



## HOW TO DEVELOP ONLINE LEARNING SKILLS

### **Computer Literacy**

You need to have a basic knowledge of computer and Internet skills in order to be successful in an online course. Here are some of the highlights:

1. Knowledge of terminology, such as *browser, IMHO, application*, etc.
2. Understanding of basic computer hardware and software; ability to perform computer operations, such as:
  - a. Using keyboard and mouse
  - b. Managing files and folders: save, name, copy, move, backup, rename, delete, check properties
  - c. Software installation, security and virus protection
  - d. Using software applications, such as Word, PowerPoint, Excel, email clients
  - e. Knowledge of copying and pasting, spell-checking, saving files in different formats
  - f. Sending and downloading attachments
3. Internet skills (connecting, accessing, using browsers) and ability to perform online research using various search engines and library databases.
4. Ability to use online communication tools, such as email (create, send, receive, reply, print, send/receive attachments), discussion boards (read, search, post, reply, follow threads), chats, and messengers.

### **Strong reading and writing skills**

You need to have strong reading skills and be able to communicate effectively through writing. Most of the material in the online environment will come from your textbooks and written lectures, therefore strong reading and critical thinking skills are very important for success in an online course. Online students communicate through such text-based tools, as emails, discussion forums, chats and instant messaging. You need to feel comfortable expressing yourself in writing.

### **Self-motivated and independent learner**

While online courses can offer more flexibility in scheduling, they require more self-discipline and independence than on-campus courses. Some students can find this uncomfortable and not suitable for their learning style. They may miss face-to-face interaction with an instructor and peers, which helps to keep them on track. In the online environment, you have to be able to start and to work on tasks on your own, without someone keeping you focused, and you have to be self-disciplined in order to follow the class schedule and meet deadlines.

### **Time commitment**

Online classes take as much time as regular on-campus classes. You need to set aside sufficient time for study. Plan to spend at least as much time working on the assignments and studying as you would with a traditional course. Note that some students report spending even more time for online classes than for traditional ones. Time that you need to devote to a 3-credit course will be approximately 12 hours a week.

### **Time management: log-in frequently and develop study schedules**

Even though you may not have to "be" in class on some specific day and time, you still have to follow the course schedule provided by your instructor. Remember that online classes are not independent study courses; you are still required to "show up" and participate actively. Since online courses are asynchronous, they will continue developing and changing even if you are not online. You need to be online frequently enough and log in at least three to four times per week in order to keep up with the content flow, complete assignments, follow discussions and communicate with your classmates and instructor. Some courses may even require you to log in every day.

Never wait until the last minute to complete your assignments. You may have a technical problem or run out of time which will cause frustration. One of the major reasons for failing online classes is procrastination, since it is very easy to fall behind in the online environment. Make sure to set aside specific time on a regular basis to participate in your course. Schedule specific times to log in and to study.

### **Active learner**

Online students must be active learners, self-starters who are not shy or afraid to ask questions when they do not understand. Remember that you, not the instructor, must be in control of your learning process. Since your instructor cannot see you, you need to "speak up" right away if you have problems and be as explicit as possible; otherwise there is no way others will know that something is wrong.

Remember that your instructor is not the only source of information. Most of the time you will be able to post your question in the discussion forum and your classmates will help you as well.

If you have technical difficulty, problems understanding course content or difficulty meeting the deadline, seek help right away and contact your instructor to make arrangements.