of the local school district, the VHS Learning site coordinator will include that contact on communications with VHS Learning teachers and coordinators, unless the parents request, in writing, to not communicate with the school. Written requests can be made via a support request in the VHS Learning Service Center or via email to the VHS Learning site coordinator assigned to support the student.

Initial Enrollment Numbers

Although VHS Learning courses are typically capped at 25 enrollments, initial enrollment numbers will be higher than 25 students in courses where there has historically been attrition during the first few weeks of the course. This practice minimizes waitlists for high demand courses and ensures most students can enroll in a VHS Learning course of their choice.

Materials and Lab Kits

Certain courses contain materials that students will be required to obtain on their own, including books easily available at local libraries or common materials to complete simple lab exercises in the home environment. Materials that students are required to obtain on their own, if applicable, are listed in the course description in the course catalog. If a student is unable to procure the materials, they should work with their site coordinator to try to obtain the materials. If they are unable to obtain needed materials with site coordinator assistance, the student should inform their teacher and submit a VHS Learning support request with details about the situation.

Certain courses require the purchase of a lab kit so that students have access to materials for a robust, hands-on lab program. Courses with lab kits and lab kit fees are noted in the course description in the course catalog. Students must care for lab materials responsibly, follow directions carefully, and work independently to complete these labs. Students and a responsible adult will complete a Lab Materials Use Agreement that will be signed and uploaded to their course. Refer to the Waiver Requirements policy for additional information. Lab kits shipped internationally will incur additional shipping and customs fees.

Preferred Name Process

It is possible to update the name displayed in VHS Learning systems for students who prefer a different name than their legal name due to gender identity or cultural preference. This policy does not apply to nicknames. Students, their site coordinator, or their teacher can request this change by submitting a support request through the VHS Learning Service Center. Requests are evaluated and approved by VHS Learning staff, after which time changes will be applied to the system.

A student's legal name will remain unchanged in the VHS Learning Student Information System unless a site coordinator updates the student's record to change the student's legal name. The student's legal name is the name that will be reported on the VHS Learning transcript.

Registration Dates

Registration dates are available on our web site. Visit the calendar to see all current registration dates and general semester dates, including deadlines for grade posting.

Seat Allocation

A seat is defined as one confirmed or waitlisted enrollment in one class during a given semester. If a student enrolls in two different courses in the same semester, that counts as two seats for that semester. If a student enrolls in a full year (two-semester) course, that counts as one seat each semester (two seats total). Students placed on waiting lists are counted as utilizing a seat. Credit Recovery courses are worth one seat, and students have up to 20 weeks to complete their course.

Schools may register students for both the fall and spring semesters as soon as registration begins, typically in mid-May. Credit Recovery course enrollments occur on an ongoing basis. Enrollments for Credit Recovery courses during the academic year (September start date to April 30th) are included in school membership bundles. Enrollments for Credit Recovery courses from May 1st through August 31st are not included in school membership bundles and are fee-based.

Flexible course enrollments are included in membership bundles from September through the February 1st Flexible course start date. Most courses will equate to 2 seats; however, certain 0.5 credit courses (noted in the catalog and course information grid) will equate to 1 seat. Some Flexible AP courses (unlike paced AP courses) equate to 0.5 credits and 1 seat as noted in the VHS Learning catalog.

If you are participating in VHS Learning through a school consortium, contact your Consortium Director to determine the number of seats that have been allocated to your school.

After the fall, spring, and monthly semester add period, all enrollment seats are considered used. If a student in a 0.5 credit (worth 1 seat) or 1 credit (worth 2 seats) course drops the course AFTER the add period, these seats are considered used. Students who drop a course before the end of the add period can enroll in another course, or a different student may use the enrollment seat(s).

Note: for Credit Recovery and Flexible courses, students have a 7-day grace period to drop the course from the start date. If a student drops a Credit Recovery or Flexible course after the grace period noted, the enrollment seat(s) are considered used.

Student Selection

Courses are intended for high school and middle school students under the age of 21. Contact us for information on special offerings.

Time management and self-motivation are essential skills that must be considered when choosing students to participate in this program. Participation in an online course requires independence, personal responsibility, and good communication skills. Students must plan their work, be responsive to deadlines, and be conscientious in completing assigned tasks independently and in groups.

Typically, site coordinators manage recruitment and enrollment of students. Site coordinators work with school counselors to identify students with the appropriate skillset who have an interest in taking online courses. Site coordinators explain student responsibilities, help students become familiar with course choices and the various course requirements, ensure students have the appropriate prerequisites for the courses they choose, ensure students are of the appropriate grade level for the courses they choose, obtain administrative approval for their student enrollments, and enroll students in selected courses. They also ensure students understand the rigor and pacing of the VHS Learning program and the level of active participation required from students. Students not meeting course requirements must obtain override approval from VHS Learning prior to course enrollment.

Courses are also available to home school students or other students seeking high school course credits. These students may enroll in VHS Learning courses independently, directly via the VHS Learning website.

Truancy/Student Non-Participation

Teachers will communicate with a student's site coordinator if attendance issues exist. Site coordinators are also expected to monitor student attendance. Students and site coordinators must notify teachers if a student will be absent from class for more than 4 days. Absence is defined as a failure to submit work to their VHS Learning course.

A student that has not submitted work to their class for 14 calendar days without an excusable reason for absence, as defined in the Excusable Reasons for Absence policy, or pre-approval is considered truant and may be dropped from their class.

If a school's policy does not allow for dropping courses, the student would be allowed to remain enrolled but would not be allowed to make up missed work from their absence. For a student to be considered **dropped,** the following process must be documented:

1. There must be evidence that the VHS Learning teacher has reached out to the student's SC about their absence prior to the notification of extended absence. The teacher must also attempt to communicate with the student and their site coordinator via email and/or phone to determine if the student intends to re-engage with the class. The curriculum/instructional coordinator must be copied on these communications.
2. If the teacher is not able to reach the site coordinator, they should submit a VHS Learning support request with information about the length of absence, details of the steps taken to communicate with the student and site coordinator, and the result of their actions.
3. VHS Learning will contact the student's site coordinator to confirm whether there was an excusable reason for the absence. If the site coordinator does not respond, VHS Learning will call the school administrator. If VHS Learning confirms there was not an excusable reason for the absence, the student will be removed from class.
4. In cases where the student's local school does not allow the student to drop his or her course, but the student does not intend to complete additional work, the teacher and site coordinator will agree that the teacher will not be required to email the site coordinator with student updates. Grades will continue to be input as zero for missing assignments.

If an excusable reason for absence is confirmed, the site coordinator will work with the teacher and VHS Learning curriculum and instruction staff to create a plan for the student to complete the course. The Incomplete and Extension Request policies apply in this instance. It is expected that the teacher and site coordinator will work with the student prior to an extended absence so the student can re-engage with the course and complete the course successfully.

Once dropped, student access to the course is removed. There is a delay between request and student drop; drops do not occur immediately. The student's grade in the Student Information System will be changed to Withdrawal, and their grade information, as well as grades processed through the grading system, will not be visible unless a school requests this via a support request. Teachers will not enter grades into the grading system for a student that has dropped.

Tuition Refund

Individual tuition students who officially withdraw from their full-year, AP, semester, or monthly start courses through notification to VHS Learning may receive a refund of tuition according to the following schedule:

- A full refund, less a $25 administration fee, will be granted prior to the start of class.
- A 75% tuition refund will be granted if withdrawal occurs during the first week of the course.
- No tuition refund will be granted after the first week of the course
- The withdrawal date is the date the enrollment is dropped within the VHS Learning Student Information System or the date the drop is requested through a VHS Learning support request (whichever occurs first).
- Tuition refunds are not granted for unused seats purchased in membership bundles.

Credit Recovery, Flexible, and Summer School Tuition Refund policies are outlined in the appropriate sections of this handbook.

Waitlists

The number of students enrolled in a course is typically limited to 25. Students are automatically placed on the waitlist if a course is full, in the order in which they registered. If space becomes available in the course before the add period ends, waitlisted students are added to the course in the order that they were registered. Once classes begin, site coordinators may elect to remove students from waitlists and register them into courses that have openings. Students who are waitlisted count towards the total number of seats used for the semester.

Waiver Requirements

Some courses, including lab science courses and physical education courses, require students and their parent/guardian (if student is under age 18) to sign waiver documentation and upload the waiver to the course. Waivers, if required, are outlined in course descriptions in the course catalog. Waivers must be returned during the first weeks of the course, as outlined in Week 1 lesson documents. Students who do not return the required waiver documentation within the expected time will not be allowed to complete assignments for which the waiver is required.

Academic Policies

Academic Calendar

Academic year courses are either semester-length or full-year (two semester). The fall and spring semesters are 15 weeks in duration. Full-year courses are 33 weeks in duration with a break between weeks 15 and 16. Semester calendars are available prior to the start of each academic year.

All students and instructors must follow the VHS Learning academic calendar as it pertains to VHS Learning courses. Often school calendars differ from the VHS Learning calendar. When calendars differ, the VHS Learning calendar and course schedule take precedence. Should a student be unable to attend class due to a school vacation or calendar issue, it is essential that students and site coordinators inform teachers in advance so arrangements can be made to work ahead or make up work. If students do not make alternative arrangements with teachers in advance in cases of scheduling conflicts, late work policies and penalties apply.

Flexible courses are self-paced, initial credit courses. Policies related to enrollment periods for Flexible courses can be found in the Flexible Course Program section of the VHS Learning handbook.

Credit Recovery and summer courses are separate and distinct from courses offered during the standard academic year. Credit Recovery courses are self-paced, 20-week courses with rolling start dates. Summer courses are also available for credit recovery or enrichment and are offered in two 4-week sessions and one 8-week session.

Please submit a support request via the VHS Learning Service Center for information on courses that follow unique academic calendars.

Advanced Placement: AP Classroom

VHS Learning students are expected to access and utilize AP Classroom resources as directed by their VHS Learning teacher. This requires students to have a College Board account.

