

**VIRTUAL**  
VIRGINIA



# COUNSELOR HANDBOOK

2018–2019

[virtualvirginia.org](http://virtualvirginia.org)

A PROGRAM OF THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## Welcome to Virtual Virginia

We are excited that you are joining Virtual Virginia (VVA) this year. This handbook answers many of the questions you may have about Virtual Virginia and provides quick access to information. Please make sure you are familiar with all of the Virtual Virginia policies and procedures outlined here.

Virtual Virginia courses meet or exceed rigorous curriculum standards, including the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) and the College Board Audit Certification. All Virtual Virginia courses are staffed by highly-qualified Virginia licensed instructors with virtual office hours posted within the courses. These virtual office hours provide ample opportunities for students to contact their instructor(s) via a toll free telephone line, using email, or communicating through a live web-based conferencing tool. In addition to the local mentor, students may access the services of the Virtual Virginia Help Desk for technical issues.

Virginia has a long history in providing distance-learning opportunities for its middle and high school students. Beginning in the 1980s, Advanced Placement (AP) and world language courses were offered via satellite television to students throughout Virginia via the Virginia Satellite Education Network (VSEN) program. The primary mission of the program was to serve rural and underserved students with courses that were either unavailable because of the lack of highly qualified instructors or too few students to offer the course.

Several years ago, the program changed to include Web-based delivery and additional world language, core courses, Advanced Placement, and elective courses were added. The program became known as the Virginia Virtual Advanced Placement School (VVAPS). In 2005 the Virginia Department of Education saw a need to combine the VSEN and VVAPS programs and move toward embracing online education. Through that process, the VDOE created the Virtual Virginia (VVA) program. Over the years thousands of students in Virginia and across the nation have successfully completed courses using Virtual Virginia, and Virtual Virginia continues to expand course offerings to help meet the individual needs of students.

Virtual Virginia students are active participants in online learning. They work with talented instructors and interact with them to help them achieve their educational goals. Students experience opportunities to interact with other students around the state, around the nation, and from other countries. Students develop strong relationships with their instructor and their fellow students. They get an opportunity to learn technology skills in addition to subject area knowledge. Lastly, students are expected to effectively manage their time and to keep up with course assignments.

Virtual learning and online courses offer flexibility in the learning environment, but some things remain constant including the need to individualize instruction, communicate regularly and closely monitor student learning. Virtual Virginia instructors utilize local school mentors and local school counselors as direct points of contact to ensure student success. This handbook will detail some of the guidelines that were established to help define the roles and responsibilities of local school counselors.

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*Note: This handbook is subject to change at any time. Virtual Virginia reserves the right to make changes to this handbook as needed and without prior notice.*

## VDOE Statement of Nondiscrimination

The Virginia Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, political affiliation, or against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities. The policy permits appropriate employment preferences for veterans and specifically prohibits discrimination against veterans.

For further information on Federal non-discrimination regulations, contact the Office for Civil Rights at [OCR.DC@ed.gov](mailto:OCR.DC@ed.gov) or call 1-800-421-3481.

You may also view Governor Terry McAuliffe's Executive Order 1 (EO-1, 2014), which specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, political affiliation, or against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities. The policy permits appropriate employment preferences for veterans and specifically prohibits discrimination against veterans.



## Student Support

Virtual Virginia provides Registrar and HelpDesk support to enhance the academic experience of Virtual Virginia students. The local school is required to provide a counselor and on-site mentor to provide student services at the local school.

## Virtual Virginia Registrar

The Virtual Virginia Registrar, Tavy Young provides registration support for all Virtual Virginia students through collaboration representatives of the local school division, VVA administration, faculty, and staff.

Virtual Virginia students, student parent/guardian, and local school counselors and mentors may contact Tavy Young by phone at 866-903-8194

Registration questions can also be sent to [tavy.young@virtualva.org](mailto:tavy.young@virtualva.org)

## Virtual Virginia HelpDesk

Virtual Virginia operates a toll-free technical support line for students and local school personnel to use for assistance with any technical issues related to Virtual Virginia courses.

The HelpDesk toll free number is 866-650-0027

Technical questions can also be sent to [support@virtualhelpdesk.org](mailto:support@virtualhelpdesk.org)

## Local School Mentor

Each student taking courses with Virtual Virginia must be assigned a mentor by the local school. The local school principal, assistant principal, or other assigned local school designee assigns a mentor to each student enrolled in a Virtual Virginia course. A local school mentor must be assigned to each student via the Virtual Virginia registration system. If the mentor assigned to a student is changed or needs to be updated after enrollment occurs, the local school is responsible for entering this change in the registration system.

