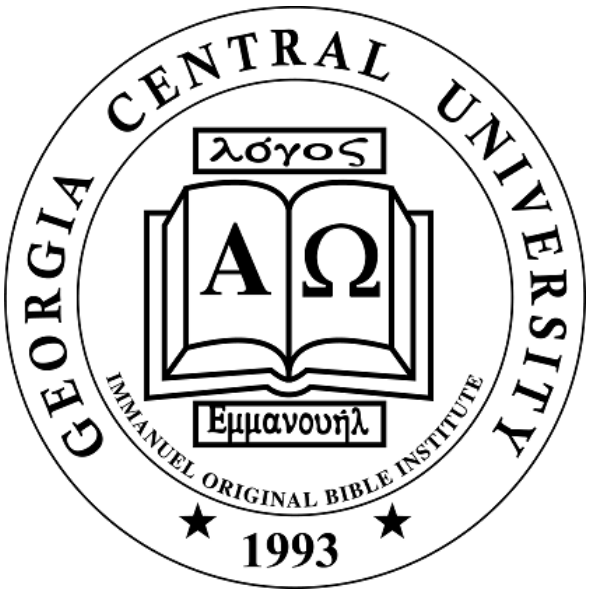
GEORGIA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY



DISTANCE EDUCATION HANDBOOK

2026 – 2027

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I. Mission

Georgia Central University (GCU) inspires and prepares students for Christian leadership and professional careers in the global community. GCU Distance Education (DE) advances this institutional mission by delivering the same high-quality education as our on-campus programs in a flexible, accessible online format. Whether students are balancing work, family, or other commitments, GCU DE courses allow them to pursue the degree from wherever they are.

II. History

Diversity of students is in fact one of reasons that GCU DE was launched and developed. The University's physical campus tends to attract mainly Korean-Americans or nonimmigrant Korean students. While this fact may reflect the University's original *raison d'etre*, GCU's increased awareness of the need for diversity and desire to spread the Gospel to all parts of the world (as called for in the institutional mission) means that a more diverse student body needs to be reached. GCU DE do just that by allowing students who might otherwise be unable to attend GCU's traditional programs for reasons of distance or due to the perceived "Korean-ness" of the physical University, to participate in these degree programs, thus receiving the education they desire and, simultaneously, creating a more diverse student body for the University.

III. Programs

GCU DE is currently offering online or hybrid courses for the Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degree programs of the University as well as for the General Education courses. It assures that each online or hybrid course will meet the program learning outcomes as defined in the GCU Catalog and as selectively given below:

<u>Bachelor of Arts in Computer Science (BACS)</u>
Graduates of the BACS program are expected to demonstrate:

- Foundational knowledge of computing and mathematics appropriate to the program's purpose;
- An ability to identity and analyze a problem and define the computing requirements appropriate to its solution;
- An ability to design, implement, and evaluate a computer-based system, process, component, or program to meet desired needs;
- An understanding of professional, ethical, legal, security and social issues and responsibilities;
- An ability to apply mathematical foundations, algorithmic principles, and computer science theory in the modeling and design of computer-based systems in a way that demonstrates comprehension of the tradeoffs involved in design choices;

- An ability to apply design and development principles in the construction of software systems of varying complexity.

Bachelor of Arts in Theological Studies (BATS)
Graduates of the BATS program will be prepared to:

- Demonstrate Christian faith and worldview in an understanding of modern society and its culture;
- Prove knowledge of the Bible and Christian theology, and Church history;
- Enhance the ability to carry out the ministries of the local church;
- Demonstrate the ability to understand the counseling principles and techniques required to meet individual needs;
- Apply appropriate hermeneutics of the Bible to a lifelong pattern of spiritual growth and personal development.

Bachelor of Arts in Christian Education (BACE)
Upon completion of the BACE program, students will demonstrate:

- Basic understanding of the Bible, theology, & ministries to shape Christian educational praxis;
- Understanding of the foundations of teaching and learning theories in Christian context;
- The ability to use appropriate teaching skills and methods in various age groups in ministries;
- The ability to synthesize theories and practice to a lifelong pattern of spiritual growth.

Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration (BABUS)
The students understand and are familiar with:

- Christian principles with business and management, to be able to identify ethical dilemmas and apply Christian values to resolve those dilemmas while considering the impact on God's world;
- The relevant economic and financial issues of the current market system and future forecast markets logically;
- Techniques to maximize the potential of electronic communications and the internet in business, inside and outside of corporate organizations;
- The importance of both human and material resources and the required skills for resource management;
- Demonstrating foundational knowledge in each of the primary functional areas of business;
- Being able to solve unstructured business problems.

Bachelor of Arts in Martial Arts (BAMA: Taekwondo)
Students who have learned the basic skills of Taekwondo in this course will

- Be active as athletes or coaches through training in specialized major courses;
- Become qualified as masters, referees, instructors, bodyguards, safety staff, physical education instructors, Taekwondo organization administrators, Taekwondo event marketers, etc.;
- Have chances to have certification from Kukkiwon such as Taekwondo belt certification, Taekwondo master certification, Sports for all instructor certification, Sports game instructor certification, and various referee certifications (Poomsae,

sparring, Taekwondo for the disabled, etc.).

Bachelor of Science in Nursing Completion (RN to BSN)
Students of the program are expected to demonstrate the following:

- Ability to integrate nursing education into professional nursing practice;
- Evidence-based practice with critical thinking;
- Professional communication with spiritual competence in various healthcare settings;
- Leadership skills for health promotion during the life cycle;
- Application of systems, finances, and policies to professional nursing care.

Master of Arts in Christian Education (MACE)
Upon completion of the Master of Arts in Christian Education (MACE) program, students will demonstrate:

- Fundamental Christian understanding of the Bible, theology, and various educational theories;
- The ability to apply Christian educational theory and skills to educational ministries;
- Integration of Christian educational disciplines and social and behavioral sciences in order to serve the Christian community with effectiveness and professionalism.

Master of Arts in Mission Studies and World Christianity (MAMSWC)
Upon completion of the Master of Arts in Mission Studies and World Christianity program students will:

- Be able to comprehend the Bible and its introductory, critical, historical, geographical, and cultural background based on hermeneutics;
- Clarify the various concepts of mission, including evangelism, social responsibilities, urban mission and Missio Dei;
- Understand the characteristics of urban and global mission issues and trends;
- Distinguish the difference cultural and social customs in order to understand indigenous peoples, and to closely connect with social agencies such as welfare departments;
- Develop skills to manage and mobilize resources for world evangelism.

Master of Arts in Music (MAMUS)

Graduates of the Master of Arts in Music program will demonstrate:

- Comprehension of the fundamental knowledge of general music theories and histories;
- Specialized skills in and knowledge for piano, organ, voice, contemporary pop music, orchestral instruments, composition, conducting, , church music, or contemporary Christian music;
- Exhibition of a higher standard of technical ability, artistry, and difficulty;
- Achievement of a level of depth and breadth of repertoire.

Master of Divinity (MDiv)
Having completion of the Master of Divinity program, students will demonstrate:

- An ability to read and interpret the Bible in its diverse contexts accurately;
- An ability to think theologically on various contemporary issues, with an advanced historical

and theological understanding of Christian tradition;
- An ability to communicate the word of God to societies and cultures;
- An ability to practice various spiritual disciplines in their personal and public lives and ministries regularly and consistently;
- An ability to perform core ministry skills to serve local congregations or people in the fields of their professions.

Master of Business Administration (MBA)

Having completion of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) students will demonstrate:

- Advanced knowledge in each of the primary functional areas of business administration;
- An ability to solve semi-structured business problems and unstructured business problems;
- Competency and readiness to serve the community with biblical worldview as well as professional skills.

Master of Arts in Martial Arts (MAMA: Taekwondo)

Students who have learned the basic skills of Taekwondo in this course will

- Be active as athletes or coaches through training in specialized major courses;
- Become qualified as masters, referees, instructors, bodyguards, safety staff, physical education instructors, Taekwondo organization administrators, Taekwondo event marketers, etc.;
- Have chances to have certification from Kukkiwon such as Taekwondo belt certification, Taekwondo master certification, Sports for all instructor certification, Sports game instructor certification, and various referee certifications (Poomsae, sparring, Taekwondo for the disabled, etc.).

