



## Being a Successful Online Student

Gateway Community College offers numerous online, online with campus requirement (OLCR), and hybrid courses using Blackboard, which is an online teaching system available to Connecticut Community College students. Blackboard allows instructors to post materials and communicate with students online. On campus meetings are required for OLCR courses. Hybrid courses meet online and on campus, with some of the contact hours held in the classroom and the remainder of the hours spent online. Many traditional courses are web-enhanced which means the instructor includes course materials online in Blackboard. Faculty members may require students to access Blackboard in any course offered at GCC. You can access Blackboard from any computer connected to the Internet with the correct version of Java ([run the Browser Check to be sure you have the correct version](#)).

In many ways, taking an online course is similar to a traditional face-to-face course. You will still have an instructor and fellow students in your virtual classroom. All of the elements of a traditional course: the syllabus, the course materials, textbooks, lectures, discussions, tests, and grades will be part of your online course. You can expect to spend the same amount of time that you would spend in a traditional on-ground course plus the hours that you would have spent in the classroom. For example in a traditional 3-credit course, you would meet in the classroom for 3 hours per week. Professors generally expect that you will study 1 to 2 hours for every hour in the classroom, for a total of 6 to 9 hours per week. The same holds true for an online course, except that the 3 hours of in-class time will now be time that you are working online. This results in a total time commitment of 9-12 hours per week. Online courses are generally not self-paced which means that you must follow the syllabus and complete assignments, assessments, discussion postings, etc. on a regular basis.

Characteristics of successful online students:

- Highly motivated, organized, independent learners
- Possess good time management skills
- Have good reading, writing and communication skills
- Are able to perform basic computer literacy skills:
  - basic keyboard and mouse proficiency
  - Internet (navigating the Internet and understanding how it works)
  - word processing (typing, cutting, copying, and pasting)
  - email (sending, receiving, replying, forwarding, and attaching files)

- Have regular and reliable access to a computer with Internet access (DSL or cable recommended).
  - It is possible to use traditional dial-up, but time used waiting for pages to download could be better used doing research and writing assignments.
  - Have an alternative plan to access the Internet in case you have technical difficulty at home.
    - Local library, GCC computer lab, a friend or relative's computer
  - In addition, you should have an emergency plan for times when your primary computer is down or the power goes out in your local area.

Taking an online course is truly a commitment. While an online course may blend more easily into your hectic schedule, serious focus is still needed. You must realize that *there is a lot of work involved*. Even in an online course, *there are deadlines and due dates*. If you fall behind, catching up with the work can be very difficult. *Read the class documents and follow the instructions closely*. Keep pace with the class assignments. *Do not put assignments off until the last minute*. It is strongly recommended that you set up a schedule: a day to read the lessons, time for research and writing, and time on a daily basis to check into the class, check announcements, emails, and respond to discussions.

You will automatically receive an email with helpful introductory information when you register for an online, hybrid or OLCR course. Follow the instructions below to enter or correct your email address in myCommNet to insure that you will receive this email:

- Go to <http://my.commnnet.edu>
- Log in using your NetID username and password
- Click on the Student tab
- Go to the Self-Service link
- Click on Personal Information
- Click on Update email address(es) to insert your correct email address into myCommNet.

This will also allow your instructors to email you if they wish to do so before the course begins.

For the latest information, directions for logging in to Blackboard, and many other resources, visit the GCC Blackboard Distance Learning web pages at <http://www.gatewayct.edu/Offices-Departments/Academic-Affairs/Distance-Learning> and <http://www.gatewayct.edu/Offices-Departments/Academic-Affairs/Distance-Learning/Student-Resources>.

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