

Standard for University Enterprise Electronic Login Credentials

Purpose

The purpose of this standard is to provide the procedures and requirements University departments must follow when requesting, utilizing and terminating electronic credentials having enterprise-level authorization for employees, students and affiliates (including sponsored individuals).

Scope

1. PIDs: Virginia Tech Usernames

The PID—the **P**ersonal **I**dentifier—is the primary electronic login credential or username for individuals using Virginia Tech electronic services. Eligibility for a PID is tied to the relationship the individual has with Virginia Tech. Once a PID is created, the individual will typically retain that PID even if the basis for PID eligibility changes. The PID may be suspended when an individual relinquishes all relationships with Virginia Tech that entitle that person to a PID. Creation of a PID does not imply access to or authorization for any Virginia Tech service.

Standard

The PID / VT Username is used to authorize access to services and resources to the individual identified by the PID. New PID recipients must know and understand the university's policies regarding the use and access of university data and electronic resources, found at <https://it.vt.edu/resources/policies.html>

Termination of PIDs for violation of policy

The university reserves the right to take actions that result in a PID not being usable.

All users of university electronic services must comply with University [Policy 7000, the Acceptable Use and Administration of Computer and Communications Systems Policy](#) (AUP) and its associated standard. For those individuals who fall under the university's disciplinary procedures—students and current employees—allegations of unacceptable use will be investigated and handled according to those procedures.

For individuals who are neither current students nor current employees, the university reserves the right to terminate the PID upon allegations of violations of the university's [Acceptable Use and Administration of Computer and Communications Systems Policy](#). Appeal may be made to the University Information Technology Security Officer with final appeal to the Chief Information Officer.

The university reserves the right to terminate a PID at the discretion of executive management. The university's President or Executive Vice President and Provost may authorize termination of a PID in exceptional situations, immediately and without notice. In such cases, there is no appeal.

PID character strings (username)

Most users will select the character string (name) for their PID using a self-service account creation process found on 4help.vt.edu. This process will specify the current rules for PID composition.

The Division of Information Technology makes no guarantee that a particular character string is available to any individual.

Individuals should select character strings that are memorable. The typical “public face” for a Virginia Tech user is the ***preferred e-mail address*** that may be selected by the user who is eligible for e-mail service.

For the reasons below, **the character string will not normally be changed once selected:**

- Constancy promotes remembering; and
- Changes have the potential to propagate costs and security risks not only within authentication services in Information Technology but also to all services that use the PID for authentication and/or authorization.
- While major university online resources should work seamlessly with a renamed PID, it is not guaranteed that all applications that use the PID authentication will handle the transition gracefully. Loss of access, either temporary or permanent, could occur after a PID is renamed.

There are some circumstances in which PIDs can be renamed. Acceptable criteria for PID rename requests include:

- Employees who retain eligibility for a PID after separating from the university (e.g., retirees or alumni) may be required to take on a new character string for their PID to ensure that no communications are misdirected.
- The Virginia Tech Police or Human Resources makes the request on behalf of an individual who is being threatened, stalked, or harassed, if changing the PID reduces the individual’s exposure to harm.
- Renaming the PID to be consistent with a new and verified name change that has been approved/ implemented by the university’s Human Resource Office or, in the case of students, the Office of the Registrar.
- Other types of PID rename requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Receiving spam email does not constitute a valid reason for requesting a PID change.

Passwords

A minimum credential for logging into electronic services is a password coupled with an independent second factor of authentication such as notification and confirmation delivered over an alternate communications mechanism, a pseudorandom pass code, biometric measure, or other means accepted as a best practice. The University Information Technology Security Officer establishes the password standards. The University Information Technology Security Officer also establishes acceptable means for additional factors of authentication and may allow particular systems to not use an additional factor of authentication where it is deemed technically or otherwise infeasible.

PID passwords are not to be shared.

Procedures related to Virginia Tech Usernames (PIDs)

1.1 PIDs created by students/alumni

Students: Upon receiving an offer of admission and accepting the offer, an incoming student is eligible to generate a PID through the self-generation tools described at www.4help.vt.edu.

To generate a PID, the incoming student must provide the following information:

- First name
- Last name
- University ID number
- Date of birth
- Major

Individuals having difficulty providing this information should contact the office responsible for their admissions.

- If you have been accepted into an undergraduate program, e-mail Undergraduate Admissions at admisspid@vt.edu.
- If you have been accepted into a graduate program, contact the Graduate School at 540-231-6691, or e-mail gradappl@vt.edu.
- If you have been accepted into the doctorate of Veterinary Medicine program, contact Veterinary Medicine admissions at 540-231-4699 or e-mail dvmadmit@vt.edu.
- If you have been accepted into the Agriculture Technology program, contact Agricultural Technology admissions at 540-231-7649 or e-mail agtech@vt.edu.

Admitted students may retain a PID “for life.” In practice, “for life” means the PID will remain in place until:

- The individual does not follow up admission with attendance;
- The individual is asked to renew the PID, and fails to renew;
- The university no longer uses this method of authentication; or
- It becomes known to the university that the individual is deceased.

