Guidelines for Online Student Success

These guidelines apply to all students registered for online courses.

Students enrolled in online courses in the Huizenga College of Business and Entrepreneurship must understand the commitment they are making to independent, self-motivated learning. While the online learning environment has much in common with ground-based learning, it tends to be more challenging. Therefore, it is imperative that online learners possess the necessary skills and follow some best practices to be successful. Below are some guidelines that will help determine whether a student will thrive in an online environment.

Technical and Computer Skills

Some courses may be able to be completed using a public computer, such as at the local library. However, many courses require the purchase and installation of specific software. Take note of the system requirements below, as well as the tech skills that you will need.

1. It is recommended that you only take an online course if you have **your own computer** (or a shared family computer).
2. Most tasks will require a **desktop or laptop computer**. Some course work may be accessible using a smartphone, iPad, tablet, or Chromebook, but most will not.
3. Keep up with any changes in the NSU technical requirements for online courses.
4. Ensure that your computer supports the Canvas LMS system requirements. Canvas works best with the Chrome web browser. Ensure that you have the most up to date version installed and that your computer supports Chrome system requirements.
5. Have access to a reliable, high-speed internet connection that meets Canvas LMS system requirements for internet speed.
6. If your device does not include a **webcam** and **microphone**, purchase external ones. Make sure these are functional for tests and online meetings.
7. A cable internet connection is recommended for exams.
8. Have basic computer skills, such as safe web navigation. Maintain up-to-date anti-virus and anti-malware programs on any device used in submitting coursework or in communicating with classmates and instructors.
9. Students with disabilities need to have access to any assistive technologies needed to navigate and read web content. They should also be sure to be registered with NSU's Student Disability Services, who will coordinate any special arrangements with the instructor.
10. Be willing to develop skills in required software applications. Be able to download plugins and media readers that may be necessary to access some course content.
11. Know how to save files to the cloud, as well as how to back them up to a physical device such as a thumb drive.
12. Be flexible when encountering technical challenges without getting easily discouraged. The NSU Help Desk can help solve many problems. For Canvas issues that are not course-specific, contact the Canvas Help Desk which is available 24/7.

Time Management and Study Skills

Since the online environment lacks much of the structure present in the face-to-face classroom, you must exercise real commitment to be successful in the online environment.

1. Check the syllabus early to confirm whether there are **required** online meetings. Arrange your personal or work schedule so that you can sign in on time and remain throughout. Do your best to attend optional meetings as well.
2. Be proactive. Ask for help when technical or academic problems arise. Ask for help before the problem becomes a crisis. **Remember that neither your instructor nor the NSU Help Desk are available 24/7.** (Please note that the Canvas Helpdesk is available 24/7 for Canvas issues.)
3. Create a workplace that is free from noise and will keep distractions at a minimum.
4. Utilize the Canvas calendar to keep track of deadlines added by the instructor. Add your own additional deadlines as needed.
5. Schedule time to complete readings, do research, and study. Don't just focus on the assignments. Plan on doing at least the same amount of work as in a ground course. This will add up to roughly 10-20 hours per week per class.
6. Test weblinks and read assignments instructions several days before they are due, so that you can get help with tech issues
7. Be able to navigate the [NSU library](#) databases and conduct research using reputable sites.
8. Submit assignments at least an hour before the deadline, in case of tech issues.
9. Log into Canvas regularly (via the website or the mobile app) to stay on top of course announcements and deadlines.
10. Expect to have **at least one group project** in each class. Be flexible when scheduling meeting times with your teammates.
11. When working with group members online, it is tempting to use a "divide and conquer" approach. Unless otherwise directed by the instructor, your team will need to **collaborate on each part** of the project.
12. It is your responsibility to follow Academic Integrity and other important policies established at NSU.

Independence in Learning

In the online environment, the instructor is not physically present to answer questions and clarify concepts. Online learners should be mostly independent learners. You should feel comfortable asking for help but *only after* thoughtfully working through the materials that the instructor has provided.

1. Read the syllabus carefully on day one and familiarize yourself with all course requirements. **Make a personal commitment to adhere to them.**
2. Pay attention to the learning objectives posted in the course and devote yourself to achieving them.
3. Read assignment instructions carefully, including any provided rubrics.
4. If the instructions for assignments are not clear, contact the professor well before the due date.
5. Check for graded assignments and read all comments and feedback, for both auto-graded and instructor-graded assignments. Contact your instructor if you don't understand the feedback.
6. You should be comfortable learning through a variety of formats: printed textbooks, online articles and ebooks, videos, podcasts, etc.
7. Be aware that online learning requires independent thought and analysis with limited interaction.

8. Self-assess to determine how well you are understanding what you are reading or watching.
9. Be willing to seek out supplemental materials and practice on your own if you find you are weak in a particular area, such as formatting Word documents or navigating Excel.
10. Before contacting your instructor, check to see if your question hasn't already been answered in a class email, course announcement, or in an "Ask Your Professor" discussion board.

Responsiveness

When learning happens at a distance, it is easy to lose touch with the instructor and with other students. In addition to reaching out when you need help, you will need to check your course regularly to see if anyone is trying to contact you.

1. Check your notification settings in Canvas, and make sure that you are receiving (and reading) timely alerts.
2. Respond to **Canvas Inbox** and **NSU email** messages that request information from you within 48 hours.
3. Take note of the instructor's contact information and preferred communications method.
4. Give the instructor 48 hours to respond to you before sending a follow-up email or escalating to another person.
5. Respond to your teammates promptly. Treat your teammates with respect and courtesy.
6. Remain engaged in online discussion boards. Even if reply posts are not required for a grade, read through your classmates' posts and work to build an online conversation.
7. If you must leave an online meeting unexpectedly, due to a tech issue or emergency, notify your instructor.
8. If an online meeting ends unexpectedly, stay near your computer for ten minutes to see if the meeting will be rescheduled or continue with a new link.

Communication Skills

The online environment places a greater emphasis on the written word than the face-to-face classroom, which relies more heavily on the spoken word. However, other forms of communication may be required as well.

1. Make sure your communications with classmates and with your instructor are courteous and focused on gaining a thorough understanding of the subject matter.
2. Don't be afraid to express disagreement with the views of your classmates or your instructor, offering an alternative perspective. This can be done respectfully.
3. Plan what you want to say, considering organization and flow. Contact NSU's Writing & Communication Center for additional help.
4. Read through what you have written, imaging the perspective of someone else. Make sure that you are being specific enough in your wording choices.
5. Use spellcheckers properly, but also proofread assignments before submitting. Understand that a spell checker does not detect the use of incorrect words or poor sentence structure.
6. In an online meeting, make sure that your background noise is minimal and that you are muted when not speaking.
7. Use tools responsibly when in online meetings. Use the reaction buttons to participate nonverbally and use the chat to make brief responses.

8. If you are in an online class meeting or online team meeting, use the mic and webcam whenever possible. Adjust your webcam so that your face is captured as straight-on as possible, in good lighting, and filling most of the frame.
9. We want to learn from each other. Share appropriately your personal life and experiences.