

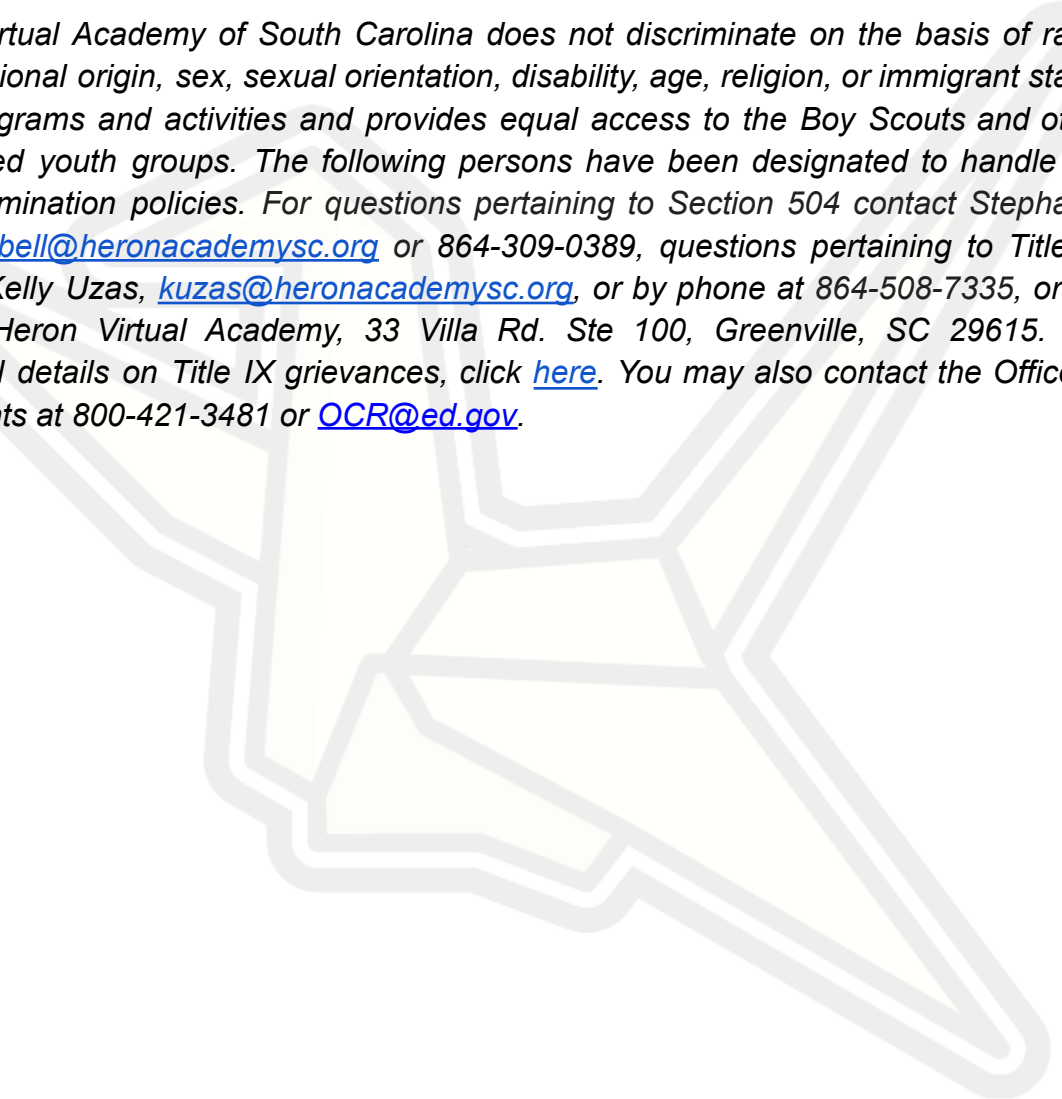


PARENT AND STUDENT HANDBOOK 26-27

33 Villa Road, Suite 100
Greenville, SC 29615
Phone: 864-508-7335
Fax: 864-558-0535

This handbook sets forth general guidance for parents and students enrolled in the Heron Virtual Academy of South Carolina (HVA). HVA is a public charter school and is subject to the rules and regulations of South Carolina public schools. The charter school guidelines for HVA are available online at <https://erskinecharters.org/>. A copy of this handbook will be posted on the school website at www.heronacademy.org. Handbook items may be amended as necessary throughout the school year.

Heron Virtual Academy of South Carolina does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, or immigrant status in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following persons have been designated to handle the nondiscrimination policies. For questions pertaining to Section 504 contact Stephanie Bell at sbell@heronacademysc.org or 864-309-0389, questions pertaining to Title IX contact Kelly Uzas, kuzas@heronacademysc.org, or by phone at 864-508-7335, or via mail at Heron Virtual Academy, 33 Villa Rd. Ste 100, Greenville, SC 29615. For additional details on Title IX grievances, click [here](#). You may also contact the Office of Civil Rights at 800-421-3481 or OCR@ed.gov.



Welcome to Heron Virtual Academy.

We know that for many of you, arriving here wasn't easy. You may have faced struggles—academic, personal, or both—that made traditional paths harder to follow. But this handbook is not about what came before. It's about what happens next.

At Heron, we don't see your story as finished. We see it as *just beginning*—your Chapter One. This is a place where second chances turn into new beginnings, where growth is measured not just in grades, but in resilience, responsibility, and self-worth.

Inside, you'll find the tools, expectations, and support systems that guide our shared journey. They're here to help you move forward—to write the next chapter not with shame or regret, but with purpose and potential.

You belong here. You are seen here. And your story is far from over.

Let's write Chapter One together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Crook". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Crook" clearly distinguishable.

David Crook
Board CEO
Heron Virtual Academy of South Carolina
864-663-2597
dcrook@heronacademysc.org

Dear Students and Learning Coaches,

At HVA, our belief is that all students should have the opportunity to learn in an environment that best supports their needs and encourages each student to meet their full potential. The HVA Administration, Faculty, and Staff are committed to creating a learning environment that supports growth, confidence, and a love of learning for each student enrolled at Heron Academy. We are confident in the ability of our students to rise to any challenge they may face, and we believe each student can find a path that will lead to success while enrolled here at Heron Academy.

The purpose of this handbook is to inform you of all HVA policies and guidelines. Understanding the expectations for students and learning coaches will help ensure a successful school year at HVA. I encourage all students and learning coaches to read this handbook and discuss each section thoroughly.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to any HVA staff member with questions you may have. Our teachers, administration, and staff are committed to providing a high-quality education for each student through individualized student support and a strong, collaborative relationship with students and learning coaches. Our hope is that you will find success this school year and it will be your best year yet!

Thank you for choosing Heron Academy of South Carolina to be a part of your educational experience. We are looking forward to seeing all that you accomplish during your time here at HVA!

Sincerely,



Nicki Batson, Executive Director
Heron Virtual Academy of South Carolina
864-659-0356
nbatson@heronacademysc.org

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SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTORY

Nicki Batson; Executive Director

864-659-0356

nbatson@heronacademysc.org

Jennifer Overholt-Mau; Director of School Programs

864-671-1794

jmau@heronacademysc.org

Emilee Fidler; Academic Administrator

864-251-5764

emfidler@heronacademysc.org

Darrick Cureton; College and Career Readiness Administrator

864-251-5671

dcureton@heronacademysc.org

Christine Kellett; Operations Manager

864-671-1859

ckellett@heronacademysc.org

Radonya Smalls; Special Programs Manager

864-214-5875

rsmalls@heronacademysc.org

Carrie Geimer; Director of Student Support

864-808-0680

cgeimer@heronacademysc.org

K12 Virtual Schools LLC Customer Support: 1-866-968-7512

- CUSTOMER CARE – Choose option #1 if you need assistance with: Materials, Navigation/Login, Usernames/passwords
- TECHNICAL SUPPORT – Choose option # 2 if you need assistance with: Hardware, Software, or Learning Systems.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Heron Virtual Academy of South Carolina

2026-2027

Academic Year Calendar



July 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
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August 2026						
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30	31					

September 2026						
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October 2026						
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November 2026						
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December 2026						
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January 2027						
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February 2027						
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28						

March 2027						
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April 2027						
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May 2027						
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30	31					

June 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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27	28	29	30			

July 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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August 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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Key

Event	Date	Student Holidays	
New teacher start date	July 22	Labor Day	September 7
Teacher start date	July 23	Teacher Workday	October 9
Teacher end date	May 26	Fall Break	October 12
Teacher Workdays (Student Holiday)	October 9	Election Day	November 3
	December 17, 18	Thanksgiving Break	November 25-27
	January 4	Teacher Workday	December 17, 18
	March 12	Winter Break	December 21-January 1
		Teacher Workday	January 4
First Day of Classes	August 4	MLK Jr. Day	January 18
Last Day of Classes	May 20	Presidents Day	February 15
		Teacher Workday	March 12
Start of Quarter	Q1-August 4	Spring Break	March 22-26
	Q2-October 13		
	Q3-January 5		
	Q4-March 15		
End of Quarter	Q1-October 8	School Event	
	Q2-December 16	45th Day	October 6
	Q3-March 11	90th Day	December 16
	Q4-May 20	135th Day	March 10
		180th Day	May 20
		Prom	TBD
		Graduation	TBD
Report Cards Issued	Q1-October 15	Make-up Days	
	Q2-January 8		October 9
	Q3-March 19		December 17
	Q4-May 28		March 12

ABOUT HVA

OUR MISSION/ VISION

To provide enhanced virtual education programs that prepare students for life beyond school—regardless of circumstance.

Heron Virtual Academy of SC provides a supportive, individualized education that empowers students to overcome challenges and achieve their goals.

OUR BELIEFS

To provide access to an exceptional education that enables success, regardless of circumstances.

- We believe in personalizing learning.
- We believe all students should have access to a quality education.
- We believe in giving parents real ways to get involved in their students' education.
- We believe in keeping teachers and students highly engaged and motivated.
- We believe in using modern tools to prepare students for today's world.
- We believe in being accountable and responsive to our community.

OUR VALUES

- Student focus
- Integrity
- Perseverance
- Commitment

AWARD-WINNING CURRICULUM

The K12 Virtual Schools LLC curriculum is developed by cognitive scientists, noted leaders in the education field, math and reading specialists, Flash designers, and other subject matter experts. K12 Virtual Schools LLC is widely regarded across the country for its passionate and rigorous approach to education focused on how students actually learn.

The K12 Virtual Schools LLC curriculum works for all kinds of students to unlock their personal full academic potential and help them achieve mastery of the key concepts and skills they will need to succeed in life. From gifted children to students whose lives require an individualized schooling schedule, to those who need a gentler pace than in a traditional classroom, K12 Virtual Schools LLC provides an adaptable but focused learning environment.

HVA FACULTY

We believe that a collaborative relationship between you and your assigned teachers is necessary. Your Success Coach has a wealth of knowledge and thus should be your first point of contact for all questions that are academic or technical in nature. As your teacher interacts with you, know that this is a team effort to ensure that your student is making progress and demonstrating compliance in all areas.

HVA SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

STATE AND SCHOOL TESTING REQUIREMENTS

As a public charter school in South Carolina, HVA is required to meet the requirements for mandatory state testing. HVA students are required to participate in all state-mandated academic assessments, both virtual and in person. Specific testing days will be shared as soon as available. The locations of tests will be announced closer to each scheduled testing period. Every effort will be made to ensure that families will not need to travel an unreasonable amount of time to testing locations, but all families should be prepared for the possibility of some travel to and from the testing location.

Mandatory state tests also provide useful information to parents and teachers on a child's academic progress.

Failure to participate in these assessments may result in a student being administratively withdrawn from the HVA program. Failure to participate in these assessments may result in blocked reregistration for the following school year. South Carolina does not have an opt-out option for their mandated tests.

LEARNING COACH/STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The following statements are electronically signed by the student's legal guardian at time of enrollment or reregistration:

- I understand that enrollment includes full participation in all state-mandated testing on the required dates and at the assigned location. It is my responsibility to provide transportation for all required testing. Tests that are not proctored in-person may be proctored virtually. Students must have a working camera and microphone to participate in virtual proctoring.
- I understand that I will have the direction and support of a South Carolina certified teacher in implementing the K12 Virtual Schools LLC curriculum with my student.
- I accept the responsibility to supervise my student in using the K12 Virtual Schools LLC curriculum. I understand that I am expected to become knowledgeable about the curriculum and the Online School.
- I accept the responsibility to actively participate in the planning, instruction, and assessment of my child using the K12 Virtual Schools LLC curriculum and the Online School. I understand that I will schedule a minimum of six hours per school day to accomplish this task.
- I understand that, regardless of grade level or program, there are guidelines and policies regarding daily lesson completion, assignment submissions, and course level attendance. Regardless of the program my student is enrolled in, they are required to adhere to the school attendance policy.
- I understand that there are guidelines regarding live-online sessions and that my student(s) are required to participate fully in virtual sessions, including the use of the microphone, camera, and other online tools, as requested.
- I understand that students are expected to complete work in the Online School each regular school day, according to the official school calendar, and that any deviation from this Calendar must be communicated to and approved by my student's Success Coach.
- I understand that my child and I are required to participate in scheduled conferences with our teacher(s), Counselor or Success Coach. I understand that during these conferences I am expected to have access to all materials and the computer. Scheduled conferences are expected to occur from the primary location that instruction takes place.
- I understand that I must read and respond to emails and phone calls from HVA staff within 24 hours.
- I understand that I must live in the state of South Carolina in order to be enrolled in HVA.

