Moodle

A Virtual Learning Environment and Platform

For

Online Distance Education & Learning

September 19, 2013
Mission

The American College of Commerce & Technology Online (Distance Learning) Program mission is to develop students and disseminate knowledge through research, education and training that promotes academic, social and economic value and strengthen individual, family, and community well-being in this diverse and increasingly global environment of the United States of America and beyond. At the American College of Commerce & Technology, in today’s world, education never ends, that is why it shall offer courses dedicated to bringing you the best, latest information and affordable learning.

It is designed for students to attend classes as scheduled and enable them to work towards their personal and professional objectives with relatively minimal disruption to their personal and professional responsibilities. Each class consists of scheduled course work supported by online and off-line activities with the instructor. Students Focus on a single subject matter at a time to enhance their ability to manage a complete study schedule with work responsibilities. It also facilitates integration with student practice both in the field of study and in situations on the job. Because of the intensive nature of course work, full attendance to all classes and full participation in online components of courses are required for credit.
The faculty consists of dynamic community and globalized professionals bringing their experiences into the online classroom. Instructors are available by internal message and telephone systems. They can be reached for immediate answers during their posted office hours and will respond within 36 hours to any questions received outside of these hours. Instructors may also communicate with students via other electronic means such as: Online Chat, Skype and Viber. Because class sizes are kept small, instructors also serve as the student’s tutor. Students and instructors can interact in a chat-like manner that allows for real-time discussion and example exercises. If the instructor’s posted office hours conflict with a student’s schedule, special arrangements can be made.

The student body is ethnically, economically and geographically diverse. Many students are recent college graduates, while others are looking to change careers or enhance themselves for other purposes. All students are united by their pursuit of a quality academic experience and their commitment to making a significant difference in a variety of settings like government, the nonprofit sector, international and corporate worlds.

The online (Distance Learning) program permits students to complete their academic requirements while remaining employed full-time or part-time without losing the salary and benefits of employment, as well as, serve those students who have other legal, distance, personal or professional responsibilities. The pace of classes and ability to concentrate on a single subject matter at a time is conducive to students managing their academic, personal and professional life.
The American College of Commerce & Technology provides an extraordinary combination of outstanding faculty, staff and quality affordable education support. Notwithstanding, the program supports the objective tradition and passion of committed students to be leaders and serve society in policy, academic, clinical, personal and professional settings.

**Coursework**

At the discretion of the instructor, students will or may be required to participate in some group projects, but most assignments are completed on an individual basis. Homework assignments are posted at the beginning of the week and must be completed and submitted by the due date. Typical assignments include a discussion question or two based on the lecture and/or reading (with replies and comments on classmates’ posts), and written assignments or tests when due. Depending on the course, students may be required to write essays, complete term projects, and/or take exams. Instructional materials differ for each course but may include electronic textbooks, website links, voice-over PowerPoint lectures, journal articles, case studies, and interviews.

**Course Calendar & Attendance**

The American College of Commerce & Technology offers four quarter terms (Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer) each year and is comprised of ten/twelve week terms. Students are not required to be online at a specified date or time. However, students are expected plan on logging in at least two different days each week for an online weekly total of approximately three hours. Additional time offline will be needed for study and assignment completion.

**Virtual Learning Environment and Platform**

The American College of Commerce & Technology supports an online virtual learning environment (VLE), or learning platform, which is an e-learning education system based on the web that models conventional in-person education by providing equivalent virtual access to classes, class content, tests, homework, grades, assessments, and other external resources such as academic, library or museum website links. It is also a place where students and instructors can interact through threaded discussions or chat that includes a content management system.

This learning environment can also be integrated with a physical learning environment (on-campus) and referred to as hybrid blended learning. Online learning can take place synchronously or asynchronously when scheduled. With synchronous courses, participants meet in “real time”, and teachers conduct live classes in virtual classrooms. Students can communicate through a microphone, chat rights, or by writing on the board. In asynchronous learning, which is sometimes called “self-paced” learning, students are expected to complete lessons and assignments independently through the system. These courses have deadlines just as synchronous courses do, but each student is learning at his own pace.
The virtual learning environment can also include students and teachers “meeting” online through a synchronous web-based application. The instructor is able to present lessons through video, PowerPoint, or chatting. The students are able to talk with other students and the instructor, as well as collaborate with each other, answer questions, or pose questions. They can use the tools available through the application to virtually raise their hand, send messages, or answer questions on the screen given by the instructor or student presenter.