Mentor/student partnerships are important to student success. A local school teacher may serve as a mentor; however, the mentor does not have to be a licensed teacher.

Daily mentor responsibilities include:

- Maintaining regular contact with students taking Virtual Virginia courses
- Monitoring student progress and needs through daily contact with students taking online courses
- Monitoring student progress and reporting to parents, counselors, principals, and any other stakeholders
- Serving as liaison between the student, the school counselor, and Virtual Virginia instructors and student parent or guardian regarding student performance and progress
- Proctoring tests and examinations on school grounds
- Providing any documented Section 504, IEP, or other necessary student services
- Working with the local technology staff to ensure that all students have access to the appropriate technology
- Retrieving and providing the school with student grades on locally designated dates
- Notifying the school counselor immediately of any student's intent to withdraw from Virtual Virginia courses.

## Enrollment

Students who are enrolled in and attending a Virginia public school may elect to enroll in a Virtual Virginia course with prior approval of the local school. The school counselor or designee registers the student online through the Virtual Virginia Student Information System (SIS) registration system. Students are enrolled in Virtual Virginia courses on a space available basis. At the time of enrollment the local school mentor acknowledges and agrees to all Virtual Virginia policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.

If a student wishes to enroll in Virtual Virginia courses in addition to a full schedule of classes, it will be at the discretion and approval of the local school to award the credits and pay for the courses if necessary. For a student to enroll in a Virtual Virginia course, the local school must agree to award the assigned credit for the course. If the course includes a relevant end-of-course assessment, the local school will administer the assessment and award Verified Credit. Credit is posted into the student's record by the student's local school.

There is no limit to the number of courses that a student may take if the school approves the course registration and the student meets the course prerequisites.

The local school is responsible for maintaining a current counselor of record for each student enrolled in Virtual Virginia courses throughout the year.

Homeschool students may also register for Virtual Virginia courses. The homeschool instructor of record, who may be the parent/guardian, may enroll the student, and the parents or guardians are responsible for payment of all tuition or fees associated with the course.

## Withdrawing from Courses

Students enrolled in Virtual Virginia courses who wish to drop a course should withdraw within 21 calendar days from the first day of the course. No tuition will be refunded after 60 calendar days from the course start date.

Students must continue to submit assignments until the online withdrawal is processed locally and recorded in the Virtual Virginia Student Information System (SIS). Student grades may be negatively impacted by assignments not submitted until the date of withdrawal. Students who stop participating in the course without officially withdrawing will continue to receive zeroes for work not submitted until the end of the course, at which time their schools will receive a final grade. The notation of a formal withdrawal on the student record is a local school decision.

Students who are inactive or fail to complete coursework over a 30-calendar-day period will be administratively dropped from the course.

Withdrawing from a Virtual Virginia course must be done by the local school counselor who originally registered the student. All withdrawals must be done online by following these steps:

1. The counselor logs in to their VVA SIS account.
2. Click on the “Students” tab. Click on the student’s name.
3. On the left side of the window, click “Current Enrollment.”
4. Click “Course Withdrawal.”
5. Click “Request Drop.”
6. Select the course to drop. Complete the Comment section and drop the course. Click “Save.”

If you have questions about withdrawing from a course, please contact the Virtual Virginia Registrar at 866-903-8194.

## Fees

The Virginia Department of Education pays tuition for all Early College Scholar (ECS) students. There is a tuition charge for non-ECS students enrolled in AP courses of \$375 times the [Local Composite Index](#) (between \$75 and \$300).

Tuition for Virginia private and homeschool students is \$499 per credit (\$299 per 0.5 credit). Tuition for out-of-state enrollment is \$849 per full-credit course (\$549 per 0.5 credit). Virginia public schools will not be charged tuition for world language courses and for certain non-AP electives.

Local schools are responsible for ordering and paying for the ECS students’ AP Exams. [ECS program info >>](#)

## Textbooks, Equipment, and Supplies

All textbooks, equipment, supplies, and computer access needed to participate in a Virtual Virginia course should be provided by the local school that registered the student. In the case of homeschool students, the parent/guardian will provide these resources. A list of required resources can be found at [virtualvirginia.org](http://virtualvirginia.org).

