

Password & Passphrase Requirements for Student Accounts

OVERVIEW

Your Gulf Coast State College (GCSC) password is the primary control protecting your college account. This policy defines the requirements for GCSC account passwords and passphrases and applies to all accounts used to access college systems and resources.

PASSWORD REQUIREMENTS

A GCSC password must:

- Be between 8 and 256 characters in length.
- Include at least 3 of the following 4 character types:
 - Lowercase letters
 - Uppercase letters
 - Numbers (0–9)
 - Spaces or symbols (@ # \$ % ^ & * - _ ! + = [] { } | \ : ' , . ? / ` ~ " () ; < >)

Tip: The 8-character minimum is a floor, not a goal. GCSC strongly recommends a minimum of 12 characters, or a passphrase, for stronger security.

PROHIBITED PASSWORDS

GCSC enforces Microsoft's Global Banned Password List, so common and known-compromised passwords are automatically rejected. In addition, a password may not include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Personal identifiers, such as your name, nickname, or initials.
- College references, such as the college name, mascots, or locations.
- Easily guessed words, such as "password" or "P@ssw0rd".
- Common phrases, such as "The best is...", "I love my...", "Softball is...", or "How are you...".
- Simple sequences, such as "abcd" or "1234".
- Keyboard patterns, such as "qwerty" or "qazwsx".

PASSWORD CHANGES

GCSC passwords **do not expire** on a fixed schedule. However, you must change your password right away if any of the following occur:

- You believe your password has been seen, shared, or compromised.
- You may have entered it on a suspicious or phishing website.
- ITS notifies you that a change is required.

If there is evidence that your password or account has been compromised, ITS may automatically reset your password and revoke any active sessions to protect your account and college resources. You will need to set a new password before you can sign in again.

You can change your password at any time using [Self-Service Password Reset \(SSPR\)](#), or in person at the ITS Helpdesk on campus.

KEEPING YOUR PASSWORD SECURE

Your password is unique to you and must not be shared. To protect your account:

- Do not share your password with anyone, including college staff or other students.
- Do not use your GCSC password on non-college systems, websites, or accounts.
- Use a password for your GCSC account that you do not use anywhere else.

GCSC will never ask you for your password. If someone requests it, do not provide it, and report the request to ITS.

PASSWORD BEST PRACTICES

A passphrase built from several words is easier to remember and harder to guess than a short, complex password. To create a strong password or passphrase:

- Choose an uncommon combination of four to eight easy-to-remember words.
- Add spaces between or within words.
- Use capital letters, or capitalize specific words.
- Add punctuation or special characters that are meaningful to you but difficult for others to guess.
- Use unique or abbreviated spellings of words.
- Replace some letters with numbers to create variations, such as changing “E” to “3”.