Doctor of Ministry (DMin)

Upon completion of the DMIN program participants will:

- Integrate theological reflection with ministerial knowledge in order to analyze and assess the suitability of solutions to ministry issues and problems, using theological resources and appropriate social science research to develop these solutions;
- Advance in their capability of theological reflection, systematic thinking and reflective practice skills in order to implement the philosophy and goals of their present ministries;
- Demonstrate higher effectiveness as a goal in developing the ministerial growth of church and congregations in relation to worship, preaching, fellowship, discipleship, compassion and care, education, and services;
- Demonstrate deeper awareness of the impact of multiple cultures on society, and of the responsibility of the church for public witness, social justice engagement, and evangelism; and demonstrate flexibility in advanced ministerial leadership, as well as the ability to conduct a spiritually- and organizationally apt practice of the theology of the laity.

Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA)

Upon completion of the program, students will demonstrate:

- Advanced and scholarly knowledge for future success as a professional musician;
- Musical mastery of the major field and the associated solo, chamber, and symphonic/operatic repertoire.

Doctor of Philosophy (PHD) in Intercultural Studies

Having completed the PhD program, students will have demonstrated:

- An advanced knowledge of the discipline of intercultural studies and research methodologies appropriate to do advanced interdisciplinary research in its emphasis areas;
- Deeper understanding and application of relevant theoretical missiological knowledge and critical examinations of mission theologies and practices with both Western and non-Western Christian perspectives;
- An ability to analyze contemporary challenges and needs in various intercultural contexts;
- An advanced ability to engage in learning, research, and teaching in academic and professional settings;
- Integration of the comprehensive interdisciplinary knowledge of scholarly literature and effective intercultural practices;
- Organization of an interdisciplinary scholarly qualitative research work in the discipline of intercultural studies.

Doctor of Philosophy (PHD) in Business Administration

Graduates of the Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration (PHDBA) program will be able to:

- Design, direct, and shape organizational processes in support of organizational objectives;
- Influence the context and environment in which decisions get made;
- Selflessly lead initiatives that enable generations to improve and innovate;
- Identify change initiative behaviors and develop solutions for managing change;
- Implement the best practices in coaching, delegating, and performance management;
- Understand and use tools for enhancing managerial performance.

IV. Curriculum Design

Number of Courses projected: about 25 courses (10 for online; 15 for hybrid) per semester.

Delivery Method: Online through a customized Learning Management System (henceforth in abbreviation, LMS) designed and supported by Google Classrom.

Offered Mainly Online or Alternatively Hybrid: Currently all distance education courses are offered mainly online. However, we also offer hybrid courses, mixing electronic and on-campus elements, designed to assure that students have full access to appropriate educational services.

Residency Requirement: Students enrolled in GCU DE should complete at least one third of the program at the Atlanta main campus.

All courses and programs were designed by the administration and faculty of the School. Program design is the prerogative of the curriculum committees of each School (Dean and faculty members), and individual courses are designed by faculty and approved by the Dean. Course design protocol is followed closely, in order to make the School's programs as high-quality as possible. Assessment of these courses and programs follows GCU's assessment schedule and uses modified versions of the standard assessment tools (for example, student surveys that are specific to an online or hybrid course, rather than the traditional course). All levels of the School community, from students to the Dean, are involved in various kinds of assessment ranging from student course surveys to high-end

assessment of student performance and achievement of learning outcomes.

V. Educational Effectiveness & Integrity

A general weakness of non-traditional methods of instruction is the lack of face-to-face classroom interaction. GCU DE therefore call for substantial interaction between instructor and students and among students. The necessary equipment and software infrastructure for an online learning program is already in place. Impact upon current GCU programs and resources will be mainly upon training of instructors to conduct online or hybrid courses, the recording of course lecture videos in GCU's production studio, and of course the conducting of the courses themselves, which require high levels of student-instructor and student-student interaction.

Each course has similar but course-specific requirements for online interaction, outlined on course syllabi. Instructor training places a special emphasis on maintaining interaction with students. Instructors post video lectures, then take a quiz or requires a summary paper regarding those lectures in order to monitor students' authentic engagement. Message board conversations or discussions are encouraged, and student responses to instructor postings are required. The instructor, in turn, monitors the message boards and student interaction thereon, and interjects when appropriate. Live chat or video conferencing capacity is also a powerful tool to empower instructor-student and student-student interactions. In future, local groupings may be combined with the LMS to further facilitate interactions between instructor and students and among students.

