Verification of Student Identity
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The verification of student identity is essentially the confirmation of two conditions: 1) The right student has access to the correct course; and 2) that individual is indeed performing the work during the entire course duration. Distance learning courses at the CCNY (CUNY) are set up and conducted to meet both conditions.

All students participating in online instruction offered by any CUNY campus must log in to their course sites using their CUNYfirst credentials. The CUNYfirst system employs IDs and passwords to invoke an authentication triangulated against name, date of birth, and social security number. Additionally, each student must use Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA). MFA requires an authentication application which resides on a smart phone or may be sent to an authentication token possessed by the student. To ensure FERPA compliance, these credentials are stored in a secure database and generate a unique ID linked to all three data points; it is this ID, invoked by the user's ID/password/MFA combination, that grants access to the system. This secure login is a student's only means of access to the learning management system (LMS) in our case BrightSpace. Students are registered in their online courses through CUNYfirst, which imports registration information directly into the BrightSpace without any action on the part of students, faculty, or staff beyond the regular registration process. Only duly registered students and the instructor of record appear on the roster of any online course. Furthermore, every action within a course site registers on the extensive tracking features of BrightSpace, which track each user in terms of time and duration of the action and part of the site involved, even if there is no posting by the student.

Supplementing these technical means of verifying student identity and activity are high degrees of student and faculty interaction that characterize distance learning courses at CCNY. Students introduce themselves, often in terms of prior knowledge of and current interest in a course's subject, and may write multiple posts weekly, including responses to one another as well to the instructor's assignments and discussion questions. Students may also maintain journals, blogs and/or wikis individually or in group work. Indeed, such interactivity creates a high degree of familiarity and even intimacy within each course. Both student orientation and faculty development stress the importance of social presence through self-presentation and transactional interaction, including

- the use of e-portfolios
- the use of student photos and videos, especially in self-introductions, and e-portfolios
- participation in learning communities
- work in groups and teams
- plagiarism checkers (to ensure work submitted by the student is the student's own)
- synchronous ("real-time") conferencing (by both voice and video)
- asynchronous conferencing (by both voice and video). Although, not all of these tools and practices are included in all distance learning courses, these are secure and efficient to verify student identity in distance learning comparable and equivalent to those used in in-person instruction.