Advanced Placement: Predicted Score Requests

VHS Learning teachers are not expected to provide colleges with predicted AP scores for VHS learning students. As a supplemental provider, VHS Learning teachers do not have access to the student performance data needed to make a valid prediction of success on an AP exam.

Advanced Placement: Summer Work

AP courses have required summer assignments that are submitted during Week 1 of the academic year and are graded by the VHS Learning teacher. Summer assignments cover essential prerequisite content and are expected to take approximately 5 hours to complete. Students that enroll in an AP course in late summer have flexibility to turn the work in through Week 3, though students are encouraged to finish summer assignments prior to course start if possible. Summer assignments are linked in the course description of each course in the catalog.

Advanced Placement: Testing

Students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses are expected to take the AP exam. Students who are failing their AP class need not take the AP exam. Exam results do not affect the student's course grade or future enrollment in courses.

It is the responsibility of the student's school to order and administer AP exams. Schools must set up exam only sections so that students can successfully access and complete work in VHS Learning AP

Classroom sections. Individually enrolled students will be required to secure a testing location using the College Board's homeschool student protocol. VHS Learning does not administer AP exams and will not be able to find a testing site for students. AP exam scores are reported to VHS Learning and used in VHS Learning annual benchmarks.

Communication: Notification of Student Tragedy

In the unfortunate event of a tragedy concerning a student or faculty member, please contact us as soon as possible via phone (978-897-1900) or a support request via the Service Center.

In circumstances involving a student, we will:

1. Contact the student's school to offer support/assistance in the case of a student tragedy.
2. Email teachers of the other students from the school where the tragedy occurred, so teachers can be flexible with absences or late work submission.
3. Email the site coordinator of the other students in the class in which the tragedy occurred, to make them aware of the situation.
4. Work with the teacher in the course in which the student was enrolled to determine the best method of communication to the students in the class and offer additional assistance and support to the teacher.

Examples of situations in which we should be notified include the death of a student, teacher, or site coordinator, or a tragedy concerning a student at a member school that the school has reason to believe may impact their students taking online classes.

Course Levels

Each course is designated as credit recovery, standard, honors, or Advanced Placement. Standard courses are considered college preparatory and should be identified as such at the student's school. Some high school courses are also designated appropriate for gifted and talented middle school students. The level of each course is indicated in the VHS Learning course catalog, which also contains prerequisite skills and course grade level requirements.

The following parameters can be used as guidelines for courses:

- A standard (college preparatory) level class requires approximately 6 hours per week.
- An honors level class requires approximately 8 hours per week.
- An AP level class requires approximately 10 hours per week.
- Credit Recovery courses are typically for credit recovery and require approximately 40 hours of work for a 0.5 credit Credit Recovery course and 80 hours of work for a 1 credit Credit Recovery course.
- Flexible courses contain similar assignments to the paced version of the course. The level and credit earned in a flexible course dictate the approximate time to complete the course. Our estimation is as follows:
    o 1 credit AP: 330 hours
    o 0.5 credit AP: 170 hours
    o 1 credit standard: 200 hours
    o 0.5 credit standard: 95 hours

Course Retakes

Students must adhere to local school policy regarding retaking our online courses. If allowed by the local school, a student may retake a course providing the following conditions are met:

1. The student has approval from his/her school to enroll in the course and the student or school pays the appropriate tuition or uses seats for the enrollment.
2. There is space available for the student wanting to repeat a course after spaces have been assigned to students taking the course for the first time.
3. The student received a failing final grade the first time the course was taken.

The student's school is responsible for determining how a replacement course will appear on the student's official transcript. The student should understand whether and how a repeated course will impact the student's transcript and GPA.

Credit for Courses

Local schools grant credit for VHS Learning online courses. Courses taken through VHS Learning should receive the same credit and be listed on the student transcript in the same way as any other course offered by the school. Each VHS Learning semester course is worth 0.5 credit. Year-long courses are worth 1 credit. Participating schools translate our credits into the appropriate school credit. Credit for Credit Recovery courses are at the discretion of each school. We recommend that VHS Learning courses be given the same level as traditional courses. For example, a VHS Learning AP course should be worth the same credit on a student's transcript as a local AP course.

Document Formats Allowed

To ensure integrity of work and validity of student grades, students must submit work in formats that are compatible with our plagiarism detection tool. Teachers may ask students to resubmit work that has been shared in a format that is not compatible with our plagiarism detection tool, such as scanned images, screenshots, or other image-based files that contain text.

Excusable Reasons for Absence

Paced VHS Learning courses include discussions and group work. It is expected that students are actively engaged with their peers each week.

VHS Learning does not recognize overall workload, motivation, studying for other courses or assessments at the local school, or sports and extra-curricular commitments as excusable reasons for absence. Students who have significant time commitments and cannot regularly attend their VHS Learning course and meet course pacing requirements should consider a Flexible, self-paced VHS Learning course, if available.

Excusable reasons for absence include the following scenarios. A site coordinator must confirm the student's excusable reason for absence via email or support request.

- Illnesses or accidents that require hospitalization
- Natural disasters or extreme weather events
- Family emergencies
- Traumatic experiences
- Concussions or medical conditions that prevent attendance at school.

Extended Absence (7 or more consecutive school days)

This policy applies to students who are absent from class for an extended period (greater than 7 consecutive school days) due to an excusable reason for absence. Shorter absences are managed by the VHS Learning teacher and VHS Learning administration under the Late Work policy. Students who are truant without reason for absence are subject to the Truancy policy.

If a student misses more than 7 consecutive school days because of an Excusable Reason for Absence, the site coordinator should submit a support request so that a member of the VHS Learning team can evaluate the situation and suggest an approach for supporting the student. Depending on the circumstance of the student's absence and the course, a variety of approaches are used, including exempting assignments, extending weekly deadlines, or extending the course end date (which would require hiring a substitute at an additional charge).

VHS Learning can accommodate absence of up to four weeks in a semester-length class through varied approaches (as described above). If a student will be absent for more than four weeks in a semester-length course, they will be allowed to re-enroll in a future semester or Flexible version of the course at no charge, as it is unlikely a plan will be able to accommodate for that length of absence in a 15-week course.

 If a student is absent for more than four weeks in a year-long course, VHS Learning will make every attempt to accommodate using the approaches listed above. Students who are absent for more than 8 total weeks in a year-long course will have missed too much of the course to be able to successfully rejoin the class.

Concussion

If a student has a concussion during their course, the school and site coordinator must take an active role in communicating the student's status and outlining expectations for how the student will complete their course. The preferred method of communication with us is via the VHS Learning Service Center, to ensure all departments are aware of expectations.

The site coordinator must share the following information with VHS Learning via a support request:

- Student name
- VHS Learning course(s)
- What has the student been cleared to do in an academic setting?
- What are specific expectations for screen use and workload?
- Are any global exemptions/reductions being made in the local school?
- Target date for return to full learning

Once supporting documentation, such as a medical note or 504 plan, is available, it must be uploaded to the student's profile in the student information system, to assist teachers in supporting the student. Additional details can be found in this Concussion Support at VHS Learning document.

Other Medical Issues

If a student is absent from school due to a medical issue lasting more than a few days, the school and site coordinator must take an active role in communicating the student's status. The preferred method of communication with VHS Learning is via the Service Center.

VHS Learning requires verification of absence due to medical issues. It is preferred that a medical professional provides a letter confirming the duration of time the student is excused from attending school. The letter does not need to contain specific medical information or a specific diagnosis, but it must include a time for returning to school and any limitations on the student. If a letter from a medical professional is not provided, the student's school counselor must verify that the student was or will be absent from school for a specific period.

Extension Requests

Students will be allowed to make up work past the end of a semester under the following conditions:

- there is an excusable reason for absence, as defined in the Excusable Reasons for Absence policy, which prohibited the student from completing the work within the defined period, and
- there has been a written agreement between the student and teacher (either via private topic or documented email) which clearly outlines the names of the assignments to be completed (or exempted), the deadline for turning in the assignments, and the amount of credit which will be granted for work passed in late.

Extensions must be formalized in writing between the course instructor and VHS Learning curriculum/instructional coordinator. If approved, extensions will be granted in two-week blocks of time for a maximum of one month. The student will be given a grade of Incomplete through the duration of the extension period, after which time a course grade will be finalized.

In extreme cases where a student is unable to access their online classroom for an extended period, such as a student in a concussion protocol or with a significant medical issue, a combination of the following solutions might apply. Decisions about these situations are made collaboratively between the student's school and the VHS Learning Curriculum and Instruction Team:
- exempting non-critical work
- student withdrawal from the course
- re-enrolling student in an upcoming semester or a Flexible course, if available
- allowing the student to complete work at his/her own pace with the support of a local teacher or school administrator.

Failing Grade/Numerically Not Possible to Pass

VHS Learning makes every effort to support students who are struggling to be successful in their course. If there comes a time when a student is no longer able to pass a VHS Learning course, because they have not submitted a significant portion of work and do not have an excusable reason for absence as defined in the Excusable Reasons for Absence policy, the following options will be made available to the student:

- Drop the course to focus on other courses in the face-to-face environment.
- Audit the course; see the Audit Requests policy for additional information.
- Remain enrolled in the course and the school will assign a local teacher to assess work and determine a final local grade for the course.
- Remain enrolled in the course and the VHS Learning teacher will grade any work that is submitted in accordance with the VHS Learning Late Work Policy.

If a school does not choose an option for the student, they will remain enrolled in the course; any work submitted will be graded in accordance with the VHS Learning Late Work Policy.

Final Exam Exemption

VHS Learning final exams are required to be completed, even if a school has a local policy that exempts students from completing final exams. Final exams are an important element of our student performance data set and are reported as part of our accreditation improvement goals, and students are asked to make their best effort to complete the exam. Students may take the exam any time during the last week of their class.

Grade Availability

Current grade information is always available in the VHS Learning Student Information System. Data is refreshed nightly, and the Current Grade Average (CGA) visible to site coordinators represents the average of all term grades, including grade information entered the previous day.

