

ONLINE STUDENT HANDBOOK

The Online Student Handbook was created as a support guide for potential and current online students at Brazosport College.

*Brazosport College
Online Student
Support Guide*

If you were given this hand book in hard copy, you can access an electronic copy from the following URL: <http://oakleaf.brazosport.edu/bcdl/onlinestudenthandbook.pdf>

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Mission

In support of the College's Mission, the Distance Learning and Online Instruction Department promotes and supports online learning to ensure instructional success through the design, development, implementation and assessment of quality online courses, student support services, and resources in a data driven, collaborative, and diverse virtual community.

About Distance Learning at Brazosport



Distance Learning at Brazosport College offers educational opportunities for those in need of flexible hours and convenient access to a wide range of quality courses from the comfort of their own home. With availability to online support services and resources with a click of a button, our Virtual Campus provides an excellent opportunity to achieve your educational and career goals online.

Online Student Privacy Statement

Brazosport College complies with all of the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). We are committed to protecting the privacy of a student's educational record regardless of delivery method. The Registrar is the point of contact for all FERPA related issues, and all employees are informed and trained of their responsibilities of unauthorized release of confidential records or information during mandatory FERPA training offered during Convocation, Community Education Training, and the Adjunct Academy. Because an online environment creates a record of student activity, it is subject to FERPA privacy rights, unlike verbal exchanges in a physical classroom.

Identity Verification in Distance Learning Courses

The identity verification process for online courses protects student's privacy through the use of a secure portal, with a secure login and student-selected password.

Faculty Responsibility

Faculty and staff understand and carry out a commitment to confidentiality, integrity, and security to protect the privacy of students who participate in distance learning activities. Students' records are kept private by the instructor, except in cases where academic staff or administration access the course, with legitimate educational interest under FERPA guidelines and FJ-R (LOCAL) policy pertaining to Student Records.

Student Responsibility

In order to maintain confidentiality, portal login passwords is generated by the student and any password reset is completed through BC Password Reset. It is the student's responsibility to keep their password confidential. See the Student Account Security Agreement.

Only work submitted to open forums, like discussion boards, can be accessed by other students; other assignments, grades and correspondence are not viewable by other students.

The above is not an exhaustive list of Academic policies, for complete listings consult the Course Catalog & Schedule and online Board Policy Manual.



The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) updates copyright law for the digital environment. **All information posted** on the Virtual Campus is copyrighted under this and previous copyright law. No material can be used or distributed without permission from Brazosport College.

Alternative legal sources are available for use by faculty and students including books, music, and movies.

Additional information on plagiarism and copyright for students can be found on the Center for Online Education website. Additional resources can be found: Ultimate Guide to Copyright, Differences between Copyright Infringement & Plagiarism, and the Brazosport Copyright website.

Course Types

- **Total Online** courses are those with no face to face contact, yet may require proctoring.
- **Hybrid** courses are those with some face to face contact.
- **Supplemental** courses are those with 100% face to face contact. Typically, students meet on campus and access resource materials online.

Terms & Definitions

The following terms and definitions may be used either by your instructor in directions or referenced in various tools you will use when working your online course.

Online Academic Term

Follows the same schedule as on-campus semester terms:

- Fall Semester (15 weeks)
- Winter Mini-mester (3 weeks)
- Spring Semester (15 weeks)
- May Intersession (3 weeks)
- First Summer Term (6 weeks)
- Second Summer Term (6 weeks)
- Eleven Week Summer Term

Attachment

A file (image, document, presentation, etc.) which is "attached" as part of an Email message or Discussion posting.



Brightspace (formally known as Desire2Learn)

The name of the provider of our learning management system (LMS) which is used to run our online courses.

Browser



Software that allows you to retrieve, and search through pages on the Internet. There are several types of browsers available which you can use to access your course. The most highly used are Firefox, Internet Explorer, Chrome, and Safari.

Discussions

A tool in your online course used to interact/communicate with your instructor and other students.

Downloading or Download

The action of getting a file from your online course down to your computer.



Dropbox

A tool in your online course used for submitting assignments to the instructor.



