Guide: Fully Online and Blended Courses

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS
Unlike a traditional course, which takes place face-to-face, you will not have to attend classes on campus. You will have the opportunity to meet with your professor and classmates virtually, which will enable you to develop a sense of belonging in the online community. By actively participating in exchanges and group activities you will develop a sense of belonging to your online learning community. To help you stay motivated, it is important that you take responsibility for managing your time and keep up with the class by preparing and maintaining a study plan throughout the course. While online courses offer more flexibility in your schedule, the time commitment required is equivalent to that of a traditional course. Remember, it is not true that online courses are easier than traditional courses; you will need to devote just as much time, effort, and energy in a fully online or blended course than a face-to-face one.
Contrary to a traditional course that takes place entirely in class, you will have to accomplish significant learning components online within a blended course. Face-to-face activities will allow you to actualize your learning while enhancing your learning experience through presentations, group analysis, case studies, lab work etc. While the online component will allow you to peruse course material/content/assignments, view videos, participate in discussion forums, accomplish various formative activities, etc. Your greatest challenge will be to develop autonomous skills to accomplish the online component. You need to understand that the online component not only prepares you for the face-to-face sessions, but that the online activities are an integral part of the course.

Before the Course Starts

Get ready!

LOGISTICAL ISSUES

Fully Online Course

Develop a personalized schedule that you will be able to follow. Choose a time of day when you won’t have any distractions so that you can focus solely and exclusively on your online course. For a 3 credit course you can expect to devote approximately 7-9 hours per week to accomplish work, which may include: reading/research, activities/assignments, participation to discussion forums etc.

Blended Course

The general rule of thumb is for every hour of class time, there should be at least 2 hours of time for reading, work, online discussions, research, etc. This, of course, varies from one course to another and from one student to another. Whatever formula you choose, make sure you put in regular and consistent effort every week.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

- Make sure your computer is ready before you start the course.
  - Software
    - Some courses provide PDF documents, PowerPoint® presentations, multimedia elements (video, audio, interactive activities, etc.). Make sure you have all the necessary software before the course starts.
    - If your course requires special software, you will find information about it on the course website.
Equipment

- Adjust your chair, desk, keyboard, and monitor for better ergonomic positioning to eliminate the risk of poor posture that can cause back pain, headaches, etc.

- Sometimes it is easier to read a document on paper than on your computer screen. Do you have access to a printer?

- If a specific piece of equipment is required for your course, you will find information about it on the course website – most likely in the course syllabus.

For technical questions related to your fully online or blended course (problem accessing the course, error messages, etc.), please contact the Computing help Centre:

- Computing assistance Request: http://www.ccs.uottawa.ca/cybersos/
- Telephone: 613-562-5800 ext. 6555 or toll free 1-877-868-8292, extension 6555

STEPS TO FOLLOW BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF YOUR ONLINE COURSE

Connecting to Blackboard Learn


- See the link “Login information for students” further down this page if you can’t login in the system:
  - Username: your student number
  - Password: same as uoZone

Course outline/Syllabus: Once you have accessed your course website, find the course outline/syllabus. It is the best source of information for identifying what is expected of you in order to succeed in the course. Read it right away and use it to make up your schedule.

- Textbook: It is possible that a textbook or other printed resources are required for the course. Make the time to order them right away so that you can stay on track. See the course outline/syllabus for details.

- Shop online for textbooks sold by the University of Ottawa bookstore: http://www.bkstr.com/ottawastore/home
  - Email: libbook@uOttawa.ca
  - Telephone: 613-562-5353 or toll free 1-877-868-8292, ext. 5353

- Purchase course packs online through ReproBoutique accessible from InfoWeb: https://web3.uOttawa.ca/infolweb/logonPage.do

The course outline/syllabus includes all important information of the course.
• **Get familiar with the course website.**

  » Don’t be afraid to click on all the links. Exploring will allow you to become more comfortable with this new environment.

  • Often professors prepare ice-breaker activities. Sometimes there is a short video presentation of the professor. Other times you will be asked to introduce yourself to the group in a discussion forum. **Go for it!**

  • This is an opportunity for you to get to know the people with whom you will be interacting in the coming months, and at the same time testing out various tools at your disposal in the site.