Instructors are required to confirm term and semester grades for students at specified intervals (see the VHS Learning Academic Calendar for grading deadlines). Site coordinators are encouraged to regularly share CGA and term grade information with parents and guardians. Parents and guardians receive weekly progress report emails, and access to the VHS Learning Student Information System, when contact information is added to a student's account. We recommend, especially in the case of failing students, that site coordinators print grade reports and send them home with students to be signed by a parent/guardian and returned.

In addition to grade emails, students in Flexible courses will receive a progress update email monthly, indicating current grade on completed work, number of assignments completed, and whether the student is "on pace" to complete the course by their course end date. Site coordinators are encouraged to closely monitor progress for students in Flexible courses, to ensure they have adequate time to complete the course prior to their course end date.

Final grades for Credit Recovery courses are posted within two weeks of students completing all course work, or at the end of the Credit Recovery term (20 weeks), whichever comes first.

Grade Periods for Term and Semester Grades

Grade periods for semester-length courses (fall and spring)
Term 1 Grade: The Term 1 Grade represents student work from weeks 1 through 8.
Term 2 Grade: The Term 2 Grade represents student work from weeks 9 through 15.
The Final Grade represents an average of the Term 1 and Term 2 grades.

Grade periods for full-year courses
Fall Term 1 Grade represents student work from weeks 1 through 8.
Fall Term 2 Grade represents student work from weeks 9 through 15.
Spring Term 3 Grade represents student work from weeks 16 through 26.
Spring Term 4 Grade represents student work from weeks 27 through 33.
Final Grade: The Final Grade for full-year classes is the average of Term 1, 2, 3 and 4 grades.

Grade periods for Flexible, Credit Recovery, and Summer courses
Flexible, credit recovery, and summer courses have only one term grade that is calculated based on total points earned in the course compared to total points possible. Term grades for Flexible classes are reported at the discretion of the school, outlined in the Flexible course section of the Handbook.

Grade Dispute Process: Prior to End of Course

If, during the semester, there is a question about the validity of a student's grade, the student should consult with their site coordinator and then communicate with the teacher in the Private Topic to ask about the grade item in question and seek clarification about the situation. If the student is not able to resolve the issue the student or their site coordinator should submit a support request. The request should include the student's name, course name and section, details about the grade in question, and steps that have been taken to resolve the issue with the teacher. A curriculum/instructional coordinator will review the request and consult with the teacher of the course. The decision will be shared with the teacher, student, and site coordinator and will be final.

Grade Dispute Process: Final Course Average

If, after final grades have been confirmed, it is determined that a student's grade is incorrect, the grade will be updated in the Student Information System so that the student or school can download an updated transcript. The following steps should be followed when a grade is in question:

1. Submit a support request with the student's name, the course name and section, and the reason for the requested change.
2. A curriculum/instructional coordinator will review the request, consulting with the course instructor and appropriate Associate Dean as warranted.
3. If approved, the curriculum/instructional coordinator will update the Student Information System and will note the final grade in the support case.
4. An updated transcript can be obtained from the Student Information System once the final grade is updated.

Grade Scale

VHS Learning utilizes a numerical scale with a grade of 60% indicating a passing score. A student may receive an "I" for an Incomplete if they are not able to finish the course. See Incomplete Grades for additional information on this policy. Instructors submit grades in numeric format (i.e., 100, 99, 98, etc.) and the grading system generates equivalent letter grades (i.e., A+, A, A-, etc.).

When necessary, high schools translate grades into their own grading system. For example, a school that implements a grade of 65% as passing should take into consideration that our passing score is 60% or a school that grades on a pass/fail basis should convert our grades to P or F.

When converting numeric grades to letter grades, please use this scale, which is provided on transcripts in the VHS Learning Student Information System:

Letter Grade	Numeric Grade	Letter Grade	Numeric Grade
A+	97 - 100	C+	77 - 79
A	93 - 96	C	73 - 76
A-	90 - 92	C-	70 - 72
B+	87 - 89	D+	67 - 69
B	83 - 86	D	63 - 66
B-	80 - 82	D-	60 - 62
		F	00 - 59

Grade Over 100%

Teachers are not able to confirm grades over 100% in the Student Information System. If a student has earned a score greater than 100% for a term, that grade will be confirmed as 100%. Students are not allowed to "roll over" additional points from one term to another.

Grading: Term 1 Grade 50%

Recognizing that there are some students who take time to adjust to a paced, asynchronous course model, teachers will confirm a grade of 50% for any student whose **Term 1 grade** is 25% - 49%. Students whose grade is below 25% will have their numerical score entered in the SIS.

Incomplete Grades

Teachers may allow a student additional time to complete course work following the close of the marking period by issuing an Incomplete (I) for Term 1, 2, 3, or 4. Teachers are encouraged to be flexible, especially when an Incomplete is requested by a site coordinator. Incompletes and the time allotted to complete the work are granted by the teacher after review of the student's reason for absence. Teachers will identify specific assignments eligible to be completed during the incomplete period. Consultation with the curriculum/instructional coordinator is available as needed.

VHS Learning administrators settle disputes if the teacher and site coordinator disagree about whether a student should be given an Incomplete. Site coordinators can request a review by filing a support request. The additional time allotted for the completion of incomplete work may not exceed two weeks from the close of the marking period unless the reason for absence is considered excusable as defined in the Excusable Reasons for Absence policy. See the Handbook policy entitled Extension Requests for additional details.

Late Enrollments or Enrollments During the Add Period

To support every student interested in participating in our program, VHS Learning has an add period that extends into the first week of a course. Students who enter their VHS Learning course during the add period will not be penalized for submitting work late during Weeks 1 and 2. VHS Learning will extend this period of allowed work submission as needed, based on the circumstance of the enrollment or the curriculum of the course.

In a limited number of circumstances, VHS Learning allows enrollments after the add period is complete. These exceptions are granted on a case-by-case basis, approved by VHS Learning administration. Students are provided an entry plan if they enter courses after Week 3.

Late Work

The following late work policy applies to work submitted without an excusable reason for absence, as defined in the Excusable Reasons for Absence policy. If a student has an excusable reason for absence that requires additional flexibility the student or site coordinator must communicate with the teacher to establish a schedule for turning in work late (without penalty) and identify whether modification of expectations/ assignments is required. Students should communicate with their teacher via a PT message; site coordinators should submit a support request or communicate with the teacher via email.

- Late work will be accepted up to one week past the due date with a penalty of 20%.
- Discussion and group work assignments will not be accepted late unless confirmed circumstances make participation impossible during the scheduled week. Confirmation from the site coordinator is required for this allowance.

- Due to grade deadlines, the late work policy for the final week of the semester is shortened from one week to three days. If a student requires more than three days past the end of week 15 or week 33, they must seek an Incomplete or extension from their teacher in advance of the last day of the week. See the Incomplete and Extension Request policies for additional details.

Students who enter a course during the add period are subject to the Late Enrollments policy, noted above. Review the Excusable Reason for Absence, Extended Absence, Incomplete, and Extension Request policies for additional guidance. VHS Learning staff members facilitate this process and settle disputes as needed.

Plagiarism/Academic Honesty

Teachers will follow established communication protocols to investigate incidences, to ensure a fair, consistently applied process that treats infractions as teachable moments and provides appropriate consequences.

Consequences

- **Note:** There are common circumstances where students should not be penalized, such as use of common knowledge that does not require citation, accidental submission of another student's file because it was similarly named to theirs and stored on a school computer, and the use of template prompts in their submissions.
- For a first incident, the student will receive up to 50% credit for assignment(s) that are resubmitted within 3 school days of notification.
- For second and subsequent incidents, the student will receive grades of zero and will not be allowed to resubmit assignments.
- In egregious incidents, the student may receive a zero on first offense or be withdrawn from the course with a failing grade, a decision made by the Dean or Associate Dean.
- If a student has been found to plagiarize on a written exam, the student will earn a score of zero for that portion of the exam and will not be allowed to resubmit an answer to the question.
- If a student is found to have shared work but did not intend to be complicit in a plagiarism incident, that student may receive a lesser penalty, of up to 20% off the work, and would not be required to resubmit the assignment. Any future instances will be penalized using the consequences outlined above (50% credit and then no credit allowed).
- In certain courses, students will be required to complete an alternate assignment in lieu of resubmission of original work. This will be determined by the curriculum/instructional coordinator and will be communicated to the teacher, who will provide instructions to the student.

Unusual Circumstances

If questions about the incident remain unresolved, VHS Learning will investigate. Findings will be communicated to the student (via Private Topic) and the school within 2 business days, assuming students and schools respond to inquiries within 24 hours, Monday - Friday. Failure of a school to respond to inquiries within 48 hours, Monday through Friday, will result in VHS Learning resolving the matter and implementing consequences.

Appeal

Students may appeal a decision by speaking with their site coordinator and filing a support request so that a VHS Learning Associate Dean can investigate. Findings of the Associate Dean are final.

Deferring to Local Policy

If a school has a more stringent policy the school policy will override VHS Learning consequences outlined above, at the request of the school.

Plagiarism/Academic Honesty: Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

VHS Learning recognizes that technologies powered by artificial intelligence (AI) have been in use in classrooms for many years and have benefits to students and teachers that can facilitate learning. We believe it is our responsibility to foster an understanding of ethical and appropriate use of AI tools in a VHS Learning class. The following guidelines apply in all VHS Learning classes:

- Students under age 18 must obtain parental permission before creating an account to use AI tools, if needed.
- There are occasions where AI tools may be used in research or brainstorming. However, all work submitted for a grade in a VHS Learning course must be the students' own work.
- Students are not allowed to use AI to brainstorm or research answers on quizzes, tests, summative activities, or activities specified by their teacher or identified within their course.
- If a student chooses to use an AI tool to brainstorm or research in completion of other activities, they must cite the use of a tool and abide by the following:
  - Recognize limitations to AI chatbot tools and validate any information gathered from these tools, using other resources to support claims or gather recent information.
  - Cite AI-generated text that is included in final submissions of work. Both APA and MLA style-guides include suggestions for citing AI-generated text.
  - Share a screenshot of the original AI text to illustrate how the student used the tool and clarify what was generated by the student.