Email

A tool in your online course used to interact/communicate with others in the course. Your course email tool is different than regular email in that messages are kept inside your course. TIP: you can choose to forward your email to an outside email address via the Email Settings in your course. Keep in mind you must log back into the course to reply to email message.

External Link

A link when clicked opens in a new tab or browser window to some other location OUTSIDE of the course. External links require you to CLOSE the window or tab to return back to your original location.

File

"Something" created by a software program like Microsoft Office such as a document, presentation, or spreadsheet.

File Name

A title or name given to a file to distinguish it from other files. File names SHOULD NOT contain spaces or grammatical syntax such as &, %, \$, #.

TIP: Create file names that are short and concise such as: homework1

Forum

Discussion section in your course containing discussion topics based on course content. For example, the instructor may create a Forum called Trees which lists several topics for discussion based on tree types like Sycamore, Pine, and Apple.

Internal Link

A link when clicked takes you to another area INSIDE the course.

Learning Management System (LMS)



A software application which provides an instructor with a way to create and deliver content, monitors student participation, and assess student performance.

Media Player

A program which allows you to play and manage audio and video files. For example: Windows Media Player or Quicktime Player.

Online Courses

Courses which are available online. Online course can be offered as total online, hybrid or supplemental.

Uploading

The process of moving files from your computer to your online course.



Virtual Campus

The portal or access point in which students and faculty log into their online courses.

Virtual College of Texas (VCT)

The Virtual College of Texas is a collaborative of Texas community and technical colleges which you can use to take online courses not offered at Brazosport College.

Are you Ready?

The online learning environment is very different from the classroom. More information is text based and depending on the type of course you take (total, hybrid, or supplemental) you may have very little in person contact with the instructor and fellow students. You will need to be good at managing your time, understanding what motivates you to learn, and being persistent in your determination to succeed.

“VARK is a questionnaire that helps your learning by suggesting the strategies you should be using.”

To help better understand yourself, how you think about how you learn, and how to use strategies to help your own learning take the [VARK Questionnaire](#). VARK is a 16 question test that provides you with a profile of your learning preferences and strategies that can help improve your learning. It is not a tool to keep you from taking an online course, but rather a guide to help you improve your ability to learn online.

Student Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Can anyone take a distance learning class?

Yes, anyone who is eligible to take regular courses on campus may enroll in distance learning courses. Just keep in mind that online courses are not easier than regular campus classes. They often require much more time and discipline to succeed.



Will I be required to attend class meetings on campus?

This is determined by the class type as well as by the instructor. Typically total online classes are taught 100% online, meaning there would be no campus meetings, although some may require a web-based meeting using one of the online course tools. On the other hand Hybrid (more than 50% of the course is taught online) and Supplemental (regular on-campus class with an online component) courses do have campus meeting times.

Instructors teaching online courses or who have an online component should provide you with a syllabus online (within the Virtual Campus) or in-class. The syllabus will include the course requirements and information about any on-campus sessions you will be expected to attend.

Can I earn a degree totally online?

Yes. Brazosport offers the Associate of Arts Degree fully online. Refer to the Course Catalog, under [Associate of Arts Online](#) for additional information and accessing the Degree Plan.

How do students register for an online course?

Students register for a distance learning course in the same way that they register for any other on-campus class. Student must apply to the college, take any required placement test, meet with an advisor as necessary, and register for classes. For more information about the admission and registration process visit Brazosport College's Steps to Enrollment webpage: <http://www.brazosport.edu/students/future-students/admissions/enrollment/>

How much do online classes cost?

Students enrolling in distance courses will be assessed a charge of \$40.00 per course in addition to normal tuition and fees. Students enrolling in Virtual College of Texas (VCT) courses will be assessed a charge of \$45.00.

Can I take both online and regular on-campus classes?

Yes, you can take a mixture of online, hybrid, and on-campus classes.

Are online classes more difficult than on-campus classes?

Online classes have the same objectives, readings, and assessments as an on-campus class. Yet, since they are online they often require more self-discipline and management to succeed in them.

How are quizzes typically done online?