- I understand that if my phone number, address, email, or emergency contacts change, I must inform my Success Coach in a timely manner.
- I understand that HVA is requesting a one-year commitment.
- I understand that in order to fulfill enrollment requirements the following documents must be provided: enrollment form, copy of birth certificate, proof of residency (copy of utility bill, etc. stating service address), Title I eligibility form, agreement to use of instructional property, current immunization record or waiver, previous standardized test scores and report cards (if available), custodial paperwork (if applicable), Home Language Survey (if applicable) and a copy of current Individualized Education Program/504 plan (if applicable).
- I understand that periodic school diagnostic assessments, both online and face-to-face, are a requirement and must be completed within the given timeframe.
- I understand and agree that it is my responsibility to secure an internet service provider that will support a connection that is sufficient for my student to participate in virtual live sessions and access school related video content.
- I understand and agree that HVA is a full-time public school and that my student may not be enrolled in any other full-time public, private or charter school while enrolled in HVA.
- I understand that learning coach absences are not an excused reason for student absence, and it is my responsibility to create a plan for continued study in HVA's curriculum if the learning coach is unavailable.
- I understand that it is my responsibility to alert HVA if my student is currently suspended from school, under a school truancy plan or has court order to attend school for truancy, expulsion, in the process of an expulsion hearing, ineligible to attend classes at their home-based school, or attending alternative school as part of a probation period.
- I understand that live class sessions and/or attendance at in-person educational sessions will be required as part of my student(s) learning plan.
- I understand that students identified as at-risk based on current engagement and/or transfer information (such as credit deficiency, excessive absences, or low academic performance) may have additional probationary enrollment monitoring. This program could entail additional daily scheduled live sessions that will be required, as well as completion of assignments by deadline.
- I understand HVA utilizes every opportunity to allow students to learn from peer collaboration, work-based learning, career and technical student organizations, project-based learning, industry-recognized certification preparation, internships, job shadowing, practicums, industry chats, resume and portfolio building, and many more educational career learning connections.
- I understand that if my student(s) or I fail to uphold any of the above expectations, that my student(s) may be withdrawn from HVA.
- I understand that HVA may take and use photos at school events that may include my student(s) for social media, yearbook, and other purposes. It is my responsibility to contact the school coordinator at each event and notify him or her of our desire to not be photographed.
- I understand that HVA may provide a school level directory to be shared with others within the school. It is my responsibility to request to opt out, if desired, by sending a written notice to help@heronacademysc.org.
- I understand that HVA periodically sends notifications via text message to parents with an app called ParentSquare, and if I would like to opt out of these messages, I should send an email to help@heronacademysc.org.
- I understand HVA was under extended evaluation with the NCAA prior to March 2026. Courses taken prior will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the NCAA in order to determine eligibility. There is no guarantee that courses taken at HVA will be approved by the NCAA to play college sports.

- I understand that my student's school issued computer will have a unique IP address and the school may use the IP address to identify my student's location if needed.
- I understand that it is my responsibility to monitor my student's computer use, including but not limited to, access to inappropriate websites.
- I understand that HVASC may require all visitors to be screened for identification at the Administrative office or a school organized in-person event. In the event of an emergency, all visitors will follow the designated safety plan protocol.
- I understand that students may receive emails/text/communications directly from staff and the LC/LG may not be copied on it. All students/families are expected to be familiar with and follow the expectations and requirements of HVASC's Acceptable Use Policy.

TEACHER OR SUCCESS COACH RESPONSIBILITIES

- Collaboratively develop an individual learning plan for your student by use of data-driven instructional methods.
- Guide and direct the student through the K12 Virtual Schools LLC Online School platforms.
- Provide instructional support to meet SC State Standards.
- Facilitate academic conferences.
- Review student-submitted work throughout each grading term.
- Maintain school work day Monday through Friday from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm.
- Respond within 24 school day hours to all school emails and telephone calls.
- Inform you of school updates/information from HVA and/or K12 Virtual Schools LLC .
- Plan and attend regional outings/field trips.
- Administer state required assessments.
- Provide support in all areas of successful student learning and achievement.
- Complete semester progress reports and year-end report cards.
- Be the first point of contact for parents and students.

QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS

HVA staff recognizes that life at school does not always run smoothly. As problems arise, school personnel and parents must collaborate to solve them. HVA staff also realizes that parents and students do not always know what to do or where to seek out answers and often give up and become frustrated when problems remain unsolved. Please follow these procedures for general information or for assistance in resolving a problem:

Step 1. All concerns and issues should first be directed to the student's Success Coach via phone or school email. If your Success Coach cannot resolve the issue, he/she directs the student or parent to the appropriate contact for assistance.

Step 2. If the concern is not resolved at this level, parents are advised to contact an administrator at the HVA office (864) 236-4006 using the directory at the beginning of this handbook.

COMMUNICATION RESPONSIBILITY

Ongoing and consistent communication is required between the student, parent, and teacher(s) for school compliance. School communication includes school email, telephone (leaving voicemail when necessary), text messages, school announcements, newsletters, and workshops (in person and online via Live Class).

Teachers will respond to any school emails/phone messages within one business day of receiving the message.

Parents may consent to giving their student's phone number as the contact number for HVA teachers and staff. The student must be over the age of 13. The consent form can be found [here](#).

Our administrators are available for HVA families to answer questions, offer support, and receive valuable feedback for growing our school into the best virtual program in South Carolina. Please contact them through email or phone numbers listed above.

LIVE CLASS SESSIONS

HVA teachers will offer multiple live sessions each week. The sessions will cover a variety of topics, which may include any of the following:

- Coverage of state standards,
- Support for daily lessons,
- Areas of student need as determined by data,
- State testing preparation, or
- Other instructional topics as deemed necessary.

Attendance during the live sessions may be mandatory. During these sessions it is required that families have a working microphone and camera to use as requested by the teacher. Teachers will expect students to use these tools as this helps to improve the interactive experience or to proctor student learning feedback. To support test integrity, please ensure student cameras are on and students are clearly visible during the entire testing period. Please contact customer support at 1-866-512-2273 for any problems using these tools with your computer. Live sessions are a fantastic opportunity for instructional support and feedback that are indispensable while trying to meet the expectations of our rigorous program.

HVA INSTRUCTIONAL ASSESSMENT PLAN

The HVA Instructional Assessment Plan is a strategic use of 3rd party curriculum supplements, including periodic interim assessments, over the course of a school year to ensure that all students are provided with a growth measure and a systematic exposure to state standards. The data generated will make data-driven instruction possible.

The goal is to provide every student with an individualized learning plan, continuously improve student learning using data, and ensure all students are exposed to and become proficient on state standards. Through the K12 Virtual Schools LLC Instructional Assessment Plan these goals can be accomplished.

Participation in the Instructional Assessment Plan, which may be face-to-face at times, is a requirement for continued enrollment with HVA. To support test integrity, please ensure student cameras are on and students are clearly visible during the entire testing period.

Failure to complete mandatory assessments may result in a student's access to course material being blocked. While access is blocked, absences may be recorded until the interim assessment is completed.

SCHOOL DIRECTORY

Information will be sent out initially by email on how your student and family can opt-in to the directory to allow whole school level visibility. The directory allows parents and students to search for other community members based on grade levels of students, geography, and areas of interest. The information provided in the school directory is not intended for commercial use.

SUMMER PROGRAMMING REQUIREMENTS

Students who are identified as having additional needs at the end of the school year may have required participation in targeted summer programming, as available. A few examples of this type of programming include:

- High school credit recovery
- Summer reading/ summer math sessions or requirements
- Face-to-face or virtual sessions
- Home visits

STUDENT INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING

HVA uses a data-driven instructional model which defines the academic needs and strengths of students based on data. Our teachers will use information on previous standardized tests, quarterly benchmark exams, and online school information to track the student's progress towards meeting goals for the school year. It is a fluid process that evolves throughout the school year. All parties involved with supporting the student can be called on to assist with meeting student goals.

Our teachers will review available data and students will be invited to participate in live class sessions based on their individual course progress and academic needs. These sessions are designed to provide targeted, data-driven academic support. Within the first few weeks of enrollment, students will be placed into small instructional groups based on available academic data. The requirement for live sessions will be reviewed weekly and may be adjusted to respond to changing student needs.

The school year will begin with a "Connection Call" from the Success Coach or teacher within the first two weeks of school. Attendance will be monitored weekly, with a data review at least every 4-6 weeks for intervention purposes. During this time, calls and emails to the family may be made or conferences held dependent on needs.

INDIVIDUAL GRADUATION PLAN

In compliance with the Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA), students and parents in grades 8-12 will meet with their assigned counselor each year for an Individual Graduation Plan (IGP). During IGP Conferences, counselors and students will review academic progress, graduation requirements, career interests, educational goals, and postsecondary plans. For underclassmen, this is the time to choose classes for the following school year.

Career planning sessions will include access to career inventories and information to assist in the career decision-making process. IGPs and career awareness programs last approximately 30 minutes and parents/guardians are invited to attend. The IGP will be accessible in PowerSchool at <https://cie.powerschool.com>. Please contact your Success Coach if you need a login.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READY

Counselors and teachers will work with students from 8th to 12th grade to integrate a comprehensive college and career planning program. At the beginning of the school year all 8th to 12th grade students will be required to attend a class assembly during the first week of school. During that meeting, your school counselor and graduation coach will walk you through the details of your school year, in addition to any requirements you will need to be aware of for a successful school year. This meeting will be recorded and available for you to review throughout the school year.

Throughout the school year, HVA Faculty and Staff will work with all students to prepare for post-secondary college and career opportunities. HVA will offer virtual meetings and face to face meetings around the state. These meetings will provide you with an opportunity to meet with one of the school counselors and our career learning staff. These meetings will include, but are not limited to, topics such as:

- Identifying your postsecondary goals and developing plans to meet those goals
- Learning about financial aid and how to complete the FAFSA
- ASVAB guidance and support
- Career Readiness
- College Application Day
- Academic support--goal setting
- Soft Skills support--integrity, communication, courtesy, responsibility, professionalism
- Job search support --resume writing, interview skills
- College visits -- technical/community colleges and four-year universities
- Individual Graduation Plan Meetings
- Class Information Sessions
- Other activities are to be determined

NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association)

As of March 2026, HVA is approved by the NCAA for student-athlete participation in NCAA athletic programs. Prior to this date, HVA operated under extended eligibility status. Coursework completed before March 2026 will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the NCAA and may or may not be accepted toward eligibility. Coursework completed after March 2026 will be accepted towards eligibility for college-bound student-athletes.

Students planning to compete in NCAA athletics must meet NCAA eligibility requirements, which include:

- Completing approved core courses
- Maintaining a qualifying GPA
- Submitting SAT or ACT scores, if required by the college

FAMILY EDUCATION RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) provides parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights regarding the student's education records. These rights are:

(1) The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the school receives a request for access.

To request an inspection and review, the parent or eligible student should submit a written request to the executive director that identifies the record (s) they wish to inspect. The executive director will arrange for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

(2) The right to request an amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate.

Parents or eligible students may ask the school to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate. They should write to the executive director; clearly identify the part of the record they want changed and specify why it is inaccurate. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school notifies the parent or eligible student of the decision and advises him/her of his/her right

to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures is provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

(3) The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA allows disclosure without consent.

One exception that permits the school to disclose information without consent is when the school discloses information to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by or contracted to provide services to or designated by the contractor to provide services to the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the Board of Directors of the school; a person or company with whom the school has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

(4) The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the school to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-4605

(5) FERPA requires that the school, with certain exceptions, obtain a parent's or eligible student's written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from a child's education records. However, the School may disclose "directory information" without written consent, unless either the parent or eligible student has advised the School in writing that he/she does not want all or part of the directory information disclosed. The method for objecting to disclosure of directory information is specified below. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the School to include the following information from education records in certain school publications or disclose it to certain parties. Examples include:

Shipment of computer and school materials to and from student's home
Entry of student enrollment information into a computer database for use by school officials
Sports activity sheets, such as for wrestling, showing weight and height of team members

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. In addition, federal laws require the School to provide military recruiters, upon request, with three directory information categories – names, addresses and telephone listings – unless parents or eligible students have advised the School in writing that they do not want their student's information disclosed without prior written consent.

The school has designated the following information as directory information:

- name
- address
- telephone number
- e-mail address
- photo
- athletic information
- grade level
- activities and clubs
- awards

If there are certain items the school has chosen to designate as directory information that parents do not want disclosed from their student's education records, without their prior written consent, parents are encouraged to send an email identifying the information they do not want disclosed, the student's name, and the name of the virtual academy or affiliate school in which the student is enrolled to:

help@heronacademysc.org.

Notice of these rights is available, upon request, on audiotape, in braille, and in languages other than English.

The Protection of Pupil Rights Act (PPRA) affords parents/guardians of elementary and secondary certain rights regarding the collection of survey data for marketing purposes. For details about these rights, please see [HVA PPRA Policy](#).

WITHDRAWING

Families who decide to withdraw from Heron Virtual Academy should submit this request to their student's Success Coach, and the Success Coach will email the parent a parent withdrawal form. The legal guardian must provide the following information to the Success Coach before the withdrawal process will begin.

1. The reason they want to withdraw from HVA
2. Last day of enrollment/attendance with HVA
3. Name of the school the student is transferring to

Once this information is provided, the Success Coach will lock the student account and submit the withdrawal request. The new school should send a records request or proof of enrollment to HVA to finalize the withdrawal. This can be sent to records@heronacademysc.org or faxed to 864-568-3711.

*Note: If the family is not responsive to Success Coach outreach attempts, the withdrawal process will be placed on hold until a records request is received, or contact is made. Absences will accumulate during this time until the student is withdrawn for truancy.

**If HVA is not provided with proof of enrollment from a new school, the student's home district will be notified of the withdrawal and could result in family court referral or a DSS intervention.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular school attendance is an essential part of your student's education and vital to graduating ready to take on the demands of adult life. Students who are frequently absent may be putting their futures in jeopardy by falling behind in school. Chronic absenteeism is a behavior that is strongly associated with dropping out of school.

In South Carolina, all children are required to attend a public or private school or kindergarten beginning at age five and continuing until their 17th birthday. If a parent chooses not to send their children to kindergarten, a waiver must be signed. Waivers may be obtained at the local school. Parents also have the option of homeschooling their children provided the requirements for homeschooling are met.

In accordance with the Compulsory School Attendance Law and S.C. Code of Regulations, uniform rules have been adopted to ensure that students attend school regularly. Students are expected to attend school each day and are counted present only when they are in school or are present at an activity authorized by the head of school.

Our attendance specialists work to promote positive school attendance and to notify families of concerns regarding attendance and truancy, see attendance section for more details. If your student has missed school without an excuse, please contact your Success Coach immediately and have your student log in and complete schoolwork. If your student has missed school and has a medical excuse or parent note, please send the excuse to hvascattendance@heronacademysc.org.

Corrine Davis, Student Attendance Specialist (SAS); Grades 8-12, 864-724-9712.

ATTENDANCE

By establishing a daily routine for signing on and completing course assignments in a timely manner, students will be able to successfully complete course requirements and graduate on time. Remember, communicating with teachers is the best way to stay on pace and ensure a successful online educational experience at HVA.

