How to Be a Successful Online Learner

Whether they are synchronous or asynchronous, online courses are a convenient way to earn a degree or certificate. However, having more freedom and flexibility with the course format also means assuming more responsibility. This handout will provide tips for being successful while taking online courses and will include the following topics:

Familiarize Yourself with Canvas

Stay Engaged with Your Class

Create a Study Space

Discover How You Learn Best

Organize and Plan Your Schedule

Communicate with Your Instructor

Participate in Discussions and Group Assignments

Build a Network

Use Available Student Resources

Stay Motivated

Canvas: Frequently Asked Questions

Google Docs and Canvas: Frequently Asked Questions

Google Suite Tutorials

Zoom Tutorials

Familiarize Yourself with Canvas

All Germanna courses use the Canvas learning management system to deliver online instruction to students. The following terms will appear on the Canvas Global Navigation Menu, which is the navigation panel that appears whe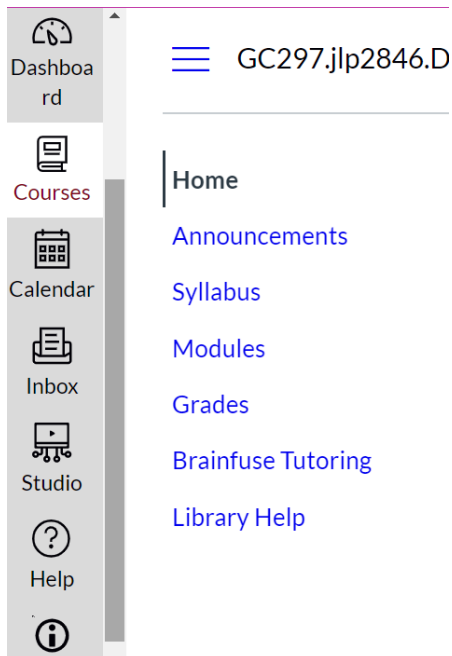n you log into Canvas, or within your online course. Direct links to Canvas tutorials are listed at the end of this handout.
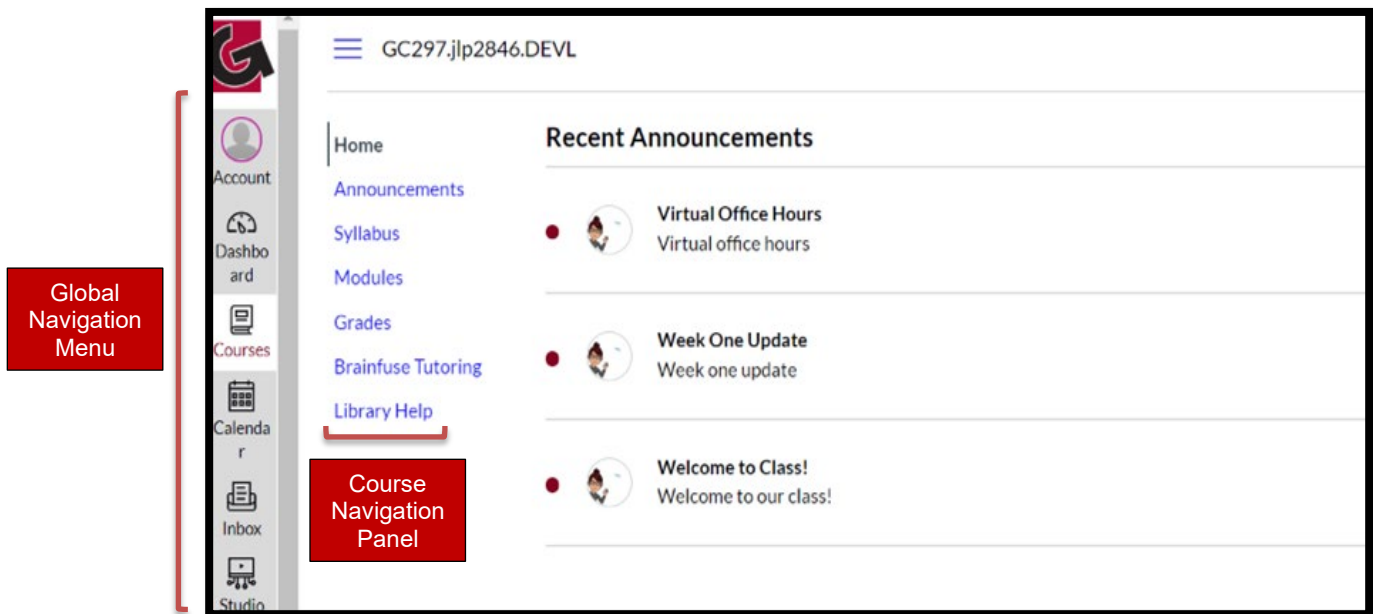
Dashboard: Your Canvas Dashboard will list tiles for all the classes you are enrolled in at Germanna. To enter a specific course, click on the corresponding tile.

