

SEVERN BUSINESS COLLEGE

Student Handbook
Distance Learning

Welcome

Dear Distance Learning Student,

The Staff of Distance Learning commends you for choosing Online Distance Learning at Severn Business College. As a distance learner, you will find your online distance learning courses academically equivalent to the on-campus courses.

Carefully read the material presented in this handbook as it provides you with information specific to distance learning. This handbook will examine:

- How to be a successful distance learning student,
- How to manage studies on Moodle,
- Where to find your course syllabus,
- How to be successful in your course.

Every student is responsible for observing the rules and regulations for the College as published in these documents and engage with your instructor via email dl@severnbusinesscollege.com about questions regarding the course itself.

Best Wishes

The Staff of Distance Learning

What Does Distance Learning Mean?

What is Distance Learning?

In distance learning, the instructor/tutor and students are apart from one another and support is provided via email, Skype and telephone. Distance learning course is a self-study course and requires students to login onto Moodle on a regular basis to complete course requirements and receive support/feedback from the instructor/tutor. Moodle platform is fully equipped with all the resources and guidelines needed to complete the course.

Distance Learning is 100% Online

Distance learning is a self-study course with instructor/tutor support, with learning modules managed online via the Moodle platform. Distance learning course allows students to participate from geographically remote locations without the need to come to campus. Assessment is through practical assignments (one assignment per subject), with no exams - to more accurately reflect the real working environment.

The Successful Distance Learner

What makes a person successful in distance learning varies from person to person. The following is based on advice from instructors and students who have had positive distance learning experiences.

Good Study Habits

One of the best ways to be a successful distance learner is to develop and execute good study habits. Some are:

- ✓ Check your email at least once a day
- ✓ Time management - Don't let assignments go until the last day
- ✓ Use all resources available to you
- ✓ Work in a quiet, uninterrupted area as much as possible
- ✓ Dedicate at about 10-12 hours per unit each week
- ✓ Communicate with your instructor
- ✓ Reach out when you need help
- ✓ Have a strong sense of self-awareness

Learners who have a strong sense of self-awareness and good study habits usually have better strategies for understanding new information and are typically more successful in a distance learning environment.

Learning Style

The way you prefer to learn new information is called your learning style. Assessing your skills and preferences will help you select the type of learning strategies that are most likely to keep you interested and enable you to reach your learning goals. If you don't already know your individual learning style, it is advised that you take a short self-assessment online/Moodle.

Self-discipline and Motivation

Another characteristic shared by successful distance learners is self-discipline. This distinguishing feature is usually seen in the learner's ability to stay current with assignments and adhere to assignment due dates.

One way to promote self-discipline is to work with a calendar. Schedule time to study for work on assignments and complete assignments on time.

Distance learners need to be self-motivated. Unlike traditional courses in which the students and instructor meet face-to-face, learning activities and communication in distance learning courses is remote. This arrangement allows you the flexibility to work when it is most convenient for you. It will be your responsibility to remain motivated and to stay engaged to complete the course requirements wholly and on time. You are responsible for knowing when course activities are due.

Time Management

Time management is a commitment; you must set aside a significant amount of time each week for work. Distance learning classes require as much time and effort as traditional seated classes, if not more.

Technical difficulties in software, hardware, internet connections, etc. are to be taken into consideration when you budget your time. Assignments have specific due dates in online learning and failure to turn in assignments on time will result in additional charges. Don't leave assignments to the last minute. Using the course syllabus as a guide and the calendar you developed for self-discipline will help you better manage your time.

Class Communication

Distance learning requires communication with the instructor. As an online student, effective communication is key, but can be difficult. Without face-to-face contact, a traditional classroom experience provides, what you say carries a lot of weight. Written communication lacks the facial expressions, the tone of voice and other non-verbal seen or heard during face-to-face communication.