Local schools must provide all resources, textbooks, equipment, supplies, along with any other services or resources for students with Section 504, IEP or other documented accommodations. Virtual Virginia does not assume responsibility of the local school to provide services or resources for students with documented disabilities.

## Virtual Virginia Calendar

The Virtual Virginia academic calendar and posted on the [virtualvirginia.org](http://virtualvirginia.org) website. Virtual Virginia reserves the right to update or modify the academic calendar as needed. Courses offered as Full Year and 4x4 Fall Block cohorts begin in mid-August and continue through the second week in September. Courses offered as 4x4 Spring Block cohorts begin in early January.

Virtual Virginia course calendars do not always align with local school division calendars. Students and local school mentors are responsible for notifying the Virtual Virginia instructors about any calendar conflicts well in advance and should make sure that assignments are completed in a timely manner. Virtual Virginia course pacing calendars are located in each course home page. It is very important for students to turn in assignments by the deadlines listed on the course calendar. If a student misses an assignment deadline, that assignment's grade will be recorded as a zero.

## Student Communication Policy

Communication between students and Virtual Virginia instructors is key to student success in a Virtual Virginia course. Students enrolled in a Virtual Virginia course will be required to regularly communicate with Virtual Virginia instructors. Virtual Virginia instructors will contact students by phone, email, and web conferencing software.

## Grades

Local school division calendars and grading policies vary widely throughout the state; therefore, the local school mentor will retrieve the student grades as needed and determine the letter grade according to the local school grade scale. Virtual Virginia does not have a specific grading scale; the local school will convert the numeric grade awarded to a letter grade based on the local grading scale. Honors points, weighting, and other special considerations are made at the discretion of the local school counselor.

Virtual Virginia grades are based on the percentage of total points on all graded assignments in a course. Final grades are calculated according to the following formula: Semester 1: 45%, Semester 2: 45%, Final Exam: 10%. Virtual Virginia does not provide letter grades, Local schools should apply the Virtual Virginia final course percentage into their local grading scale. The Virtual Virginia final course grade will be made available to the school counselor of record. Please note that Virtual Virginia final exams are required for all students, and the final exam grade is calculated into the final course grade.

## Late Work Policy

Timely submission of assignments is the hallmark of a successful Virtual Virginia student. All assignments will have a due date published in the course calendar. If a student does not complete the assignment by the due date, a grade of zero will be recorded for that assignment.

At the Virtual Virginia instructor's discretion, the student may request the opportunity to complete the assignment up to two weeks after the original due date at a grade penalty of up to 15% for the first week late and up to 30% for the second week late. If there are extenuating circumstances that can be verified by a mentor, counselor, or principal the grade penalty may not be applied. This policy is intended to help students recover if they fall behind in a course and is not intended to allow repeated late work submission.

Virtual Virginia policy requires that any request to submit late work over two weeks past the original due date must be made by the local school counselor or principal. The student's parent/guardian must work with the local school counselor or principal to request an extension for assignments over two weeks late. The counselor/mentor must document the steps the local school will take to support this student as he or she completes the work.

In addition, assignments due during the two weeks before both the semester and course end dates will not be given the normal two week grace period. If these assignments are not submitted on time and no extenuating circumstance is verified by the local school counselor, the student will receive a grade of zero for these late assignments.

Occasionally, an extenuating circumstance prevents a student from completing a semester or a course by the assigned end date. To grant semester or course extensions, Virtual Virginia instructors must receive a written request from the local school counselor or principal explaining why the student was unable to complete the work on time, and the counselor/mentor must document the steps the local school will take to support this student as he or she completes the work.

## Academic Integrity and Ethics Agreement

Virtual Virginia students are required to fully commit to academic integrity. Students are required to agree to abide by the following set of expectations:

- Students are expected to verify that the work on each assignment is his or her own.
- Collaborating with another classmate on any assignment must be preapproved by the Virtual Virginia instructor.
- Students may not plagiarize in any form.
- No student may allow others to copy his/her work.
- No student may misuse content from the internet.
- No student should store coursework on a public or shared network drive.

If a student plagiarizes work in any manner, the student is subject to disciplinary action including possibly being given a zero for that assignment, removal from the course with a failing grade, or other consequences. Additional consequences may also be enforced at the discretion of the local school counselor or principal.

