



# DONNELLY COLLEGE

## Tips for Success

One of the advantages of online courses is that the work required can be done at any time of the day you choose, however this can present challenges that a face-to-face course may not. The following tips will help you prepare for your course and adjust to the online environment more readily.

### The First Week

The first week of an online class is usually designed to help you get to know the course, the instructor, and students, as well as learn how to navigate the online learning environment. There are a few things that you should pay special attention to during the first week:

#### Study the Syllabus Carefully

This is especially important for online learners. In a traditional face-to-face class, the instructor will usually spend some time explaining the syllabus and course agenda to the whole class and answer any questions that come up; however, an online course doesn't operate in the same way. The syllabus, therefore, is the most important source of information for you, including the learning content covered in the course, grading methods, assignments, and participation requirements. Read the syllabus carefully and take note of specific deadlines and assignments. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to email your instructor or post questions to the Discussion Forum.

#### Get to know your instructor and classmates

The instructor will usually post a brief introduction about him or herself on the course site, and may provide the URL to their personal website. Take this as an opportunity to learn about your instructor's expertise. The instructor may also ask every student to post a self-introduction on the Discussion Forum. This assignment will allow people to get to know each other and to foster a sense of community.

#### Get familiar with the Canvas LMS

You are going to be using Canvas for all your courses, so give yourself some time to get used to the features. Click and explore the course navigation, online Discussion Forums and Learning Modules. The sooner you familiarize yourself with the system, the sooner you can focus on the course content. Visit the Canvas Student Orientation course for additional information.

#### Allocate regular time to study and create a schedule

You will want to allocate time to get your coursework done so that you don't fall behind. Any coursework that involves collaboration with other classmates will

need to be done in advance of any weekly deadlines to allow time for revision and feedback.

## **While Taking the Course**

### Understand the Expectations

Online courses, just like face-to-face courses, require that you are fully aware of the instructor's expectations and requirements. When you read through each Learning Module, make sure you pay attention to the following things that every learning unit will contain:

- Learning Objectives: What you are expected to accomplish upon completing the unit.
- Learning Activities: What you are expected to do to achieve the learning objectives.
- Assessments: Evaluate how well you have met the objectives, through assignments, exams, etc.

### Manage your time

It is recommended that you look briefly through the learning content in a Learning Unit before you start working on it. Don't spend too much time reading the content; just get a sense of what topics are covered, how much reading is required, and what kind of activities or tests are included. It is unlikely that you will be able to complete a full Learning Unit in just one night, so you will probably need to break up the learning materials, activities and assignments into manageable chunks. Plan for how much you can do at a time, and allocate times for completing the tasks. Make specific, realistic and time-limited plans, and stick to your plan until you are done.

### Get involved

You won't be able to see your instructors and classmates face-to-face. Active participation is the key to success in online learning. It is important to work and interact with the learning materials independently, as well as interact with your classmates by participating in activities collaboratively. Visit the course every day to receive the latest news and information. Also, check your email frequently. Instructors usually send important course information and updates by email.

### Be prepared for assignments and assessments

Assignments in online courses may take a variety of forms. Most assignments will have to be submitted online. For example, you might be asked to upload your term paper on the course site or send it directly to the instructor as an email attachment. You may also be asked to create presentations in the form of a webpage. For each assignment, read the instructions carefully to understand specific requirements.

Online assessment strategies are similar to face-to-face courses, including quizzes, exams, papers and projects. Quizzes can be taken online and scored automatically, and research papers can be submitted directly through the

Canvas system. Assessments may also include the use of proctoring tools that create a restricted test-taking environment through integration within Canvas.

### Communication and Collaboration

One important part of online learning is to study the course content provided by the instructors independently. Usually, instructors will post lectures, readings, and video clips on the course site, and it is your responsibility to review all those materials. Be sure to study them carefully, take notes on important issues, and write down the thoughts and questions you have. This will set up a good foundation.

### Connect with your classmates

Researchers and educators emphasize the importance of the social and cultural aspects of learning. Some believe that online courses provide a more democratic learning environment, where shy students are more likely to speak up, and everyone has more freedom and opportunity to express their opinions. The instructors usually provide plenty of opportunities for students to interact with each other by participating in online activities, such as group projects or online discussions.

### Participate Regularly and Frequently

There are many differences between online classes and face-to-face classes, but one thing that does not differ is student participation. Participating in online communication and collaboration helps to foster a learning community, and allows you to share ideas and co-construct knowledge with your classmates. It is important to frequently visit and contribute to the Discussion Forums. We suggest that you visit the Discussion Forum at least three times for each Learning Unit. Don't wait until the deadline to post. Learning can be most productive when every participant is committed to and engaged in thoughtful and sustained discussion.

### Write Carefully and Respectfully

Consider these tips on how to communicate effectively and appropriately in online courses:

- Write in complete and logical sentences.
- Use correct spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Do not write entirely in capital letters, it gives the impression that you are shouting.
- Be brief and to the point. Avoid lengthy or detailed posts.
- State and support your positions but try not to overwhelm everyone with your opinions.
- Let others know that you have read and appreciate their posts.

### Interact with your instructors

Read the course introduction/syllabus for your online class to find out ways to interact with your instructor. When you have questions, some instructors will ask

you to post them to a class Discussion Forum (so that everybody will be able to see the questions and answers), and others will ask you to email them directly to the instructor. Don't hesitate to contact your instructor when you need their assistance. Email is the standard communication method. When an emergency comes, you can also phone your instructor. Some instructors offer face-to-face office hours even when the course is online. Identify how or when you can contact your instructor during office hours.