Due to globalization, day, time and electronic transmission differences, the American College of Commerce & Technology relies on the asynchronous delivery of education and learning for the following reasons:

- Simple, doesn't require synchronization of both communication sides
- Cheap, because Asynchronous transmission require less hardware
- Set-up is faster than other transmissions, so well suited for applications where messages are generated at irregular intervals, for example data entry from the keyboard and the speed depends on different applications.

The American College of Commerce & Technology uses Moodle as an effective user friendly virtual learning environment and platform for its online mission. The acronym means “Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment”, a free software e-learning platform, also referred to as an eLearning Management System, or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Originally it was developed to help educators create online courses with a focus on interaction and the collaborative construction of content, it continues in its evolution and contributions.

Moodle has several features the American College of Commerce & Technology accepts as representative of its interest in an e-learning platform with a filtering system, and supports educational learning to include many types of environments for teaching, training and development as well. Some typical key features of Moodle are:

- Assignment distribution and submission
- Subject matter discussion forum
- Files and data upload and download
- Grading, scoring or performance measurement
- Instant messaging for participants
- Online calendar
- Online news and announcements
- Online testing capabilities

The American College of Commerce & Technology use of Moodle as a major part of its e-learning delivery system effectively facilitates teaching and learning. Moodle is accessed by logging in at http://elearning.acct2day.org/login/index.php. The resources provided are for faculty and students to become more familiar with the Moodle learning environment.
Student Focus

In order to succeed in an online class, students need and are expected to have the required level of computer skills, motivation and a commitment to learn and work on their own. Online classes are great for students who can take the initiative to complete required coursework without the direct supervision of a professor. The academic standards at the American College of Commerce & Technology for online courses are the same as those for all other courses it offers.

For asynchronous online courses, all classes are online, but there is the possibility that some exams will be taken in a classroom or administered by a proctor. Students will receive written directions from their instructor. The interaction between the instructor and the students (and among students) is based on writing and reading of postings and continuous participation in an online discussion forum. Students are expected to write and read a lot in addition to the textbook, lectures and other required readings. It is expected that all students will be able to express and communicate effectively in writing.

Student Responsibilities

The American College of Commerce & Technology online courses provide students with a flexible and convenient way to learn, and this means online learning is not easier than in the traditional classroom. Online courses offer the same opportunities for learning and growth, and the chance to challenge self as a student. Students must have computer skills, need to be motivated, dedicated and determined with their studies online.

Working Knowledge of Computer Skills.

- Creating and naming/renaming folders.
- Saving, opening, and placing files inside folders.
- Opening and working with more than one application at a time.
- Protecting your computer against computer viruses.
- Creating a document in a word processing program.
- Naming, saving, retrieving, and editing a document.
- Sending email and attaching files to an email.
- Browsing and surfing internet websites.

Ability and Interest Communications and Participation.

- Be willing and able to communicate with classmates and faculty online.
- Must participate in weekly online activities. Students are required to log into their course one or more times per week to view announcements, participate in class activities, assignments, online discussion and quizzes and tests.
- Complete the online assignments, quizzes, and activities by the due date to allow instructor adequate time to review work and provide feedback.
• Contact instructor with course related questions by course mail well in advance of due dates and allow 48 hours for a response to questions raised.

**Time Management.**

• Student time management is an important factor in completing any coursework, especially for online courses. Successful online students have to be very organized in their studies and take responsibility for their own learning.
• Students must determine what time of day they can best focus on their studies. It is very helpful to have a set schedule for studying. Many students find it is best to get into the routine of sitting down at the same time each night or for the same hour each morning to ensure they can stay on top of their work and not fall behind.