Students must sign on and complete work each school day to be considered present. One of the most important responsibilities of students and parents is to ensure that this attendance requirement is met. Attendance is taken daily via the HVA portal. Therefore, students must sign in daily and complete lessons each day in each course to be counted present and to avoid being dropped from the school's membership and/or losing credit in the course. **This is the minimum requirement.** If students are unable to sign in every day during the regular school week (Monday through Friday), then Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays may be used as make-up days with prior approval from his or her teacher within the semester that the days were missed.

KEY ATTENDANCE POINTS

The four critical points about attendance are:

1. Sign on daily (Monday through Friday) and complete all classroom assignments.
2. Use Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays as make-up days.
3. Notify your Success Coach immediately when it is not possible to sign on; and
4. Return telephone calls and/or respond to emails from Success Coach/staff members.

LAWFUL ABSENCES

1. Absences caused by a student's own illness* **and** whose attendance in school would endanger his or her health or the health of others.
*Verified by a statement from a physician within two days of the student's return to school. Absences for CHRONIC or EXTENDED illness will be approved only when verified by a physician's statement.
2. Absences due to a serious illness or death in the student's immediate family verified by an email from the parent within two days of the student's return to school.

3. Absences due to a recognized religious holiday of the student's faith when approved in advance. Such requests must be made to the homeroom teacher in writing.
4. Absences for students whose parents/guardians are experiencing a military deployment. Executive Director may grant up to five days of excused absences provided that 1) the absence is pre-approved, 2) the student is in good standing, 3) the student has a prior record of good attendance, and 4) missed work is completed and turned in within the school's allotted time.
5. Absences due to activities that are approved in advance by the head of school. This would include absences for extreme hardships. Such approval should be prearranged when possible.
6. Absences from the online school due to approved school outings and face-to-face testing are counted as attendance days.

UNLAWFUL ABSENCES

1. Absences of a student without the knowledge of his or her parents.
2. Absences of a student without acceptable cause with the knowledge of his or her parents.

TRUANCY

Although the state requires students to attend 170 of the 180-day school year, parents and students should be aware that S.C. Code of Regulations - Chapter 43-274 stipulates that a child ages 6 to 17 years is considered truant when the child has three consecutive unlawful absences or a total of five unlawful absences.

What do I do if my child refuses to go to school? First, contact your Success Coach and report the problem. Your Success Coach will collaborate with a Student Attendance Specialist (SAS). If your child continues to miss school unlawfully, a SAS or Administrator from your child's school will schedule an intervention conference with you and your child. At that time, a plan will be devised to improve your child's attendance. If your child continues to miss school unlawfully, his/her case will be referred to our Student Resource Coordinator (SRC). The SRC will convene a conference with you and your child regarding his/her attendance problem. If your child continues to miss school unlawfully, the case may be referred to district and/or state authorities for further intervention.

MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL ABSENCES

Absences in Middle School and High School are accrued every school day. Any absence more than ten may cause the student to lose credit for a 180-day course or be ineligible to remain enrolled with HVA. The first ten absences may be lawful, unlawful, or a combination. All absences beginning with the eleventh must be lawful. Furthermore, any absence of more than five may cause the student to lose credit for a 90-day/semester course. The first five absences may be lawful, unlawful, or a combination. All absences beginning with the sixth must be lawful.

ATTENDANCE ADMINISTRATIVE WITHDRAWAL

If a student has ten or more consecutive, unexcused absences, he/she will be truant and withdrawn from active enrollment at HVA as of the 11th day. The team will notify senior administration and a withdrawal review will be held. ***It is imperative that any student who is absent for more than three consecutive days provide any documented excuses to hvascattendance@heronacademysc.org or send directly to the student attendance specialist within seven days of the absences to avoid being considered truant and withdrawn.***

Additionally, any student who has missed more than ten school days cumulatively may be subject to withdrawal by administration as ineligible to remain enrolled with HVA due to attendance policy violation.

MEDICAL HOMEBOUND

South Carolina's mandates regarding medical homebound instruction appear in state board of education regulation 43-241. Put in the simplest terms, r 43-241 defines "homebound instruction" as teaching that is offered to the student who has an acute or chronic medical condition that prevents him or her from attending classes at school, takes place "in a room especially set aside for the period of instruction," and is conducted by an individual who holds a South Carolina teacher's certificate.

Specifically, regulation 43-241 says that students who cannot attend public school because of illness, accident, or pregnancy, even with the aid of transportation, are eligible for medical homebound instruction. A physician must certify that the student is unable to attend school but may profit from instruction given in the home. Any student participating in a program of medical homebound instruction must be approved by the district superintendent or his or her designee on standardized forms provided by the state department of education. All approved forms must be maintained by the district for documentation.

Medical homebound instruction is a service that is available for students who cannot attend school for a medical reason. A physician must certify that the student has such a medical condition but may benefit from instruction and must fill out the medical homebound form that the school district provides. The form for Medical Homebound can be picked up from the school or by contacting Radonya Smalls, rsmalls@heronacademysc.org.

The school leader then decides whether to approve the student for medical homebound services. The school will consider the severity of the student's illness or injury, the length of time that the student will be out of school, the impact that a prolonged period away from school will have on the student's academic success, and whether the student's health needs can be met at school virtually.

The goal of homebound medical instruction is to provide continuity of instruction and to facilitate the student's return to a regular school setting as quickly as possible. State Board of Education Regulation 43-241 outlines the provision of medical homebound services. For further information please contact Kasey Spicer, Special Programs Coordinator at 864-336-3465 or at kaspicer@cyberacademysc.org.

NON-ACCREDITED SCHOOLS AND HOMESCHOOL CREDITS

Students enrolling from non-public schools, which meet the accreditation definition as defined by Regulation 43-273, will have credits accepted. Students enrolling from a non-accredited school or homeschool will be subject to a course proficiency review prior to awarding high school credits. Students can demonstrate course proficiency in one of two ways to receive high school credit:

- Evidence of Work OR
- Proficiency Exam

If a student is unable to demonstrate mastery of standards through evidence of work or a proficiency exam, the course will receive a grade of "NP" (Not Pass) on the transcript. A grade of "NP" is neutral and does not impact a student's GPA positively or negatively. If a student receives a grade of "NP" then the student will also be unable to enroll in subsequent higher-level courses.

Students whose homeschool or unaccredited transcript indicates an honors-level course must provide evidence of work based on the South Carolina Honors Rubric to receive honors credit. Proficiency exams are not sufficient to receive an honors level credit. If the course is not approved for honors credit, it will then

be determined if a CP credit should be awarded based on the evidence provided. If CP cannot be awarded based on the evidence provided, the student may still opt to take the proficiency exam.

RESIDENCY POLICY

All students enrolled in the Heron Virtual Academy of South Carolina are required to establish and maintain residency within the state of South Carolina as a condition of enrollment.

Residency Requirement

To comply with the state law, all students must reside within the state of South Carolina for the duration of their enrollment. Students must provide valid proof of residency prior to the start of each academic year. Failure to submit acceptable proof of in-state residency may result in withdrawal from the school. This policy applies to all new and continuing students.

HOME VISITS

The Heron Virtual Academy values meaningful engagement with students and families and recognizes that face-to-face interactions can sometimes be a critical component of supporting student success. While public locations, such as libraries, are typically preferred for in-person meetings due to convenience and accessibility, the academy acknowledges that there may be instances where a home visit is the most appropriate option.

If a virtual academy staff member determines that a home visit is necessary to best serve a student or family, the following guidelines must be followed to ensure the safety and success of all parties involved:

1. **Public Location Meetings:** Whenever possible, staff members should arrange to meet students and families at a public location. Two staff members should be present, and a parent or guardian must remain with the student throughout the meeting.
2. **Home Visits:** In situations where a home visit is deemed essential for the family's success:
 - The visit must be pre-approved by the virtual academy administration.
 - Two staff members must participate in the home visit.
 - The parent or guardian must remain present for the duration of the visit.

This policy is designed to prioritize effective communication and collaboration while maintaining the safety and comfort of students, families, and staff.

VISITOR POLICY

Visitors To The Office

The Heron Institute welcomes visitors to our administrative office. Visitors can include but are not limited to:

- Parents/students
- Third party vendors
- Interested families not yet enrolled in CASC/HVASC
- District, State, K12 auditors

When a visitor arrives, the office assistant or designated staff member will greet the visitor and identify the reason for the visit. If the visitor is requesting specific records/information about a student, the designated staff member will follow the procedures outlined in the Communications Policy.

While in the office, all visitors will be assigned to stay within the main waiting area and will be monitored by a designated staff member and will not be left unattended.

Visitors To Outings

Visitors at designated outings can include:

- Learning coach/guardian or appointed guardian (who is at least 18 years of age) of an actively enrolled student
- Family, guests, friend of an actively enrolled student

Visitors at outings may be screened for identification (ask for driver's license) and designated staff members may verify their identity/relation on the active student's account. Visitors will be accounted for using the event sign in sheet. Visitors at outings will not be asked to monitor other students within the outing group.

Visitors To Testing Sites

Testing site visitors are required to have identifications checked. If approved to enter/monitor a test, all visitors will follow the state mandated testing protocol. Testing site visitors will be monitored by a designated staff member at all times and will not be left unattended.

Visitors For Online Sessions

Online sessions are secured with a login system that requires authentication to access classrooms. In the case of temporary visitors or external guests, such as accreditation teams, school administrators will provide a one-time use login for access.

In the event of an emergency, all visitors will follow the designated protocol in the [The Heron Institute Safety Plan](#).

STUDENT SUPPORT - RESOURCES, ATTENDANCE, AND ENGAGEMENT

The Heron Institute Student Support Team provides students and their families with the resources to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. The Student Support Team includes three branches: student resource coordinators, attendance specialists, and engagement Success Coaches. These three branches collaborate with students, families, and staff to identify and address individual needs, provide interventions and resources, and equip students and learning coaches to strengthen the skills necessary for academic growth and social and emotional wellness.

Students and families will have contact with the Student Support Team during the year and should check and respond to emails, texts, and/or phone calls. Families and students are invited to reach out to the Student Support team members using the contact information listed below.

STUDENT RESOURCES

The Student Resource team members assist in connecting students and their families to community resources in the areas of financial assistance, medical health services, mental health services, DSS and DJJ involvement, custodial matters, loss of family and loved ones, homelessness and disrupted living situations, and many other social issues which may impact school performance and engagement.

Student Resource team members can also assist students in identifying clubs and small groups that meet their interests and needs. Our school hosts various clubs that help students be a part of a social community.

View our school website for a list of current club offerings.

Student Resource team members can also assist students in connecting with small groups: wellness, grief, pregnancy and parenting support, and social skills.

H. 4624 – GENDER IDENTITY LAW

H. 4624 law mandates that if a minor student asserts to any school employee that their gender is inconsistent with their biological sex, or requests to be addressed by a pronoun or title that does not align with their biological sex, the school employee must notify the school's administration immediately.

Additionally, this law prohibits school staff from the following:

- Knowingly encouraging or coercing “a minor to withhold from the minor’s parent or legal guardian the fact that the minor’s perception of his or her gender is inconsistent with his or her sex.”
- Knowingly withholding “from a minor’s parent or legal guardian information related to the minor’s perception that his or her gender is inconsistent with his or her sex. In accordance with this law, our school's administration is responsible for communicating any such information to the parents or student's legal guardians.

When these mandated notifications are required, the Student Support Administrator will attempt to contact the parent or legal guardian by phone. A follow-up email communication confirming the nature of the call and the expressed preference of the parent or legal guardian will then be provided. If a connection cannot be made by phone, the explanation of the law, the reason for the notification, and an invitation to the parent or legal guardian to communicate preferences will be sent via email.

This communication is intended to foster a supportive and transparent partnership between parents and the school.

STUDENT RESOURCE TEAM MEMBERS

- George Woodward, Student Support Administrator (SSA), 864-209-1594, gwoodward@cyberacademysc.org
 - DSS, DJJ, disrupted living situations or unhoused, H. 4624 communication
- Remi Gardner, Student Resource Coordinator (SRC), 864-280-9394, rgardner@heronacademysc.org
 - Small groups, mental and medical health, social/emotional challenges, loss of family and loved ones, safety conferences
- Tony Moore, Community and Family Liaison, 864-485-9644, tmoore@cyberacademysc.org
 - Learning coach training and support, onboarding, financial assistance, local partnerships, clubs

ATTENDANCE

The Attendance team members work to promote school attendance and to notify families of concerns regarding attendance and truancy.

Students with chronic attendance concerns may be required to attend online check in session(s). Learning coaches will be asked to participate in a phone call or an online meeting to develop an attendance plan for their student to help bring them into good attendance standing with the school. The conference is the family's opportunity to work with the attendance specialist and the student's teacher to find a way to meet our school's attendance requirements.

Failure to follow the school attendance policy could lead to withdrawal after 10 unexcused absences and/or non-adherence to the attendance plan set forth during this meeting. This could also cause students to be ineligible to return to HVA in future school years.

Attendance Team Members

- Corinne Davis, Student Attendance Specialist (SAS), Grades 8-12, 864-724-9712, cdavis@cyberacademysc.org
- Collects absence excuses, sends attendance notices, communicates with families regarding truancy.

ENGAGEMENT

The Engagement team members provide a range of services to new and returning students and their families to help establish a strong foundation for the academic success of each student. All students are assigned a Success Coach.

Success Coaches facilitate onboarding for new students and learning coaches and provide clear and consistent communication regarding school expectations. The student's Success Coach will send an introductory email at the beginning of the student's cohort. The student's assigned Success Coach is the student's and learning coach's first point of contact for information about engagement expectations and support plan status. Students and learning coaches who are unresponsive to all contact attempts by school staff after 5 or more attempts are referred for withdrawal review for no contact protocol.

ONBOARDING

The Heron Institute's onboarding program is called Flight School. Our Success Coaches lead Flight School by providing early communication, leading orientation sessions, and ensuring students and learning coaches understand the priorities for successful engagement. Flight School is designed to provide students and learning coaches with an overview of strategies for effective engagement and tips for navigating our online school. Families will receive an email overviewing the Flight School the week before their cohort begins. Families will follow the Flight School schedule outlined in the email and attend all Flight School sessions to complete our onboarding expectations.

ENGAGEMENT EXPECTATIONS

Engagement Expectations	
Badge Name	Expectations
School Attendance Badge	The student will attend school daily.
Course Assignments Badge	The student will complete and submit assignments in each course weekly.
Critical Communication Response Badge	The student and learning coaches will read and respond to critical communication from all school staff.
Live Class Attendance Badge	The student will attend all required Live Class sessions, related services, intervention, and remedial class sessions.

