

#### **4.17 Electronic Signature (e-Signature) Policy**

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Approved by the Board of Trustees – January 26, 2022

Approved by the Board of Trustees – December 10, 2025

##### **A. Purpose**

The eSignature Policy shall be used by Westmoreland County Community College (college) to increase productivity and ensure convenient, timely and appropriate access to information by using electronic signature technology to collect and preserve signatures on documents quickly, securely, and efficiently. In addition to increasing productivity and efficiency, this policy furthers the college's goals of reducing the consumption and storage of paper documents and the maintenance and supply of printers. This policy establishes when electronic signature technology may replace a hand-written signature, with the goal of encouraging the use of paperless, electronic documents whenever appropriate and allowed by law. This policy applies to all signatures used in processing various college documents and assumes the college signer has been given the authority to sign and bind the college as determined by the president, or their designee by means of a properly executed Power of Attorney.

##### **B. Intended Goals for eSignature**

- **Security and Legal Compliance:** The use of e-forms and eSignature provides a secure method of signing and transferring documents electronically. A document cannot be altered after the signer has completed the eSignature.
- **Integration into business processes:** The eSignature process may fit into pre-existing business practices, providing automated processes.
- **Simplified workflow:** eSignatures eliminate resource-intensive processes that require the college and counterparties to manually sign documents. Features of the eSignature process include automation of simple forms, ability to track and review changes, vary the recipient roles, tag signatures, etc.
- **Cost benefits:** There is a potential cost savings from not having to print, file, scan, and store paper copies. The college will save also on certified mail, postage, printing, ink, envelopes, and paper.

##### **C. Policy**

This policy applies to documents requiring a signature of any person where the signature is intended to show authorship, approval, authorization, or certification, and legal binding of contracts. It is the policy of the college to encourage the use of electronic signatures by

authorized signatories in all internal and external activities, documents, and transactions where it is operationally feasible to do so, where existing technology permits, and where it is otherwise appropriate based on the department's preferences. In such situations, affixing an electronic signature to the document in a manner consistent with this policy shall satisfy the college's requirements for signing a document and, in the case of contracts and agreements, those authorized to legally bind the college.

#### D. Requirements of eSignature

1. The use of eSignatures is permitted and shall have the same force and effect as the use of a "wet" or manual signature if all the following criteria are met:

- a. The eSignature is unique to the person using it.
- b. The eSignature is capable of verification.

2. The eSignature is under the sole control of the person using it.

- a. Email notifications requesting eSignatures must not be forwarded.
- b. These requirements prohibit the use of proxy signatures.

3. The eSignature is linked to the data in such a manner that if the data is changed after the eSignature is affixed, the eSignature is invalidated.

#### E. Common Types of Documents

This policy is intended to broadly permit the use of eSignatures. Examples of common types of documents are listed with notes on each type of document.

Notes Memos, Forms, Board Letters, and Other Correspondence

- Yes, eSignature is recommended.

Contracts

- Yes, eSignature is recommended for those authorized to legally bind the college.

Certificates, Permits

- Yes, if allowed by law departments should work with college counsel to determine where applicable laws permit an eSignature to be used.

Documents Requiring Notarization

- No

Document Requiring the Board President's Signature

- No

#### F. Documents Involving Other Parties

In the case of contracts or transactions which must be signed by outside parties, each party to the agreement must agree in advance to the use of an eSignature. No party to a contract or other document may be forced to accept an eSignature; they must be permitted to decide either way. Such consent may be withdrawn by the other party at any time such that future

documents must be signed in hardcopy format. When a document is electronically signed by all parties, the college will provide a copy of the electronically signed document to the other parties in an electronic format that is capable of being retained and printed by the other parties.

#### G. Storage and Archiving of Electronically Signed Documents

If a document exists only electronically, steps should be taken by each department to ensure that a fixed version of the final document is stored in some manner. It is up to the department to decide how to store these final electronic documents so long as it does so in a manner consistent with any applicable college document retention policies and any applicable laws.

#### H. eSignature Solution Providers

The college's Information Technology Department and, if necessary, the college solicitor will be responsible to determine acceptable technologies and eSignature providers consistent with current state legal requirements and industry best practices to ensure the security, integrity, and legality of the data and the signature.

#### I. Conclusion

The use of eSignature is intended to make Westmoreland County Community College business practices more efficient. The process eliminates the need to print, file, and store paper copies of documents that can now be authenticated digitally and stored electronically.