Partner School Handbook
2019/2020

SophieConnect provides opportunities for network schools to offer online classes that promote Sacred Heart values and traditions while adhering to the high standards of a Sacred Heart education. Our program offers students an opportunity to experience nontraditional online classes and a unique, virtual network exchange experience at the same time. SophieConnect online classes are:

- A cost-effective way to expand programs
- Ensure that the Goals and Criteria and Sacred Heart educational philosophy are the foundation of all educational experiences we offer to our students
- Prepare students for a globally integrated workplace
- Promote global and cultural awareness
- Enhance communication skills as an important aspects of successful collaboration
- Help strengthen the bonds between Sacred Heart Network Schools

This handbook outlines policies, procedures, guidelines, and best practices applicable to the 2019/20 academic year. Please let us know if we can improve or supplement this document in any way.

Thank you,

Matilde Larson and Karl Haeseler
Co-Directors of SophieConnect
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2019/2020 SOPHIECONNECT ACADEMIC CALENDAR

February 11, 2019       19/20 School Partnership Agreements Sent Out
February 14, 2019       Student Registration Opens
March 08, 2019          School Partnership Agreements Due
June 10, 2019           Regular registration for courses closes
June 11 - Aug 16, 2019  Late Registration period
June 17, 2019           Tuition invoices will be sent out
August 16, 2019         Last day to withdraw with 75% refund
August 29, 2019         Login information and class invite sent to students
September 03, 2019      Last day to withdraw with 50% tuition refund
September 04, 2019      No refunds on or after this date
September 05 2019      Fall Semester Orientation
September 09, 2019      All Fall Courses begin
October 03, 2019        Meet your child’s online teacher - Open House
October 14, 2019        Columbus Day - no classes
October 20, 2019 November 18, 2019 November 27 - Dec 01, 2019 December 09, 2019
November 19, 2019       November 27 - Dec 01, 2019
December 09, 2019       Christmas Break - no classes
December 19, 2019       No refunds on or after this date for Spring Sem. Courses
January 06, 2020        Columbus Day - no classes
January 06, 2020        Courses resume
January 13, 2020        Spring semester orientation
January 14, 2020        Fall Semester ends
January 15, 2020        Spring Semester begins
January 16, 2020        Martin Luther King Jr. Day - no classes
January 20, 2020        Partnership Agreements sent
January 21, 2020        Registration for 2020/21 begins
February 04, 2020       Mid-Winter Break
Feb. 13 - 17, 2020      Ash Wednesday
February 26, 2020       Spring Break
March 14 - 29, 2020     Easter Break
Apr 10 - Apr 13, 2020   AP Exam Schedule (dates determined by College Board)
May                      AP courses end with AP exam
                        Spring Semester ends
May 20, 2020           Feast of St. Madeleine Sophie
May 25, 2020

SophieConnect
A Sacred Heart Greenwich Initiative
CONTACT INFORMATION
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GENERAL POLICIES
**TUITION POLICIES**

**Tuition payments**
Tuition payment must come from the school, not the individual student, and is due upon receipt of invoice. SophieConnect will issue invoices on June 18, 2019. If the minimum number of registered students for a particular course is not reached by June 8, 2019, the course will be cancelled and schools will be notified. 100% tuition reimbursement will be issued for any cancelled courses unless the student wishes to transfer to another online course.

Tuition for a full year course is $600 (USD).
Tuition for a semester course is $400 (USD).

**Two-semester discount**
A student taking two semester-long courses will pay $300 for each semester course (equivalent to full-year course tuition).

**Additional expenses**
Course Materials/textbooks/AP Testing Fees are not included in the tuition. Acquiring books and course materials is the responsibility of the individual student. AP testing fees are coordinated by the individual SophieConnect Site Director. Some courses will require other subscriptions/software that students will have to purchase and download. A list of required resources will be sent to school contacts and students in June.

**Financial Aid**
For information about financial aid availability, contact co-directors.
Registering students for classes
The academic dean or designated Site Director at each school will register the students, not individual students or families. This implies that the school has academically approved the student enrolling in a SophieConnect online course. If you have 8 or more students to register, SophieConnect will be happy to accept registration information via email and enter it into the system for you. All we would need are their last and first names, school email addresses, graduation year and corresponding courses.

Withdrawing from a course
The last day to withdraw with 75% refund for a fall semester course is August 16, 2019. The last day to withdraw with a 50% tuition refund is September 03, 2019. No refunds will be issued after September 04, 2019. No refunds for a Spring semester course will be issued on or after January 13, 2020.