The following are useful tips:

- ✓ Identify course and section in the subject line of the email
- ✓ When asking a question, be specific and provide details about what you are trying to figure out and what you don't understand
- ✓ Always identify yourself in the message
- ✓ Keep it simple. Be clear and concise
- ✓ Avoid using jargon and overusing "big" words
- ✓ Use concrete, specific words rather than vague, general words
- ✓ Write professionally, but as you would talk
- ✓ Avoid "texting" language, foul language or slang
- ✓ Vary your sentence length, but avoid very long (run-on) sentences
- ✓ Write in a positive tone
- ✓ Do not respond in anger
- ✓ Always edit and proofread your work before you send it
- ✓ Check spelling and grammar

Computer Requirements

Computer Skills

"What kind of computer skills do I need to be a successful online student?" You need basic computer skills. Below are lists of necessary tasks:

Basic Skills

- ✓ Create, save, copy, and locate files/folders
- ✓ Navigate between two or more applications
- ✓ Minimize/maximize Windows

Email Skills

- ✓ Send, open, and reply to a message
- ✓ Enter a message subject
- ✓ Send an attachment
- ✓ Open and/or save an attachment

Web Browser/Moodle Skills

- ✓ Go to a specific URL
- ✓ Follow a hypertext link
- ✓ Conduct a basic search using a search engine
- ✓ Download and install plug-ins

- ✓ Zip/unzip a file (Compress)
- ✓ Update browser as needed
- ✓ Upload an assignment file
- ✓ Respond to a forum post

Word-Processor Skills

- ✓ Open a new/existing file
- ✓ Save a file
- ✓ Rename a file (Save As)
- ✓ Cut, paste, format text
- ✓ Print a document

Computer Access

It is recommended that distance learning students have regular access to a personal computer with internet access. A high-speed connection is preferred. If you do not have a computer or internet access then there are several places with a computer with internet access to study. A personal computer with internet access is preferred.

Student Information

Student Accounts

Email

All students have required an Email account. Students are responsible for receiving, responding to and complying with email communications sent by the College. Because information may be time-sensitive, students are encouraged to check their email regularly (daily) throughout the course.

Moodle

The Moodle platform is used to deliver distance learning courses, and an instructor or tutor provides assistance. During course enrollment, a Moodle username and password are given.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment [leading to the award of credit] that considers whether learners can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and so not need to develop through a course of learning.

The College recognises the RPL enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any appropriate methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting a unit or a whole qualification. Evidence of learning must be valid and reliable, e.g. examination certificates, work experience. Recognition of Prior Learning form can be downloaded from Moodle.

Academic Writing & Study Skills

Guidance to academic writing and study skills are provided on the Moodle platform.

Student Induction/Orientation

Distance learning students are requested to read on the Moodle platform-

- ✓ Student Handbook
- ✓ Course Handbook
- ✓ Guide to writing an assignment
- ✓ Harvard referencing quick guide
- ✓ Distance learning process
- ✓ Assignment submission procedure and
- ✓ Other documents

As this will build the foundation for distance learning.

Syllabus

The course handbook defines the boundaries of your course. It is the single most important document you will need for success in your distance learning course. Course handbook contains information that identifies assignments, assessment, and course expectations. The course handbook is your key to success – you should use it as a time management tool. The course handbook can be found on Moodle and on College website. You should print a copy and/or save a copy to your desktop for easy reference.

Academic Honesty

The independent nature of distance learning increases opportunities for the student to commit acts of academic dishonesty. Students are expected to keep their Moodle log in username and password confidential, submit only original work, and adhere to the college's policy on academic misconduct. Any violation will be addressed according to the college's policy on academic misconduct.

Honesty and integrity are essential to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge at Severn Business College. Students share in the responsibility to develop and maintain an atmosphere where new ideas can be discussed and presented while recognizing the original work of others. Students of Severn Business College will pursue professional careers in which people's lives and the welfare of the environment are in their trust. Therefore, it is critical that students develop and honour the principles of honesty and integrity that they will carry into their future endeavours.