Power Play Badge	All classes above 60: The student must maintain or increase letter grade.
Failure to meet these engagement requirements leads to referral for a support plan.	

SUPPORT PLAN				
First Three Week Support Plan Period	Second Three Week Support Plan Period	Failure to earn badges leads to referral for more intensive support.	Heron Haven	Failure to make progress could lead to student withdrawal.
Student must earn 8-12 badges during 3 week period	Student must earn 8-12 badges during 3 week period		Individualized support with their pod team that includes success coaches, school counselors, mentoring teachers, and student resource coordinator.	

Students can earn four engagement badges per week. The engagement badges are outlined above and encompass our engagement expectations for students.

Exceptions to the Live Class attendance badge can be made when a student is absent due to illness or a death in the immediate family. A note from the student's doctor or a bereavement note is required.

ENGAGEMENT COMMUNICATION UPDATES

The student and learning coach will receive notification from the student's Success Coach of the recommendation for additional support through a probation plan. The learning coach should respond within 24 hours to confirm receipt of the communication. Participation in the probation plan process is required.

SUPPORT PLAN

A student identified for low progress and/or lack of engagement will be placed with a support plan by a Success Coach who will help throughout the process. The goal is for the student to gain the skills, motivation, and drive to be successful in the school's academic program and return quickly to good standing.

Students and families receive up to six (6) weeks from the date of initial plan to resolve engagement concerns. Students will work with a Success Coach to earn badges during the support period. Students have an opportunity to earn 4 badges per week. Students must earn 8-12 badges within the 3-week period

for successful completion of to earn another 3 week plan. After 2 successful plans (6-weeks) the student will return to good standing.

If a student does not earn enough badges to successfully close either of the 3 week plans they will be recommended for more intensive support with their team that includes Success Coach, school counselors, mentoring teachers, and student resource coordinator. This team creates a safe environment with additional staff communication and encouragement provided to the student.

Students referred for a second time will follow the same plan as outlined above.

Students can only receive a maximum of 2 referrals a year. A third referral could result in immediate withdrawal.

REVIEW FOR WITHDRAWAL

Students must earn 16 badges within the six weeks for successful completion of probation and a return to good standing. Students earning less than 8 badges for the first 3 weeks or, students earning 15 or fewer badges over 6 weeks, are referred to Heron Haven for additional support. Students who do not make engagement improvements will be moved to administrative review for withdrawal from Heron Academy. *The student account may be locked at that time. If a student is referred for a third Probation Plan, the student will immediately be withdrawn due to lack of continuous engagement.* Students are only eligible for one appeal per academic school year.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT PLAN

Students who are failing 2 or more courses may be assigned to an academic support plan. Success Coaches will host students for required academic support sessions where students are taught how to manage their time, prioritize tasks, and communicate with teachers. Students can remain on an academic support plan for as long the student is failing 2 or more courses.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESS

Teachers, Success Coaches, and administrators frequently communicate important updates and reminders via email. It is important that these communications are read and responded to.

- Required testing communication
- Flight School for Learning Coaches
- IGP (Individual Graduation Plan for grades 8-12)
- Teacher/Advisor Help Sessions
- School Staff Communication
- Alert/Probation Notices
- 504/IEP Meetings
- Required conferences (parent/teacher conferences, success coach meetings, etc.)

REASONS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SCHOOL WITHDRAWAL

- The student has five or more unlawful absences while being unresponsive to attendance department attempts to resolve.
- Failure to complete in-person or remote mandatory assessments.
- Failure to follow support plan.
- Failure to communicate with school staff (email, phone calls, texts).

ENGAGEMENT TEAM MEMBERS

- Natalie Mims, Student Support Supervisor (SSS), 864-209 1642, nmims@cyberacademysc.org
 - Onboarding, engagement, withdrawal appeals
- Courtney Ballinger, Senior Advisor, 864-209-1677, cballinger@heronacademysc.org
 - Engagement support, support plan status, engagement withdrawals
- Andrea Calderon Alvarez, Bilingual Engagement Coordinator, 864-251-5086, acalderonalvarez@cyberacademysc.org
 - Bilingual onboarding for new learning coaches, bilingual communication

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT AND ACCEPTABLE USE

This section describes the policies and guidelines of the Student Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use. At Heron Virtual Academy (HVA), we believe that all students thrive in an environment built on mutual respect, high expectations, and supportive relationships. The guidelines in this section outline our shared responsibility to maintain a positive virtual learning space where every student feels safe, connected, and valued.

These expectations are not just rules—they are agreements we make as a school community to support each other's academic success, personal growth, and well-being. We understand that students may face challenges, and we aim to respond with empathy, consistency, and restorative support.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We recognize that behavior is a form of communication.
- We respond to challenges with curiosity, not judgment.
- We support students through mistakes and focus on repair and reflection.
- We partner with families to meet students' individual needs.

BEHAVIOR LEVELS & RESPONSE APPROACH

LEVEL I: BEHAVIOR NEEDING REDIRECTION

These behaviors may interrupt instruction or school routines but do not pose a safety concern.

Examples:

- Frequent absences from required live class sessions
- Off-task or disruptive behavior in virtual classes
- Dress code reminders (e.g., appropriate on-camera attire)
- Incomplete participation in learning activities
- Unintentional academic integrity violations

Supportive Responses May Include:

- Verbal redirection
- Private message or call from the teacher
- Parent/guardian communication
- Student-teacher-parent conference

LEVEL II: BEHAVIOR IMPACTING THE COMMUNITY

These behaviors may cause emotional harm, demonstrate repeated Level I concerns, or disrupt the school climate.

Examples:

- Repeated Level I behaviors (3+ instances)

- Disrespectful communication to staff or peers
- Bullying, name-calling, or unkind comments in class chats
- Use of inappropriate language or posting of offensive content
- Inappropriate behavior, comments, gestures, or content

Supportive Responses May Include:

- Restorative conversation and reflection
- Safety conference with Student Resource Coordinator
- Parent-teacher-administrator meeting
- Individualized behavior or success plan

LEVEL III: BEHAVIOR THAT COMPROMISES SAFETY

These serious behaviors may present a physical, emotional, or legal risk to self or others.

Examples:

- Threats toward staff or peers
- Possession or use of harmful or prohibited items
- Harassment or physical intimidation
- Vandalism, criminal activity, or off-campus violence

Supportive Responses May Include:

- Immediate safety planning and administrative intervention
- Required in-person meeting with administration and family
- Referral to outside agencies or support services
- Temporary removal from the school environment
- Involvement of law enforcement if necessary

CONSEQUENCES AND RESTORATIVE ACTIONS

Our goal is to support growth, not to punish. Responses are layered to match the behavior level and prioritize reconnection and repair.

Possible Actions Include:

- Verbal redirection and reminders
- Temporary restriction of school privileges (e.g., class chat access)
- Restorative or reflective assignments
- In-school or virtual detention (camera and screen sharing required)
- Parent-student-staff conferences
- In-person meetings when necessary
- Loss of school event participation
- Administrative withdrawal in rare, serious cases

ONLINE CONDUCT & DIGITAL RESPONSIBILITY

Students are expected to follow safe and respectful digital practices:

- Use only your own username and password
- Never share personal contact information online
- Avoid impersonating others or posting anonymously
- Do not post, download, or share harmful or non-instructional content
- Use school technology for learning purposes only
- Be mindful and kind in all digital interactions

LIVE CLASS EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to be present, prepared, and respectful in all live sessions:

- Attend and participate regularly
- Use class tools (chat, mic, camera) appropriately
- Follow dress code and virtual classroom norms
- Communicate kindly with peers and staff

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP & INTERNET ETIQUETTE (NETIQUETTE)

Students are expected to demonstrate kindness, empathy, and respect online:

- Avoid sarcasm or language that can be misunderstood
- Focus comments on the topic, not the person
- Use inclusive and respectful language
- Offer feedback that is helpful, not hurtful
- Protect privacy by not sharing personal information or email addresses
- Think before you post—read your message out loud and check for tone

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

We are committed to helping students understand the importance of honesty and original work.

Academic Dishonesty Includes:

- Submitting work that is not your own
- Copying or plagiarizing content
- Allowing others (including adults) to complete your work
- Cheating on tests or assessments
- Using artificial intelligence or other tools to generate, complete, or substantially alter work and submitting it as your own without teacher permission/citation

Response to Academic Integrity Violations:

- **1st Offense:** Learning intervention (e.g., plagiarism module); assignment may be resubmitted for full credit; teacher contacts parent
- **2nd Offense:** Assignment may be resubmitted for half credit; parent-teacher-admin meeting
- **3rd+ Offense:** No credit for the assignment; additional conference and support plan

CARE FOR SCHOOL MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

Students and families are asked to treat school-issued equipment with care:

- Keep food and drinks away from devices
- Avoid rough handling or dropping devices
- Report damaged or missing items to:

K12 Virtual Schools LLC Customer Support: 1-866-512-2273

STUDENT INTERNET SAFETY

To help students stay safe online:

- Never share personal information (e.g., address, phone number, photos) with anyone outside of school
- Never agree to meet someone in person who you've only met online
- Notify a trusted adult if you receive anything that feels uncomfortable or unsafe

By working together—students, families, and staff—we can ensure that every student at HVA has the opportunity to learn in an environment that supports growth, builds trust, and promotes positive relationships.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) POLICY

Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the acceptable and ethical use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and systems in the virtual school environment. It is designed to promote responsible use of AI technologies by students to support learning, innovation, and academic integrity.

Acceptable Use of AI

AI may be used as a supportive tool to assist in the learning process. Acceptable uses include:

- Generating ideas, outlines, or study aids (with proper citation)
- Practicing concepts in subjects like math, science, or language arts.
- Accessibility support (e.g., text-to-speech, language translation).

All AI-generated content must be cited (e.g., "Generated by ChatGPT, OpenAI, June 2025"), and the Instructor may require an appendix detailing:

- Which tool/version was used.
- The prompts and exchange.
- The editing or integration process.
- The educational intent in using it.

Prohibited Use of AI

- Cheating, plagiarism, or submitting AI-generated work as original without disclosure.
- Violating academic integrity policies.
- Misrepresenting identity or impersonating others.
- Generating or spreading misinformation, hate speech, or inappropriate content.
- Submitting private or sensitive data.

Academic Integrity

Using AI to generate content that is then submitted as a student's own work—without proper disclosure or without instructor's permission—is considered a form of plagiarism and constitutes a violation of the school's policy. This includes, but is not limited to, essays, reports, coding assignments, solutions to problem sets, creative work, or any material intended to reflect a student's individual knowledge or effort.

Students are expected to clearly indicate when AI tools have been used to assist with or contribute to their assignments. Failure to disclose such use will be treated the same as any other form of academic dishonesty. Any content produced by or heavily assisted by AI must be appropriately cited or acknowledged in accordance with instructor guidelines.

All existing rules and consequences regarding plagiarism and academic misconduct apply equally to the misuse of AI. Depending on the severity of the violation, consequences may include a warning, a reduced or failing grade on the assignment, loss of credit, disciplinary action, or further administrative review.

PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICE USAGE POLICY DURING INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

The purpose of this policy is to create a focused and distraction-free learning environment that fosters a positive educational experience for our students. By prohibiting the use of personal electronic devices (devices that are authorized for classroom use, as defined below, are exempt from this policy) during instructional time, as defined below, this policy aims to enhance student engagement and concentration, thereby supporting the development of the college and career-ready skills outlined in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. This approach will enable students to engage in meaningful interactions, collaborate with peers, and cultivate the essential skills necessary for success in college, careers, and life.

This policy has been developed in compliance with the General Appropriations Bill, H. 5100 of 2024, Proviso 1.103.

I. Definitions

- A. "Personal electronic device," hereinafter referred to as "device," means any device utilized to access the internet, Wi-Fi, cellular telephone signals, or to capture images or video. This includes but is not limited to, cell phones, smartwatches, tablets, and gaming devices.
- B. "Personal Electronic Device accessories," hereinafter referred to as "device accessories," include any wired or wireless accessory or wearable technology that connects to a device and any other accessory commonly used with a personal electronic device.
- C. "Instructional time" is defined as the period during which students are actively participating in scheduled online classes, virtual lessons, or any other school-related activities requiring their full attention and engagement.
- D. "Access" is defined as viewing, holding, wearing, or otherwise using a device for communication, internet access, gaming, recording, or any other function commonly associated with devices. During instructional time, devices should be used only for educational purposes as directed by the school.
- E. "Authorized for Classroom Use" is defined as the use of a personal electronic device, such as a laptop, Chromebook, iPad, etc. that is used to access scheduled online classes, virtual lessons, or any other school-related activities.

II. Policy Implementation and Enforcement

- A. During instructional time, students may only use electronic devices that are authorized for classroom use.
- B. If explicitly required by a student's IEP, Medical Plan, or 504 plan, the student shall be allowed to access their personal electronic device for medically or educationally necessary purposes described and required for administration of the IEP, Medical Plan, or 504 plan.
- C. If a student violates the preceding guidelines during instructional time, the student will be subject to progressive consequences as outlined in the student code of conduct and disciplinary enforcement procedures.

While we recognize the importance of personal electronic devices in modern life, minimizing their use during instructional time will create a more productive and engaging learning environment for all students. We appreciate the cooperation of students and parents in adhering to this policy to ensure that our educational objectives are met effectively. We also ask that parents and guardians help monitor appropriate device usage in the home to support their child's educational experience.

BULLYING POLICY

All students have the right to learn in a safe and supportive school environment that is free from bullying, intimidation, and harassment. The school environment includes Live Class or other live virtual meeting place, blended learning labs, outings, testing sites, any school-sponsored events. The school environment is also extended to include incidents that occur outside of school whenever such incidents impact the school environment. HVA is committed to providing a safe environment by ensuring that bullying, intimidation, and harassment is not tolerated in our school and will be investigated and addressed upon notification.

Bullying, intimidation, and harassment are defined to include any gestures, written or verbal communication, or physical acts by an individual student or group of students that inflicts physical, verbal, emotional or mental suffering on another student or group of students. They are any behaviors designed to intimidate, threaten, distress, or hurt others.

These include but are not limited to any behaviors that take place in Live Class, at a testing site, or at a school-sponsored function that:

- Are motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or mental, physical, or sensory disability, or by any other distinguishing characteristic
- A reasonable person should know, will have the effect of intimidating, scaring, or harming a student, teacher, staff member, etc. or damaging their property, placing them in reasonable fear or harm to their person or damage their property
- Are sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to create an intimidating, threatening and or abusive educational environment for an individual
- Have the effect of insulting or demeaning any person or group of persons in a way as to cause substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with the orderly operation of the school. Acts of bullying, intimidation or harassment may also be a student exercising power and control over another student/individual, in either isolated incidents or patterns of harassing or intimidating behavior.

CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying is **bullying** that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites. Examples of cyberbullying include mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles.

REPORTING

All school employees are required to report alleged violations of the school's Anti-Bullying policy to the executive director. All other members of the school community including students, parents or legal guardians, volunteers and visitors are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy. Reporting parties should be encouraged as part of the school's Code of Conduct to submit an Incident Report Form to the executive director.

Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action cannot be based solely based on an anonymous report.

A school employee who promptly reports an incident of bullying, intimidation, or harassment to the appropriate school official and who makes the report in compliance with the procedures in the policy is not liable for damages arising from any failure to remedy the situation.

INVESTIGATION

The executive director or designee is responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation of this policy. A prompt, thorough and complete investigation of the alleged incident shall be conducted. A written record of each investigation regarding allegations of bullying, intimidation, and harassment will be created. All written documentation shall be maintained by the executive director.

Some acts of bullying, intimidation, or harassment may be isolated incidents requiring the school to respond appropriately to the individual(s) committing the acts. Other acts may be so serious or part of a larger pattern of bullying, intimidation, or harassment to require further action involving law enforcement.

Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for students who commit an act of bullying, intimidation or harassment range from positive behavioral interventions, up to including suspension, administrative withdrawal, and legal, and/or law enforcement action. The executive director in conjunction with the school and Stride attorneys will consider the nature and circumstances of the act, the level of harm, the nature of the behavior, past incident(s), past or continuing patterns of behavior, and the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred.

If the investigation determines that harassment, intimidation, or bullying has occurred, the administration will take reasonable, timely, age-appropriate, and effective corrective action. Examples of corrective action include but are not limited to:

- Disciplinary action against the aggressor, up to and including termination of an employee or administrative withdrawal of a student
- Special training or other interventions
- Apologies
- Dissemination of statements that the school does not tolerate harassment, intimidation, or bullying
- Independent reassessment of student work
- Tutoring
- Individuals, including students, employees, parents/legal guardians, and volunteers, may also be referred to law enforcement officials, if warranted.
- Safety Conference (refer to Safety Tier Protocol)
- Exemption from in-person school events (refer to Safety Tier Protocol)

CONSEQUENCES FOR RETALIATION OR FALSE ACCUSATIONS

Reprisal or retaliation against a victim, witness, or anyone with reliable information about an act of bullying, intimidation or harassment is prohibited. The consequence and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation shall be determined by the school after consultation with school and Stride attorneys, consideration of the nature and circumstance of the act, in accordance with the case law, federal and state statutes and regulations and district policies and procedures.

BULLYING EDUCATION AND PREVENTION RESOURCES:

- <https://www.stopbullying.gov/>
- <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/classroom/>

- <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/creating-safe-and-respectful-environment-our-nations-classrooms-training-toolkit>

BEHAVIOR IN FACE-TO-FACE SETTINGS

HVA sponsors optional outings for students and families on a regular basis that enhance the K12 Virtual Schools LLC curriculum/learning activities. While attendance is not mandatory, it is a wonderful opportunity to meet other school participants and have conversations about our children and programs and share practices that work. Outings are opportunities for both the students and learning coaches to socialize. It is our hope that the teachers and learning coaches will work together to plan and implement these activities. Parents or guardians are responsible for the cost of transportation and any entrance fees associated with optional outings. While credit for field trips is not offered in lieu of the regular curriculum for most outings, attendance at these events can be included under supplemental time.

HVA parents or guardians and students are expected to conduct themselves appropriately at all optional outings. Parents or guardians are always responsible for the supervision of their children.

DRESS CODE

HVA expects students to dress appropriately when attending outings or while on camera for school events or live virtual settings. Examples, of inappropriate dress include:

- Clothing, apparel, or jewelry that by words, signs, pictures, or any other combinations thereof, advocates or promotes sexual activity, violence, death, suicide, or the use of alcohol or drugs, or demeans, degrades, or intimidates another because of race, sex, religious persuasions, national origin, disability, or gang membership.
- Apparel that reveals or exposes the midriff/lower back or sides of the upper body or torso and/or undergarments.
- Any clothing that is excessively tight, is of transparent material, see through material, or that is ripped or torn, or has suggestive signs or symbols.
- Any clothing through which underwear or any type of undergarment may be seen.
- Spandex, clothing that does not cover backs, clothing that permits viewing of cleavage, halter tops, tank tops with open sides, spaghetti strap tops, and muscle/tank shirts.
- Spikes, dog chains/chokers, ball bearing chains, wallet chains, or other jewelry that increases the risk for accidents.
- Live Class Session Environment
 - Keep your camera on and ensure your face is clearly visible unless excused by the teacher.
 - Be present and engaged—avoid multitasking (no phones, games, or unrelated tabs).
 - Use chat responsibly—only for class-related questions or comments.
 - Be seated in a quiet, distraction-free location (preferably not a bed or noisy area).
 - Ensure your background is free from inappropriate or distracting décor, images, or posters. Consider using a virtual background if needed.

SUMMARY OF SCHOOL CRIME ACT

According to SC law, if a student is convicted of assault and battery, which is not of an aggravated nature, on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event against a person affiliated with the school in an official capacity, including, but not limited to, administrators, teachers, substitute teachers, teacher's assistants, student teachers, custodial staff, food service staff, and volunteers, the student must be punished by imprisonment for not more than twelve months or a fine of not more than one thousand dollars, or both, at the discretion of the judge.

Law requires the Department of Juvenile Justice to immediately notify the HVA executive director if a HVA student is convicted of a violent crime. Any teachers of the child will be notified by administration as soon as knowledge of the conviction is shared with HVA.

Anyone officially affiliated with HVA is immune from criminal prosecution and civil liability if they report school related crime made in good faith., if making the report would otherwise incriminate them.

SMOKING POLICY

According to SC law, HVA always prohibits the use of any tobacco product or alternative nicotine product by any person in any school buildings or facilities, including the use of tobacco products or alternative nicotine products by persons attending a school-sponsored event at any location when in the presence of students or school personnel or where use is otherwise prohibited by law. School personnel must enforce the policy, including appropriate disciplinary actions. Disciplinary actions for a student violating the policy may include but are not limited to: Conference with parent or legal guardian, mandatory enrollment in tobacco cessation or prevention program, community service, school suspension, or suspension of extracurricular activities. Visitors who violate this policy may be verbally requested to leave and could have prosecution for disorderly conduct for repeated offenses.

ADMINISTRATIVE WITHDRAWAL

Administrative withdrawal is the removal of a student from our school due to the student no longer meeting enrollment requirements. Students may be administratively withdrawn due to violation of terms of support plan and due to serious minimum daily progress concerns, chronic absenteeism, relocation to another state, or failing to comply with testing participation requirements as indicated in enrollment policy acknowledgements.

Students may also be administratively withdrawn from our school because of serious behavior concern such as the commission of any crime, gross immorality, gross misbehavior or the violation of any other written rules and regulations established by HVA, or when the presence of the student is deemed to be detrimental to the best interests of the school. Examples include possessing a weapon at face-to-face school events, showing weapons on camera during virtual sessions, or exhibiting gang affiliation.

Students who engage in an ongoing pattern of behavior that is disruptive to the orderly operations of the school or who are in violation of school attendance, daily progress, or other enrollment requirements shall be recommended for administrative withdrawal, as set forth in the Student Behavior Code. This means the student cannot attend online school or attend any school-related events.

DISCIPLINE OF DISABLED STUDENTS

Heron Virtual Academy (HVA) follows the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) and the procedural safeguards provided under IDEA and State law for students with disabilities. In disciplinary matters, this means that a student with disabilities may, based on the severity of the behavior, be moved to a temporary alternate placement determined by the IEP team or suspended for no more than 10 consecutive school days (a student may be moved by a temporary administrative decision if special circumstances such as drugs, weapons, or serious bodily injury apply).

A student does not have to have an IEP in place to receive IDEA discipline protections. Protections are available as long as the school had knowledge that the student may have a disability before the misconduct occurred.

HVA may suspend a student with a disability for up to 10 days without a duty to continue to provide services from the IEP. Suspending a student with disabilities for more than 10 cumulative days in a single school year (even for separate incidents), however, constitutes a change of placement. In those cases, the student must continue to receive all services required by the IEP. If a student's behavior warrants in-school suspension, HVA will provide services comparable to those in the student's IEP and that allow the student opportunities to participate in his or her general curriculum.

If a student with a disability is being considered for administrative withdrawal or a suspension that would result in more than 10 days (consecutive or cumulative of the school year), HVA will conduct a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) hearing. At this hearing, a determination will be made regarding whether the behavior was caused by, or had a direct or substantial relationship to, the student's disability, or whether the conduct resulted from the school's failure to implement the IEP. Parents will be notified at least 24 hours prior to an MDR.

If the MDR results in a finding that the behavior was not a manifestation of the disability, then HVA will take the same disciplinary action for the student with a disability that it would have for children without disabilities. As noted above, if a removal constitutes more than 10 cumulative days during the school year, all required IEP services shall be provided. In addition, HVA may also perform a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and implement positive behavioral intervention services to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

If the MDR results in a finding that the behavior was a manifestation of the disability, or if the conduct was a direct result of HVA's failure to implement the IEP, then HVA will conduct an FBA or, following a review, modify any existing behavioral intervention plan as necessary. The student will be returned to the student's placement at the school (though the parents and the school may agree to a change of placement as part of modifications to the IEP or BIP).

Parents or the school may appeal an MDR determination. An appeal hearing must be held within 20 days of notice by the LEA representative. A decision shall be rendered within 10 days.

Disability services shall be provided during the appeal process. If the school believes continuing IEP services is substantially likely to result in serious bodily injury to the student or others, the school may appeal that decision.

School officials shall remove a student to an interim alternative setting for up to 45 school days, regardless of whether the conduct is a manifestation of the disability in the following three situations: a student is found to have used or possessed illegal drugs, possessed a firearm on school grounds, or committed aggravated assault or serious bodily injury.

In these cases, the student may be placed in an alternative education setting for up to 45 days. The Principal will notify parents of all matters related to the incident in writing and parents may bring an attorney or advocate to any related meetings.

Regardless of the determination following the MDR, the school will resume providing IEP services on the 11th day of suspension (if they were halted as part of the suspension).

HVA will consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether a change in placement, consistent with the other requirements of South Carolina Department of Education Board of

Education Regulations, is appropriate for a child with a disability who violates a code of student conduct. All parental notifications related to disciplinary actions will be made as required by state and federal regulations.

APPEAL PROCESS

An appeal to any disciplinary decision up to and including administrative withdrawal must be made to the Student Support Supervisor-Engagement, Natalie Mims (nmims@cyberacademysc.org) OR executive director within three days of the decision being communicated to the parent/legal guardian.

PARENT/LC CONDUCT

POLICY ON PARENT/LEARNING COACH CONDUCT DURING LIVE INSTRUCTION PURPOSE

This policy ensures a productive and respectful learning environment during live instruction sessions by outlining expectations for parent and Learning Coach behavior.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Heron Institute encourages parents and Learning Coaches to actively observe and support their students during live instruction. Positive engagement fosters collaboration between families and educators, which is essential for student success. However, behaviors that disrupt the educational environment cannot be tolerated.

EXPECTATIONS FOR CONDUCT

1. Parents and Learning Coaches are welcome to observe live instruction sessions to support their students.
2. Parents and Learning Coaches must refrain from interrupting or engaging in behaviors that disrupt the flow of instruction. Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to:
 - Interrupting the teacher or students during live instruction.
 - Using vulgar, abusive, or threatening language.
 - Engaging in actions that cause distractions or disrupt the learning environment for others.
3. Parents and Learning Coaches are reminded that any communication sent via the student's account (spoken or typed) will be considered a direct reflection of the parent/Learning Coach if they are the party communicating. Misuse of the student account in this manner is strictly prohibited.

CONSEQUENCES FOR DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

1. Teachers or staff members have the authority to immediately remove a disruptive individual from the virtual session.
2. Any incidents of disruptive behavior, including misuse of the student account by a parent/Learning Coach, will be documented and reported to school administration.
3. Repeated or severe incidents of disruptive behavior may result in disciplinary action, up to and including:
 - Restriction of the parent/Learning Coach's access to live instructional sessions.
 - Temporary or permanent removal of the student from the class or course.
 - Removal of the student's enrollment from the school, subject to administrative review.

REPORTING AND REVIEW

- Any reported incidents of disruptive behavior will be reviewed by school administration, and appropriate actions will be taken following due process.

- Parents/Learning Coaches will be notified of the concern and provided an opportunity to address the situation.

COMMITMENT TO A RESPECTFUL ENVIRONMENT

The Heron Institute is committed to creating a respectful and supportive learning environment for all students and staff. By adhering to these expectations, parents, Learning Coaches, and educators can work together to ensure every student has the opportunity to succeed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Parents and Learning Coaches will be required to review and acknowledge this policy as part of the enrollment agreement to ensure understanding of the expectations and consequences.

SCHEDULING AND GRADING POLICIES

BLOCK SCHEDULING POLICIES

At HVA, grades 9-12 are on a 4x4 block schedule. According to goals in a student's Individual Graduation Plan and credits needed to earn a South Carolina diploma, students will be enrolled in four blocks during the first semester and four new classes during second semester. This allows students to complete eight credits during the school year. Exceptions to this policy are given to students who are enrolled in the limited yearlong courses. In this case, students will take five courses per semester with two being 45-minute blocks. These students still earn eight credits. Under extenuating circumstances or by parent request, students can opt to add one independent study course per semester to a student's schedule in order to earn extra credits. Specific courses and seats available for independent study courses vary. Students enrolled in the JAG (Jobs for America's Graduates) program may earn one additional elective credit per year.

Students will be issued 4 official report cards during the year: one after each quarter. For courses with a Part A and a Part B, Part A will be weighted 50% and averaged into Part B grade, so the Part B grade will show as the final grade in the course. For all other courses, the final grade will be calculated based on the cumulative score at the end of the term. Courses with an End of Course Examination (English 2, Algebra 1/Intermediate Algebra, Biology 1, and US History) will have the course grade count as 80% of the final grade and the End of Course Examination will count as 20% of the final grade.