**Balancing Personal Obligations.**

• Many students choose to take online courses because of the convenience. Many are working full-time, or live too far from a campus or raising a family. Balancing school and other important aspects of student life can become a juggling act.
• The greatest strength of online courses is that students can study around their own schedule. It is up to student to find time for their coursework and to make the most of it. When the student studies, they must avoid distractions, such as phone calls or television.

**Study Environment.**

• It is recommended that students should have a well-lit place to study that is free from. If the student can’t escape in-home interruptions, they can work on campus, at their local library or school or at some other convenient location of their choosing. Schedule a designated study time when and where there can be a distraction-free environment.

**Participation.**

• It is important that students take an active part in their online education. Just because the student cannot see the classmates or instructors face to face does not mean that they cannot interact them. Online courses are designed to include or allow for group discussions and online chats.

**Questions.**

• Students must not be afraid to ask questions. As an online student there are several ways to get the answers you are seeking. Students an always send a email message to the instructor for clarification, just be sure to ask early enough to get a response well before any pending deadlines or due dates. Students can also turn to their classmates for help by email or by posting questions in the discussion forum to gain other students’ knowledge and insights.
• It is also important for students to do their best to try and find answers for themselves, because they are bound to learn other answers in the process if possible.
Get out of it What you put in.

- The more effort the student puts forth in their online courses to comprehend the material the more likely they are to succeed after the course is finished. As usual, the more extra effort during the course, the more it will lead to a better, more lasting outcome and experience.
- Online courses have a lot to offer students who dedicate the time and focus to getting the most out of their courses.

Student Expectations

The American College of Commerce & Technology Moodle online environment is designed as a highly interactive, collaborative learning environment with small student to faculty ratios that require students to actively and effectively collaborate in class discussions and participate with respect and understanding for diverse points of view. Therefore, students are expected to:

- Acknowledge and demonstrate respect for the personal and professional growth of oneself and others in verbal and written interactions with faculty and student peers.
- Assess one's own and others' interpersonal strengths and weaknesses by constructively utilizing and providing feedback.
- Recognize one's own personal and professional values and the personal and professional values of others in the class.
- Demonstrate self-reliance and self-direction in setting and completing individual and group learning goals and objectives.
- Demonstrate respect for faculty, peers, and staff regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religious, moral, or political beliefs.
- Acknowledge that conflicts and the resolution of conflicts, between individuals and among groups, are integral to the collaborative online learning process, and demonstrate responsibility for resolving these conflicts while maintaining respect for all individuals involved.
- Accept responsibility for working collaboratively in the learning process and for the achievement of the learning outcomes linked to group performance.
- Maintain confidentiality and acknowledge individual privacy in the communication of personal or professional information about one's employer, other students, or their employers.
- Maintain the highest ethical standards in the preparation and submission of assignments. Intentionally using unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic assignment or representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in an academic exercise will follow the American College of Commerce & Technology Student Academic Misconduct / Disciplinary Procedures.
- Observe the American College of Commerce & Technology Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policies and avoid creating a hostile or offensive learning environment that hinders or interferes with any student or faculty member.
All participants are accountable for compliance with the American College of Commerce & Technology Online Expectations and Student Responsibilities. Actions, verbal statements, and written statements which threaten or violate the personal safety of any faculty, staff, or student, or any conduct which interferes with the educational process or institutional functions will be referred for appropriate action.

The American College of Commerce & Technology requires students to apply the APA writing style in all primary writing assignments. APA citation style refers to the rules and conventions established by the American Psychological Association for documenting sources used in a research paper. APA style requires both in-text citations and a reference list. For every in-text citation there should be a full citation in the reference list and vice versa.

When writing a research paper, APA style requires that citations are located both in the text of the body, as well as in a formal reference list section of the document. This article provides some general guidelines on how in-text citations should be formatted. For a more in-depth explanation, consult pages 169-179 of the Publication Manual.

