

ACADEMIC INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY DIVISION

The Division of Academic Innovation & Technology of Laredo College helps to achieve the College's mission by offering high-quality distance education, utilizing cutting-edge instructional technology, and providing exceptional faculty professional development, all in an effort to assist students in reaching their academic goals.

The AIT Division oversees and provides leadership support to the following units:

- eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center
- Center for Teaching Excellence & Learning
- Center for Learning, Academic, and Student Success (CLASS)
- Instructional Technology Center (ITC)
- Library Services
- TRIO Student Support Services
- The Manuel Blanco Writing and Research Center

For more information or assistance contact the Office of the Dean of Academic Innovation and Technology at (956) 721-5888 or visit our website www.laredo.edu/academicinnovationandtechnology (<http://www.laredo.edu/academicinnovationandtechnology/>)

eLearning and Instructional Innovation Center

Mission Statement

The eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center supports the mission of Laredo College by offering online degree programs and courses to meet the needs of the diverse student population of Webb County and the surrounding communities.

eLearning Today, Leading Tomorrow

The eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center at Laredo College provides instructional and technical support to maximize student access to instruction by offering online, hybrid/blended, and videoconference courses. Online courses provide greater flexibility and require students to be self-disciplined and to possess time management and technical skills. Students are responsible for purchasing their textbooks, completing their assignments, and taking exams as stated in the course syllabus.

Modes of Instruction

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) rules define distance education as "The formal educational process that occurs when students and instructors are not in the same physical setting for the majority (more than 50 percent) of instruction." Distance education can include courses and programs offered online, off-campus face-to-face, and electronic-to-groups. Coordinating Board rules recognize two categories of distance education courses: fully distance education courses and hybrid/blended courses. A fully distance education course is defined as "A course which may have mandatory face-to-face sessions totaling no more than 15 percent of the instructional time. Examples of face-to-face sessions include orientation, laboratory, exam review, or an in-person test." A hybrid/blended course is defined as "A course in which a majority (more than 50 percent but less than 85 percent), of the planned instruction occurs when the students and instructor(s) are not in the same place."

Online Courses

All course activity is completed online; there are no required face-to-face sessions within the course, and the course may require minimal on-campus activity.

Hybrid Courses

Most course activity is completed online, but there are some required face-to-face instructional activities such as lectures, discussions, labs, or other in-person learning activities. Remember that all course requirements for an online course also apply to a hybrid course.

Videoconference Courses

Technologies are used to extend classroom lectures and other activities to students at remote sites in real time. Students attend scheduled lectures at a designated videoconferencing room that originates at an LC campus, local high school, or other location. The primary difference with this mode of instruction is that several sites may be involved in a simultaneous broadcast.

See Registration for Online Courses (p. 84) below for details and examples of online, hybrid, and videoconference courses.

Technology Requirements for Online Courses

A high-speed internet connection is suggested for best results when accessing Canvas. The internet browser is an important factor to ensure online courses work adequately during the semester. Canvas requires the latest two versions of every browser release; however, we highly recommend that the browser's flash plug-ins and internet browser be updated to the latest version. To avoid technical issues, we recommend students to use Firefox, Google Chrome, or Safari. Click on the links to view required Canvas browser and computer requirements. Students will also be required to have a webcam to take online exams from home.

Canvas Learning Management System

The eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center (eLearning Center) is the administrator of the Canvas Learning Management System for Laredo College. Canvas is used to deliver online content for face-to-face, hybrid, and online courses. Students can access Canvas through the PASPort Student Portal.

Virtual Backpack

The Virtual Backpack is a free, on-demand, self-paced orientation course that helps you to understand online classes and provides the information you need to start your online learning experience on the right note. The Virtual Backpack Online Student Orientation is open to all current and prospective students and covers topics on how to log into and navigate your course, customize your account, complete assignments and tests, and more. Access the Virtual Backpack today!

Scholastic Dishonesty

The college expects all online students to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is beyond reproach. Students will be expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their online experiences. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in academic work is subject to disciplinary action. The Scholastic Dishonesty (p. 344) section of the Policies for Students provides additional information on "scholastic dishonesty," including but not limited to, cheating on academic work, plagiarism and collusion.