  • Have a look at the calendar in order to take note of activities/work that need to be accomplished on a short- and long-term basis so as to adequately plan for the session.

SUMMARY OF THINGS TO CHECK BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF YOUR ONLINE COURSE:

- ✓ Log in using your uoZone account through the Virtual Campus: http://www.maestro.uottawa.ca/en/

- ✓ Explore the website by clicking on the various tools and links.

- ✓ Download the course outline/syllabus.

- ✓ Order the textbook or course pack (if applicable, check the course outline).
During the Semester

Stay on track!

• Be proactive!

» Do not hesitate to contact your professor or teaching assistant if you have any questions related to the course.

» Demonstrate your ability to work autonomously. It is by fully participating in all activities that you will be able to further your knowledge and put your learning into practice.

Fully Online Course

» Professors provide online office hours to answer questions students may have. See the course outline/syllabus to find out when office hours are.

Blended Course

» Office hours for blended courses are normally offered on campus according to a pre-established schedule.
• **Manage your time!**
  » Keep to the schedule you set for yourself.
  » Establish deadlines.
  » Take advantage of the time you set aside for accomplishing work, whether it be for a fully online course or the online component of the blended course.
  » Avoid distractions. To concentrate on your course, close Facebook and other social media sites, turn off your phone and the television.
  » Allow enough time for reading. There could be more reading material (to replace lectures in class).

• **Use of computer/tablet/Smart phone**
  » It is time to consider your computer, tablet or Smart phone as a learning tool that will help you develop your research and analysis skills.
  » From now consider these devices as tools that will allow you to actively participate in your learning, giving you the opportunity to share your knowledge and build on your learning.

• **Refer to the syllabus often**
  » This is the document that your professor uses to explain everything about the course:
    ~ The course description;
    ~ The general and specific objectives;
    ~ The schedule, including the distribution of activities per week;
    ~ Important dates of submission of assignments and exams;
    ~ Details of the course evaluation;
    ~ Policies, grades and net ethics;
    ~ And more!
• **Stay motivated!**

  » In an online course, it can be a little harder to stay motivated throughout the entire semester.
  » Collaborate and participate on a regular basis!
  » Complete the activities as you go.
  » Break down activities into smaller tasks that are easier to manage.
    ~ It is much easier (and more motivating) to take baby steps on a regular basis than to take a giant step all at once.
  » Use the communication tools available to you in the course website to communicate regularly with your classmates.
  » Pair up with someone else in the class to keep each other motivated.

• **Participate**

  » In the context of a blended course, the role of the professor and the student change. Beyond being a subject-matter expert, the professor acts as a guide and facilitator to support your learning. As a student, you will be required to be fully engaged in your learning within this new, dynamic learning environment.
  » In order to stay motivated, it is important to closely follow the schedule and complete the required work and readings on time in order to be well prepared for class sessions.
  » Participate fully in class and within online group activities in order to share learning with your peers and build on your knowledge.

  » An online course does not mean an easy course. You will need to actively participate in your learning by sharing your knowledge with your peers in order to create an engaging learning community.
  » You will often communicate in writing.
    ~ Communicate clearly and in a timely manner. Consult the netiquette section in order to know how to communicate in a correct manner with your professor and your peers.
    ~ Don’t be afraid to participate and ask questions in the discussion forum. Chances are that others will have the same questions as you do.
    ~ Don’t wait until the day before a test or exam to ask questions.
    ~ You will learn as much from the professor’s answers as from discussions between students.
After the Course Ends

Close Up Shop!

Just like in a face-to-face course, you will be evaluated to determine your level of success in the course. The evaluation method may vary from one course to another, whether it is a fully online or blended course. In some cases, it will be the assignments and activities that you did throughout the course that will determine your final grade. In others, there may be a final assignment or a “take-home” exam.

If a written final exam is required for your online course, you must notify your professor within the first 3 weeks of the start of the course if you are able to write the exam on campus. If you are unable to travel to Ottawa to write your exam, you will need to find a proctor to supervise your exam. This person must be approved by your department or by the Centre for Mediated teaching and Learning (CMTL). If you do not know how to find a proctor, you can contact the CMTL for help with this by phone at 613-562-5787 or by email at the following address: distance@uottawa.ca.

