Are online classes right for you?

Student Online Learner Self Evaluation

1 = Completely Disagree, 2 = Strongly Disagree 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Strongly Agree, 5 = Completely Agree

Technology Access

I have access to a computer with an Internet Connection   1 2 3 4 5

I have access to a new computer.   1 2 3 4 5

I have access to a computer with adequate software (e.g., Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat) 1 2 3 4 5

Online Skills and Relationships

I have the basic skills to operate a computer (e.g., saving files, creating folders).   1 2 3 4 5

I have the basic skills for finding my way around the Internet (e.g., using search engines, entering passwords).   1 2 3 4 5

I can send email with a file attached.   1 2 3 4 5

I think that I would be comfortable using a computer several times a week to participate in a course. 1 2 3 4 5

I think that I would be able to communicate effectively with others using online technologies (e.g., email, chat).   1 2 3 4 5

I think that I would be able to express myself clearly through my writing (e.g., mood, emotions, and humor).   1 2 3 4 5

I think that I would be able to use online tools (e.g., email, chat) to work on assignments with students who are in different time zones.   1 2 3 4 5

I think that I would be able to schedule time to provide timely responses to other students and/or the instructor.   1 2 3 4 5

I think that I would be able to ask questions and make comments in clear writing.   1 2 3 4 5

Motivation

I think that I would be able to maintain motivation even though the instructor is not online at all times. 1 2 3 4 5

I think that I would be able to complete my work even when there are online distractions (e.g., friends sending emails or websites to surf).   1 2 3 4 5

I think that I would be able to complete my work even when there are distractions in my home (e.g., television, children, and such).   1 2 3 4 5

Online Audio/Video

I think that I would be able to relate the content of short video clips (1-3 minutes typically) to the information I have read online or in books.   1 2 3 4 5

I think that I would be able to take notes while watching a video on the computer.   1 2 3 4 5

I think that I would be able to understand course related information when it's presented in video formats.   1 2 3 4 5

Internet Discussions

I think that I would be able to carry on a conversation with others using the Internet (e.g., Internet chat, instant messenger).   1 2 3 4 5

I think that I would be comfortable having several discussions taking place in the same online chat even though I may not be participating in all of them.   1 2 3 4 5

I think that I would be able to follow along with an online conversation (e.g., Internet chat, instant messenger) while typing.   1 2 3 4 5

I sometimes prefer to have more time to prepare responses to a question.   1 2 3 4 5

Importance to your success

Regular contact with the instructor is important to my success in online coursework.   1 2 3 4 5

Quick technical and administrative support is important to my success in online coursework. 1 2 3 4 5

Frequent participation throughout the learning process is important to my success in online coursework. 1 2 3 4 5

I feel that prior experiences with online technologies (e.g., email, Internet chat, online readings) are important to my success with online courses.   1 2 3 4 5

The ability to immediately apply course materials is important to my success with online courses.   1 2 3 4 5

Managing Time:

One challenge facing an online student is the self-discipline required to devote adequate time to class in courses that might not have regularly scheduled times to meet synchronously online or in person. Most students found that establishing their own schedules for class time helped them ensure enough time for class participation. One student commented,

Setting and staying to specific study days was one factor that worked for me. For example, in the evenings, throughout the week, I read my lessons. Saturdays were generally reserved for writing assignments. Saturdays were also devoted to responding to other online postings and building on what I had already submitted.

Another student stated that designating specific times to read, complete written assignments, and post dialogue to other students proved helpful. Students also emphasized the need to create a schedule that gave them some flexibility and wasn't overwhelming. One student explained, "I was careful not to put too much pressure upon myself when completing a homework assignment. I found that doing a little bit here and there avoided trying to do too much all at once." Developing a schedule that designates specific times to log in to and participate in class and to carry out other course-related activities such as reading and doing research promotes a student's success as an online learner. Students identified the most helpful time-management strategies as setting a schedule for study time (78.9 percent) and devoting time daily to the course (31.6 percent). A key difference between in-person and online learning is the independence and ability to participate in the online class at a time convenient to the student. This also presents a potential problem, as procrastination could cause a student to fall behind in the online course. The graduates who participated in the study were asked how they avoided this problem. A few students (15.8 percent) commented that logging in to their course portal every day and checking for new postings or updates helped prevent them from falling behind. Other students (36.8 percent) commented that weekly assignments from the instructor kept them on a regular schedule in the course. One student explained,

You have to discipline yourself in maintaining your schedule and not allow any distractions to disrupt your plan. I would allow myself one hour of winding down from work, eat my dinner, and get to my study room. I found that if I put in about 3–4 hours of studying during the week, the weekly assignment would be completed by Thursday or Friday.

Another student stated that an upfront planning process was critical to succeeding in the online course because studying was integrated with many other responsibilities.

Source: Online Guidebook eLearning at Wallace State Community College, Department of eLearning, p. 8-14