Students are encouraged to contact their teacher before submitting work if they have a question about the use of an AI tool to research or brainstorm for an assignment.

VHS Learning will use AI detection tools to identify work that has a high likelihood of being generated by AI tools. Teachers will also use their professional judgement of student work and their knowledge of their students to identify work that is likely to be created using AI tools. Work that is generated by AI tools will be considered plagiarism and will be addressed according to the VHS Learning Plagiarism/Academic Honesty policy.

Plagiarism/Academic Honesty: Online Translation Tools

An online translator refers to any software application or device that translates from one language to another. Due to advances in translation software and translation engines (i.e., Google Translate), it has become easier for everyone to access translation technology. Online translators are detrimental to language acquisition. Students who use online translators do not learn the vocabulary and grammar necessary to develop reading, writing, speaking, and conversational skills.

Although translation technology has progressed, word-for-word translation of phrases, sentences, or paragraphs using an online translator is often slightly, or significantly, incorrect. When using online translators, students often include words, phrases, and sentences that are not part of their learned vocabulary, which results in fluency levels above a student's proficiency level. VHS Learning teachers use these clues to identify work that has been created using an online translator.

Use of online translators in place of completing the necessary language learning activities on one's own is not acceptable and is considered plagiarism. Refer to the Plagiarism/Academic Honesty policy for more information.

Proctored Exams

Many courses require a proctor to be available to supervise a final exam. A student's site coordinator, parent/guardian, or trusted adult can be a proctor.

- Students complete the Proctor Identification Form before the proctored exam. This form confirms the student has secured a proctor; both the student and their proctor sign the form.
- Once the Proctor Identification Form is submitted to the appropriate Dropbox, the student will be able to see and begin their exam at the appropriate time.
- The student completes the exam in the presence of their proctor and the proctor completes the Proctor Verification Form.
- The student submits the Proctor Verification Form to the appropriate Dropbox in their VHS Learning class. Failure to submit the Proctor Verification Form will result in a grade of zero on the proctored exam.

Final exams are designed to be completed in approximately 45 mins. Proctors should monitor the time spent completing the exam, to ensure students are within this guideline. Students who receive extended time will receive extended time on the final exam.

Resubmission of Work

Unless explicitly required by a student's IEP or 504 plan, or the case of a submission in a format that the teacher cannot open, VHS Learning students are not allowed to resubmit graded work for an improved score. Students should contact their teacher prior to submitting work if they have questions about an assignment. Teachers do have discretion to allow resubmission of an assignment on a case-by-case basis, or based on the entire class not understanding an expectation or struggling to successfully complete the activity. Teachers should discuss whole-class resubmission with their curriculum or instructional coordinator prior to offering this to the class, to ensure equity across course sections.

Special Education: Students with 504 or Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs)

Students who participate in our classes through their school remain the responsibility of their school regarding educational accommodations; however, online teachers are required to provide reasonable accommodations as outlined in the student's plan, such as extended time to complete assignments, reduced workload, or modified expectations for discussion participation.

We strongly recommend that the site coordinator is involved in decisions regarding VHS Learning course enrollments for students with an IEP or 504 plan. Site coordinators have received training on VHS Learning policies and have an overall understanding of program expectations. By placing a student in a VHS Learning class, the student's school agrees to provide current IEP or 504 documentation. VHS Learning teachers should receive the same information any of the student's face-to-face teachers receive. When enrolling a student with an IEP or 504 accommodations, the school must:

- Upload IEP or 504 documents (or a summary of the document that provides specific information about the nature of the accommodation or adaptation) to the Student Information System.
- Change the IEP/504 field to YES in the Student Information System.

- Notify the student's teacher as soon as the document is uploaded to the Student Information System. Upload and notification should occur as early in the course as possible.
- Provide special equipment or physical accommodations that might be needed, such as a special keyboard, special software, additional face-to-face support, an on-site tutor, or an interpreter.

Synchronous Communication

VHS Learning teachers are required to host synchronous (live) office hour sessions to connect with students and provide support. Teachers are strongly encouraged to offer a "meet and greet" session within the first week or two of class. In lieu of office-hour sessions, teachers can run a tutorial session on a topic, though creation of lecture material is not required.

General Guidelines
- Participation in synchronous sessions cannot be a requirement of the course or for extra credit unless the sessions are scheduled so there is an instance available for every student to attend.
- As noted in more detail below, all sessions will be recorded, though recordings of sessions where just one student attends will not be shared with the class.
- Teachers are expected to read a statement at the beginning of each session to inform students of their rights to turn off their webcam prior to recording the session.
- Synchronous sessions are not a venue for parents to discuss student information or concerns with the teacher. If a parent wishes to communicate with their student's teacher, they should request a meeting through the student's site coordinator and a member of the VHS Learning team will meet with the parent or facilitate a meeting between the parent and teacher.

Frequency
- AP Teachers are required to host at least one synchronous session every two weeks, though teachers are encouraged to host sessions weekly.
- Non-AP teachers are required to host at least one session per month, and teachers are encouraged to host sessions once every two weeks.
- Because students are in different time zones, students cannot be required to attend sessions.
- Teachers are asked to rotate their schedule, so all students have an opportunity to participate.
- If a student requests a synchronous meeting for extra help or clarifying misunderstandings, the teacher is asked to make every effort to offer a time that is available to both the teacher and student. Unless the request is of a personal nature, the teacher is encouraged to offer the session to the class as a help session related to a specific topic.

Set-up and Technical Settings
- Technical instructions, privacy statement, and recommended settings for synchronous sessions are included in the VHS Learning Knowledge article for Virtual Classroom.
- Teachers must use the Virtual Classroom tool available in our learning management system.
- All sessions should be recorded for safety and reference purposes, but teachers should not set the sessions to publish recordings automatically to the class.
- At the conclusion of a group session, the teacher may choose to share the recording link for the class to view as a reference. Recordings are available for the duration of the academic year.
- If negative or concerning behavior or conversation occurs during a session, the teacher should immediately submit a support request so that VHS Learning can review the session recording.
- Prior to beginning the recording, teachers should read the VHS Learning statement that informs students the session is being recorded and that their participation in the session indicates their

willingness to be in a recording that will be shared with the class. Students who wish to listen but not be seen are given an opportunity to mute their microphone and shut off their webcam.

- Students who attend a live session will appear by their full name, whether they are sharing their microphone and webcam. Students who do not wish to have their name listed in the attendance list should watch the recording instead of attending a live session.
- If a session is attended by only one student, the teacher will still record the session as noted but should not share the session with the class.
- Session links should be labeled with a descriptive title and the date for future reference.

Transcripts

Students who complete courses are provided VHS Learning transcripts after final grades have been released. Transcripts are produced only for students who have completed courses in full. Partial credit transcripts are not produced; students who do not complete an entire course will be able to share their grades with their local school to determine if partial credit is possible locally, based on the percentage of the course completed.

In the unusual circumstance that a student is allowed to enter a VHS Learning course after the add period, the VHS Learning Dean or Associate Dean will review the student's previous course enrollment and grades to determine if previous coursework will be incorporated into the VHS Learning grade. At minimum, the student must have been enrolled in the same course prior to their VHS Learning enrollment and must complete at least 50% of the VHS Learning course to earn a VHS Learning credit.

Transcripts are made available to custom course offerings if the course is taught in its entirety by a VHS Learning teacher. Schools using VHS Learning content taught by local teachers are responsible for providing transcripts using their local system and policies.

Code of Conduct/General Responsibilities

Acceptable Internet Use Policy

Our site and systems shall be used in a manner consistent with the purpose of the organization, the administrative rules for using the system, and according to our policies. Communications using system resources will be considered publications and will be governed by administrative policies and policies regarding publications.

Users are expected to conduct themselves in a responsible, ethical, and polite manner while using our systems. Staff and student access to the Internet is used with the understanding that some material that can be accessed on the Internet may be inaccurate; and that some resources may contain material that is deemed contrary to prevailing community standards or inappropriate for classroom use. Access to such resources will not be permitted. If such inappropriate material is inadvertently encountered, it shall be the user's responsibility to disengage immediately.

Responsibilities: Access to systems is a privilege extended to staff, students, and other users for the purpose stated above. Users have the responsibility to respect and protect the rights of other users in the community and on the Internet. Users are expected to act in a responsible, ethical, and legal manner, in accordance with stated policies, in conformance with the purposes of the other sites, and in compliance with state and national laws. A user who commits a violation may have his/her access privileges revoked, as well as whatever other disciplinary action may be assigned by both local and VHS Learning administrators.

Usage Guidelines: All use of our systems will be consistent with the purpose as stated above. This policy does not attempt to describe all required behaviors by users of the system. In any specific situation, we rely upon individual judgment of appropriate conduct. To assist in such judgment, the following guidelines are offered:

- Any use for illegal purposes, or in support of illegal activities, is prohibited.
- Any use for political, religious, or commercial purposes is prohibited.
- The use of electronic mail in any manner that is contrary to stated policy is prohibited.
- Any use that disrupts the educational and administrative goals of VHS Learning is prohibited.
- Any use of our systems or accounts by anyone but the authorized owner of the account is prohibited. Sharing account credentials is prohibited.
- Any reproduction of copyrighted material without explicit permission is prohibited.

Privacy: System storage areas may be inspected at any time. System administrators or other appropriate staff may review communications to maintain integrity system-wide and ensure that users are using the system in a responsible manner.

Illegal Copying: Users should neither download nor install any commercial software, shareware, or freeware onto network drives or disks, unless they have written permission from the System Administrator or other appropriate staff; nor should they copy other people's work or intrude into other people's files.

Inappropriate Language: No profane, abusive, impolite, or inappropriate language should be used to communicate within our systems and/or on the Internet.

