

Distance Learning Information for FYE 105 Instructors

OVERVIEW

In the past 10 years, online learning has grown by leaps and bounds. At Bluegrass, over half of our students take at least one of their classes online--and this mirrors what is happening nationally. Students, particularly in community colleges, are turning to distance education as a solution for balancing the demands of work and family. While distance learning does offer learners greater flexibility, the online format poses new challenges for students and instructors, both of whom are learning how to navigate this new, digital frontier.

Because of this growth, we should assume that, at some point in their educational career, all our students will take an online class; consequently, all of our students need to be prepared for online coursework.

USE BLACKBOARD IN YOUR FYE 105 CLASS

I strongly encourage face-to-face FYE 105 instructors to make good use of their Blackboard (Bb) course shells. Doing so will prepare students not only for the online class that may be in their future, but for all the face-to-face classes that make use of Bb. Listed below are some of the ways Blackboard can be used in the on-ground FYE 105 class:

- **File Storage.** In addition to the course syllabus, maintain an archive in Bb of all course handouts. While many instructors are nervous about “going paperless”, I recommend giving it a try. You may find that the LCD projector in your classroom works just as well--if not better--than paper handouts.
- **Gradebook.** I strongly encourage FYE 105 instructors to keep their gradebook in Blackboard. Doing so helps students keep up with assignments and prepares them for all the many courses that do use the Bb Gradebook.
- **Discussion Forums.** Prepare students for a classroom discussion by first having them participate in a discussion forum. In class, you can refer to the discussion forum and use comments raised there to drive a classroom discussion. You can also use discussion forums for students to select groups for a class project--doing so will preserve precious in-class time.
- **Assessments.** It would be great if every student in an FYE 105 class had an opportunity to take a quiz or survey in Bb. In lieu of tests, you can use the survey feature in Bb, which functions just like a test, to allow students to provide an informal course evaluation, an assessment of a class activity, or review of a college service, e.g. students might visit the tutoring center and then complete a short survey of the service. The survey results can help drive a classroom discussion.

- Assignments. Have students submit an essay or similar assignment via Bb [SafeAssign](#). This is a powerful anti-plagiarism tool that students should know about. Plus, having students put assignments in Bb reduces the chance of work getting lost.

IMPORTANT FAQs

When discussing online classes with FYE 105 students, emphasize the following:

- *Distance learning is NOT easier than face-to-face instruction.* Many students believe that online classes will be easier and will take less time than traditional classes. This is untrue. Online classes require the same amount of work as face-to-face classes; in fact, many students report it takes them longer to complete assignments for online classes than for face-to-face classes.
- *Be cautious about jumping into online classes.* I recommend that students take, as their first online course, an introduction-to-college class such as FYE 105. Students should complete the computer requirement before beginning online courses--or take a computer class such as IMD 100, CIT 105, or OST 105 as their first online class. I discourage students from taking more than one or two online classes during their first semester as a distance learning student.
- *Patience is a virtue.* One of the advantages of a face-to-face class is having regularly scheduled meetings with an instructor who can provide instant Q&A. Students in online classes use email and other methods to contact their instructors--this means they need to be patient while waiting for responses, but. . .
- *Keep the lines of communication open.* I often encounter students who simply need to communicate with their instructor. Most instructors maintain some kind of office hours during which students can call. Students should not hesitate to schedule a phone consultation with an instructor. When in doubt, ask!
- *Follow the directions.* Just as every instructor has a different personality, so do online classes. Students should take time to review the course syllabus and other course information. Be sure to review instructor feedback. I often find that when students read the instructions offered by the professors, they can save a lot of time.
- *Time management is essential.* Students should budget their time carefully and should plan out their week and set aside time to work on their online classes. For each online class, I recommend students set aside *at least* 10 hours a week in a quiet location with dedicated, high-speed access to the Internet. Remember that students can get free high speed Internet access on any community college campus, in public libraries, and in many [private businesses](#).

- *Online classes determine course attendance based on “[academic contact](#)”.* Students should expect to be assigned some activity during the first week of class. Students who do not complete this assignment risk being dropped from the course for non-attendance.
- *Check email regularly.* Students should check their KCTCS email at least once a day when enrolled in online classes and be sure to keep an eye on their allotted storage quota.
- *Help and Assistance.* Distance Learning students are fully supported by the Blackboard 24/7 Help Desk. From the College Web site, click [Blackboard](#) and then [Help](#). Assistance is available via live chat and 866-590-9238. Students can also get assistance from the [BCTC Distance Learning Office](#) (Path: Academics / Distance Learning). Students may call 246-6603, email bl_distancelearning@kctcs.edu or visit us in A-136 on the Leestown Campus where parking is free.

SAMPLE EXERCISE

Listed below is a sample exercise that can be placed into any FYE 105 class:

Directions: On the [BCTC College Website](#), click the [Blackboard](#) link that appears at the top of the screen. Log in with your KCTCS Username and Password, and then click the [Student Support](#) tab at the top of the page. Read through the information linked there. Be sure to:

- Take the [Readiness Quiz](#).
- Complete the [KCTCS Orientation](#).
- Read the [Pre-Blackboard Tutorial](#).
- View the [Online Course Video](#).

After you have completed these activities, successfully complete the [KCTCS Student Support Challenge](#). Email a [screenshot](#) of your Certificate of Completion to your instructor.