## ADA Compliance

Students who are enrolled in and attending a Virginia public school may enroll in a Virtual Virginia course with prior approval of the local school, and must be enrolled by a local school counselor or other school assigned designee. The local school agrees provide all appropriate services to students enrolled in Virtual Virginia courses, including those with documented disabilities. The local school agrees to provide a local school counselor, a local mentor teacher, all student services, and all counseling services for each student enrolled in a Virtual Virginia course. Virtual Virginia does not assume the local school responsibility to provide Section 504, IEP, or other documented services for students enrolled in Virtual Virginia courses. The local school may require the student's local school mentor to have an appropriate certified endorsement to provide any documented student services.

In the Virtual Virginia registration process, school counselors are asked to identify qualified students with documented disabilities in the Virtual Virginia Student Information System (SIS) by indicating if the student has a Section 504, IEP, or other documented services. For students with Section 504, IEP, or other documented services the school counselor and local mentor must develop a plan for the local school to address the documented student services, and share any appropriate accommodations needed in the Virtual Virginia learning management system prior to course start date. Local school counselors and mentors are required to provide all students services to ensure student success in the Virtual Virginia course, and in the event of any complaint the local school will assume the recipient responsibilities.

## Early Warning System

The early warning system (EWS) provides advance notification to the student, mentors, parents, counselors, and instructor in situations where a student's current cumulative average is below 70%. Automated emails for students who meet this criteria will be generated by the Student Information System (Genius). A student's current course grade may be accessed via the VVA SIS.

If a student is identified a second time by the early warning system for the same course, the local school counselor or mentor must conduct a conference with the student parent/guardian about the situation. The counselor must document the steps the local school will take to support this student.



If a student is identified three or more times by the early warning system, the local school mentor will work with the school counselor to develop a plan of action for that student, which will include the same stakeholders continuing to receive automated emails whenever the student's current semester's average goes below 70%.

## End-of-Course Exams

All students enrolled in Virtual Virginia courses are required to take end-of-course final exams and do not follow local school final exam exemption policies.

Advanced Placement courses have assessments associated with them and Virtual Virginia students are encouraged to take the AP Exams corresponding to their Virtual Virginia courses. Parents of homeschool students should register for AP Exams through their local public school divisions.

Standards of Learning (SOL) Tests - Students enrolled in Virtual Virginia courses that have SOL tests must take the test at their local school.

## National Collegiate Academic Association (NCAA) Credit

Virtual Virginia courses meet NCAA eligibility requirements. A full list of approved courses is available at [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)

## Technology Access and Requirements

The Virtual Virginia HelpDesk is available to work with students, local schools, and division staff to ensure that students have assistance in using the necessary computer hardware and software. The Virtual Virginia HelpDesk does not take the place of the school's on-site technical support team. Local school technical staff must work with the Virtual Virginia technology staff to:

- Verify that the student workstation meets the minimum hardware and software requirements in this document and ensure adequate bandwidth.
- Act as a resource for the installation of programs and problem-solve any technical difficulties throughout the course.
- Communicate with the Virtual Virginia HelpDesk as needed.

All Virtual Virginia students, including those working outside of the local school setting, must have access to the required hardware and software listed in the Virtual Virginia Technology Handbook.

The Virtual Virginia Technology Handbook can be found on the Virtual Virginia homepage: [virtualvirginia.org](http://virtualvirginia.org).

Internet access is required to take any Virtual Virginia course. To take full advantage of the interactivity of the courses, broadband access is strongly recommended.

## Student Code of Conduct

All students will be required to agree to abide by the Student Code of Conduct. The code outlines expectations for appropriate student behavior and the consequences associated with failure to adhere to the code.

## Right to Privacy

Virtual Virginia will abide by the student privacy guidelines set forth by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The following individuals have access to student records: Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) board members, the Virtual Virginia administration, the professional staff of the student's school (teacher/school counselor), and appropriate administrative support staff members and other professionals who have a legitimate educational or legal interest in student records. A final grade report is available to the student's local school upon completion of their online course(s) or at any time upon the request of the local school and/or student's legal guardian.

The names of Virtual Virginia students, their images, and their coursework will not be published on the public Virtual Virginia Web site without student and parent/guardian consent.

Each Virtual Virginia student is provided a unique password that will allow him/her to access the online course. It is the responsibility of the student to keep his/her password secure.