Syllabus: The syllabus is the course schedule. All coursework and assignment due dates will be listed on the syllabus. It will also contain contact information for your instructor, as well as office hours and the course objectives.

Announcements: One mode of communication instructors will use is announcements. These will appear on the homepage of the course's Canvas shell and will provide information for the entire class.

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Dashboard	
Courses	Home
Calendar	Announcements
Inbox	Syllabus
Studio	Modules
Help	Grades
	Brainfuse Tutoring
	Library Help

Modules: Modules are the primary way instructors will organize course content and instruction. Modules may be organized by weeks, units, or topics. They will include various modes of instruction, including videos, discussions, quizzes, assignments, and readings.

Grades: You can review your grades at any time by clicking on the "Grades" link within a Canvas course shell. You can even view potential grades based on "What-if" scores to see how upcoming assignments will affect your current grade.

Calendar: The Calendar in Canvas will include assignment due dates for all your classes. Each one will be color coded, so you will know for which class the assignment is due. In addition, some instructors may post office hours on the Calendar, allowing you to be able to sign up for meetings with them in one convenient place.

Studio: Some instructors may assign a presentation video. Videos can be created and saved within Studio. The videos can be made with a webcam, or if a visual element is required, the video can be made with screen capture.

Inbox: All course communication with instructors should take place within the Inbox. This feature provides easy access to email communication with both instructors and other students in your class.

Groups: Some of your instructors may assign students into smaller, collaborative groups. When this occurs, Canvas will add "Groups" to the Global Navigation Menu to provide you quick access to all group assignments in one place. Furthermore, you will be able to participate with specific groups from within the course's Canvas shell.

Collaborations: If enabled by your instructor, Collaborations is a tool that allows students to work on a project together using the Google Suite or Microsoft 365. A link to Collaborations will appear within the Course Navigation or within Groups in the course's Canvas shell.

Stay Engaged with Your Class

When taking an online course, it is important to stay connected with your class. There are two ways you can do this. It is recommended that you log into the course each day. You can also download the Canvas Student App to your mobile device. The application will send you alerts about course announcements, updates, and emails in real-time.

Create a Study Space

Selecting a dedicated space in which to complete coursework will help you establish a routine and stay organized. The room should house all your course material, such as books, folders, files, etc., for easy access. It is recommended that the study space has access to the internet.

The environment should also be free of distractions. Consider turning off your cell phone during study sessions or dedicated class times. This will eliminate the temptation to check notifications and messages as you study. It is also possible to install a website blocker on your computer or laptop if you find that you cannot resist web surfing during dedicated study time.

Discover How You Learn Best

Once you know where you will study, you will need to decide how you will study. Each person learns differently, so you will want to figure out how you learn best. For instance, if you are a morning person, scheduling your study time in the morning may be a good idea. If you are a night-owl, scheduling your study time at night may be best for you.

It would also be beneficial for you to know what type of learner you are, so you can study more effectively. For example, if you are an auditory learner, listening to lecture videos more than once may be useful. If you are a kinesthetic learner, printing out readings and annotating them

on paper may help you understand the material faster and more thoroughly than reading on a computer screen.