Grades are determined by the total of points a student earns on all graded assignments and tests.

In-Year Enrollees (w/wo transfer Grades)

When a student enrolls after the start of a grading period, any grade earned at a previous school may be entered into the gradebook as an initial record of prior academic performance.

The student's final course grade will be determined by demonstrated mastery of South Carolina academic standards through assignments, assessments, and coursework completed while enrolled at HVASC

Appeals to grade should be directed to the high school Academic Administrator.

Any concerns with school material should be directed to the high school Academic Administrator.

Points earned by student / Total points possible = Grade

Grade Mark	Definition
A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Middle School and High School Weighted Grading System

Major Grade Assignments	50%
Middle Grade Assignments	30%
Daily Assignments	20%

EVIDENCE OF MASTERY

Grades are determined based on how well a student performs on graded activities within each course. Graded activities include but are not limited to:

- Practice lessons
- Threaded discussions
- Web explorations
- Labs
- Journal entries
- Class discussions
- Quizzes
- Tests
- Supplemental programs

CONDITIONAL RELEASE CHECKPOINTS

To ensure a strong academic foundation, students must demonstrate mastery of essential standards before moving on to future units or assignments. Certain assignments and assessments will serve as *checkpoints* to verify that students have a solid understanding of key concepts.

If a student has not yet met the mastery level required at a checkpoint, they will pause in their progression and receive targeted support, opportunities for review, and chances to demonstrate improved understanding. This intentional structure ensures that learning gaps are addressed early and prevents students from advancing before they are ready.

Because later standards often build upon earlier ones, this approach promotes deeper comprehension and better prepares students for success throughout the course.

END OF COURSE EXAM MASTERY-BASED GRADING POLICY

A minimum grade of 60% may be awarded if a student demonstrates mastery of the course standards by scoring a passing grade on an approved, proctored, comprehensive exam, such as the state approved End of Course exam.

AWARDING OF CREDIT, GRADE PROMOTION AND DEFINITION, COHORT YEAR

High school students are promoted based on the number of credits earned. Credit is not awarded for courses in which a student earns an F or fails to complete the required attendance (60 hours per semester or 120 hours per one credit course). Students may retake the same course at the same difficulty level under the conditions as stipulated in the South Carolina Uniform Grading Policy:

- Students in grades 10-12 may re-take any course in which they earned a grade of D, P, NP, WP, FA, WF or F. Students in Grade 9 who completed high school credits in middle school may retake these courses regardless of grade. Students wishing to retake a course must contact the school counselor prior to the fifth day of school the following term.
- The course in which a D or F was earned may only be retaken within one calendar year and before the next sequential course is taken.
- Students who earn a grade of D in a course and choose to repeat the course for a higher grade will only be granted one credit for the course
- The student record will reflect all courses taken and the grade earned; however, only the highest grade will be used in figuring the student's Grade Point Average (GPA).
- The student will retake the course in its entirety, including any End-of-Course (EOC) exams associated with the course.

Middle school students are promoted based on their final grades in their core classes. Students who are failing three or more of their core academic courses (math, language arts, social studies, or science) or who are failing both math and language arts are recommended for grade level retention.

Grade-level classification is based on the number of credits earned and is reviewed at the end of each school year. Mid-year reclassifications are only available upon request.

LATE WORK POLICY

Various assignments are teacher graded, and others are computer graded. During the semester, students and parents can always view grades in the grade book for each course. It is important to note that these grades are updated every time an assignment is graded.

Warning: If a deadline has passed and the teacher has not entered a zero for that assignment, the student's grade may be temporarily inflated. Zeros are typically entered weekly for work not received by the Thursday night deadline.

- Graded assignments – whether teacher or computer scored – are listed on the course calendar. These assignments must be completed and submitted *no later than midnight on the assignment's due date. Any work not received by midnight will be considered missing and assigned a zero.*
- Under some circumstances, teachers may grant due date extensions on assignments. ***Families should never assume that they will automatically grant these requests.*** Due date extensions must generally be requested before the due date of the assignment during the school week. Requests received on or past the due date, or on a non-school day may not be granted.

- In case of computer- or internet-issues, students are required to contact their classroom teachers immediately to communicate the issue, so please have a hardcopy of all teachers' names and phone numbers.
- **Please be aware that because of the point values assigned to teacher-scored assignments, it is mathematically impossible to pass a course without completing them.**

While late work may be accepted for credit until the end of each quarter, failure to meet deadlines on a consistent basis may result in academic probation or administrative withdrawal.

HIGH SCHOOL PROMOTION REQUIREMENTS

Students must earn at least six credits per year in high school including one credit in English and one credit in math each year to meet promotion requirements.

Students must have:	For Grade Level Promotion to:
6 Credits** including at least 1 English and 1 math	10th Grade
12 Credits** including at least 2 English and 2 math	11th Grade
18 Credits* including at least 3 English and 3 math OR be scheduled to complete all graduation requirements by the end of the school year	12th Grade

EARLY GRADUATION

Students interested in graduating a year or semester early must speak to their school counselor AND complete the [Early Grad Request](#) form.

Completion of this form does not guarantee early graduation but will initiate the process for a counselor to formulate an early graduation plan, if possible. It is important to note that if a student is attending a four-year college, graduating early can have serious impacts on qualification for the state lottery scholarships (LIFE and Palmetto Fellows). Students who graduate mid-year will NOT have a class rank and, therefore, would not be able to use rank as a qualifier for these scholarships during that school year. Students attending a four-year college after graduation whose scholarships might be impacted by early graduation are encouraged to stay and complete dual enrollment courses while enrolled in high school. HVA does not have a graduation ceremony for early graduates; however, students are welcome to attend the following end of year ceremony once all credits are complete. Grade level changes will not occur until the student's final year of high school and he/she is scheduled in all courses needed to graduate.

HONORS COURSES

Honors courses demand an elevated level of independence and self-discipline. Students synthesize and evaluate information and concepts from multiple sources and read texts typically assigned in college-level courses. Students also demonstrate college-level writing in essays that require analysis of primary and secondary sources, responsible use of evidence, and comprehensive citation of sources. Successful completion of prerequisites, teacher/school counselor recommendation, and a strong interest in the subject are recommended for enrollment in an Honors course. Honors courses will receive an additional weighting of .5 quality points onto the student's GPA.

END-OF-COURSE (EOC) TESTING

In courses requiring state end-of-course testing (Algebra 1, Intermediate Algebra, English 2, Biology, and US History), the school will apply the mandatory 20 percent weighting of the end-of-course test to the student's final grade when applicable. Students who repeat a course will also be required to take any applicable EOC exam.

UNIFORM GRADING POLICY

In April 2016, the State Board of Education approved the revised 10-point Uniform Grading Policy. This system will be used for all courses carrying Carnegie units, including units earned at the middle school level. Two categories of weights are taken into consideration: An honors course will receive an additional .5 weighting and an Advanced Placement (AP) course will receive an additional 1.0 weighting. A detailed conversion chart showing numerical breaks for letter grades and weightings for specific course levels can be found on the [South Carolina Department of Education website](#).

Grade Point Average (GPA) will be calculated uniformly using the following formula. The formula will yield each student's GPA which can then be ranked from highest to lowest rank in class. Computations will not be rounded to a higher number. All diploma candidates are included in the ranking.

$$\text{GPA} = \text{sum (quality points} \times \text{units)} / \text{sum of units attempted}$$

CLASS RANKINGS

Class ranks are based on the South Carolina Uniform Grading Policy. In order to calculate class rank, all student GPAs will be calculated and ranked from highest to lowest. Class ranks will be calculated one time at the end of the academic year and indicated on the official transcript. Mid-year rankings are not official and are subject to change.

Senior ranks will be calculated at the end of the final term to identify:

- Heron Honors Graduates: Students who achieve a 3.0 GPA or higher
- Valedictorian: The valedictorian is the graduating senior with the highest academic standing as of the designated ranking date for graduation honors. To be eligible for valedictorian, a student must be enrolled at HVA for at least two (2) full semesters immediately prior to graduation.
- Salutatorian: The salutatorian is the graduating senior with the second-highest academic standing as of the designated ranking date for graduation honors. To be eligible for salutatorian, a student must be enrolled at HVA for at least two (2) full semesters immediately prior to graduation.
- [Academic Achievement Award](#)
- Please note: Class rank reported for state scholarships opportunities will be determined in accordance with state law and guidance, which may use a different ranking date than that used for local honors (valedictorian/salutatorian).

SENIOR or 4TH YEAR HIGH SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

At the beginning of your senior year, or 4th year of high school, seniors will be required to attend a class assembly during the first week of school. During that meeting, the school counselor and graduation coach will discuss details concerning the senior year expectations and any requirements for graduation. This meeting will be recorded and available for all seniors to review. Additional updates will be on the [HVASC Counselor Website](#).

Other meetings throughout the school year will give all seniors an opportunity to meet with their counselor and career learning staff. These meetings will include, but are not limited to, topics such as:

- Identifying postsecondary goals and developing plans to meet those goals
- Learning about financial aid and how to complete the FAFSA
- ASVAB guidance and support
- Career Readiness
- College Application Day
- Academic support--goal setting
- Soft Skills support--integrity, communication, courtesy, responsibility, professionalism
- Job search support --resume writing, interview skills
- College visits -- technical/community colleges and four-year universities
- Individual Graduation Plan Meetings
- Senior Information Sessions
- College and Career Decision Day
- Other activities are to be determined

All seniors must meet the graduation requirements to earn their diploma--this will include required courses during the senior year.

All HVA students are required to be enrolled in a minimum number of courses for the entire school year to meet full-time enrollment status and to ensure on-time graduation. Students in grades 9-11 generally take four classes per semester and students in grade 12 must take a minimum of two classes per semester.

Any seniors who are failing courses at interim reports (every 4 weeks) will be required to attend mandatory Senior Study Hall sessions. These sessions will be held in conjunction with our Student Support Team to keep all seniors on track for on-time graduation.

On-time graduation is graduating by the end of your fourth year after beginning high school.

Students are required to complete one of the career learning pathways and attempt the required credential.

Students are required to take the WIN Career Readiness assessment if they have not taken it in the past.

Students earning below a Silver will be required to retake the WIN Career Readiness Assessment. There are several areas of focus that the faculty and staff will be working on with you.

- **Credit Recovery:** Credit retrieval is available for failed courses to graduate on time.
- **Summer School via VirtualSC:** Students can take courses with Virtual SC during the school year. Course registration will begin in the fall for needed courses.
- **College Readiness:** All HVA students will have the opportunity to complete college readiness requirements while enrolled at HVA.
 - ACT, SAT and ASVAB will be offered to HVA students. If the student does not take these assessments through HVA, scores must be presented to HVA by March 1 each year - it is **the student's responsibility** to provide these scores to HVA.
 - Two-or Four-year College Application completed
 - FAFSA completion
- **Career Readiness Requirement:** All HVA students are required to work towards completion of a career readiness program. HVA's career readiness program may include any/all the following:
 - Minimum of one Work Based Learning Experience (virtual or face to face prior to graduation)
 - WIN Career Readiness Certificate
 - CTE Pathway Completion with Credential Earned
- Senior information submitted by May 1
 - Picture and goal of what the student wants to do after graduation

- o Plans for after high school -- military, work force, college (2 vs. 4 year). Depending on your plans you will have to submit:
- o Proof of employment
- o Proof of military enlistment
- o Proof of scholarships -- this is ALL scholarships--not just the college you will be attending
- o Proof of FAFSA completion
- o Proof of college acceptance
- o CPR and Citizenship requirement completed
- Graduation Information
 - o Date, time, and location will be announced during the school year.
 - o While all families are excited to celebrate with their graduates, to streamline the graduation ceremony and provide the opportunity for all students to be recognized for their accomplishments, we are asking that there be no cheering for individual graduates until the end of the ceremony. There will be a time after all graduates are recognized for applause and celebration.
 - o Students who complete all graduation requirements by the established deadline for seniors are eligible to participate in the end-of-year graduation ceremony. Students completing requirements during the summer term will be recognized at a subsequent graduation ceremony.

STATE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

This is a guide to help you know what the requirements are to graduate from high school in South Carolina as well as some guidelines for entrance into a four-year college. This information comes from the [State Department of Education website](#).

Students must earn a total of 24 prescribed units or credits. The table below is the minimum number of credits students must take. The freshman class beginning in Fall 2024 and all subsequent classes will be required to earn ½ credit in Personal Finance in order to graduate. This will reduce the total number of required electives from 7 to 6.5, while the overall required units remain at 24. The unit requirements are distributed as follows:

English/Language Arts	4.0
Mathematics	4.0
Science	3.0
U.S. History and Constitution	1.0
Economics	0.5
U.S. Government	0.5
Other Social Studies Course(s)	1.0

Physical Education or Junior ROTC	1.0
Computer Science (including keyboarding)	1.0
Foreign Language or Career and Technology Education	1.0
Personal Finance	0.5
Electives	6.5
Total	24.0

UNIVERSITY ADMISSION REQUIREMENT

Please note that this is not an all-inclusive list of what colleges require but is meant to be a guide to help you know what 4-year colleges would like students to take. Please check the requirements for the specific 4-year school your student wants to attend for exact requirements the school has set for college admission.

- Science: Three years of lab science (Biology and two advanced-level lab science courses)
- Foreign Language: Three years of the same Foreign Language.
- Fine Art: One credit/unit of a Fine Arts course (HVA offers Art)

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the counseling department.

CREDIT ACCELERATION PROGRAM (CAP)

Heron Virtual Academy is proud to offer the Credit Acceleration Program (CAP) designed to support 8th-grade students in earning high school credit while completing middle school requirements.

This program provides a unique opportunity for students to complete core 8th-grade courses in the first semester and, upon successful completion, enroll in high school credit-bearing courses during the second semester.

Purpose Of The Program

The CAP initiative supports academic growth and personalized learning pathways. It is specifically designed for students who meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Previously retained and need to catch up to grade level
- Behind in credits for age-appropriate grade placement
- Demonstrated high achievement on readiness assessments

Course Structure & Credit Opportunities

Semester 1 (Fall):

Students complete traditional 8th-grade courses and one high school elective:

- ELA 8
- Math 8
- History 8

- Science 8
- Personal Finance

Semester 2 (Spring):

Students who pass their Semester 1 courses (60 or higher) may take high school credit courses:

- English 1 (+1 English Credit)
- Geometry Prep (+1 Elective Credit – not a Math credit)
- Fundamentals of Computing (+1 Elective Credit)
- Earth Science (+1 Science Credit)

Note: Not all students will take every course listed above. Placement is individualized based on readiness, performance, and academic goals.