Inappropriate Materials: Access or upload of material that has been deemed inappropriate for educational use is prohibited. Should users encounter such material by accident, they should disengage. Students should report such encounters to their teacher immediately. In addition, creating and/or uploading any material that is inappropriate for educational use (text, video, images or other) is prohibited.

Anti-Harassment / Cyber-Bullying Policy

We are committed to safeguarding the right of all individuals to work and learn in an environment that is free of harassment. Compliance with anti-harassment will be the responsibility of each school according to its anti-harassment policy and procedures. Complaints should be filed with the complainant's school and follow procedures of the policy for that school. In cases where there is no anti-harassment policy in place the VHS Learning anti-harassment policy will apply. Students are encouraged to report any incident of harassment/bullying to their teacher and site coordinator. Teachers and site coordinators witnessing cyber-bullying within their course and/or notified of harassment/bullying issues are required to submit a support request to notify VHS Learning administrators within 24 hours.

Anti-Harassment Policy

Harassment, intimidation or bullying and acts of cyber-bullying for any reason, including but not limited to race, color, ancestry, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, or disability in any form, is strictly prohibited. Anyone whose behavior is found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including expulsion. Violators may also be referred to law enforcement officials.

Definition

"Cyber-bullying" is the use of electronic information and communication devices, to include but not be limited to, email messages, instant messaging, text messaging, cellular telephone communications, internet blogs, internet chat rooms, internet postings, and defamatory websites, that:

1. Deliberately threatens, harasses, intimidates an individual or group of individuals; or
2. Places an individual in reasonable fear of harm to the individual or damage to the individual's property; or
3. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the course.

Copyright Policy

According to the U.S. Copyright Act, all works that are in a fixed form are copyrighted works, whether they bear any copyright markings. As such, before using copyrighted materials in any course materials, personnel shall either (a) acquire the rights to use the materials from the copyright owners, (b) keep a written (signed and dated) record that the materials fall within the fair use provisions of the Copyright Act or fall within the requirements of the TEACH Act, or (c) determine that the works are in the public domain. Individuals using copyrighted materials without completing either step A, B or C do so at their own individual risk.

Data Security and Retention Policy

Cybersecurity Framework and Risk Assessment

VHS Learning uses a custom cybersecurity framework based on industry standards provided by a third-party contractor. Our systems are audited periodically with a third-party contractor for compliance and security improvements.

Employee Training

All VHS Learning employees must pass a criminal background check and be fingerprinted. Employees are required to complete ongoing training in best practices for information security, data protection and privacy regulations.

Backups

VHS Learning systems are cloud-based and backed up daily in accordance with industry standards and disaster recovery protocols.

Destruction of Data

VHS Learning Data Retention timeframes are in accordance with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts records retention laws and have been approved by our accrediting bodies. Partners with differing needs may amend their individual contract upon mutual agreement with VHS, Inc. Individual student records may be deleted upon request by the parent or eligible student, per FERPA guidelines.

Data cannot be recovered after destruction. VHS Learning Data Retention is as follows:

- Course transcripts will be retained indefinitely.
- Student data, including assignment grades, will be retained for 5 years.
- Student assignment submissions and activity, communication, and teacher feedback will be retained for 5 years.

All questions or concerns regarding our Privacy or Data Retention policies should be directed to your Partnership manager or our Privacy Officer at privacy@vhslearning.org.

Faculty Monitoring and Support

Our courses are monitored to ensure they meet our instructional standards. Curriculum and Instruction staff members review all courses at least once each semester. New teachers and teachers needing extra assistance are assigned a faculty advisor (an experienced teacher or staff member) to monitor progress and provide feedback each week.

Faculty advisors complete weekly progress reports that are based on faculty expectations shared with teachers in training and the Handbook. The faculty advisor provides written feedback on areas of growth and commendation throughout the semester. At the end of the semester, the faculty advisor completes a summative report of the instructor's progress throughout the semester. Summative reports are available to the instructor for review and are shared with local school administrators if concerns are noted.

Curriculum and Instruction staff monitor all course instruction. If quality does not meet our standards, faculty sanctions may be necessary. Instructors that fail to meet standards and do not show significant improvement in subsequent semesters are subject to disciplinary action (in accordance with the Faculty Sanctions policy outlined in the Handbook) at the discretion of VHS Learning. We reserve the right to terminate a course offering and/or instructor participation at any time.

Faculty Sanctions

To ensure students have consistent course experiences, we establish clear expectations for faculty during training, reinforce these expectations during faculty advising, and continually monitor them throughout the academic year. If a teacher is not meeting faculty expectations, the following protocol will be utilized:

Initial communication of concerns

Regular and ongoing communication between the teacher and VHS Learning advisor or staff member ensure teachers understand areas where they are not meeting expectations. The Associate Dean of Instruction consults with the advisor or staff member to ensure communications are clear and include progress monitoring and support to help the teacher meet expectations. It is our hope that the teacher modifies behaviors to meet faculty standards during this step.

Warning notice sent to teacher and school administrator

If the teacher fails to make progress resolving issues discussed with the curriculum/instructional coordinator or faculty advisor, the Associate Dean of Instruction will email the teacher with specific information about the issues that have surfaced, expectations for improvement, and a timeline for follow-up. The teacher's local school administrator will be included in this email. This step resolves with the teacher successfully modifying instructional practice or being placed on probation.

Probation

If the teacher has not resolved the issues outlined in the warning notice, they will be placed on probation. This process is also managed by the Associate Dean of Instruction and results in the teacher returning to a teaching position under the supervision of a faculty advisor or being removed from the program.

Extenuating Circumstances

In some circumstances, VHS Learning will move immediately to a probationary status. Situations where students are placed in jeopardy or teachers are found to be grossly inappropriate or abusive will result in immediate probationary status or termination, at the discretion of VHS Learning administration.

Feedback on Course Content or Experiences

As an organization that provides quality learning experiences and is committed to continuous improvement, we value feedback from all stakeholders (students, teachers, site coordinators, school administrators). Feedback is solicited from stakeholders through the annual survey process. Anyone with a concern that needs attention during the academic year is encouraged to submit a support request to the VHS Learning [Service Center,](#) so the information can be routed to the appropriate staff member for investigation and follow up.

FERPA Statement

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law enacted in 1974 that guarantees the confidentiality of a student's records. VHS, Inc. adheres to FERPA policies and regulations.

If you or your child were enrolled in VHS, Inc. directly by your local school or district, VHS, Inc. may be considered a school official, contractor, operator, or consultant of your child's school. In these cases, your local school may designate an authorized representative to contact for FERPA or privacy questions, records inspection requests or directory information opt-out requests. In these cases, please contact the designated representative for your local school directly. For students enrolled in VHS, Inc. courses through a private school, FERPA may not apply if the private school does not receive federal funding.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

o The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day VHS, Inc. receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students who wish to inspect their child's or their education records should submit to the Chief Privacy Officer (privacy@vhslearning.org) a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The school official will arrange for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

o The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask VHS, Inc. to amend their child's or their education record should contact the Chief Privacy Officer (privacy@vhslearning.org), clearly identify the part of the record they want changed and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

o The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. The criteria for determining who constitutes a school official and

what constitutes a legitimate educational interest must be set forth in the school's or school district's annual notification for FERPA rights. A school official typically includes a person employed by the school or school district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the school board. A school official also may include a volunteer, contractor, or consultant who, while not employed by the school, performs an institutional service or function for which the school would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official typically has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school or school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer. NOTE: FERPA requires a school or school district to make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or student of the records request unless it states in its annual notification that it intends to forward records on request, or the disclosure is initiated by the parent or eligible student.

o   The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by VHS, Inc. to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

> Student Privacy Policy Office
> U.S. Department of Education
> 400 Maryland Avenue, SW
> Washington, DC 20202

Guest Policy

We do not typically allow guests into courses. If a teacher would like to incorporate material from a content expert, they are encouraged to have that individual create resources which can then be posted to the course by the course instructor. To request guest access, please submit a support request through the VHS Learning Service Center.

Instructional Materials/Mature Content

A course using instructional materials that contain mature content (such as R-rated film clips) must contain a lesson requiring a signed permission slip to view such content, from a parent or guardian, for every student under the age of 18. If permission is not granted, the teacher must provide alternative assignments or activities to students, without penalty.

The permission form will be added by the curriculum coordinator and includes:

- The name of the course
- A description of the mature content and how it will be used
- The student and parent/guardian names (printed)
- The parent/guardian's approval signature
- The date.

Mandated Reporting of Suspected Cases of Abuse/Neglect

Under the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) all 50 states have passed laws mandating the reporting of suspected child abuse and/or neglect. Teachers are mandated reporters; if they have reason to believe that a student may be a victim of abuse or neglect, they must immediately report concerns and the reason for those concerns.

VHS Learning abides by guidance distributed to MA private schools and adheres to responsibilities outlined in Massachusetts General Laws c. 119, Section 51A. This specifies that the duty to report is triggered when a mandated reporter, in their professional capacity, has reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of eighteen years is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from: 1.) abuse, which causes harm or substantial risk of harm to the child's health of welfare, including sexual abuse; 2.) neglect, including malnutrition; 3.) physical dependence upon an addictive drug at birth; 4.) being a sexually exploited child; or 5.) being a human trafficking victim as defined by section 20M of chapter 233.

VHS Learning has established the Dean, Associate Deans, and President/CEO as designated agents for purposes of reporting cases of abuse/neglect to the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF). According to Massachusetts General Laws, an oral report must be made immediately to DCF, and a written follow-up must be made within 48 hours of initial notification.

The following protocol should be followed when reporting suspected abuse/neglect:

- If abuse or neglect is suspected, the teacher must immediately contact their curriculum or instructional coordinator to confirm/validate the nature of the concern. If the teacher is unable to reach their curriculum or instructional coordinator, they should call the VHS Learning Dean (978-450-0414) or Associate Dean of Instruction (978-450-0423).
- VHS Learning will call the student's school administration to share the concern, ask for relevant contextual information, and determine whether VHS Learning or the local school will contact DCF regarding the issue. If VHS Learning is not able to communicate with school officials within an hour of initial contact, they will connect with the appropriate local DCF office.
- In Massachusetts, reports before 9 AM or after 5 PM on weekdays, or on weekends/holidays should be made to the Massachusetts Child Abuse Emergency Line (1-800-792-5200).