This really depends on the instructor. Some may require proctoring where you make arrangements with a proctor location (at your host campus, library or other qualified area) in which you go and take the exam. Other instructors offer their assessments completely online. Check the course syllabus or ask your instructor to confirm their testing procedures.

Can I use campus resources even if I take only online classes?

Yes, all Brazosport College resources are available. We even have resources that are accessible completely online so there is no need to come on-campus such as online tutoring, counseling, librarian, technical support and even financial aid.



What software and hardware do I need to take an online course?

We do suggest some minimum technical requirements. These requirements often go through changes based on necessary technical upgrades, but at the time of this writing requirements are:

- **Operating System:** Windows 7, Mac OSX v10.7
- **Video:** Minimum resolution of 1024x600
- **Internet Speed:** 1.5Mbps or higher
- **Java Runtime Environment (JRE):** JRE 1.6x
- **Javascript:** enabled
- **Cookies:** enabled
- **Browser:** Firefox (latest), Internet Explorer 10 +, Chrome (latest), Safari (latest)
- **Adobe Flash Player:** 10.1 or greater to use some media features



* Visit <http://www.brazosport.edu/dl>, under **Manuals & Tutorials for the most recent** updated browser requirements. Run a **System Check** prior to working in the **Virtual Campus**.

I don't have a computer at home, so can I still take an online class?

Yes, just make sure you have regular access to a computer that meets the minimum requirements as listed above. Many students either use their work computer or a computer in a library on or off-campus. Keep in mind though many work computers have firewall protection which can prohibit certain uses that make accessing and working in the course difficult.

Will I have to be online at a particular time?

Although most online classes do not take attendance, they may require you to submit certain assignments and tests based on a schedule. In addition, some instructor may even include live, real time online lectures in which you must attend on a certain date and time. Contact your instructor for confirmation on specific course requirements.

Will I have to buy books for the online course?

Most likely you will need to either rent or purchase a book or book code. Your instructor will give you information about text materials you will need for the course. The bookstore also has information on required and suggested texts from your instructor. You can order books directly online by visiting the bookstore website: <http://www.brazosport.edu/bookstore>

What if I have trouble in the course?

If you have academic trouble with the course contact your instructor immediately via the course email or phone (instructor contact information is located in the course syllabus). If you are experiencing technical issues contact the Brazosport Helpdesk (txt chat: <http://www.brazosport.edu/IT> | phone: 979-230-3266 | email: helpdesk.brazosport.edu)

What about protecting my privacy as a student taking distance learning courses?

Student privacy of Brazosport College students is protected by written policies as well as IT and physical security policies, procedures and systems. The written policies specify and require



adherence to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and applicable state laws. These policies are published in the Course Catalog.

In addition, information technology is a very important factor in protecting student privacy so the Information Technology department uses a number of tools and processes for protecting student data such as Firewalls and anti-malware software, Secure Data Centers for protection of all campus data, and conducting security audits to test for vulnerabilities to the system.

Is there somewhere I can go if I have a complaint?

Yes, you can submit a Student Complaint & Grievance form. Information submitted will be used in efforts to resolve your complaint. Other reports such as threats, violations, and academic problems can be found on the Student Services website under eReports.

Resources and Support

Technical Support (Helpdesk)

Contact the Helpdesk if you are experiencing technical issues with login or working in your online course.



Phone: 979-230-3266

Chat: available via the Information Technology webpage at <http://brazosport.edu/IT>

Email: helpdesk@brazosport.edu

Location: BC Main Campus, K-100

Webpage: <http://brazosport.edu/IT>

Distance Learning

Phone: 979-230-3438

Location: A.200

Support: <http://brazosport.edu/dl/>

Learning Services

Learning Services offers access to a computer lab, provides technical support, proctor testing, and rooms for group work or meetings.

Phone: 979-230-3253

Location: F-126

Chat: available via the Learning Services webpage at <http://brazosport.edu/students/for-students/places-services/learning-services/>

Advising, Counseling & Tutoring



Online Advisors & Tutors

If you require *ONLINE* help with deciding what course to take, carrier path to follow or need assistance with an assignment contact our online Advisors and Tutors.