Student Code of Conduct and Discipline

Students enrolled in online courses at Laredo College are expected to abide by the LC Code of Student Conduct (p. 344) outlined in the LC catalog. Any student who violates any provision of the Code of Conduct is subject to disciplinary action, including expulsion, notwithstanding any

action taken by civil authorities on account of the violation. Consequently, online students are expected to be fully acquainted with all published policies, rules, and regulations of the college, and copies of the Code shall be available to each student for review at the Office of the Associate Dean of Student Affairs.

Student Disciplinary Procedures

Disciplinary action related to online courses is handled informally between the student and instructor or by the Office of the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, if there is a mutual agreement to do so. This agreement will be documented in writing. If a disciplinary problem cannot be resolved on an informal basis, a formal disciplinary hearing may be requested. Special arrangements may be made for online learning students who do not reside in our in-service area. Consult the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline (p. 344) to learn more about the disciplinary process.

Advising for Online Students

First-time online students can visit the Advising, Career & Transfer Center to receive academic advisement and career exploration. The academic and career advisors assist students with educational and career planning, assessment interpretation, and online course selection. Additionally, online students have access to Email Advising. Email Advising is a web-based advising system that is intended to provide advising to current LC students who can't visit the Advising, Career & Transfer Center in person. The Registration Guide provides related information on advising, registration, payment deadlines, the academic calendar, and more. Online students can call the Advising, Career & Transfer Center (956)-721-5135 to get additional information or support since the eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center does not advise students.

Syllabus Listings

Online students who want to learn more about a course before enrolling in it can do so by viewing the Syllabus Information website. The syllabus provides an outline of what will be covered in the course of study and provides other pertinent requirements; thus this process allows students to preview the course content information before committing to an online course.. Additionally, the Faculty Vitae provides an overview of the instructor's teaching experience, including their respective educational credentials.

Registration for Online Classes

Students may register for online, hybrid and videoconference courses through PASPort (pasport.laredo.edu (<http://pasport.laredo.edu>)). eLearning courses adhere to LC's admission policies, testing requirements, and follow the academic calendar (p. 6). A \$20 per semester credit hour fee will be charged to students who enroll in an online, hybrid or videoconference course to cover the costs associated with managing, maintaining, and upgrading Canvas and other online services. Students who desire to register for eLearning courses will be able to find them in PASPort using section identifiers as shown below.

- **E01 – E99** (Online courses) Ex. ENGL 1301E01
- **MY1 – MY9** (Main Campus Hybrid/Blended courses) Ex. KINE 1306MY1
- **SY1 – SY9** (South Campus Hybrid/Blended courses) Ex. PHYS 1302SY1
- **LY1 – LY9** (Hybrid/Blended Lab) Ex. BIOL 1108LY1
- **MV1 – MV9** (Main Campus Videoconference courses) Ex. GOVT 2305MV1

- **SV1 – SV9** (South Campus Videoconference courses) Ex. ENGL 1301SV1

Online students are encouraged to consult the LC Student Handbook (p. 335) to get additional information on how to get advised, drop an online course, the attendance policy, the availability of student support services, and other important online guidelines.

Authenticating the Identity of Students Enrolled in Distance Education Courses

On the first day of class, students access their course in Canvas by logging into the secure web portal PASPort Personnel and Student Portal (PASPort). The PASPort student portal requires that all students obtain a unique PASPort username and password that is generated through the LC Students Information System during the admission process. Students are issued a temporary login password that utilizes the individual's birth date consisting of six digits: month, day, and year. When students log in for the first time, they will be prompted to change their password to one that requires a minimum of **8 characters** and consists of a combination of alphanumeric and special characters to increase the difficulty of a login breach to their personal account. Students must choose a password that meets the imposed requirements, is difficult to decipher, is not a common word, personal detail, or a reflection of the user's work activities.

The student's password expires every 180 days; however, they can change their password at any time within this 180 day period by clicking on the Forgot Password Link or from within the student PASPort portal by selecting "My Account" option on the upper-left portion of the toolbar displaying on the main homepage. Students can also set up secret Questions and Answers in an attempt to recover their password if forgotten. The instructions on this webpage advise the students to come up with responses to questions that are difficult to decipher, all in an effort to prevent intrusion.