As noted above, cases of abuse or neglect must be reported immediately, so timeliness of reporting to VHS Learning is critical. Teacher communications will be included as part of the filing, along with the teacher contact information, in case of follow-up.

VHS Learning will guide whether/how to follow up with the student in the class environment. In some cases, the local school will take responsibility for notifying the student of the report so that appropriate counseling can be provided.

Reporting all Other Concerns for Student Safety/Wellness

- When student comments or behaviors in class raise concern, the teacher will immediately respond to the student with appropriate concern. This response can be posted in the student's Private Topic or, depending on the gravity of the situation, via a phone call to the student.
- Teachers must report concerns about student posts or behaviors to the site coordinator and to their curriculum/instructional coordinator immediately. The email must include specific details of the concern as well as the steps that have been taken to reach out to the student. The email must also request a response from the school, so that we can ensure an adult in the student's location has received the email and is aware of the situation.
- If a student shares an explicit threat to harm themselves or others, the teacher must immediately phone an administrator at the student's local school so they can find the student and enact their crisis plan. Outside of school hours, the teacher must contact local authorities to request a wellness check, describing that their online student expressed explicit suicidal thoughts and they are concerned for their safety.
- If a student is identified as potentially suicidal, it is imperative that they are seen by their school's mental health professional. The teacher must contact the student's site coordinator and request a response within an hour. If the school does not respond, the teacher should contact the VHS Learning Dean (978-450-0414) or the Associate Dean of Instruction (978-450-0423). Outside of school hours the teacher can request a wellness check, as described above, based on the type of statement made and the timing of when the teacher receives the message.

If a teacher is concerned about a student's health, wellness, or behavior, they should contact their curriculum/instructional coordinator to discuss the situation and next steps, which will involve emailing the site coordinator or school counselor depending on the circumstance.

Diversity, Inclusivity, and Equity

At VHS Learning, a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment is one where all staff, faculty, and volunteers, whatever their gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, sexual orientation or identity, education, or ability, feel valued and respected.

We are committed to nondiscrimination and provide equal opportunity for all. We respect and value diverse life experiences and heritages and strive to ensure that all voices are valued and heard. We are committed to modeling diversity and inclusion for the online education industry and the nonprofit sector, and to maintaining an inclusive environment with equitable treatment for all. VHS Learning strives to:

- See diversity, inclusion, and equity as connected to our mission and critical to ensuring the well-being of our staff and the communities we serve.
- Acknowledge and dismantle inequities within our policies, systems, programs, and services.
- Explore potential underlying, unquestioned assumptions that interfere with inclusiveness.
- Think about how systemic inequities impact our organization's work, and how best to address that in a way that is consistent with our mission.
- Practice and encourage transparent communication in all interactions.
- Commit time and resources to expand more diverse leadership within our Board, and staff.
- Lead with respect and tolerance. We expect all our team members to embrace this notion and to express it in workplace interactions and through everyday practices.

Nondiscrimination: Title VI/IX and Other Equity Legislation

Participating schools must comply with all Federal Civil Rights legislation. Title VI of the Civil Right Act of 1964 protects individuals from discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ensures that no person shall, on the basis of gender, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in any federally assisted program. In addition, state civil rights legislation also applies to online courses. Compliance with all civil rights legislation will be the responsibility of each school, and complaints should be filed with the local school and should follow the school's grievance procedure.

Parent/Guardian Communication with VHS Learning Teacher

The primary point of contact between a VHS Learning teacher and parent/guardian is the student's site coordinator. This structure ensures local policies are not circumvented and student support is in place at the local site. VHS Learning teachers communicate with the student's site coordinator if concerns arise.

If a parent wishes to communicate with a teacher, they should request a meeting through the local site coordinator. A member of the VHS Learning Curriculum and Instruction Team will meet with the parent and site coordinator to gather information. They will include the teacher when necessary and based on the teacher's availability.

If a teacher is contacted by a parent/guardian to set up a meeting, they should share this request with their VHS Learning Curriculum/Instructional Coordinator, to determine next steps.

Privacy Policy

Please visit http://vhslearning.org/privacy-policy to view the most current Privacy Statement.

Privacy: Consideration for Email Communication

To protect student privacy, teachers and site coordinators are asked to adhere to the following communication guidelines:

- Do not use full student names in email subject lines, use initials only.
- Do not email IEP or 504 plans. Upload documents to the VHS Learning student information system.
- Be mindful of the distribution list for email communications regarding student performance or any student issues. Use secure email sending systems as appropriate.
- Initial emails should only be sent to contacts affiliated with the student in the student information system, unless the school has added personnel or a parent/guardian to support the student.

Social Media Platforms

Although VHS Learning students may connect with each other outside of their classes, using social media to make and maintain connections, students are discouraged from creating groups in social media for the purpose of completing assignments for their VHS Learning class. Discussions and group work must be completed within the VHS Learning platforms to ensure teacher visibility and equitable grading.

VHS, Inc. Intellectual Property

All course content and assets are VHS intellectual property that remain the property of VHS, Inc. and shall be used only for the education of students as outlined in VHS, Inc. participation agreements. Copies will not be made, and content will not be distributed unless authorized in writing by VHS, Inc.

Participation Requirements

Faculty Advisor Responsibilities

Faculty advisors are experienced teachers and staff who provide advice and mentoring. All new teachers are assigned a faculty advisor during their first semester teaching a VHS Learning course. In addition, teachers needing additional assistance are also assigned a faculty advisor. Faculty advisors evaluate instruction weekly, focusing on essential teaching skills and professional responsibilities. If an advisor has concerns, they must notify the Associate Dean of Instruction. VHS Learning reviews all weekly evaluations to ensure teachers are meeting standards.

Faculty advisors send their advisees a weekly communication giving brief feedback (reinforcing or constructive). Advisors are available for questions and to assist as needed. Regular communication between instructor and advisor is expected.

At the end of the semester, faculty advisors complete an end of semester evaluation for each course they are assigned. Instructors have access to these evaluations after they are reviewed. We use evaluations to determine whether instructors need additional assistance and should be assigned a faculty advisor during the following semester.

We are committed to providing high-quality courses and faculty advisor feedback is critical to this process. Advisors should be candid in their assessment of teacher practice. All questions or concerns regarding faculty advising should be directed to the Associate Dean of Instruction.

Professional Development

To ensure instructors are fully prepared to teach in an online environment, instructors receive extensive professional development before teaching with us. All instructors complete the professional development course Online Teaching Methodologies (OTM), a graduate-level course which focuses on pedagogical and select technical skills necessary for successful online instruction. Participants may also elect to purchase graduate credit for completion of their OTM professional development course. Information on taking OTM for graduate credit is provided during the OTM course.

In addition to OTM, teachers complete a self-paced training (see the Teacher Resource Area) that focuses on technical aspects of the learning management system. The course must be completed prior to the start of the first semester of teaching. Teachers remain enrolled in the Teacher Resource Area throughout their time with us, so they always have access to review this training as needed. Experienced teachers can further hone their practice through micro-credential opportunities. Micro-credentials focus on a discrete area of instruction and provide opportunities for seasoned teachers to demonstrate mastery through submission of evidence to Curriculum and Instruction staff who will evaluate, provide feedback, and award micro-credentials.

New site coordinators receive training where they learn best practices to recruit, enroll, mentor, and monitor their online students as well as administer the online program at their school. This professional development, which is self-paced, gives site coordinators the administrative and technical skills necessary to be effective in their role as school liaison. The Site Coordinator Orientation (SCO) and Resource Area is also available on an ongoing basis for reference by site coordinators. Our team is always available should site coordinators need additional support or have questions on program implementation at their school.

School Requirements for Full Participation

We offer different levels of participation to suit the needs of schools and students. A fully participating school is one that provides both a teacher (to be an online course instructor) and a site coordinator. The school receives a discounted participation fee for providing both a course instructor and a site coordinator. Course instructors assigned by a local school to participate in our program must be freed from one period of teaching duties (0.20 full-time equivalent (FTE)) to teach a VHS Learning course.

Schools may use the seats they purchase to enroll students in any academic-year course in which the student meets the course prerequisites. Schools may distribute these seats as they see fit within their own student population.

Each participating school designates a local school site coordinator. The site coordinator is responsible for coordinating the VHS Learning online program at their school and is the primary contact for their school. We suggest that the site coordinator be freed from other responsibilities for one period per day (to a maximum of 0.2 FTE). A site coordinator can be a school counselor, teacher, administrator, or paraprofessional, and multiple site coordinators can be assigned so that duties can be shared. Multiple site coordinators at the same school will receive training at no additional charge. Site coordinators must understand and adhere to any local requirements regarding online course enrollment within their own school districts/states.

School Requirements for Student-only Participation

We offer many types of program participation to suit the needs of schools and students. A school with "student-only" participation does not have a local teacher instructing an online course and uses only a site coordinator for program participation.

Schools with student-only participation pay a fee and assign a local resource as the school's site coordinator. The site coordinator is responsible for coordinating the program within the school and is the primary contact for their school. We suggest that the site coordinator be freed from other responsibilities for one period per day (to a maximum of 0.2 FTE). A site coordinator can be a school counselor or paraprofessional, and multiple site coordinators can be assigned so that duties can be shared. Multiple site coordinators at the same school receive training at no charge. Site coordinators must understand and adhere to any local requirements regarding online course enrollment within their own school districts/states.

Further details on participation options are available on our web site or by speaking to a team member.

Site Coordinator Responsibilities

The site coordinator is the primary contact between students, schools, and VHS Learning. Site coordinator responsibilities include:

- sharing information about VHS Learning program requirements and student expectations with students and families,
- recruiting students who are a good fit for the program,
- registering students into VHS Learning online courses,
- monitoring student progress,
- collecting and reporting progress reports,
- communicating student needs and verifying absences,
- reporting final grades, and
- sharing general information about the program with local administrators, school counselors, students, and families.