Participation Requirements

To remain eligible for high school coursework in Semester 2, students must:

- Earn a minimum grade of 60 in each 8th-grade course by the end of Semester 1
- Complete all required assessments and state-mandated in-person testing
- Submit a signed CAP Participation Waiver (parent and student)

If a student earns below a 60 in any 8th-grade course, they will continue in a yearlong version of that course for Semester 2. Students may still earn high school credit in areas where 8th-grade performance requirements were met.

Example:

A student earns a 55 in 8th Grade ELA but scores a 63 in 8th Grade Science.

- Result: The student will retake ELA 8 in Semester 2 (yearlong 8th Grade ELA).
- The student will move on to Earth Science in Semester 2 and can still earn high school science credit.

Important Notes About High School Credit

- Courses taken for high school credit in middle school follow the South Carolina Uniform Grading Policy (SCUGP).
- High school credit courses impact the student's GPA and class rank in high school.
- Grades will be included on the permanent high school transcript.
- Students have 10 school days from the course start date to drop without penalty. Dropping after 10 days results in a WF (Withdraw Fail), which counts as a 50 in GPA calculations.
- Students who retake a course from middle school must complete it before the second year of high school begins.

By enrolling in CAP, families acknowledge:

- The increased rigor and expectations of high school coursework
- The long-term impact on GPA and future high school opportunities
- That participation in CAP does not guarantee future academic program placement without meeting eligibility requirements

Eligible students will receive communication from their counselor regarding next steps for enrollment in the CAP program.

We are proud to offer this pathway to accelerate academic progress while maintaining strong supports for student success. If you have questions about eligibility or course planning, please contact our school counseling department.

TESTING REQUIREMENTS

- 8th graders are required to take SCReady. SCReady for 8th grade students consists of 3 tests: reading, writing, and math. 6th grade students are required to take the science SCReady test.
- End-of-course Exams (EOC) in each of the four content areas are required. The EOC Exams are given in Algebra, English 2, Biology and U.S. History. The End of Course Exam will count as 20% of their final grade. Failure to take the EOC will result in a zero for the exam grade.
- All students will have the opportunity to register for a free test administration for SAT or ACT during their third year of high school (typically 11th grade). Both tests are universally accepted for college admission.
 - o ACT: The ACT assesses high school students' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. The ACT is curriculum-based and not an aptitude or an IQ test. Instead, the questions on the ACT are directly related to what students have learned in high school courses in English, mathematics, and science. To register for the ACT independently, go to www.actstudent.org.
 - o SAT: The SAT is a multiple-choice, paper and pencil test that measures a high school student's readiness for college. To register for the SAT independently, go to www.collegeboard.com.
- WIN Learning, a Career Readiness Test is required and will be administered to all students in their third year of high school after initial ninth grade enrollment (typically 11th graders). Doing well on this assessment may help high school students find summer and part-time jobs and internships.

DUAL ENROLLMENT

Dual Enrollment offers high school students the opportunity to enroll in college coursework while still enrolled in high school. Eligible students will have the opportunity to earn both high school and college credits simultaneously. Permission must be obtained by the school counselor prior to taking these courses if they are to be considered for Dual Enrollment. Students who do not receive prior permission will not receive high school credit for completed courses. Courses completed for Dual Enrollment will receive an additional weighting of one full quality point.

HVA partners with various colleges throughout the state to offer dual enrollment opportunities for our students. To be eligible for dual enrollment, students must meet the admissions requirements set forth by the higher education institution of choice. Students are responsible for the payment of all tuition and textbook costs that might be associated with dual-enrollment classes. Higher education institutions will determine if a student is eligible to receive South Carolina Lottery Tuition Assistance.

Dual enrollment courses may be applied toward the 24 units required for a state high school diploma for students in Grades 9-12. A three-semester hour college credit will transfer as one credit. HVA will only permit dual enrollment for courses taught through accredited colleges and approved by the SC Department of Education. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) must be in place between the institute of higher education and HVA for a student to be eligible to take courses for dual enrollment. Additionally, only courses recognized in the South Carolina Activity Coding Manual will be approved. There is a list of recommended courses located on the school counseling website. Dual enrollment courses will be verified to ensure that students are enrolled in the minimum number of credits for their grade level. Students who withdraw from a Dual enrollment course prematurely could be required to take an additional course at the high school level.

All final grades (including WF) as reported by the college on the transcript will be recorded in the student database system. When transcripts are received with letter grades recorded, the following conversion system will apply: A=95; B=85; C=75; D=65; F=51. Only the final grade reported on the college transcript will be entered in the student database and count in GPA calculations. Dual enrollment courses will not appear on student progress reports issued by the high schools. Students are responsible for having a certified transcript sent from the college to the high school at the conclusion of the term.

Students interested in dual enrollment are required to reach out to their school counselor AND complete the [Dual Enrollment Interest and Agreement Form](#).

FLEX PROGRAM

The HVA Flex Program offers high school students the opportunity to successfully meet academic goals and school expectations while providing flexibility around live instructional sessions. HVA's goal is to individualize instruction for each student, and the Flex Program allows students, learning coaches, and teachers to collaborate in creating a learning environment tailored to student needs. Participation in the Flex Program requires completion of a Flex Program Enrollment Survey and is subject to an approval process. If approved, students will meet with the Flex Coordinator to review and agree to specific expectations. Continued enrollment in the program is contingent upon meeting these expectations and maintaining academic progress.

VIRTUAL SC

HVA has partnered with Virtual SC, a free online program, to provide students with the opportunity to take Initial Credit or Credit Recovery courses. Virtual SC courses are available for students who need to get caught up on credits, students who wish to graduate early or students who wish to take courses that are not offered at HVA. Students who take initial credit courses will be required to complete a proctored online final exam at the end of the term. Virtual SC courses are offered on a first come, first served basis and HVA has no control over seat availability in these courses. Students are limited to taking one class at a time per semester unless otherwise approved by a counselor. To view the most up-to-date information and Virtual SC policies, please visit their website at www.virtualsc.org.

CREDIT RECOVERY

Credit recovery allows students who have taken and failed a course the opportunity to recover the lost credit instead of retaking the course in its entirety. Students must have earned between 50% and 59% in the course to qualify for a credit recovery course, or receive administrator's approval. Once a student successfully completes the course, they will receive a passing grade "P" for that recovery course on their transcript. The original failed course will remain on the transcript. Students who qualify for credit recovery will be automatically placed into that course. Although credit recovery is a wonderful option for many students, those who are considering a four-year college immediately after high school can opt to retake the course in its entirety for GPA purposes. Students wishing to retake the course in its entirety in lieu of credit recovery must submit this request via email to the school counselor prior to the fifth day of school.

To be eligible for content recovery or credit recovery, students must first complete and submit all required coursework and assignments for the applicable course or course segment, as required by South Carolina law.

CONTENT RECOVERY

Content Recovery gives students a skill-based opportunity who are still enrolled in a course with the original teacher of record assigned by the school. Content recovery allows students to retake a subset of the course including a single unit, more than one unit, or supplemental assignments/activities assigned and approved by a certified teacher as needed for student mastery of course content.

Eligibility:

Students are eligible for participation in content recovery through the recommendation of their teacher based upon a variety of factors including, but not limited to, documented student performance on formative and summative classroom assessments, student attendance patterns, and course content and curriculum pacing. Students are not limited in the amount of courses for which they may participate in content recovery. However, school administrators may limit participation based upon parent/legal guardian and/or teacher recommendation.

Grading:

Content recovery assignments must be completed as soon as possible, but no later than 10 school days after the end of the semester. Seniors must complete any content recovery assignment no later than the last day of the school year in the current semester. Upon satisfactory completion of all assigned work within the time allowed, the teacher will factor the content recovery grade in with the currently recorded grade for that subset of the course.

COURSE WITHDRAWALS

With the first day of enrollment as the baseline, students who withdraw from a course within three days in a 45-day course, five days in a 90-day course or 10 days in a 180-day course will do so without penalty.

Students who withdraw from a course after the specified time of three days in a 45-day course, five days in a 90-day course or 10 days in a 180-day course will be assigned a WF and a numerical grade of 50 (F) will be calculated in the student's overall grade point average. The three, five and 10-day limitations for withdrawing from a course without penalty do not apply to course level changes approved by administration.

Students who drop-out of school or are administratively withdrawn after the allowed period for withdrawal but before the end of the grading period will be assigned grades in accordance with the following.

- The student will receive a WP if he/she was passing the course. The grade of WP will carry no Carnegie units and no quality points to be factored into the student's GPA.
- The student will receive a WF if he/she was failing the course. The grade of WF will carry no Carnegie units but will be factored into the student's GPA as a 61.

If a student fails a course due to excessive absences, the school will record an FA on his/her transcript. The grade of FA will carry not Carnegie units but will be factored into the student's GPA as a 61.

TRANSCRIPT, LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION, DRIVING FORMS, AND WORK PERMIT REQUESTS

Students can request a transcript at <https://www.parchment.com/order/my-credentials/>. Students that need a letter of recommendation, driving form, or work permit should email records@heronacademysc.org. Please note that it can take up to ten business days to process these requests. For DMV notification, students will not be eligible to receive a letter for driving privileges while on probation or while having greater than 10 absences (five per semester) without approval from your school principal. Students should follow the plan to improve the consistency of their progress and attendance before being issued the form.

TEACHER ASSIGNMENT AND CHANGE REQUEST POLICY

This policy outlines the criteria and procedures for assigning teachers to classes and the process for requesting a change in teacher assignment.

TEACHER ASSIGNMENTS

Teacher assignments are made based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to:

- Class size and student-to-teacher ratios
- Teacher certification areas and qualifications
- Educational needs of students
- Availability of teaching staff
- Overall balance and distribution of teacher workload

REQUESTS FOR TEACHER CHANGES

We understand that, on occasion, there may be concerns regarding teacher-student compatibility. However, teacher changes will generally not be accommodated unless there is a substantial reason to warrant such a change. Personality differences or preference alone do not constitute a sufficient basis for changing teacher assignments.

Substantial Reasons for Teacher Changes May Include:

- Documented disciplinary action needed for the teacher
- Verified teacher misconduct
- Other serious concerns impacting the learning environment, as determined by school administration

Process for Requesting a Teacher Change:

1. Initial Concern: Parents or guardians with concerns about a teacher assignment should first communicate directly with the teacher to address and resolve the issue.
2. Formal Request: If the concern remains unresolved, a formal written request for a teacher change can be submitted to the Principal. This request must clearly outline the substantial reason(s) for the request.
3. Administrative Review: The school administration will review the request, considering all relevant factors and evidence, and make a determination. This process may include consultation with the teacher, parents/guardians, and other relevant parties.
4. Final Decision: The administration's decision will be final and communicated in writing to the requesting party. Changes will only be made if deemed necessary based on the criteria outlined above.

The school administration reserves the right to make all final decisions regarding teacher assignments in the best interest of the students and the school community. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in ensuring a positive educational experience for all students.

This policy provides clear guidelines while allowing for flexibility in cases where a change is genuinely necessary.

SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Your assigned school counselor is your contact for any questions about your course assignment, credit recovery, college applications, scholarships, career planning, and other related topics. Please reference and bookmark the counseling website to find the alpha directory for your counselor,

<https://sites.google.com/casc.info/hvaschoolcounseling/home>.

CAREER AND COLLEGE PREP

HVA is a career-focused virtual school in the state of South Carolina designed to give your student an edge for the future.

Career Learning at HVA gives students exposure to relevant technical and specialty trade skills from career and technical education (CTE) courses built around multiple career fields, allowing them to explore occupations of interest prior to graduating from high school.

Our **mission** is to give students a head start on their career goals and college aspirations. At HVA, students can graduate high school with technical and specialty trade credentials, workplace experiences, skills that will lead to real-world success, and a jump start on college.

CTE courses are based on the knowledge and skills required for each career pathway in the following in-demand career fields:

MANAGEMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- **Administrative Services:** This program prepares students to work in an office setting to create spreadsheets; manage databases; prepare presentations, reports, and documents; and engage with customers and coworkers.
- **Business Information Management:** This program prepares students to work in a business setting with charts, data, and numbers and to manage money and finances.
- **General Management:** This program prepares students to lead and manage others, improve processes and policies, and manage a range of personnel issues and concerns while focusing on the bottom line.

MARKETING AND SALES

- **Marketing Communications:** This program prepares students to learn the foundations and functions needed to successfully market goods, services, and ideas to consumers.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

- **Game and Interactive Media Design:** Students will design, develop, and program interactive media and games for a variety of audiences. Students will learn game theory, visual and interactive design, story development, animation, simulation, and programming. Students will develop an understanding of game design concepts through a combination of practical implementation, playtesting, and in-class game critique.

RIGHTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Children with a disability have the right to attend a school authorized by the Charter Institute at Erskine College.

This section explains the educational rights of children with disabilities to attend a charter school that has been authorized by the CHARTER INSTITUTE AT ERSKINE COLLEGE. Both federal and state law requires that admission to a charter school be conducted without regard to or consideration of whether the child has a disability; therefore, charter schools are open to all students, whether or not they are eligible to receive special education services. Charter schools must provide special education services, as outlined in the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), to all eligible students. This is a summary of your child's rights to attend and receive needed services from his or her public charter school.

504

1. Charter schools accept and serve students with disabilities. Charter schools within the CHARTER INSTITUTE AT ERSKINE COLLEGE are open to all grade-eligible children on a space available basis. If more students apply than there are available spaces, a lottery is held to randomly determine who will be admitted. All students who wish to attend a charter school have an equal chance of admittance regardless of, and without any consideration of, any need for special education services.

2. Charter schools must ensure that your child receives special education services if the child has been determined to be an eligible student with a disability by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team. Charter schools within the Charter Institute at Erskine College must ensure that students with disabilities receive the special education services to which they are entitled. The services consist of special education instruction and related services in the least restrictive environment. The amount and location of services (where services will be delivered) are determined by the student's IEP team and are documented in the student's IEP.

3. Your child must receive related services if the IEP Team determines the child needs them. Charter schools within the CHARTER INSTITUTE AT ERSKINE COLLEGE must provide related services to students with disabilities if the IEP Team determines that the services are necessary for the student to benefit from special education (i.e. OT, PT, counseling, etc.).