E-Counselor

Text chat is available via the E-Counseling webpage at <http://brazosport.edu/students/for-students/counseling-testing/e-counseling/> or you can contact them via email: ecounselor@brazosport.edu.

eTutors

*e-Tutoring online services are designed to provide you with the opportunity to meet with a tutor from anywhere that has internet access. Choose from visiting with a **Writing** or **Math** tutor. Each tutor type has a unique email, so pick the correct tutor to fit your needs.*

Online Tutoring

- [Create an Online MATH Tutoring Appointment](#)
- **Help Guide:** [Create a MATH Appointment](#)
- [Schedule an Online WRITING Tutoring Appointment](#)

When booking an online WRITING appointment, select “ONLINE WRITING TUTORING” as your “Reason.” Also, be sure to choose a 55 minute appointment so we are sure to have enough time to handle any glitches and help with your writing concerns.

On-Campus Counselors & Tutors

If you need face-to-face counseling, advising or tutoring contact our Counselors and Tutors for an on-site appointment.

Counselors

Hours of operation: *Monday-Thursday 8:00AM - 5:30PM and Friday 9:00AM to 12:00PM.*

Phone: 979-230-3237

Location: E-Wing

Counseling & Testing Website: <http://brazosport.edu/students/for-students/counseling-testing/>

Tutors

Hours of operation: *Monday-Thursday 9:00AM to 8:00PM and Friday 9:00AM-12:00PM*

Phone: 979-230-2460

Email: writingcenter@brazosport.edu

Location: E-200

Student Success Center Website: <http://brazosport.edu/students/for-students/student-success-center/>

Brazosport College Library

Chat live with a Librarian via the Library webpage: <http://brazosport.edu/students/for-students/places-services/library/>

Email: refdesk@brazosport.edu

Text a question: 66746, type BCL, and then type your question.

Phone: 979-230-3406

Location: E-140

Additional Academic and Student Support Services available either online or on-site:

Academic Calendar: <http://brazosport.edu/about-bc/events/>

Student Guide & Calendar: <http://brazosport.edu/Guide/>

Admissions & Records: <http://brazosport.edu/students/future-students/admissions/>

Steps for Enrollment: <http://brazosport.edu/students/future-students/admissions/how-to-enroll-using-mybc/>

Student Rights: <http://brazosport.edu/students/for-students/student-services/student-rights/>

Bookstore: <http://brazosport.edu/bookstore/home.html>

College Catalog & Schedule: <http://brazosport.edu/students/for-students/catalog-schedule/>

Faculty & Staff Directory: <http://brazosport.edu/faculty-and-staff/resources/staff-directory/>

Financial Aid: <http://brazosport.edu/students/paying-for-college/financial-aid/>

Financial Aid FAQ's (videos): <http://brazosport.financialaidtv.com>

Campus Safety: <http://brazosport.edu/faculty-and-staff/resources/campus-safety/>

Tips for Being a Successful Student

Prepare for Online Learning

As mentioned earlier, student success takes motivation, discipline, and communication. This is true no matter how you are taking a course, whether it is in a traditional classroom or on the Internet. Yet, taking a course on the Internet involves a brand new set of skills and knowledge you may not have experienced. Knowing what to expect as a student in this type of environment can lead to greater success in online courses.

To help you prepare for the challenges, take some time to go through the [VARK Questionnaire](#).

Set Your Browser for Success

If you have any questions or experience technical issues you can always call the Helpdesk at 979-230-3266 or send an email to helpdesk@brazosport.edu.

Before you enter your course for the first time make sure to do a [Computer System Check](#) to verify your browser is supported and set properly for working in Desire2Learn. This check system should indicate if you need to enable Java, Cookies or update your browser.

Make sure to have more than one browser installed on your computer such as Firefox and Internet Explorer. Often times if something is not working correctly in one, such as Internet Explorer, using a different browser, such as Firefox will fix it.