At the age of the Internet, it may appear that the work of others may be freely exchanged; however, this is not the case. Individuals who labour over such creations – whether in physical or virtual worlds – have the right to receive compensation and/or recognition for their use under copyright law. Students are responsible for ensuring that the work presented as their own is truly their own. When the work of others is presented, it must be properly attributed and cited. This includes information that is in the public domain. To review the entire policy on Academic Misconduct visit www.severnbusinesscollege.com/pdf/academicmisconduct.pdf

Academic Appeals

The academic appeals procedure describes the ways in which candidates may make a representation about decisions made by the tutor/assessor on any piece of assessment which has been marked and graded.

If a candidate is dissatisfied with an assessment decision, then they do have a right of appeal. In order to appeal, you must be able to show why the assessment mark you are appealing against is unfair or does not represent your true academic ability. The grounds of appeal must be valid and justified with evidence supplied by the student to the Principal/Director dealing with the appeal. If the candidate does wish to appeal, they must do within 5 days of the publication of the assessment result. To review the entire policy on Academic Appeals, visit www.severnbusinesscollege.com/pdf/academicappealsprocedure.pdf

General Complains

The Severn Business College is committed to improving its service and welcomes and values the feedback from all its stakeholders. The General Complaints Procedure is one of the ways in which the College monitors its performance and ensures that the quality of our provision is enhanced. To review the entire policy of General Complains Procedure visit www.severnbusinesscollege.com/pdf/generalcomplaintsprocedure.pdf

Personal Extenuating Circumstances

You are expected to be able to manage minor illness and difficult life events whilst pursuing your course of study, just as you would have to do in the workplace. However, we realize that there may be circumstances beyond your control which cause you to perform significantly less well in coursework than you are normally capable of or mean that you are unable to meet coursework deadlines. If you are unable to hand in your assignment by the due date as a result of personal extenuating circumstances you must submit the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Form along with your supporting evidence and have the claim approved BEFORE the assignment submission date. Personal Extenuating Circumstances Form can be downloaded from Moodle.

Student Support

Courses are designed for self-study with support from the instructor/tutor and feedback on draft assignment from the tutor. For a description of the course, visit the college website or the Moodle platform. For timetable, visit the Moodle platform. Student support will be provided by the instructor/tutor via email, Skype or telephone.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I know an online course is right for me?

So you've been thinking of taking an online course, but aren't sure if it's right for you. Here are a few questions to ask yourself:

- ✓ **Do I have access to a reliable computer with internet access?** This is the most important question. You must be able to regularly log in to your course, check due dates for assignments, submit work, and communicate with your instructor.
- ✓ **Am I comfortable on the internet and confident in my computer skills?** You don't have to be a "computer whiz" to be successful in an online course but you will need to be familiar with word processing, accessing online resources, generating and sending documents electronically, file management, navigating through a website, and using information and media literacy to critically assess the validity of web-based content.
- ✓ **Do I have the time to commit to an online course?** Flexibility is one of the most attractive aspects of online learning, but you have to dedicate at about 10-12 hours per subject each week.
- ✓ **Am I a good manager of my time?** Flexibility = freedom which can lead to procrastination. Just like a seated class, staying on top of your studies and not allowing yourself to fall behind is essential to student success.
- ✓ **Am I self-motivated?** With online learning, the instructor is only there to guide you in your studies – there are no lectures to tell you what to do. Therefore, much of what is learned in an online course is on your own.

2. How do I succeed in an online course?

As with all courses, managing your time and employing good study skills is key to being successful. With online courses additional skills are necessary as well:

- ✓ **Completing assignments on time** – assignments have specific due dates in online learning and failure to turn in assignments on time will result in additional charges.
- ✓ **Balancing personal obligations** – many online learners have family and work responsibilities and making sure one schedules enough time for coursework is essential.
- ✓ **Proofread** – since nearly all assignments will be typed, be sure to proofread carefully to ensure you are sending your best work to the instructor.
- ✓ **Print and follow the syllabus** – this will help you manage your time, assignment due dates and personal commitments.