Technical requirements
In general, students with a computer that is regularly updated and less than four years old should have no trouble completing the coursework required through SophieConnect. Laptops should have a webcam with a microphone and speakers and a high speed WiFi network. The recommended browser is Chrome or, alternatively, Firefox. The browser version should be the most current one available.

Registering a technical difficulty - Asking for Help
If students or parents have questions about the technical requirements they should contact Karl Haeseler, Co-Director at 203-532-3333 or info@sophieconnect.org for help. To request help with passwords, students should use the “Forgot your password?” link on the SophieConnect login screen.

Learning Management System
Students will be given access to Blackboard Learn and Blackboard Collaborate, our Learning Management System on Orientation Day.

SOPHIECONNECT PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Student enrollment limit recommendation
We recommend that you limit students to taking one full-year online course per academic year, especially if a particular student has not taken an online course before. Students are allowed to take two online semester-long courses, one in the fall and one in the spring. If a partner school’s academic dean or designated online course coordinator would like to discuss an exception, please send the request in an email to the Co-Directors.

Course size
The maximum number of students per online class is 18. If more students want to enroll, another section may be opened up. The minimum number of students will vary depending on overall student enrollment in SophieConnect courses.
Add/drop
Add/drop period ends September 23, 2019. If a student drops and then adds an equivalent course (depending on availability) tuition will be transferred and applied to the new course without an additional fee. Add/drops are handled by the Co-Directors and Site Director at the student's school. For further information about dropping a class later in the semester, see “Withdrawals.”

Courses
Course selection is amended every year. Sacred Heart teachers are invited to submit proposals in November for the following academic year.

Course design
Course design is based on the latest research in the field of distance learning. SophieConnect courses are delivered following an asynchronous mode of instruction. All courses are built by faculty in advance, so there are common outcomes/objectives for students taking courses. Building courses in advance affords the instructors time during the year to provide students with individual attention and support. Additional resources may be added to enhance student learning and to meet specific student needs.

Our faculty bring courses to life by making them relevant in today’s world. Faculty are expected to evaluate and give feedback to students engaged in discussion boards, review and monitor assessments in a timely fashion and identify content areas where individual students are struggling and proactively engage students in these areas.

Courses reflect the Five Goals and recognize Sacred Heart traditions, such as feast days, as well as, conge. Each course has a social justice component.

Course Facilitation
All exams are online. With the exception of AP courses, proctors should not be needed. All courses are delivered asynchronously, requiring minimal participation in real-time instruction. Faculty may include OPTIONAL synchronous elements to their courses (Office Hours, review sessions, extra help), but will accommodate students in different time zones.

Course Length
Courses are either full year courses or semester long courses. SophieConnect Directors set the calendar dates for all courses. Breaks may not coincide with the Sacred Heart school in which the instructor teaches.

Time commitment
We do not have a minimum of required logins per week, but individual teachers have specific requirements for the number of postings in any given week and firm deadlines, usually Sunday at midnight for weekly assignments. Plan on spending about 6-8 hours per week on a AP level course and 4-6 hours on a non-AP elective course.
Parental Involvement
SophieConnect offers parents an opportunity to engage with their student’s teachers via Open House at the beginning of the year and an opportunity for parent-teacher conferences mid-year. These events are real-time facilitated through Blackboard Collaborate.

AP Courses

Audit Process
Each SophieConnect AP course teacher will work with the College Board to get their syllabus audited and approved. Once this process is complete, the College Board will send an email to the teacher who will forward this email to the individual school contact. Upon receipt, the school's AP coordinator has to log in to their College Board AP portal in order to approve that particular teacher for their school. This enables the school to list the AP course as part of their program and allows each school to receive the scores directly.

Because SophieConnect is only available to Network schools, the College Board will not list SophieConnect as an online provider.

Mocks
Each AP class will have at least one mock paper-and-pencil exam scheduled in the course of the year. It will need to be proctored by an adult at each student’s Sacred Heart School. SophieConnect faculty will coordinate the facilitation of mock exams with each partnering school contact.

AP Exams
All students who are enrolled in an AP course are expected to take the exam unless we are otherwise notified. The exams will be taken at the student’s school and will be proctored by either the contact person at the school or another designated adult. The AP coordinator at the student’s school will make the arrangements for exams. Fees for these exams are the responsibility of each student.

The home school for each student will receive AP scores. The scores should be shared with SophieConnect for evaluation purposes.