4. For students who require special education services that are beyond what is reasonable for the charter school to provide, an IEP Team meeting will be convened to arrange for provision of needed services. Charter schools within the CHARTER INSTITUTE AT ERSKINE COLLEGE are held to the same standards and regulations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as traditional public schools. In some cases, the parent's request to remain in the school of choice (charter school) cannot be granted because the IEP team determines that in order to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to a student; the services must be provided in a different setting, such as a child's district of residence. Just like a traditional district, individual schools are not required to provide an exhaustive list of placement options within that one school. This decision will be made through an IEP meeting. You will be invited to the meeting. When the meeting occurs, the IEP Team will determine what the child's needs are and how those needs will be met. If the IEP team determines that a FAPE cannot be provided to the student within the current charter school setting, the CHARTER INSTITUTE AT ERSKINE COLLEGE will contact the school district of residence to determine if there is a program within that school district that can meet the child's needs. If so, based on the IEP team's decision, placement will be made, and responsibility will return to the school district of residence.

5. Charter schools are required to meet the needs of qualified students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, even if the student is not eligible as a student with disabilities under federal and state special education laws. Charter schools within the

CHARTER INSTITUTE AT ERSKINE COLLEGE are required to provide a FAPE to students with disabilities determined eligible under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. An appropriate education for a student with a disability under Section 504 regulations could consist of education in general education classrooms with or without accommodations and/or supplementary services. These services will be decided upon by the child's 504 Planning Committee.

Relevant Laws and Regulations:

South Carolina Charter School Law H3241

South Carolina Special Education Regulations §43-243

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 34 CFR Parts 300 and 301

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act 34 CFR Part 104

Direct questions or concerns about the information contained in this notice to:

Radonya Smalls, Special Programs Manager

864-214-5875

rsmalls@heronacademysc.org

For additional questions or concerns, please contact the Charter Institute's Director of Special Education, Sally Fickling at (803) 849-2463 or sfickling@erskinecharters.org.

For complete information regarding the rights of parents and students in the special education process, please see our website at <https://erskinecharters.org/special-education-2/> missing link - can we get the spanish version linked here too?

CHILD FIND

Child Find is a process based on the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) Part C. The purpose is to identify, locate and evaluate individuals with disabilities who may need special education services. Anyone can initiate the process: a parent, doctor, teacher, relative or friend.

To ensure that all HVA students are properly identified and served, the parent or guardian will be asked at least twice if their student has ever been evaluated for possible special education services, and if the student has ever received special education services as a student in a public or private school. If so, the parent or guardian will be asked if their student has an active Individual Education Plan (IEP). The HVA registrar will also request and review all records from the student's previous school. If there is any indication that the student may have received special education services, Radonya Smalls, Special Programs Manager, will be notified.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

HVA is responsible for providing a free and appropriate education under the federal Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA). HVA Special Education professionals assist parents in accessing and coordinating services pursuant to a current Individualized Education Plan. Parents should indicate that their child has an Individualized Education Plan on their enrollment form. Are we able to have a positively worded statement that failure to this may result in loss of service hours at first and the team will have to meet to determine compensatory services - that way parents are aware that it is vital to disclose this

Special education services are available to students who have been identified with a disability. Documentation of the disability must be provided, such as a previous Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and/or a psychological evaluation. Students with IEPs in need of adapted learning support services are

those whose complex learning needs impact their academic achievement and their ability to make sufficient progress toward IEP goals in the general education setting. Services offered may include adaptations and modifications to the general education curriculum, specialized instructional strategies, and adjustments in pacing.

The HVA program is considered an **inclusion** program. The student's home is the regular classroom and services are provided by consultation with a highly qualified special education teacher via phone, e-mail and the online (virtual) classroom. Radonya Smalls (864-214-5875, rsmall@heronacademysc.org) is the Special Programs Manager at HVA.

SPECIAL EDUCATION EXPECTATIONS:

- Every special education student will be assigned a special education teacher in addition to their regular education teacher.
- The special education teacher will work with the learning coach on IEP goals; how to modify and adapt the learning environment; and curriculum paths for success.
- The special education teacher, the regular education teacher, and the learning coach will meet for a three way conference call once every grading period.
- The special education teacher will hold Live Class online to assist students with their specific learning needs.
- The special education teacher is available to be used as a resource for instructional strategies and adaptations and modifications to the curriculum.
- IEP meetings will be held either online or using a conference call line.
- The special education teacher will provide a progress report at the end of each grading period noting the progress on the student's IEP goals.
- Special Education students are required to meet the same attendance policies as their peers. The home environment, one on one instruction, and flexible schedule can help the students create a learning environment that meets their specific needs.
- Special education students are required to receive all special education services and are required to be physically located in the state of South Carolina to receive services. The student is at risk for withdrawal if services are not provided due to the student not being physically in the state of South Carolina.

RELATED SERVICES

Related services, placement and goals are determined by the IEP Committee. Options for related services should be discussed with the special education staff before a decision is made to enroll with HVA.

HVA provides related services through contracts with service providers (speech pathologists, occupational therapists, etc.). It is important for students and parents to attend all related services appointments for the student to receive maximum benefit and achieve IEP goals.

***** *We understand that it is our responsibility to provide a free and appropriate public education to each enrolled special education student. Because HVA is a virtual school of choice, it is understood that speech and related services are provided virtually; however, we understand that the virtual environment is not always the most appropriate environment for speech and other related services. If the IEP team determines that face to face therapy is the most appropriate, services will be offered by a provider close to the family's home.*

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT (MTSS) ACADEMICS

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Services at HVA are available for students who have been identified as academically “at-risk.” A student that is defined as “at-risk” has tested significantly below on his/her assessments, has demonstrated that he/she is struggling with the current curriculum he/she is enrolled in, or he/she has been identified with some type of need (academic or social/emotional) on the Child Find screening.

MTSS is based on the concept of providing evidence-based instructional and behavioral strategies by highly qualified intervention teams that are matched to the student’s needs, and those needs are monitored on a frequent scheduled basis.

The HVA MTSS Coordinator is Emilee Fidler, emfidler@heronacademysc.org, 864-251-5764.

How to request MTSS assistance and what to expect:

1. The learning coach can request that the Success Coach file a referral for the MTSS team to review.
2. The MTSS coordinator will set up an initial meeting with the learning coach and the regular education teacher to review the needs of the student.
3. After the team meets and reviews the given information, the student will possibly be placed on an intervention plan to assist with the OLS progress.
4. The MTSS team will review the case after the student has had ample time to work through the online school with appropriate interventions to determine whether the student will need ongoing interventions or a referral for special education testing.

HVA SAFETY FLAG PROTOCOL

The Heron Institute observes a Safety Tier Protocol to ensure the maximum safety of all students and staff. Students with justice involvement, or who may have had prior expulsions or disciplinary concerns, will meet with our Student Resource Team to review in-person event considerations and classroom protocols. Restrictions, if applicable, will be communicated along with a Safety Tier assignment and a schedule for checking in with the Student Resource Team. We welcome and value all of our students and recognize that any challenges past or present do not define the individual. Our protocol for Safety Tiers is in place to ensure the safety and success of all students, and to create an environment where all students have the opportunity to thrive.

MEDICAL NEEDS OR ACCESS TO MEDICATIONS

Report any medical needs or any access to medication for on-site events to your student’s Success Coach.

PARENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Providing accommodations also applies to parents with disabilities. If needed in order to allow for parental participation, accommodations for parents with disabilities will be provided; thus, enabling parental involvement throughout the 504 process. The school must take appropriate steps to ensure that communications with parents with disabilities are as effective as communications with others.

HEALTH AND SAFETY MANUAL and CRISIS MANUAL

HVA has a written Health and Safety Manual. This is available upon request to Christine Owens at cowens@heronacademysc.org.

RIGHTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL HOME CIRCUMSTANCES

ESSA Title IX, PART A MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is a federal law that ensures youth experiencing homelessness can attend school and outlines student rights.

McKinney-Vento homeless liaisons are designated personnel that ensure homeless youth can enroll in school and receive services.

Additional information can be found at

<https://ed.sc.gov/policy/federal-education-programs/essa-title-ix-part-a-mckinney-vento-homeless-assistance-act/>

George Woodward is the McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison at Heron Virtual Academy. He can be reached by email at gwoodward@cyberacademysc.org or by phone at 864-209-1594. Please email any dispute involving your student's eligibility for McKinney-Vento designation to George Woodward. McKinney-Vento designation includes doubled up, hotels, and transitional living situations.

TITLE I, PART A YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) establishes guidelines to ensure school access, improved educational outcomes, and enhanced academic stability for children and youth in foster care.

George Woodward is the Student in Foster Care Liaison at Heron Virtual Academy. He can be reached by email at gwoodward@cyberacademysc.org or by phone at 864-209-1594. Please contact George Woodward if your student enters or exits foster care during the school year.

MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

Caroline Muhn is the Multilingual Learner Program Manager at Heron Virtual Academy. She can be reached by email at cmuhn@heronacademysc.org.

TRANSLATED MATERIALS

HVA will provide translated material upon request whenever possible. Please contact your student's Homeroom Teacher for assistance with translated materials.

TITLE I SCHOOLWIDE PROGRAM

The purpose of Title I, Part A of Public Law 107-110 is to enable schools to provide opportunities for children to acquire the knowledge and skills contained in the challenging state content standards and to meet the challenging state performance standards developed for all children.

Jennifer Matthews is the Title I coordinator at Heron Virtual Academy of SC. She can be reached by email at jmatthews@heronacademysc.org.

HVA does not have a Title I schoolwide program at this time.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND PARENT VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

HVA welcomes involvement from families, parents, and students, to help improve our school and our students' overall experience. Families should contact their Success Coach if they or their student wishes to volunteer with the school.

GREENVILLE HERON INSTITUTE LEARNING LAB (HILL)

HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday through Friday: 8:30am-3:30pm

The HILL is open for student drop-in for grades 6-12 during regular school days, with the exception of testing days and other special circumstances. Planned closures will be listed on the HILL events calendar and shared through school communications.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

The HILL is meant to be a welcoming environment for students to meet other students, receive academic support, and participate in special programs.

While onsite, students are expected to attend live class sessions and complete all required school work. Extra laptops and chargers are available if needed.

Students are also expected to conduct themselves appropriately and they must adhere to the following expectations:

- Students must respect each other at all times. This includes respecting each other's personal space and property, as well as limiting conversations and noise levels. Students should also use appropriate language when communicating with others.
- Students will need to check in when they arrive and check out when they are leaving for the day. There are also bathroom passes available for students to use when the need arises. Students are responsible for informing a staff member if they need to exit the building for any other reason.
- Students should follow directions given by any school staff member that may be onsite during their time at the HILL.
- Smoking and vaping is not permitted onsite at any time.
- Personal devices, such as gaming devices or similar items, should not be brought onsite. Cell phones are allowed, but please keep them on silent and do not allow them to interfere with school activities.
- Weapons are not permitted, which includes pocket knives.

Should a student not follow the expectations listed above, they may be asked to leave for the day and/or be put on a temporary suspension from the HILL, until otherwise given approval to return.

DRESS CODE

Students are expected to dress appropriately while onsite. Examples, of inappropriate dress include:

- Clothing, apparel, or jewelry that by words, signs, pictures, or any other combinations thereof, advocates or promotes sexual activity, violence, death, suicide, or the use of alcohol or drugs, or demeans, degrades, or intimidates another because of race, sex, religious persuasions, national origin, disability, or gang membership.
- Apparel that reveals or exposes the midriff/lower back or sides of the upper body or torso and/or undergarments.
- Any clothing that is excessively tight, is of transparent material, see through material, or that is ripped or torn, or has suggestive signs or symbols.
- Any clothing through which underwear or any type of undergarment may be seen.
- Spandex, clothing that does not cover backs, clothing that permits viewing of cleavage, halter tops, tank tops with open sides, spaghetti strap tops, and muscle/tank shirts.
- Spikes, dog chains/chokers, ball bearing chains, wallet chains, or other jewelry that increases the risk for accidents.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the case of any inclement weather that affects our ability to open and operate the HILL, families will be notified through ParentSquare, social media, and other immediate forms of communication as deemed appropriate by school staff. If inclement weather occurs while the HILL is already open, families will be notified and students will need to be picked up as soon as possible.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

In emergency situations, which can include fire emergencies, weather, safety concerns, and medical emergencies, regular school protocol will be followed. Families will be notified and proper emergency personnel will be contacted, as necessary. If needed, any students onsite will be moved to a safe place and all normal emergency procedures will be followed until reunification with a parent or guardian.

For specific information on how these situations are handled at the HILL, please contact Erin Lewis, Blended Learning Manager, at elewis@cyberacademysc.org

VISITORS

Adults that are visiting the HILL are expected to check-in at the front desk. Adults will need to be accompanied by a staff member while moving throughout the center or when using center resources, with the exception of meetings that have been previously scheduled. Adults that do not have an identified purpose for visiting will not be able to enter the center.

Parents/Guardians of a student will not be allowed to remain onsite, unless receiving approval from the Blended Learning Center staff, or attending a family event.

STUDENT PICK-UP

Students will only be released from the HILL to a parent/guardian or other authorized pickup person over the age of 18. Parent/Guardian or authorized pickup person will need to provide ID to verify their identity, and they must be listed on student accounts as a legal guardian or authorized pickup person. Students are expected to be signed out when leaving the HILL.

HEALTH POLICY & MEDICAL NEEDS

Students that show signs of illness while onsite may be asked to return home for the day in order to protect the health of other students onsite. This includes fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or extreme fatigue.

Students that have medical needs onsite will be treated with basic first aid care or with any procedures outlined in their individual health plans. In extreme situations, medical emergency protocol will be followed. Parents/guardians will be notified if any of these situations occur.

If needed, please report any medical concerns or needs for medication to the Blended Learning Advisor when arriving onsite.

Every effort will be made to meet the needs of students (both medical and non-medical) while onsite. If a student or parent does not feel like their needs are being met, please speak with the onsite Blended Learning Advisor, or contact the Blended Learning Manager, Erin Lewis, at elewis@cyberacademysc.org.

DRINKS & SNACKS

Students are welcome to bring their own drinks and snacks from home. However, drinks, snacks, and lunch items are available onsite for students. A microwave, coffee machine, and a refrigerator are also available for student use.

FINAL NOTE

You have just reviewed the Heron Virtual Academy Student/Parent Handbook. We have attempted to cover all the important rules, regulations, and procedures for which you are responsible during this school year. Your success at the academy is equal to your effort and desire.