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The site coordinator ensures grade and progress reports for participating students are submitted for administrative purposes within the students' local school. Site coordinators track student progress in courses, review student progress within our student information system (SIS), and act quickly to resolve any issues. Site coordinators meet regularly with all students to troubleshoot operational problems and discuss progress. Site coordinators also serve as parent liaisons for students taking online courses.

Site coordinators work with course instructors when students need additional support or have an extended illness or circumstance that interferes with their participation in a course. Site coordinators manage attendance procedures, student access, and enrollment in courses.

The site coordinator keeps VHS Learning informed about progress and problems on a timely basis and ensures communications reach the appropriate school personnel. VHS Learning must be notified as soon as possible via the Service Center if there is a change of site coordinator.

Student Licensing

Software licenses are protected under copyright laws. Teachers work with our Curriculum and Instruction team as needed to obtain appropriate licenses for software prior to use in online courses.

Student Participation in Courses

VHS Learning students are expected to attend and participate in their courses as fully as they would attend and participate in a face-to-face course. All assigned work should be completed by due dates and students must actively participate in course discussions. At an absolute minimum, students are required to log-in and perform work in their paced online courses three times per week. Ideally, students will access their online classes each weekday.

In cases of extended student absence (seven or more consecutive school days), the student, student's site coordinator, or the student's parent/guardian, must contact VHS Learning for assistance in coordinating make up work. It is the responsibility of the student to make up work missed due to absence. VHS Learning Extended Absence and Late Work policies guide practice for scheduling make up work and allowing credit. It is the responsibility of each student to be familiar with late work policies and attendance policies and to adhere to these policies.

Students who do not participate in their paced course for 14 calendar days will be considered truant/non-participatory and may be dropped from the course at the discretion of VHS Learning. Please see the Truancy/Student Non-Participation policy in this handbook for additional details.

Teacher Responsibilities/VHS Learning Standards for Teaching

Teachers create safe and vibrant learning communities within our classrooms. Teachers are expected to meet the VHS Learning Standards for Teaching, which address the professional responsibilities required of VHS Learning teachers and critical skills needed to be a successful online teacher.

Teachers who do not meet the VHS Learning Standards for Teaching will be subject to faculty sanctions (see Faculty Sanctions in this handbook). Teachers must maintain content area certification and background checks as required by their local department of education. At minimum, teachers must have a fingerprinted background check every 5 years. Background check costs are not reimbursed by VHS Learning.

General
- Participate in VHS Learning courses as fully as they would participate in traditional courses.
- Login at least once a day, Monday through Friday. Working over the weekend is not required, though many teachers choose to.
- Host office hours in accordance with the VHS Learning Synchronous Tools policy.
- Accommodate students as needed, based on IEP or 504 plan documentation.
- Support students who are struggling, providing make-up plans as needed.
- Apply all VHS Learning policies consistently and equitably.

Discussions
- Read and monitor student posts in course discussions throughout the week.
- Be present in course discussions and add at least one post that deepens the discussion and helps students develop critical thinking skills.
- Respond to questions posted by students in their Private Topic (PT) and in any questions area within 24 hours, Monday through Friday.

Grading and Feedback
- Grade all assignments within one week of the assignment due date.
- Confirm student grades and enter comments according to the VHS Learning calendar.
- Provide substantive, instructive feedback on one or more key assignments each week.
- Positive feedback should be more comprehensive than "Excellent work!" and should include specifics that show the student the teacher is attentive to their work.
- Substantive feedback includes specific references to improvements that could be made and references to lessons in the week where students can review missed concepts, as applicable.
- Grade assignments based on quality and comprehensiveness, using rubrics when provided.

News Items
- Post a comprehensive "Welcome" news item at the start of each week, bridging ideas from the previous week and introducing major themes and topics of the week.
- Use a positive tone in all News items.
- Post at least one additional news item throughout the week.
- Personalize template News Items found in their course, so they reflect their own voice.

Communication
- Respond to communications from students, site coordinators, and VHS Learning within 24 hours, Monday through Friday.
- Use asset-based and unambiguous language in communication with all stakeholders.
- Introduce themselves to their students' site coordinators via email during the first week of the course or as soon as a new student is added, if after Week 1.
- Communicate with the site coordinator as soon as there is concern about student performance and/or attendance. If a student does not login for more than three days without advance notice, teachers are expected to reach out to site coordinators.
- Copy a curriculum or instructional coordinator on all communication with site coordinators, families, and schools.

- Implement the Truancy/Student Non-Participation policy if a student does not participate for 14 calendar days without a valid reason from their site coordinator (or without having proactively notified the teacher.

Absences
- Notify their curriculum or instructional coordinator via the Service Center if an illness or emergency prevents them from teaching their course.
- For three consecutive school days or less, VHS Learning will monitor the course section.
- For four consecutive school days or more, the teacher should alert their students via a News Item. VHS Learning will work with the school district to place a substitute/replacement teacher within the course. The teacher's school district will be subject to a substitute teacher fee.
- VHS Learning courses do not include scheduled vacations/breaks for teachers or students as it would be impossible to identify one break period that accommodates all schools. Therefore, teachers must schedule accordingly and plan for internet access during times when their own schedule differs from the VHS Learning calendar.

Course Revisions
- Preview course activities and materials prior to students' accessing the week's lessons, to re-familiarize themself with lesson content and check for broken links or other potential issues.
- Recommend updates, fixes, replacements for broken links, and/or improvements to courses via the Service Center.
- To allow for adequate time to complete modifications, course modification requests should be submitted no later than Friday before the week begins.

Technical Requirements for Participation

We use the Internet as the primary vehicle for course activities and instruction. Email is the primary tool for communication between faculty and administration. Schools considering participation in the program must have Internet connectivity; students and faculty must be able to access the Internet daily.

Students typically spend at least one full class period per day using a computer with Internet access to meet the work requirements of their online course.

Courses contain links to outside websites, and while we make every effort to maintain these links so that they are up to date and safe, we cannot guarantee that users following links from within a course will not encounter sites hosting malware or viruses. We strongly recommend all users install malware/virus protection from a reputable vendor, and make sure that the definitions are updated regularly to prevent infection. We cannot provide users with technical support for virus/malware removal.

Technical issues may be reported via a variety of means, including phone, email, and through the Service Center (24/7 support). Support requests submitted to the Service Center will receive a response within 24 hours, Monday through Friday.

Flexible Course Offerings

VHS Learning is pleased to offer self-paced courses for motivated students. Flexible courses are taught by licensed teachers and contain nearly identical content to the paced, asynchronous version of the courses. Students progress through the course independently, working at their own pace. Flexible courses follow all VHS Learning policies, with some exceptions, as outlined in this section of the handbook.

Start and End Dates for Flexible Courses

1 Credit Flexible Courses

Flexible courses worth 1.0 credit (AP and non-AP) will begin each Monday, starting on the first Monday in September. Students can enroll through December 1 for AP courses and through February 1 for non-AP courses. During the registration process students can select any available start date in the future. Students have until June 15 following their start date to submit all assignments. Course access will be removed on June 30.

0.5 Credit Flexible Courses

Flexible courses worth 0.5 credit will be available on an ongoing basis, with enrollment typically occurring the same day that the student enrolls in and pays for the course. Students have 20 weeks from their start date to submit all assignments.

Add Period for Flexible Courses

Because of the frequent opportunity for enrollment, there is no add period for Flexible courses. Students who miss a Monday start date will be placed into the next Monday start.

Drop Period for Flexible Courses

Students have a 7-day grace period from the course start date to drop the course. The standard VHS Learning refund policy will apply.

Extension Requests for Flexible Courses

The June 15 end date for 1 credit Flexible courses will not be extended except in the case of a student with a doctor's note excusing them from attending school for at least 2 consecutive weeks. Requests for additional time beyond June 15 must be submitted to VHS Learning via support request from the site coordinator or guardian. If a student approaches a teacher about an extension, the teacher should ask the site coordinator to follow up with a support request through the VHS Learning Service Center.

Students enrolled in a 0.5 credit Flexible course can request a one-time extension if they do not finish their work within their initial 20-week enrollment period. Students must request the extension via a support request. A VHS Learning staff member will confirm a student has completed at least 50% of the course before granting a 2-week extension.

Minimum Enrollment Period for Flexible Courses

Students must be enrolled in a 1 credit Flexible course for a minimum of 20 weeks before they can earn credit for the course. Students who attempt to finish in less than 20 weeks will need to wait for the 20-week enrollment period to be complete before accessing their final grade and transcript. The minimum enrollment period for a 0.5 credit Flexible course is 6 weeks.

Pacing Expectations for Flexible Courses

Although Flexible courses do not have deadlines to submit work, it is important that students submit work regularly so that they can finish their course within the expected timeline.

To provide site coordinators and parents/guardians with an approximate picture of student progress, VHS Learning teachers will, at least every 4 weeks, email site coordinators with an update about what a student's approximate course grade would be if the student does not complete additional work in the course.

This information will be available to site coordinators via a Genius dashboard report. Site coordinators are urged to monitor their students' overall progress relative to expected progress and share updates with parents/guardians on a regular basis.

Students are expected to complete the course in the order that the units are presented. Though students will see all course materials (except exams) on enrollment, they should progress through the content in order, unless otherwise directed by their teacher or site coordinator.

It is expected that students will submit assignments consistently as they progress through the curriculum. Students should turn in assignments as they are completed; if a student turns in a large volume of assignments at once, the teacher will not be able to return feedback within 3 days and likely will not be able to provide feedback before the student moves on to new material.

Grade Periods for Flexible Courses

All grades will be captured in a single term in the VHS Learning student information system and learning management system. Students, site coordinators, and guardians will be able to monitor grades throughout the duration of the course, however, an official grade will be issued once, no later than June 30.

If a school requires term or semester grades, it will be the school's responsibility to determine those scores based on their local policies and evaluation of student progress. We recommend that schools consider a student's consistent effort and their approximate pacing in the term grade.