For any in-text citation (in the body of the report) there should be an entry in the reference list, and the same goes for the reverse as well - any reference list entry should match an in-text citation. When using APA format follow the author-date method of in-text citation. This means that the author's last name and the year of publication for the source document should appear in the text like: Richards (2001). A more complete citation should appear in the reference list at the end of the paper.

**Writing Check Grammar & Sentences**

At the American College of Commerce & Technology students write documents that are going to be seen by others, and they are expected to check their writing to ensure that it makes sense grammatically. They may be composing an essay for their course, creating an article for a website or working on a business project. No matter the need, students are expected to use writing support tools or an editor to check their grammar and sentence structure so that they can present their writing in the best way possible.

Writing an essay is never a simple task. Every essay is written in a specific format, and there are different formats that can complicate the writing. Among the potential problem areas is sentence structure. Inaccurate or poorly written sentence structure not only distracts from the essay’s point, but it also displays amateur writing skills.
The Ready Student

Technical Issues

- Has access to an Internet connection. Having access to an Internet connection, preferably a high-speed connection is a key component support to learning online.
- Has access to a computer at home, school, library or work. An up-to-date computer will allow you to access course content, view multimedia files and engage in online forums and discussions with a minimum of problems or issues.
- Has current software. Viewing multimedia files is an important part of online learning. Computers that are too old or too slow may not have or run the appropriate software that allows key types of documents or files to be downloaded quickly or viewed at all. Other software such as Microsoft Word allows you to complete assignments and submit them online. Check your course syllabus for each class to see if any special software is required.

Materials

- Has required textbook(s) as required by the instructor. Most instructors have a textbook (or two) that they ask students to read, and will refer to throughout the course. Follow the syllabus and know what the requirements are. Whether some or all of the class is online, you must still keep up with the reading and assignment materials.
- Has updated software and hardware. Yes, this is already established in the "Technical Issues" above, but it may require repeating. Check your course syllabus for each class to see if any special software is required and if any special hardware is required, such as a headset with earphones and a microphone.

Study Environment

- Identifies a place that provides an environment conducive for studying. Find a place that is well lit, well ventilated, and is free from distractions. If this place is at your residence establish that you are studying, or taking an online class or test.
- Is prepared because procrastination will make things harder. Normally, some assignments may seem more difficult than others. If you have trouble, contact the instructor or your support group immediately, share your thoughts and devise a strategy for undertaking the assignment.

Organization

- Is organized as an important and key part of online learning. Planning and organizing leads to less stress and confusion especially when multiple assignments and projects are due. Follow the syllabus. Know the due dates. Break larger assignments into smaller pieces and complete them.
• Makes the appropriate time commitment and manages time wisely. A good rule of thumb is that a typical, 3-credit course should take approximately three hours of class time per week plus an additional six hours of study time per week. In other words, you should be dedicating about nine hours per week to each course. Your online courses are no different in this regard.

Support Network

• Establishes access to support group(s). There will be times when some tasks seem confusing. It is during these times that being able to talk with the instructor will help make things clearer. At other times having family, friends, or other students to talk things over with will help relieve stress or confusion.
• Knows how to get technical support at the American College of Commerce & Technology. Student Computing Help can be reached online or by phone, 703-942-6200.

Successful Student Learning

Online learning requires commitment from the student. The student must complete all work on time and stay current with assignments. This proposal will provide you with ideas that will help you succeed in the online environment.

• Be open-minded and share experiences during learning process. The online environment should be a place where students are free to express themselves. The student has time to think carefully about what they want to say before sharing.
• Communicate through your writing. Most communication is written, so it is very important that students are able to express themselves and their thoughts in a written format.
• Be disciplined and self-motivated. Students are responsible and committed to keep up with the course workload. The instructor will not always be able to tell if the student is having trouble if assignments are not completed on time.
• Meet all time commitments and requirements for the course. On average, many students feel that online courses require more time and commitment than traditional learning environments. For some students this is very true.
• Use critical thinking and decision making in your learning process. Students must be able to receive information and carefully consider all solutions or other alternatives before responding.
• Think through ideas before responding. Your responses are vital to the learning efforts of the group as a whole. The input you carefully consider before responding will enlighten and enhance the learning environment for everyone.
• Understand that high quality learning can take place in an online environment. Your input and participation are the keys to success. An online learner is expected to use technology correctly and communicate effectively in writing.
• Set aside a place that provides a conducive study environment. Find a place that is well lit, well ventilated and a minimum number of distractions.