Alumni: Recent students retain their PID when they become an alum of the university; alumni needing a PID may create one by self-generating a PID through the tool available at www.4help.vt.edu. The alum must provide the following information:

- First name
- Last name
- University ID number
- Date of birth
- First term of attendance
- Last term of attendance
- Degree major

- Degree received

Individuals having difficulty providing this information should contact the office of the University Registrar at 540 231-6252 or e-mail registrar@vt.edu.

1.2 PIDs created by employees/retirees

Employees may create their PIDs effective on the date of their start of employment. In addition, departments may permit an employee to establish a PID in advance of their employment start date. Go to www.4help.vt.edu to learn more about PID creation.

To generate a PID, the employee must provide the following information:

- First name
- Last name
- University ID number
- phone number
- Date of birth

Individuals having difficulty providing this information should contact their employing department.

Employees will retain a PID for the duration of their employment with Virginia Tech. PIDs will be terminated when:

- The individual does not follow up anticipated employment (“pre-hire”) with subsequent employment;
- The individual leaves the employ of Virginia Tech (a grace period may apply);
- A retiree may retain a PID “for life.” In practice, “for life” means the PID will remain in place until:
 - The university no longer uses this method of authentication;
 - The retiree is asked to renew the PID, and fails to renew; or
 - It becomes known to the university that the retiree is deceased.

Employee exceptions:

1. Expedited termination. Normal processing will cause an employee’s PID to be terminated when the administrative system of record (Banner) reflects the effective date of termination. Upon request for ‘expedited termination’ to Identity Management Customer Support (IMCS) by the employee’s most recent department head (or university official higher in the employee’s reporting line), the PID of an employee may be terminated as of the last working day in advance of entry into the administrative system (in some cases, a grace period may apply).
2. Extensions. Former employees may be sponsored by a department head (or higher-level university official) for a Sponsored PID (see next section).
3. Adjunct faculty members: Departments that employ an adjunct faculty on a recurring but non-consecutive manner, may sponsor a PID for that individual, providing access to services during the breaks in service (see next section).

1.3 Sponsored PIDs

Sponsored PIDs are used for a variety of reasons to provide persons other than students/alumni and employees/retirees with some access to services. Such access should provide a benefit to the university and not only to the individual. To request a sponsored pid, go to 4help.vt.edu and search on “sponsored pid”, then follow the instructions.

Application for a sponsored PID requires the sponsor to specify a termination date if the PID is needed for less than one year, or to renew annually.

A sponsored PID will be terminated if one or more of the following occurs:

- Separation of the sponsor from Virginia Tech employment or movement of the sponsor to a new department or area within the university (and failure to assign a new sponsor);
- Arrival of the termination date;
- Failure of the sponsor to renew by the renewal date; or
- The university no longer uses this method of authentication.

1.4 Other relationships

Contractual relationships to provide services for which a PID is required should specify the conditions for generation and termination within the agreement or contract. Agreements may be with parties external to the university, or related to special programs with university offices.

Technical Assistance

Individuals needing technical assistance or having difficulty working with the PID account creation process may contact 4Help at 540-231-help (540-231-4357) or www.4help.vt.edu.

Definitions

Authentication factors are elements that are used in forming digital credentials to verify a person’s identity. The number of different factors used for authentication is directly related to the level of trust a process can place in the validity of the digital credential. As the number of factors increases, so does the level of trust in the credential.

Digital credentials provide a means to link an asserted identity in the electronic medium to evidence used to verify a person’s identity. Digital credentials may be something you know (for example, PID plus password, or a challenge question and answer pair), something you have (for example, a smart card or a physical token), or something you are (including biometric measures).

E-mail address: Virginia Tech provides basic e-mail service to many of its affiliated groups. Individuals with e-mail service will have an e-mail account named after their PID, and PID/password credentials will be used to authenticate to the basic e-mail system. However, e-mail account holders are encouraged to set a ***preferred e-mail address***—another character string—that is the e-mail address used by others to communicate with them.

Employees include those individuals who are currently employed and paid by Virginia Tech, as well as those who have been designated as employees but not paid by Virginia Tech. Employees must be present in the enterprise human resources information system (Banner).

Terminated refers to the status of a PID when the account holder no longer may use the PID in the Information Technology-provided authentication system. The PID and/or its associated password may be in one of several states in which the PID/password combination will not permit such authentication.

References

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Policy 7040, Personal Credentials for Enterprise Electronic Services

<http://www.policies.vt.edu/7040.pdf>

University Policy 7010, Policy for Securing Technology Resources and Services

<http://www.policies.vt.edu/7010.pdf>

University Policy 7000 Acceptable Use and Administration of Computer and Communication Systems

<http://www.policies.vt.edu/7000.pdf>

Acceptable Use of Information Systems at Virginia Tech

<https://vt.edu/about/acceptable-use.html>

Virginia Tech student privacy/FERPA

<https://www.registrar.vt.edu/FERPA.html>

Maintenance of Standard

This standard is maintained and revised by Secure Identity Services in consultation with the University Information Technology Security Office. Questions about this standard may be directed to sis@vt.edu.

Revisions

February 2022 Updated links and moved Procedures section to the end of the standard instead of in the middle.