Along with the secure log-in system to the LMS, various pedagogical tools, employed to promote interactions, also seek to assure the identification and integrity of student works. Furthermore, to prohibit plagiarism, students are required by policy to provide a certificate of plagiarism screening at copykiller.com for research papers.

VI. Evaluation & Assessment

Evaluation and assessment of GCU DE is conducted on multidimensional levels. For the evaluation and assessment of each online or hybrid course, instructor is required to compile a course portfolio, consisted of the syllabus, student sample works, and the narrative of self-evaluation and assessment, etc. Also, students are required to access the SIS (Student Information System) of the institution with personal log-in information and take an anonymous survey in four major areas (self, instructor, course, and service/support). For the effectiveness of GCU DE itself, the department of institutional effectiveness conducts evaluation and assessment on a three-year cycle basis.

VII. Technological Support & Requirement

Currently, GCU DE team consists of one DE director, one IT director, one IT and media technician, one head librarian, and the system maintenance outsourcing company.

Students are provided with information regarding necessary technology and associated skills in a manual, available for download or watching from the GCU website, which explains the basics of logging in and setting up an account. Students are informed as to the minimum required technology, that is, basically, internet access – any relatively modern PC can handle the system, and students can also log in on a tablet or mobile phone. The actual technical skills required are minimal and should

not prove to be a problem for anyone who is even remotely aware of computer technology. If students can surf the internet, or check email, then they can use this system without issues.

GCU's LMS has been customized by Google Classroom to GCU's specifications. It utilizes discussion boards, assignment boards, resources boards, and online syllabi, as well as the aforementioned recorded video lectures. The LMS is already in place and is fully operational. The system does not provide features such as chat or video conferencing tools at the moment, but the addition of such tools is planned to enhance instructor-student and student-student interactions.

VIII. Library / Learning Resources

Library and information resources are available to online students. The GCU library maintains subscription and other access to several databases, including the American Theological Libraries Association (ATLA) Religions Database, the Theological Research Exchange Network (TREN), the National Library of Korea, the Korean National Assembly Library, and the Honam University (Korea) eBooks database. The GCU Library also has become a member of the Georgia Private Academic Libraries (GPALS) consortium, which is an organization of libraries for mutual benefit, mainly through interlibrary loans and access to the collections of other schools. GCU students should be able to have access to GPALS database and Georgia Library Learning Online (GALILEO) program, which provides access to a large number of databases, from JSTOR and other purely academic collections to professional journals.

Students may also request physical copies of books in the GCU Library. A system of checking out books via mail is also being constructed, to allow online students access to GCU's physical collection. In addition, the LMS allows instructors to upload course readers or reading materials for students to read or provide links to the internet resources when available.

IX. Faculty Support System

Faculty for online or hybrid courses is generally taken from among GCU's existing faculty. In the case of advanced degree programs, these faculty members will be chosen mainly from existing degree program faculty, although new faculty will be hired if it becomes necessary. The Faculty workloads and requirements for online or hybrid courses will be addressed in workshops, which are offered periodically (before the beginning of every semester) and instantly wherever in needs. All the products and materials pertaining to online or hybrid courses that may be made or developed by faculty are and remain the property of the institution; however, faculty will be asked for the agreement when the institution needs to use the products and materials on behalf of its mission. Faculty technical training and support for online or hybrid courses is administrated by the director of Distance Education and provided by the IT department.

X. Student Support System

Support services for online students is administrated by the director of Distance Education and provided by the IT department and the Offices of Admission and Academic Affairs. The IT is currently rolling out an online application and registration system, but as for now students must mail copies of application documents to the main campus. All required documents are available online on the GCU website. Problems with applications may be addressed by emailing or phoning the Office of

Admissions. Bill paying may be done over the phone and is being added to the online application system as soon as a secure payment system is set up. Academic advising is performed by the directors and faculty of the degree programs, via email, text message, or mail. Financial aid is not offered to online students. Vocational counseling will be performed by directors and faculty of the degree programs, in cooperation with the Office of Student Affairs, especially as regards finding internships for advanced degree students.