Grades
Grades are calculated out of 100 and will be sent to each school as a numeric grade. SophieConnect does not assign letter grades. Each Sacred Heart School will determine how this grade will be reflected in a student’s report card.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism
Plagiarism and other academic integrity infractions are taken seriously by SophieConnect teachers and administrators and require the full attention of the appropriate administrator at the
student’s school. Suspected occurrences must be brought to the attention of the SophieConnect co-directors and will be resolved in concert with the appropriate parties.

**SafeAssign**
Teachers mandate the use of SafeAssign, a built-in plagiarism prevention tool, to monitor plagiarism and citation rules. Every major written assignment will be submitted through Blackboard Learn, which will automatically generate a SafeAssign report accessible to teachers and/or students.

**End of Year Procedures**

**Award Certificate**
In May partner schools will receive a certificate of participation for each student who has successfully completed a SophieConnect online course and will note if a student has earned top academic honor in that class. This certificate may be shared at Prize Days or distributed to the students as appropriate.

**Final Grades**
Final grades will be sent to each school along with a course blurb and a student comment. These grades will be numerical out of 100. Grades will be sent as indicated on the SophieConnect calendar.

**End of Year Evaluations**
As SophieConnect continues to grow and expand, feedback from students, parents, school contacts and teachers is essential. We will be asking each to help evaluate courses at the end of the year.

Teachers will ask for feedback throughout the year, to ensure that students are engaged and can make modifications if necessary to ensure student success. Honest feedback is expected and will be most helpful to students and teachers alike.

**Grades and Reporting**
Teachers will provide prompt feedback on assignments and assessments to students so that students are always aware of their academic standing. Teachers provide grades and comments mid-semester and at the end of a term to the school academic contact for distribution to the parents.

If a student’s academic performance declines quickly, the teacher will alert the school contact and co-directors as soon as possible about the change in an informal progress report.
**Student Summer Work**
AP courses will usually assign summer work. It will be sent to each partner school contact in June for distribution to students. Work is expected to be turned in per teacher instructions and will be graded/assessed. Summer work is meant to help students prepare for the online AP course.

**Student Course Expectations**

**Class Size**
SophieConnect courses have no more than 18 students enrolled and many classes will have fewer than 18 students.

**Building Community in a Class**
Students will be engaged in class discussions pertinent to the subject among students and the instructor. At times, collaborative group work will also be assigned. Students attending the same school and taking a course together may also connect informally, outside of class to review the materials, study, and collaborate on assignments. Students may also use social media to stay connected with other SophieConnect students.

**Being Ready for an Online Course**
Students enrolled in SophieConnect classes have been recommended by their school's academic leader, hence they have been deemed responsible and adequately prepared for online learning. Students new to online learning may have to overcome an initial learning curve, but experiencing different modes of learning is part of the online experience. The SophieConnect team is confident that students will succeed after an initial adjustment and take this experience with them to further their future academic careers.

Some people may be under the false impression that online courses are easier compared to traditional classes in a brick and mortar school. However, each SophieConnect online course is as rigorous as any traditional course offered at any Sacred Heart school. In some cases it might feel even more rigorous because students are required to participate regularly, be proactive in their engagement with the material, and take an active role in their learning experience.

Students can expect to spend on average 8 - 10 hours a week on their online classwork. Time spent on coursework includes engaging with new material, reading, watching videos, completing labs; spending time on assignments, posting in discussions, practicing problems, and completing assessments. Assessment work may include standard online tests, essays, and individual or collaborative projects.

**Group Work**
Group work is a great way to collaborate, build community, problem solve together, and make sure students synthesise and apply the new material. Collaborative group work can be a challenge but students will discover ways to work productively within groups. Students may be asked to use Google Docs or other tools to facilitate group work and collaboration.
Assessments
All courses will include regular assessments, which vary from class to class. At times tests will be proctored at each student’s school so students can be prepared for AP exams which are written and proctored. At other times tests will be taken online (sometimes timed).

Turning in assignments
Teachers will let students know deadlines well in advance. Staying organized, managing time and having regularly scheduled time set aside to do the online coursework will help students stay on top of assignments. All written assignments will be checked for originality via SafeAssign, a plagiarism prevention tool.

Withdrawal
There is an add/drop period (see the calendar). Students dropping a course after this period will receive a W as their grade.

Late/Incomplete Work
Each SophieConnect teacher will set the policy for late/incomplete work as well as all due dates for assignments and assessments.