Enabling Java & Cookies:



- **ENABLE Java:** <http://www.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?answer=23852>
- **ENABLE Cookies:**
<http://www.google.com/support/accounts/bin/answer.py?&answer=61416>

Make sure you are using Recommended Software:

To help prevent problems with opening files in your course it is recommended you use **Microsoft Office** (2007/2010).

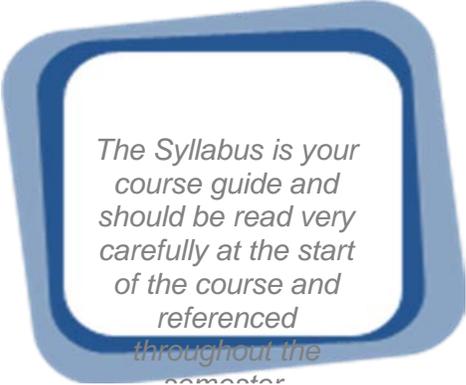
It is also recommended you have the most Updated Versions of the following:

- Java: <http://www.java.com/en/download/index.jsp>
- Adobe Reader: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>
- Adobe Flash Player: <http://www.adobe.com/go/getflashplayer>
- Adobe Shockwave: <http://www.adobe.com/go/getshockwave>

Read the Course Syllabus

The Syllabus is your course guide and should be read very carefully at the start of the course and referenced throughout the semester. It describes what is expected from you and what you should expect from the instructor. It also provides important course information about:

- navigation
- first weeks activities
- course topics
- assignment and quiz dates
- participation and submission polices
- required texts and materials
- response time lines
- grading schemes and evaluation criteria



The Syllabus is your course guide and should be read very carefully at the start of the course and referenced throughout the semester.

Know Where to get Help

There are a variety of resources available to not only help you work with course tools in the Virtual Campus, but also to be a successful student online. Make sure to visit the Resources section in this guide for both online and on-campus academic service contact information and location.

Don't Wait and Act Quickly

If you are experiencing any difficulty with finding a course area, accessing a file, submitting a quiz, understanding an assignment or lecture **ask for help**. What may take your hours to work out may take the Help Desk or your instructor minutes, saving you precious time and stress.

So, don't wait and act quickly! The sooner you ask for help the greater chance there is for successfully finding the correct information and continuing on in your course. It is a win, win situation!



Manage Your Time

Managing your time can be done successfully by taking control over the amount of time you spend on specific activities. To help manage your time use the course Syllabus, your online course Calendar, and the Checklist (*if used by the instructor*) as well as:

Create a Routine Study Schedule

Develop and plan for a dedicated block of study time for each day during the week. Keep in mind times in which you are most productive, such as early morning or late evening.

Find a Study Space

Locate an area in your home that is free from distractions in which you can concentrate and focus your attention on the work at hand. The local library may be an alternation study space.

Weekly Review

Once a week review and update your assignments and calendar. Increase the number of reviews per week the closer you get to an assignment deadline and exam date.

Prioritize your assignments

When studying focus on the more difficult assignment/project first. You will be fresh and more alert.

Get Something Done

If you are having problems writing a paper or beginning a project just roughly draft out your ideas, the assignment details will come to you later during your weekly review.

When studying focus on the more difficult assignment/project first. You will be fresh and more alert.

Identify Resources to help you

Use our campus online counselors, your instructor, a friend, search the Internet or go to the library to save you time, energy and solve problems.

Skills Needed for Distance Learning

The following is a suggested list of basic skills you should have when taking an online course.

Computer Skills

- cut/copy and paste within and between documents
- use spell check
- attach a document to an email message
- paste text from your word processor into an email message
- print documents
- run two or more programs at once and move between them
- open and close documents and folders



- find files that you create on your computer
- send and receive email

Internet Skills

- open an attachment in discussions or an email
- find a web page using an web address or URL
- follow links from one web page to another
- print a web page
- book mark web pages to access later
- use a search engine (google, yahoo, bing, etc.)
- download and upload documents from and to your course



Find **manuals and videos** on how to work with course tools by going to the Distance Learning webpage at <http://brazosport.edu/dl/> or RSVP for the **Orientation to Online Course Tools** which is provided on campus or totally online:

<http://secure.iotform.us/mcconnel/rsvpvirtualtour>

Accessing the Virtual Campus

The Virtual Campus is the portal in which provides you access to your online courses. To access the Virtual Campus go to <https://online.brazosport.edu>.