Advantages of Online Learning

• Flexibility. Online students are able to learn and study at their own pace. Students have freedom work on their schedule.
• Interaction. Team learning is encouraged because online learning focuses on learner-centered instruction. Discussion forums and the sharing of diverse materials increase student inaction in the course.
• Technology. Online learning teaches technology skills that will help students excel in the workforce.
• Team Learning. Online learning facilitates team learning where individuals can work together online to complete activities.

Challenges to Online Learning

• Isolation. An online environment can sometimes feel more isolated than the traditional classroom setting. Students taking online courses do not always receive the same kind of social interaction that students would receive in a traditional classroom.
• Support. Sometimes, instructors cannot provide the instantaneous feedback online that they could give in the classroom. It may be up to the student to take a more active role in seeking feedback from the instructor and fellow students in an online class. Also, students may encounter technical issues during the course, so it is important to contact student support for help when these situations arise.
• Technology Requirements. Students must have access and knowledge of certain technology. Your computer system must have meet minimum standards and have a high speed internet connection.
• Different facilities. An online learner will not necessarily receive the same facilities as a student on a traditional campus, though an online equivalent may exist (e.g., online library course reserves).

Student Netiquette Sensitivity and Respect

• Always Remember: We are human beings and computers have given many of us the impression that we are writing to a machine rather than to another person. We are using the computer as a tool just as we use the telephone to communicate and interact with others and their varying human behaviors.

Received Communications

• Pardon the inaccuracies of others and possibly reveal something better. It is also possible that a “yes” in the minds of some may mean “no” to others do to diversity, different cultures and globalization. Listen well “through the eye” rather than only “with the eye”.
• Most people have said something that they regret, or sent email message that could have been written better. Bottom line, be willing to apologize, accept apologies and move on. Notwithstanding, always respect the privacy of others.

Sending Communications

• Accept and practice the standards of good behavior: Be polite, sincere, and respectful and avoid gossip online. Share expert knowledge and help others understand the assignment and learn the content.
• Present yourself well online. Check spelling, re-read for grammatical errors and organize communications for easy responses. Avoid angry, hostile and abusive electronic communications, and project an image of a good person. Anyone can try to move other participants away from inappropriate comments.

Composing Email

• Think about using humor carefully. It is important to understand what seems funny to you may not seem funny to others. Jokes and sarcasm can be offensive, and witticisms can be flat. Be sensitivity to diversity, different cultures and globalization.
• Be sure to identify yourself and focus your wording according to the audience or participates. Write short paragraphs they are more readable and avoid the problem of too much text on the screen. Shorter lines are easier to read on the device screen. For example: consider a newspaper or magazine column.

Organizing Communications or Email

• Provide headings or titles to help the reader relate to and preview specific information regarding what you are communicating or discussing in a way that will support participant comprehension and memory. For example: “Let’s Study for Comprehensive Quiz Regarding Chapters 1 and 2” is much more informative than “Let’s Study for Quiz.”
• Separate your paragraphs with blank lines, make questions clear and avoid the condition of writing a statement instead of the actual question. In other words, be sure to ask the question you mean to ask in as specific, concrete terms as possible.
• Use only upper and lower case and remember, the use of “ALL CAPS” if not an acronym, could imply screaming – a practice and experience you don’t want to have. Consider the opportunity of sending your message to yourself to see what others before you send it to them.

Continuing Email Conversations

Respond to email received within a reasonable time frame which is considered based upon the recipient’s expectations and the subject being discussed. Also consider whether it is important to trim old messages at the bottom of an email so as to keep your message size from getting too large and to keep your messages looking clean.
It Happens Online!

American College of Commerce & Technology
Call: 703-942-6200 -- Inquire, Register or Enroll

Welcome!