Students are encouraged to communicate with their teachers in advance if there is a concern about getting work in on time. While SophieConnect courses allow for some flexibility, setting priorities and planning ahead are critical components of succeeding in an online class.

In the event of a serious illness, injury or other significant life event that would hinder the ability to complete work, the student or school contact should communicate with the teacher and the co-directors.

Communication Between Student and Teachers
Communication is expected to take place regularly between students and SophieConnect teachers. Teachers can be contacted through the course, or by email to their SophieConnect email address. Contact information can be found at the beginning of this handbook. Other forms of communication may include video conferencing, discussion boards, and through direct feedback on assignments and assessments. Teachers will email school contacts to discuss changes in achievement, or if a student doesn’t log into the course in the expected timeframe, turns in assignments late consistently, or doesn’t complete work required.

Teachers are expected to respond to student email within 24 hours of it being sent 5 out of 7 days each week. Everyone needs a break and the teacher will set the days that they will be disconnected from SophieConnect.

Students should not wait until the last minute to ask for help. Being proactive and self-directed, are part of the skills necessary to be successful in an online class. Students can also reach out to their fellow classmates for assistance which builds collaboration and community.
Privacy
Students have ownership of their work and it is their intellectual property. It will be not shared without their permission.

STUDENT ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Support from Teachers
SophieConnect faculty are key to ensuring that students are successful in the online classroom. This commitment to student success requires faculty to work individually with struggling students by providing one-on-one support through online meetings, extra feedback and collaborating with the academic support team.

Student Support from SophieConnect
SophieConnect wants students to succeed. To that end we have developed a system to assist students in their online class pursuits.
If a student does not log on or falls behind in class work, the teacher will contact the student. If a student does not respond the teacher will email the SophieConnect Co-Directors, and the school contact.

At the beginning of each course there is an orientation day. It’s a time to get familiar with the course, watch the introductory video from the teacher and navigate around to become comfortable with tools, the syllabus and content organization.

Support from Parents
Parents play a major role in helping students succeed. Some things that can be done at home to help ensure online courses are a success -

1. making sure the student has a space to do online work with reliable internet connection.
2. encouraging students to stay on top of the work assigned, and to do it daily, not wait for one free day and do all of the work assigned for a particular week.
3. encourage students to communicate frequently with their teachers and other classmates when they have questions and to be self-directed learners and develop their sense of agency.
4. to be patient as learning in an online environment is different than a face to face classroom; they can do it but there will be a learning curve.

Snow Day/Blackboard or Google Goes Down
With SophieConnect there are no snow days. As this is distance learning the only thing that would hinder course work would be a lack of electricity, internet or our learning management system going down. In the event that something like this were to occur, teachers will make adjustments to due dates. Students should be proactive and communicate difficulties as soon as possible with their SophieConnect teachers.

Calendar
SophieConnect has its own calendar that may be different from a student's regular school calendar. All SophieConnect courses will use adhere to this calendar. It is posted on page three of this handbook.
Scheduling recommendation
SophieConnect recommends that, if possible, students have a period or two scheduled into their regular school week to work on their online class. If more than one student takes the same online course, finding a time for all of them to meet would be preferable.

Proctoring Tests
Tests will generally not be proctored, unless it is a mock AP exam. See AP exam above.

Checking in with students
Regular check-ins with students in an online class is important. It reminds students that they are supported and invites feedback on how things are going.

Contact with Teachers
School contacts are invited to participate in the open house that is scheduled in the fall for each course and to stay in contact with teachers as needed. We ask that you cc the co-directors on emails so everyone is kept informed on what is happening.

Contact with Co-directors
Once a school identifies its contact person for SophieConnect, the co-directors will communicate regularly with this person. They will be the point person for all communication regarding SophieConnect.

Requesting Grade Reports
Grades will be sent according to the SophieConnect calendar. If a school requires grades at a different time, please put in the request via email to the co-directors. Site Directors have access to the electronic gradebook (NetClassroom) to view grades and cumulative averages.

Course Evaluation
Evaluating courses is essential in order to ensure the effectiveness of the curricular design. Students will be asked to evaluate a course mid-year and at the end of the year. Contacts are invited to share feedback during a phone conversation mid year and via a survey at the end of each school year.

Your honest feedback is crucial to the success of Sophie Connect.

Issues affecting Students
When a situation arises at home which may affect a student’s academic performance or general well-being, parents are asked to notify their school’s contact person for SophieConnect so that the appropriate academic support can be put in place.