PASPort requires that students use the unique account username and password that is given to them by the Enrollment and Registration Services Center during the admissions process. Inside PASPort, students not only have access to Canvas, but also to personal information, like their home address, phone numbers, emergency contacts, tax forms, transcripts, and more. **It is important that students create strong passwords, and do not share their login credentials. PASPort accounts are designated for the use of the student that was approved ONLY. Students are encouraged to become familiar with the Security section of the college Internet Usage Policy.**

- Each student, employee, or guest with a PASPort account shall be responsible for all use of the account.
- Accounts shall be for use by a single individual - the person for whom the account was approved.
- An employee or student shall not share or give his or her assigned login or password information to anyone.

Students are urged not to attempt to read or copy files belonging to others or attempt to decrypt or translate encrypted material unless the files have been made accessible by the owner, or appropriate authorization has been obtained.

Bookstore and Textbook Information

The course syllabus provides required textbook information for online courses. Textbook(s) and other instructional resource materials can be purchased online at the LC Bookstore Website. The bookstore search tools allow students to find a textbook by title, author/publisher, and the price. Students can buy their books online from other web sources

and have them shipped directly to their home address. Contact the LC Bookstore at (956)721-5250 for additional information.

Testing for Online Courses

Students taking online courses can test from any location and are not required to come to campus. All online courses require the use of Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor, a program that records students while testing. Students can download a free copy of the Respondus Monitor program from the eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center website at www.laredo.edu/cms/Respondus (<http://www.laredo.edu/cms/Respondus/>). The LockDown Browser/Monitor program requires that each student have a computer with a webcam and microphone to record the online exam session. The webcam can be part of your computer or it can be connected to the computer using a USB cable. To get a basic understanding of the webcam feature of Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor, view a short video at <http://www.respondus.com/products/lockdown-browser/student-movie.shtml> (<http://www.respondus.com/products/lockdown-browser/student-movie.shtml/>). Students also have the option to come on-campus to take a test. The available locations for on-campus testing are the eLearning Center and the Center for Learning, Academic, and Student Success. For assistance with downloading, installing, or taking a test with LockDown Browser/Monitor, contact the eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center staff at 956.721.5880 or complete an eHelp Desk request at <https://ehelpdesk.laredo.edu/home> (<https://ehelpdesk.laredo.edu/home/>).

Computer Labs Available by appointment

Student eHelp Desk

The eHelp Desk is a self-service portal where students can get help with their technical issues related to Canvas and online classes. Students can log on to the eHelp Desk at <https://ehelpdesk.laredo.edu/home> (<https://ehelpdesk.laredo.edu/home/>). Technical support is available after regular office hours and on weekends. You may also call 956.721.5880 to request help during our regular business hours.

Online Tutoring

Tutoring is available to all students as an online resource, giving access in real-time to tutors who can help with assignments and answer questions. Students can receive live tutoring help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through Smarthinking Online Tutoring, an online tutoring service provided by the Center for Learning, Academic, and Student Success. Students must first log in to PASPort and then to Canvas to find the Smarthinking Online Tutoring link.

Library Resources

The LC Library Services offers online students a broad range of library learning resources and instructional resources such as eBooks, eJournals, eDatabases, Periodical Listings, and the ability to request books or articles from another library, as well as access to eEncyclopedias, Government Information, and other resources. They also have access to the library collection at Texas A&M International University through a mutual borrowing agreement. TexShare services are also available to borrow materials from member libraries across Texas and to access periodical databases. The link How-To Videos provides tutorials on how to access the library homepage from off-campus and be able to find books and articles on the database listings.

The Distance Education link, on the Library's webpage, has handy databases Research Guide by subject area, which makes it easy for students to find what they need. Furthermore, the Library has a Mobile App that allows students instant and easy virtual access to all of the library databases, browse the book catalog, periodicals, and more. Online

students can obtain library assistance or specific information by sending an email to the Reference_desk@laredo.edu or by calling (956) 721-5275 or (956) 794-4275.

Special Services

The Special Services Center ensures that all students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate in all facets of college life by providing reasonable accommodations and supportive services. The Special Services Center focuses on being supportive by providing equipment and software to help the student succeed in a college setting. For more information, please contact the Special Services Center at (956)721-5137.

Financial Aid

Online students are encouraged to complete a Financial Aid Application online. It is very important to apply early, from January 1st through March 1st, so that financial aid can arrive on time. Students must provide the required documentation to the Federal Student Aid program, LC, and HigherOne by the given deadlines in order to get prompt approval on their Financial Aid Application. HigherOne provides LC students with a debit card that can be used to withdraw financial aid money, quick and easy. For assistance on how to fill out the application, contact the Financial Aid Center via email at finaid@laredo.edu or by phone at (956) 721-5361.

