

Are You Ready to Be an Online Student?

Questions to Ask First

Students thinking about taking online courses should consider what it means to be an online student before deciding to take an online course. The benefits of taking an online course may seem obvious, but you will want to make sure that you will be able to successfully complete the course requirements.

Do you have regular access to the Internet?

It is necessary to maintain regular communication with the instructor with whom you are taking the course. You should be able to answer your email quickly during the school week, which means within 24 hours after receipt. This being said, you should be able to successfully send and receive email with attachments. Students must have a RELIABLE Internet Service Provider (ISP) and email account prior to the start of class.

Are you comfortable working on your own? Are you self-motivated?

You will have a more flexible use of the time to spend on course work. Due dates are set by each individual instructor. Such flexibility and independence is agreeable to some but, for others it is difficult to self start.

Can you make deadlines?

Your instructor is counting on you to finish your work on time. Your communication may be virtual, but your tasks and assigned deadlines are not. Make sure that you are able to set your own schedule and are able to stick to the timeline.

Is this the right time for you to apply for an online class? You should be confident that you can set enough time aside for your online course assignments and study time. You may feel that taking an online course will free up your time for other tasks. If you are feeling overwhelmed by other responsibilities, like your work or you have/want to concentrate on family obligations- then perhaps you had better postpone your involvement. Online courses require as much and often more personal preparation time than on-campus courses. Remember everything that you would normally communicate by speech in class must be typed in an online course.

Are you sure you are capable of producing first-rate results in your online course?

You should think about your success with time-management and your ability to feel confident that you are able to achieve success in the course. Otherwise an online course will not help but cause inconvenience. Be honest with yourself about your capabilities.

What Qualities Make For A Good Online Student?

- **Good written communication skills**
 - Remember, your primary means of communication is through writing. Being able to send a well structured message will help with the communication process.
 - Make sure that you are able to easily maneuver through Canvas. You should be aware of how to find assignments and course material, as well as be able to participate and post to discussions and send emails with attachments. If you are taking an online course in biology you would not want to miss the point of the lesson simply because you did not know where/how to find the lecture.
 - You should be confident that you have access to the necessary hard and software requirements to meet the needs of the course. The Academic Skills Center is available on-campus as is the local library. Make sure that you have a backup plan of where to go to complete your work.
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- **Excellent attention to detail, particularly when following written directions**

- Assignments, projects etc. are posted in the written form. Grades are drawn from work accomplished as directed. When grading assignments the instructor will look for competence in the work submitted. This means that all of the required steps were followed and presented in a professional manner.

- **Commitment to answer e-mails quickly**

- The instructor will send and respond to emails and post messages in the Blackboard learning environment. Pertinent information pertaining to the course will be given. It is necessary to have a smooth communication process.

- **Commitment to stay with the course to its completion, and to set a schedule achieve success**

- Assignments, projects, etc. are given specified due dates. These dates are nonnegotiable. It is the student's responsibility to turn in assignments on time. If the student is having trouble with a portion of a project it is expected that contact be made with the instructor in enough time for the instructor to answer the question(s) and still allow time for the assignment to be turned in by the due date.

- **Enjoyment of working independently, with just occasional supervision**

- The instructor's job is to be a guide throughout the course. Postings will be made. Comments and directions will be given.

- **Self-motivation**

- It is the student's responsibility to take the course seriously and to be able to budget time to receive a successful grade.
- Student success will be marked by finishing assignments on time, submitting quality work, and reporting in regularly.
- The student must be good at self-pacing and, allowing self plenty of time to work on an assignment.