Once the course has ended, you will no longer have access to the course website. After all your hard work, it will be time for you to:

- Create back-ups of the content (material) that you want to keep.
- Make copies of your assignments, blogs, portfolio, etc.
- Keep in touch with your classmates or with your professor. Do you have their contact information?

It is possible that access to the course website will be removed before your final grade has been posted. Not to worry, you will still be able to view your grades in InfoWeb:
http://www.uottawa.ca/strategic-enrollment-management/

Good luck with your studies!
## Services and Resources That Can Be Accessed Online

Whether you take a course that is hybrid or entirely online, this list might come in handy.

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<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>SERVICES</th>
<th>WEBSITE ADDRESS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>uoZone</strong></td>
<td>• All student Web tools and information are centralized in uoZone.</td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.uottawa.ca/en/students">http://www.uottawa.ca/en/students</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Virtual Campus</strong></td>
<td>• Blackboard Learn</td>
<td>• Access to your course website: <a href="http://www.maestro.uottawa.ca/en/">http://www.maestro.uottawa.ca/en/</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• List of courses</td>
<td>• Telephone: 613-562-5800, ext. 6555 or toll free at 1-877-868-8292, ext. 6555</td>
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<td>» From the “Subject” drop down menu, choose the “Blackboard/Virtual Campus” option</td>
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<td><strong>Technology Support</strong></td>
<td>• General computing help</td>
<td>• Telephone: 613-562-5800, ext. 6555 or toll free at 1-877-868-8292, ext. 6555</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Password changes</td>
<td>• Email: <a href="mailto:cybersos@uOttawa.ca">cybersos@uOttawa.ca</a></td>
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<td>InfoWeb</td>
<td>• Password Management&lt;br&gt;• Evaluation Web-Based Courses&lt;br&gt;Online Scholarships and Bursaries&lt;br&gt;• Etc.</td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.infoweb.uOttawa.ca">http://www.infoweb.uOttawa.ca</a></td>
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<td>Library</td>
<td>• Books&lt;br&gt;• Articles&lt;br&gt;• References&lt;br&gt;• Course reserve&lt;br&gt;• Videos&lt;br&gt;• Databases</td>
<td>• <a href="http://biblio.uottawa.ca/en">http://biblio.uottawa.ca/en</a>&lt;br&gt;• <a href="http://biblio.uottawa.ca/en/use-library/connect-campus">http://biblio.uottawa.ca/en/use-library/connect-campus</a> (Off-campus access)</td>
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<td>ReproBoutique</td>
<td>• Purchase your Course Packs online</td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.uottawa.ca/print/course-packs/">http://www.uottawa.ca/print/course-packs/</a></td>
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<td>Bookstore</td>
<td>• Purchase your textbooks online</td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.bkstr.com/ottawastore/home">http://www.bkstr.com/ottawastore/home</a></td>
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<td>SASS (Student Academic Success Service)</td>
<td>• See the online resources available</td>
<td>• Documents available online (referencing, grammar, the writing process, the structure of a paper): <a href="http://sass.uottawa.ca/en/writing/undergraduate/online-document.php">http://sass.uottawa.ca/en/writing/undergraduate/online-document.php</a>&lt;br&gt;• Questions via email: <a href="mailto:awhc@uOttawa.ca">awhc@uOttawa.ca</a></td>
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<td>Financial Aid</td>
<td>• There are many possibilities when it comes to financing your studies: scholarships, government loans, work-study program, etc.</td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.uottawa.ca/strategic-enrollment-management/home">http://www.uottawa.ca/strategic-enrollment-management/home</a></td>
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<td>Teaching Evaluation</td>
<td>• Provide feedback on a course and an instructor’s teaching by filling out a questionnaire.</td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.evaluaction.uottawa.ca/index-e.html">http://www.evaluaction.uottawa.ca/index-e.html</a>&lt;br&gt;• Accessible through InfoWeb</td>
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<td>Accessibility</td>
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