Withdrawal from Online Courses

Please contact the Office of the Registrar and Admission for details on withdrawing from courses. It is the student's responsibility to submit an Add/Drop form prior to the official last day to Drop with a "W." Students who receive Financial Aid Title IV funds and withdraw from LC, may owe a refund to the Department of Education. Students, who receive Financial Aid, please contact the LC Financial Aid Center prior to withdrawing from any LC courses.

Grades

Students can view their online course progress reports by clicking on "Grades" from the Canvas homepage to open their personal gradebook. This report provides the grade for a particular assignment/exam, the date the assignment/exam was taken, and view any comment the instructor may have made. Additionally, students can use the "What If" tool in Canvas to add a grade to specific assignments or the final exam to obtain an average of their progress or to determine what grades they need to make in order to pass the course. The final exam and overall final course grade can be accessed through the PASPort account under the "Student" Tab. A grade of "I" (Incomplete) will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances such as verifiable serious illness or death in the immediate family.

Course Grades and Transcript Access

Students can view their grades by accessing the Canvas Gradebook in their online/hybrid course or through their PASPort account using their choice of mobile device with Internet access. Grades and other student information such as registration holds, financial aid status, and unofficial transcripts are available on PASPort. Final grades for all courses will be available within one to two days after the end of the semester through the LC PASPort Portal. Official Transcripts can be obtained from the Enrollment and Registration Services Center once specific criteria is met.

Academic Appeals

Online students who think that the final course grade is incorrect, have two weeks (10 working days) after the grade is issued to appeal their grade. Students who feel that a grade earned in a class activity is incorrect, have one week (five working days) to appeal a grade that has been issued. Online students are encouraged to discuss grade

issues immediately with their instructor. If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved after consultation with the instructor, the online student needs to discuss the issue with the division chair as part of an informal process. A formal conference can be scheduled if the issue is not resolved; the Student Rights and Responsibilities Students Complaints (p. 367) section on the LC public website provides the process to file a written complaint.

Complaints and Grievances

Online instructors are not under the supervision of the eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center, nor does it address issues regarding instructional matters. Issues or complaints related to online or hybrid courses or an instructor must follow the appropriate chain of command: Instructor, Department Chair, Division Dean, Vice President of Instruction, and then the President of LC. Please consult the LC Student Handbook for detailed instructions on Students Rights, Responsibilities, and Students Complaints (p. 88). Students may contact the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs at (956) 794-4988 for additional information.

Family Education Rights & Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)

Laredo College is committed to protecting the privacy of traditional and online students by adhering to a Board approved Student Records Policy. The College President or designee shall develop and maintain a comprehensive system of student records and reports dealing with all facets of the College District program operation and shall ensure through reasonable procedures that records are accessed by authorized persons only, as allowed by this policy. The data and records shall be stored in a safe and secure manner and shall be conveniently retrievable for utilization by authorized school officials. Laredo College shall make a student's records available to the student. The records custodian or designee shall use reasonable procedures to verify the requestor's identity before disclosing student records containing personal identifiable information. Online students can review their records in person during regular business hours without charge upon written request to the records custodian. For in-person viewing, the records custodian or designee shall be available to explain the record and to answer questions. The confidential nature of the student's records shall be maintained at all times. As part of this confidentiality, LC complies with the provisions of protecting the privacy of educational records, establishes the right of a student to inspect and review his/her educational record, and provides guidelines for the correction of inaccurate or misleading data. LC complies with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and informs students of their rights by publishing the general policy in the LC College Catalog, the eLearning & Instructional Innovation Center Student Handbook, and the FERPA General Guidance for Students all these documents are available on the eLearning Center webpage under the Student Resources link. Students enrolled in online courses are required to communicate with instructors via email using the LC student PASPort Portal and the messaging system within the LMS which ensures privacy associated with the unique login and password assigned to the student. In order to keep student's grades confidential, online faculty utilize the Canvas Gradebook without the need for emailing student's progress reports to external email services. Furthermore, eLearning Center staff informs students during "live" LMS orientations to accept responsibility for the security of their personal username and password, likewise not to share login credentials with anyone, and to always terminate their personal PASPort sessions after each use.