

SYSTEM POLICY: Technology Administrative Policy  
SUBJECT: Moodle e-Learning and Instructional Support  
AUTHORIZING BODY: Southern University Board of Supervisor  
RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Division of Information Technology - DoIT  
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## **RATIONALE**

Moodle and other online learning management software, are available for faculty and students as a pedagogical aid in the teaching and learning process. Since Moodle serves as digital classroom space, policies for its use must take into consideration both university procedures and academic needs.

## **POLICY**

Southern University (SU) Division of Information Technology develops, maintains, and provides technical support for Moodle. SU campuses Office of e-Learning and Instructional Support (e-LIS) administers and provides instructional and user support services for Moodle. e-LIS must respond to faculty requests for help and special services concerning Moodle and those services must be in accordance with university-approved procedures and policies, concerning users, assigned roles, additional requested courses and cross-listed courses, semester transitions of content, incompletes, course ownership and user support.

## **SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY**

This policy includes all faculty, students, and courses at SU that are in Banner and imported into Moodle.

## **DEFINITIONS AND PROCEDURES**

### **A. Users and Usage**

All persons associated with Southern University as students, faculty, or staff have access to Moodle through their SU campus ID. Guest roles must be created by e-LIS and granted access on a temporary basis upon requests from faculty or staff in relation to a specified teaching and learning need. Only SU students will have access, unless other contractual arrangements are made. Faculty may use Moodle for teaching, research, and/or committee work. There are three types of university courses using Moodle: traditional classroom courses with supplementary Moodle materials, web-enhanced courses with activities substituting for in-person classroom hours, and completely on-line courses.

### **B. User Roles**

Assigned roles and courses in Moodle are integrated with the student information system in Banner by means of software called Ellucian Intelligent Learning Platform (ILP). Academic units are responsible for input and accuracy of schedule information. If changes to any courses' or instructor are desired, then those changes should initiate in the academic units. Then the correct information will be pulled through to Moodle. Possible Moodle roles attached to a campus ID account:

- Instructor role -- the primary instructor of the course, who creates all course elements and has access to all course and student information in a Moodle course. Instructors may login as any of the students in their course, send mail to their SU email, and access grades.

- Secondary instructors and TAs role -- The primary instructor of a course may request e-LIS add other instructors, if they have SU user accounts. TAs from SU can also be added with varied permissions for partial editing.
- Student role -- a student role does not allow one access to the course creation or management tools. Instructors may use this role to view and test the course from the student point of view.
- Administrator role -- an administrator may change settings for the entire program and login as needed or to trouble-shoot the system.

**Exceptions to Banner.** Moodle imports course information including classes, instructors, and students from Banner. But since Moodle is a digital classroom environment rather than a registration system, there will be discrepancies between the two software systems, such as roles and accounts. Exceptions may be manually added to Moodle for the following reasons:

- Test students: Faculty may request a student role and account to practice online course features that they have created in Moodle.
- Additional guests in instructor roles: Faculty may request from eLIS that additional outside guest speakers be added as co-instructors or in the TA roles to their Moodle course. The possible roles in Moodle do not always correspond to real roles. Guest accounts are deleted after one semester.
- Students: Because Moodle can be audited internally and externally for registration, tuition, and academic record information, e-LIS and the Office of the Registrar will need to approve student adds that are exceptions to Banner information.
- Entire courses: Faculty and staff may request new courses to be created for advisement, tutoring, committee-work, pilot studies, research, and/or training purposes with a faculty designer (s) and either guest student accounts or actual students.

### **C. Additional Courses requested by Staff**

Staff may request courses so that they might have contact with the student population they are trying to reach. A conflict may arise where students' course lists may become too lengthy so that academic courses become buried in the non-courses. For this reason, the responsible authority for any given population of students must approve student enrollments in non-academic "courses". Most additional courses will be put on a different Moodle system, such as Test or Development systems.

### **D. Cross-listed Courses**

There are a number of possible types of cross-listed courses.

1. Courses cross-listed in Banner. These courses have two different rubrics but are approved through the traditional process as one course. Moodle will import these cross-listed courses as one course, with the multiple CRNs listed, exactly the same as in Banner.
2. Faculty requests for combined courses that will be accommodated.
  - Combined identical sections with the same course rubric for courses taught in the classroom at different times for the purpose of course resource materials.
  - Combined identical sections for a special purpose like the library module put into combined sections of a course.

3. Faculty requests for combined courses that will be accommodated only with the permission of the chair, dean, or provost's office as appropriate.
  - Combined courses with different rubrics.
  - Combined course sections with the same rubric for completely online courses.
4. Faculty requests to separate courses cross-listed in Banner into separate courses will not be accommodated.

## **E. Semester Transitions**

The transition or copying of course content between semesters should be as simple as possible in the Learning Management System environment. Faculty may request ongoing development courses to be created on the Learning Management System server by filling out a request form. Content will then be moved for faculty if desired. There are two basic types of courses on the LMS server - "term-based" courses and "persistent" courses.

### **Term Based Courses**

A term-based course is an "official" course which belongs to a specific term and is recorded in the student information system. Generally speaking, at any one time there will be three terms of term-based courses on the server - the current term, and the two previous terms. There will be short windows (of perhaps a month) during which there will be four terms of courses on the server. The specific technicalities are spelled out below.

