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Student Readiness for Online Learning

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Advising Tips for Online Learning

When advising students on course selection, faculty may have questions about whether or not online learning is appropriate for a particular student. Below are some tips regarding student readiness for online courses, followed by a student self-assessment checklist:

- The student must be organized and motivated to make time on a regular basis to complete online coursework. Students sometimes forget that, even though they don't have to be in class, they still need to schedule time in their day for the course. A good guideline to follow is that an online course is likely to require the same amount of time that a student would spend in class AND on out-of-class assignments for a face-to-face (f2f) section of the same course.
- The student's motivation for taking the course should be educationally sound. If the student's only interest in an online course is that it fits into his/her schedule, the student may struggle to keep up with the course work during the semester. Online courses are not inherently easier than f2f sections. Some students will enroll in an online course based on the misconception that it will be easy, only to withdraw when they fall behind.
- Online courses tend to be substantially text-based. Students need good reading and writing skills in order to succeed in most online courses.
- The student must have the daily Internet access and technical skills required to complete course assignments. Minimal requirements are included in the checklist below.
- Students need to be organized and ready to learn on the first day of the course. Unless it is otherwise stated in InfoBear, students should begin using the Blackboard or Moodle course website on the first day of classes for the semester. In 80/20 hybrid courses (indicated by "Y" in section designation), there may be several online assignments prior to the first f2f class meeting. Students are strongly advised to purchase textbooks and test out their BSC network and Blackboard accounts well in advance of the first day of an online course.
- Online instructors often send information to students in advance of the start of the course. Since this may be done via BSC email, students are strongly advised to maintain and check their BSC email boxes regularly, especially in advance of an online course. Otherwise, they may miss important course information.
- Only very highly motivated and organized students should consider adding an online course after the first day of classes. If, in addition to starting late, the student is new to online learning, it can be very difficult to catch up and keep pace with the rest of the class.
- Any technical problems should be directed to IT Support at 508-531-2555 or itsupport@bridgew.edu. Questions regarding the syllabus, course content, and/or assignments should be directed to the instructor.

The Online Learning Student Checklist is intended to help students determine whether or not they are ready for online courses. During the year, we will continue to provide information and resources on student readiness for online learning. In the meantime, feel free to contact Dr. Anne Hird, Online Learning Facilitator, at ahird@bridgew.edu if you have questions on this topic.

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Online Learning Student Checklist: Is It For You?

The number of online courses at BSC is rapidly increasing. On InfoBear, online sections are indicated by a W, Y, or X in the section designation:

W = 100% online. Course is entirely online, with no face-to-face (f2f) class meeting time.

Y = 80-99% online. Course is predominantly online, with some f2f class meeting time.

X = 50-79% online. Course is partially online, with substantial f2f class meeting time.

Y sections have no more than 7.5 hours of f2f class meeting time. X sections have 8-19 hours of f2f class meeting time. The dates and times of f2f class meetings and any other scheduling details, are listed on InfoBear. F2f class meetings in X and Y sections are mandatory.

If you are new to online learning, you may wonder if this is the right course format for you. Online learning, while exciting and convenient, is not for everyone. In order to succeed, you will need:

Commitment to:

- Making time in your schedule to complete coursework. These courses do not require you to be online at any specific time. However, you still need to make time in your schedule to complete the coursework.
- Keeping up with regularly scheduled course assignments.
- Attending on-campus class meetings for 80/20 hybrid courses (indicated by Y in section number.)
- Participating in virtual class meetings, if required for your course. Some instructors use Blackboard, Moodle or Adobe Connect for scheduled, online lectures, discussions, and/or other class activities.
- Collaborating with other students (e.g. online class discussion)
- Communicating with your instructor when you need help with assignments.
- Contacting Information Technology Support for help with technical problems.

Daily access to a computer with the following minimum specs:

- Windows XP or higher or Mac OS X or higher.
- Internet connection: high speed (cable or DSL) strongly recommended. A 56kb dialup connection may pose problems, since many instructors now use multimedia content that requires a high speed Internet connection.
- Internet Explorer v6.0 or higher or Safari v1.0 or higher.
- Current antivirus and anti-spyware software.
- MS Office (2003 or more recent preferred) or compatible word processor.

Computer skills (minimum requirements):

- Navigating the Windows or Mac operating system and desktop environment.
- Saving files and organizing them in folders.
- Sending and receiving email and email attachments.
- Searching the Web efficiently.
- Using MS Word or compatible word processor to write papers.
- Additional skills specific to the course you plan to take may be required.

If you are missing anything on this checklist, you should consult with the course instructor before registering for the class. For more information on online and other distance learning options at BSC, see <http://www.bridgew.edu/Distance/>