XI. Student Identity Verification & Privacy Protection

All GCU students, online or traditional, are issued a unique GCU Student ID number and a gcuniv.edu email address. Logging in to the online system (as well as other systems such as the GCU Library website or the Student Information System, which allows students to access their own records) requires use of this student ID and email. Students are instructed during initial training to change the temporary login password they receive at registration to a strong personal password, and to change their password regularly. Forgotten passwords can only be changed upon verification of identity (usually through access to a student's personal email account). As noted in the Catalog, GCU is committed to student privacy, and follows FERPA guidelines regarding student records. All student records are kept under lock and key in a fireproof room at the main campus, with electronic backups stored securely offsite. No person is allowed access to a student's records other than the student him- or herself and GCU administration as necessary.

Students must log into the Google Account with their GCU email (or, their personal Gmail) and password in order to access the Google Classroom LMS. The LMS utilizes Secure Socket Layer (SSL) technology to keep information private and protected. The only personal information that is maintained in the LMS is a student's email, address, and phone number. A login with Student ID and password is required to access this data. Sensitive information such as Social Security numbers is not stored on the LMS at all.

XII. Authorization / Accreditation

GCU DE program is an approved participant in the **National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA)** and the **Georgia–State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (GA-SARA)**.
More information about NC-SARA, the role of NC-SARA-participating institutions, and student resources is available at https://nc-sara.org/sara-students/.
GCU DE program is also approved by the **Association for Biblical Higher Education(ABHE)** and the **Association of Theological Schools (ATS)**.

XIII. Student Resources

Every student deserves a positive educational experience and, thus, have the right to file a complaint or grievance when their experience may not be what they anticipate. GCU DE desires that student complaints be taken seriously and resolved promptly and satisfactorily. The procedure presented in the below diagram should be followed to resolve an issue raised by a GCU DE student.

HOW TO

FILE A SARA STUDENT COMPLAINT

KEY

SPE = State Portal Entity

SARA = State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements

I HAVE A COMPLAINT ABOUT VIOLATIONS OF SARA POLICY. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

First, file a complaint with your institution

WAS YOUR COMPLAINT RESOLVED?

NO

I WANT TO FILE A COMPLAINT WITH THE STATE

You may now file a complaint with the institution's SARA SPE.

Contact the SPE of your institution's home state

Start with the NC-SARA Institution Directory on the NC-SARA website

Select the home state of your institution

The SPE contact will be on the right side of this webpage

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The institution's home state SARA SPE has final authority in SARA complaints

Institution's home state SARA SPE notifies your location's SARA SPE.

Process ends

HOW DO I CHECK FOR SARA COMPLAINTS?

Quarterly, SARA SPEs report the status of complaints to NC-SARA. Complaint reports are listed on NC-SARA website by state.

*Diagram source with explanations: https://nc-sara.org/sara-student-complaints-0

Detailed guidelines and forms for the procedure required at each stage can be found at the following links:

- STAGE 1: To file a complaint with the GCU institution
    - GCU Grievance Policy and Procedure https://gcuniv.edu/download/GCUCatalog2025-2026.pdf [pp.85-87]
- STAGE 2: To file a complaint with the State GA (Note: This applies only if the complaint could not be resolved in Stage 1)
    - GA-SARA Complaint Rules https://gnpec.georgia.gov/student-resources/complaints-against-institution/ga-sara-student-complaint-rules
    - GA-SARA Student Complaint Form https://gnpec.georgia.gov/student-resources/student-complaints/ga-sara-online-student-complaint-form

XIV. Minimum Technology Requirements

To participate in GCU DE Program, students must have:

- Access to a PC or Mac with the latest operating system updates (Windows 10 or 11; macOS 10.14 Mojave or later)
- A reliable internet connection (cable or fiber recommended)

XV. Program Features

- **Flexible Learning** – Access course materials anytime, anywhere.
- **Approved & Accredited** – Approved by the Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission (GNPEC), the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE), and the Association of Theological Schools (ATS).
- **Nationwide Reach** – Authorized through NC-SARA, allowing enrollment from 49 states (excluding California), the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- **Interactive Learning** – Engage with instructors and classmates through live sessions, discussion boards, and multimedia content.
- **Secure & Reliable –** GCU DE courses are empowered and operated through Google Classroom, a leading Learning Management System trusted by institutions worldwide for its reliability and security.