Term-based courses follow this life cycle.

- A term-based course will be created on the LMS server (via an automated interface with the student information system) one month before the start of the term to which it belongs. Example – if a course belongs to a Spring term that starts on Jan 12, then the course will be created approximately on Dec 12 (one month earlier).
- Courses exist on the Moodle server for one year (based on the end date of the term they belong to) after which time they are archived (backed up and placed on the backup server). Example: A course taught in Fall 2016 will remain available to the instructor and students on the Moodle server until the end of Fall 2017. Within a month or two, a backup (archive) file will be made, the course will be deleted from the Moodle server, and the archive file will be available only by request through an application.
- Faculty will have access to the course throughout its life cycle - in other words, from the moment it is created until the moment it is archived.
- Students will have access to the course starting one week before the official course start date. Example - If a course in Spring term starts on Jan 12, then the course will become available to students on January 5.
- Students will continue to have access to the course as long as it is on the server and left open and accessible by the instructor.

### **Persistent Courses**

A persistent course is one which is not bound to a specific term. It is not archived at any specific point in time, but rather stays on the server until there is an explicit reason to remove it (like the request of the faculty who owns it). Persistent courses fall into the following general categories:

- Ongoing Development or Practice Courses. These course shells will be created at faculty request to store course data or develop courses. Faculty may use these courses for developing content for teaching, service, and research purposes. At the end of every academic year (immediately after June 30 each year), all materials in the Development Courses that have remained untouched for a period of 3 prior years will be archived and accessible by e-LIS, who will search old courses at faculty request.
- Faculty Organizations. Faculty may have courses created for a digital space that enhances committee or academic work, and faculty forums.

## **F. Incompletes**

Southern University Undergraduate policy on "I" grades is that they must be cleared during the first 8 weeks of the "...next semester (Fall or Spring) for which the student registers..." According to this policy, if a student receives an "I" grade in Spring and Summer semester, it would not need to be made up until 8 weeks into Fall, if he/she registered for Fall. If the student had an incomplete in Fall, and registered for Spring, he/she would have 8 weeks into Spring to complete the course. If the student had an incomplete in Fall or Spring and did not register for the following Spring or Fall, he/she would have 1 calendar year from the end of the semester to complete it.

The Learning Management System will always have the current term and the last two terms worth of courses available. This should accommodate all "I" type situations described above. This means that accommodating incomplete requests should not require a course to be restored from an archive. If, however, the course is from a term that is no longer on the server, the faculty can request that the course be restored from the archive. e-LIS will construct a shell for the archived course and import it so that the instructor and student can both access it with proper approval from the Registrar and/or Academic Affairs.

If faculty want a previous student to complete his/her grade accessing the current semester's course, the student will be added to the new course after the Registrar's and/or Academic Affairs approval.

Moodle policies regarding incompletes will always follow the current Southern University policy as well as directives from the Office of Academic Affairs and the Registrar.

## **G. Course Ownership**

Faculty shall individually own their courses in Moodle. No other faculty member, administrator, or academic unit may copy an individual's Moodle course without their written permission. However, if a particular unit and their faculty share modules or courses among a certain group and approve alternate written arrangements or contracts, e-LIS will follow those arrangements if they are consistent with all other policies in this document.

## **H. User Support**

Moodle webpages on each campus' website contains links to various user support tools and request forms.

- Help Request General Form--any type of help involving Moodle may be requested here by instructors and students.
- Moodle Development Courses--this form is to request additional practice courses on Moodle. Faculty Test Account--faculty may ask for a student identity to test how elements of their Moodle course are working.

- Archives--faculty may request a copy of old Moodle' courses (older than one semester) from the archives. However, it would be best also for faculty to create their own backups of Moodle courses and keep their own archives.
- After Hours Support – Faculty and students have access to after-hour support. Support hours are from 5pm to 8am on weekdays and 24 hours support on weekends and holidays. The toll-free access number is on Moodle landing page and SU campuses websites

### **I. Course Backups and Retention.**

There are three types of backup (copies) of Moodle courses.

1. Server backup by DoIT of the entire system: These can't be used to find individual courses but exist in case of emergency to the entire system.
2. Retention of Course Archives: These are end of the semester individual course backups, identifiable by their CRN. When a course is removed from the Moodle server (see Semester Transitions, above) it is backed up into a file and moved to the archives. The backup file will remain in the archives for three years after the end date of the course and then it will be deleted. Faculty can request a copy of the backup file from e-LIS staff at any time before it is deleted. Ex: A Fall 2016 course backup file will be available in the archives until the end of Fall 2019, at which time it will be deleted.
3. Faculty backups: Faculty should create backups of their courses using Moodle's backup tool. This tool will create a backup file which faculty can download to their own computer for storage. This is an instructor's best protection against losing course data.

### **J. Student Privacy**

Moodle courses are password-protected, so that students meet in a private online classroom space. Although students generally should not see each other's registry information without consent, such as email addresses, the Participants Block in Moodle does allow students to see other email addresses within a particular course. The Participants Block may be hidden from students by an instructor closing the eye icon or students may hide their email in the Edit Profile area.

### **Reviewed by:**

Moodle Development and Advisory Committee (MDAC) -- 3/23/2017