Before you log in verify your computer is properly for working in your online course:

<https://online.brazosport.edu/d2l/systemCheck>



To login you will need to enter your Brazosport username and password (bc+your Personal Identification Number or PIN).

If you forgot your password you will need to register for the password assistant:

<https://password.brazosport.edu/pwdreset/login.asp>

If you are experiencing problems with login or have technical issues contact the Helpdesk:

- Text chat with the helpdesk
- Email: helpdesk.brazosport.edu
- Call: 979-230-3266



If you are experiencing problems with login or have technical issues contact the Helpdesk.



Associate of Arts Online

In order to be awarded the Associate of Arts degree at Brazosport College, a student must successfully complete a minimum of 60 semester hours including:

- All of the general graduation requirements that are listed under [Graduation Requirements](#), of this catalog
- [General Education Core Curriculum](#)
- 2 semester hours of science labs corresponding to Core science course selections
- At least 16 semester hours of academic electives

The following is a program of study to complete the requirements for an Associate of Arts degree online in two years. Please note that the courses listed are restricted to those available online. Some degree requirements may also be satisfied by on campus coursework, listed in the [Associate of Arts](#) degree plan. Other academic courses may be available online through the [Virtual College of Texas](#). Please contact Linda McConnell, Director of Distance Learning at 979-230-3368 for further information.

The Associate of Arts degree (AA) is a general education degree with an emphasis on the core academic requirements. The degree does not allow enough hours of concentration in a single discipline for students to declare a major; however, a series of suggested courses of study are listed so that students planning to transfer into four-year academic programs at other Texas institutions may receive the maximum number of transfer credit hours toward a planned baccalaureate major. Students are advised to check with Brazosport College counselors and faculty and with their transfer institution for additional counseling in choosing appropriate electives. Courses listed in the degree plan below are identified as meeting either a core curriculum or general degree requirement. Please note that international students (F-1 students) must enroll and maintain 12 credit hours to be in status and only 3 credits of the 12 can be taken online a semester.

Continue to next page for specific course list.



Freshman Year

First Semester

- ENGL 1301 - Composition and Rhetoric I **Credit Hours: 3**
- PSYC 1300 - Learning Framework **Credit Hours: 3**
- Creative Arts: Choose from ARTS 1301 OR MUSI 1306. **Credit Hours: 3**
- HIST 1301 - United States History to 1877 **Credit Hours: 3**
- Academic Elective: Choose from any online academic course. **Credit Hours: 3**

Second Semester

- ENGL 1302 - Composition and Rhetoric II **Credit Hours: 3**
- Social/Behavioral Science: Choose from PSYC 2301, PSYC 2314, SOCI 1301, OR GEOG 1303. **Credit Hours: 3**
- HIST 1302 - United States History from 1877 to Present **Credit Hours: 3**
- SPCH 1318 - Interpersonal and Small Group Communication **Credit Hours: 3**
- Academic Elective: Choose from any online academic course. **Credit Hours: 3**

Sophomore Year

Third Semester

- GOVT 2305 - Federal Government **Credit Hours: 3**
- ENVR 1301 - Environmental Science I **Credit Hours: 3**
- ENVR 1101 - Environmental Science I Laboratory **Credit Hours: 1**
- HUMA 1301 - Introduction to Humanities **Credit Hours: 3**
- College Level Mathematics: Choose from MATH 1314 OR MATH 1342. **Credit Hours: 3**

Fourth Semester

- GOVT 2306 - Texas Government **Credit Hours: 3**
- ENVR 1102 - Environmental Science II Laboratory **Credit Hours: 1**
- ENVR 1302 - Environmental Science II **Credit Hours: 3**
- Academic Elective: Choose from any online academic course. **Credit Hours: 3**
- Academic Elective: Choose from any online academic course. **Credit Hours: 3**
- Academic Elective: Choose from any online academic course. **Credit Hours: 4**