As cited in Virtual Virginia's Acceptable Use Policy - communication through e-mail, discussion board, chat, blog, and other communication tools provided by Virtual Virginia is subject to monitoring by Virtual Virginia staff without other prior notice.

Inappropriate use of any Virtual Virginia communication tool, such as using these tools for profanity, use on social media platforms, or cyberbullying, is grounds for discipline including but not necessarily limited to the following: parental contact, local school contact and application of local student code of conduct consequences, administrative removal from Virtual Virginia courses, or contact of law enforcement agencies in instances where violation of local, state, or federal laws is suspected.

## Acceptable Use of Technology

All students in enrolled in Virtual Virginia courses are expected to conduct their communications in a professional and respectful manner. Inappropriate language, behavior, or use of the learning management systems will result in local school disciplinary action and possible removal from the Virtual Virginia program by Virtual Virginia administration.

Each student enrolled in Virtual Virginia courses will acknowledge his/her willingness to abide by Virtual Virginia's Acceptable Use Policy and the procedures outlined therein will apply to all online courses.

## Accessing Courses

Once the semester begins, students can access Virtual Virginia courses by following these steps:

1. Go to [virtualvirginia.org](http://virtualvirginia.org).
2. Click on **"Course Login"**
3. Enter the username and password (student usernames and passwords are posted in the Student Information System Genius). Counselors should contact the Virtual Virginia Help Desk for assistance, if needed.
4. Enter Virtual Virginia courses by locating links to them on the Dashboard in the "Academic Snapshot" box on the Student Information System home page.
5. Each Virtual Virginia student is required to complete all orientation activities before beginning each Virtual Virginia course in which they are enrolled.

If students have trouble accessing Virtual Virginia courses, please visit the tech support link at [virtualvirginia.org](http://virtualvirginia.org) or email the HelpDesk at: [support@virtualhelpdesk.org](mailto:support@virtualhelpdesk.org).

## Appendix A: Student & Parent/Guardian Participation Agreements

The Student and Parent Acknowledgement (below) must be signed by both student and parent/guardian. The local school counselor is required to obtain signatures prior to each Virtual Virginia course start date, and keep this documentation on file in the school counseling office for the remainder of the academic year.

Through continuous communication and effective time management can students be successful in a Virtual Virginia course. To ensure that local school counselors, students and the parent/guardian are aware of the policies and procedures that accompany this commitment, please complete the Student and Parent/Guardian Acknowledgment below.

### Student Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that during the first 21 (calendar) days of being activated into my Virtual Virginia course, I may drop the course. I understand that for each online course, there are a minimum number of assignments that must be completed each week. Failure to submit the minimum number of assignments on a weekly basis may result in my removal from the course and may result in a failing grade being reported on my academic transcript.

I also acknowledge that I will follow all policies and procedures outlined in the Virtual Virginia Student and Parent handbook.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I must coordinate with the local school counselor and local school mentor when the performance of my son/daughter in a Virtual Virginia course needs to be addressed.

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Important Note:** *Many types of email accounts, such as work email accounts, are not secure. As such, employers or email service providers may have access to any confidential information (such as grades or performance) that Virtual Virginia communicates through email.*

## Appendix B: Mentor Participation Agreement

The local school counselor is required to obtain a local mentor signature (below) prior to each Virtual Virginia academic year, and keep this documentation on file in the school counseling office for the remainder of the academic year.

### Mentor Acknowledgement

- I acknowledge that as a local school mentor I must maintain the privacy and integrity of all student information; including academic performance, personal student data/information, student services; and I am expected to adhere to my assigned local school division data/information privacy policies as they pertain to any student information.
- I understand that for each student enrolled in a Virtual Virginia course I will have access to student personal and academic information, and this information will be shared only with authorized local school division personnel.
- I acknowledge that I will follow all policies and procedures outlined in the Virtual Virginia Mentor Handbook.
- I understand that any changes to student records in the Virtual Virginia student information system (SIS) are not permissible without prior approval from the local school counselor or administrator.

Mentor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** *Many types of email accounts outside of Virginia public school email accounts, such as work email accounts, are not secure. As such, employers or email service providers may have access to any confidential information (such as grades or performance) that Virtual Virginia communicates through email. All communication from school division personnel, mentors, and others related to confidential student information should be done in a manner that protects the information from unauthorized access.*