Site Coordinator Responsibilities for Flexible Courses

It is expected that site coordinators will regularly monitor progress in Flexible courses and will regularly review the pacing and grade information provided in the Genius dashboard for Flexible enrollments. Site coordinators are expected to share progress compared to "expected" progress as well as approximate grade if students do not submit any additional work.

It is crucial that site coordinators communicate with families whether a student is on-track to finish by the 20-week or June 15 deadline. Site coordinators will still be responsible for face-to-face support and communication as they are for all paced enrollments.

In addition to site coordinator dashboard information, students, site coordinators, and guardians (when guardian information is provided) will be sent a weekly progress update from the VHS Learning student information system. Teachers will send a monthly update to the student and site coordinator with current grade, relative progress, and approximate grade if a student does not submit any additional assignments.

Instructional Responsibilities for Flexible Course Teachers

Expectation	Flexible course teachers will
Log in	Log in daily Monday - Friday
Communication	Employ a positive and professional tone and incorporate communication techniques that promote clarity
	Monitor and respond to Private Topics (PTs) and question forums daily
	Send a PT to a student at least once every two weeks to connect. Send additional PTs to recap 1x1 meeting notes, acknowledge when a student completes a unit of study, and to share reminders and suggestions related to pacing
	Contact site coordinators at least once a month with a progress/pacing update; email more often when students require additional support
Virtual Classroom	Host Virtual Classroom drop-in office hours once a week
	Invite students to a 15-minute one-on-one check-in once a month
	Promote Virtual Classroom office hours and check-ins
Grades and Feedback	Return grades within 3 school days of student submission date whenever possible
	Provide substantive, instructive, and actionable feedback on critical assignments
	Confirm course grade (one term total) in the student information system, Genius, within one week of student completion
Additional Student Support	Preview upcoming lessons and submit a service request for broken links, typos, or other essential updates
	Implement 504 and IEP accommodations, as appropriate
	Use varied strategies to support student understanding, including recording short video explanations or offering synchronous support
	Address issues of academic dishonesty in accordance with VHS Learning policies
	Effectively use VHS Learning technology to support instruction, troubleshooting as technical difficulties arise

Transferring into a Flexible Course from a Paced Course

There are circumstances in which a transfer to a Flexible course from a Paced course may be appropriate for a student. Except in the case of a student with an extreme hardship or medical issue, students will be required to pay a fee to transfer to the Flexible course. If a student wishes to transfer, they should speak to their site coordinator, who can request fee information via a support request.

If a student transfers to a Flexible course, a member of the VHS Learning team will transfer all grades earned in the Paced version to the Flexible course. Student work will not be transferred to the new course, so students should save a local copy of any work they wish to reference.

Students will be expected to join the AP Classroom for their Flexible course, which could result in lost work, depending on the types of assignments submitted in the course.

Any zeros earned for missing work in the Paced course will not be transferred to the Flexible course and students are encouraged to complete missing assignments before completing new assignments in the Flexible course. Students will be expected to work consistently in their Flexible course to complete any remaining assignments by the course end date.

Truancy Policy for Flexible Courses

Due to the self-paced nature of Flexible courses, the standard VHS Learning truancy policy does not apply. The site coordinator and guardian (if information is provided) will receive a weekly email from the VHS Learning system. This email will include the student's current grade, course progress (number of assignments remaining), and last course login date. It is expected that the site coordinator or guardian will review these emails regularly and connect with their student if they are not accessing the course.

To support continued student progress, the Flexible teacher will take the following actions:

- Check the course Classlist at least once per week, noting last course access date.
- If a student has not logged in for 2 weeks or longer, OR if a student has logged in but has not submitted any assignments for more than 2 weeks, the teacher will email the site coordinator and guardian with the following information:
  - The date of last course login
  - Reminder that the student must submit work regularly to finish the class by the course end date.
  - Reminder that weekly updates are being sent from VHS Learning and a suggestion that they submit a support request if they are not receiving these emails.
  - A request for confirmation that the email has been received.
- If the student continues to be absent, the teacher should email at least once every month thereafter, until the end of the student's time in the course.

Credit Recovery Program

Credit Recovery Course Pacing and Credit

Credit Recovery courses are designed for students that desire self-paced credit recovery and are motivated, independent learners. Students should consult with their school to ensure Credit Recovery courses will apply to graduation requirements. Credit Recovery courses are not approved for initial eligibility with the NCAA.

Credit Recovery courses are taught by licensed teachers and enrollment is available on a rolling basis. Students progress through the course independently and work at their own pace. Each Credit Recovery course must be completed within 20 weeks, though many students complete the course in less than 20 weeks. Students must remain enrolled in the Credit Recovery course for at least 4 weeks to earn credit for the course.

Credit Recovery courses are identified as a 0.5 credit or 1 credit experience based on the amount of content included in the course. Additional details about the Credit Recovery program can be found on the Credit Recovery page of our website.

Credit Recovery Course Extension Request

If a student has not completed a Credit Recovery course by the end of 20-weeks, they are eligible to request a 2-week extension. To be eligible for a Credit Recovery course extension, the student must have completed at least 50% of the assignments in the course. Extension requests should be submitted via the Service Center.

Credit Recovery Course Partial Credit Request

Students are expected to complete all Credit Recovery content to receive credit for each Credit Recovery course. Workload reduction is not possible, due to the already abbreviated curricula in each course. If a student requires only part of a Credit Recovery course, the student's parent/guardian or site coordinator must submit a support request in the Service Center.

The student and parent/guardian should understand that the following will apply:

- The teacher will exempt the student from all non-required assignments.
- The grade for completed assignments will be entered into the VHS Learning Student Information System, so that a school can view the students' earned score.
- A transcript for the course will not be generated, because the student did not earn credit for the course. VHS Learning staff will remove student access to the course transcript.

Credit Recovery Course Truancy Policy

Due to the self-paced nature of the Credit Recovery program, the standard VHS Learning truancy policy does not apply. The site coordinator and guardian (if information is provided) will receive a weekly email from the VHS Learning system. This email will include the student's current grade, course progress (number of assignments remaining), and last course login date. It is expected that the site coordinator or guardian will review these emails regularly and connect with their student if they are not accessing the course.

To support continued student progress, the Credit Recovery teacher will take the following actions:

- Check the Classlist at least once per week, noting last course access date.
- If a student has not logged in for more than 2 weeks, the teacher will email the site coordinator and guardian (if available) with the following information:
  - Date of last course login
  - Reminder about weekly updates from VHS Learning, including a suggestion that they submit a VHS Learning support request if they are not receiving these emails.
  - Request for confirmation that the email has been received.
  - Statement that the teacher will continue to monitor for student work and that they are available if needed.
- If the student continues to be absent, the teacher should email approximately once every month thereafter, until the end of the student's time in the course (20 weeks).

Credit Recovery Course Tuition Refund

Credit Recovery tuition is refundable prior to the start of the class, less a $25 administrative fee. No tuition refund will be granted after the start of the course. Please note that Credit Recovery enrollments start within one day of registration, so the time to receive a full refund is small. Schools and students should be confident of their enrollment needs prior to enrolling in a Credit Recovery course. Membership seats or enrollments purchased in bulk for Credit Recovery enrollments are not refundable.

Summer School Program

Summer Courses

Summer courses are either four or eight weeks in duration. Summer school students may access their online course from any computer with an Internet connection. Courses are paced and include required interactions with other students in weekly class discussions. Students are expected to spend a minimum of 90 minutes per day, Monday through Friday, completing activities for the course.

Each 8-week extended session summer course is worth 1 credit. Each 4-week summer course is worth 0.5 credits. Content is taught at an accelerated pace so students can cover material during the summer. Participating schools translate credit earned into appropriate school credit. Students and their associated school contact are provided with a course transcript at the end of the course session giving the student's grade for the course and the credit earned. Students with an IEP or 504 plan must upload relevant documentation to the student information system and notify the course instructor during the first week of class so that arrangements can be made.

Courses are designed for middle and high school students. Students participating in courses must be students aged 21 or younger. Grade requirements for courses are located within course descriptions in the online course catalog.

Summer School Extension/Incomplete Requests

Students must complete all work for summer school courses within 5 days of the course end-date. Students who are not able to complete work within this period are encouraged to enroll in the corresponding Credit Recovery course and finish the course at their own pace. An additional enrollment fee for the Credit Recovery course will apply.

Summer School Late Work Policy

Due to the abbreviated schedule for Summer School courses, late work will only be accepted for one week from the due date and a 20% penalty will be applied to late work submitted within that week. In the last week of the class the late period is 5 days from the due date, so that teachers can assess work and finalize grades.

Summer School Payment and Tuition Refunds

We accept both school-subsidized payments as well as individual student tuition for Summer School courses. Students may pay by e-check, credit card, or request that their school be invoiced. Students who officially withdraw from their summer course may receive a refund of tuition according to the following schedule. Notification of withdrawal must be made in writing:

- A full refund, less a $25 administration fee, will be granted if withdrawal occurs prior to the start date of the course.
- No tuition refund will be granted after the start of the course.

Credit for Summer School and Credit Recovery Courses

It is the responsibility of the student to determine your school's acceptance of Summer School and Credit Recovery course credits.

Custom Offering Program

We strive to help schools create a supplemental educational program that meets each school's unique needs. We are not a one-size-fits-all model; we work directly with schools and school administrators to customize solutions. Some schools have specific scheduling requirements, need content-only course licensing options, or prefer to enroll their students in a private cohort. Other schools prefer to offer courses in a blended implementation, using their own course instructors. In some cases, schools need a course off-cycle due to a short-term or longer-term teacher absence. We can work with your school to create a solution that meets your school's needs and time frame.

In addition to standard membership options, schools can run private/custom versions of summer school and school-year courses with a cohort of students from their own school. We can supply the course content, teacher (or schools can supply their own), and online classroom space. We can also customize teacher education and professional development programs to meet a school's needs. Contact us at 978.897.1900 to find out more about how your school can benefit from our custom offerings.