Organize and Plan Your Schedule

It is important to utilize time management strategies when enrolled in online courses. Taking classes online requires independence; do not expect an instructor to remind you when assignments are due. The following tips and tools will help you stay organized:

- Refer to the Canvas Calendar each day. Remember, it will include due dates for your upcoming assignments for all your classes.

- If you prefer to use a paper calendar, refer to the Academic Center for Excellence's "Student Schedule Worksheet" for both weekly and/or daily planning calendars. This may help you organize how much time you spend for each class per week.

- Dedicate a specific amount of time to your course. Many students find that if they designate a specific day and time to complete coursework, it is easier to stay on top of assignments.

- Spend approximately 5 to 10 hours per week on each course.

- Do not procrastinate. Some assignments require more time than others. You will want to give yourself an adequate amount of time to complete assignment before the due date. For example, writing assignments will need to be brainstormed, outlined, drafted, revised, and if needed, the topic will need to be researched. These steps should not be completed the day before the assignment is due. It is important that you look ahead and plan when you will work on assignments.

- Try not to fall behind in the course because it can be difficult to catch up. There will be times when unplanned events happen that get in the way of you being able to turn in an assignment on time. When this occurs, communicate with your instructor as early as possible.

Communicate with Your Instructor

Your instructors will not know that you have questions unless you communicate with them. It is important to reach out to them for clarification regarding assignments and course material; however, almost all communication with your instructor will be written. Ensure that you review what you have written carefully before you send it to your instructor.

Another mode of communication with your instructor is through Zoom video conferencing. Your instructor may use Zoom for class lectures and office hours. All Germanna students have access to Zoom and can access it through myGCC. For more information on how to use Zoom, watch this Zoom Conferencing Tutorial or reference the Academic Center for Excellence's Technology Resources for Students webpage. A full list of all the Zoom tutorials will be listed at the end of this handout.

Participate in Discussions and Group Assignments

Because you won't be sitting in a classroom, participation in your online class is very important. Your instructor may assign students into smaller groups and/or discussions to invite participation. For all assignments, make sure to read the instructor's guidelines and rubrics, so you know what is expected of you. Often, the discussions will require you to do some reading and critical thinking before responding to your classmates' posts. In addition, be polite and respectful. You may not see the other students in the course, but they are learning as well. It is important to maintain a positive online environment. Finally, don't expect immediate responses. Because schedules vary, other students may not respond immediately to you.

Build a Network

Although your class is online, you are not alone. Introduce yourself and engage with your classmates. Don't be afraid to ask them questions or to answer their questions to the best of your ability in discussions. Create virtual study groups using Zoom to study for exams or create peer-review groups for upcoming writing assignments. Your fellow students are your greatest resource, and you are theirs.

Use All Available Student Resources

When enrolled in online classes, students may not physically walk by student service offices on campus. As a result, it is important to become familiar with the resources that are available to students. Take the time to click on the link to "GCC Policies and Student Resources" in each Canvas course shell, and research them further on the Germanna website as well. An important part of your education is learning how to use library resources, being involved in student activities, and getting to know your instructors. However, there are many other student support services on campus, and Germanna advisors and counselors can connect you to them. The Academic Center for Excellence is here to help you gain a better understanding of difficult course concepts; we can review your writing assignments with you, or we can answer any questions you might have regarding instructional technology. The following academic resources are available to you from the Academic Center for Excellence:

- Tutoring Appointments are a fantastic way to work through course content with another person. Germanna's Academic Center for Excellence provides tutoring for all credit courses taught at the college.

- The Math Center is where you can go for immediate answers to math questions. No appointment is required.

- The Writing Center will assist you with writing assignments from across the curriculum. No appointment is required, and we welcome any writing concerns you may have.

- Helpful Handouts are guides that supplement academic content taught in Germanna classes.

- Video tutorials may be helpful if you are a visual or auditory learner to master key topics.

- Interactive, online modules are a great way to ensure understanding of the academic content if you need to practice what you learned.

- Academic Links lead to reputable websites with valuable information that will supplement content taught in Germanna classes.

- [Focused study sessions](#) are also provided by ACE to help students in the same course work together to understand the academic content.

Stay Motivated

When taking online courses, self-motivation is key. The following strategies will help you stay on task:

- Remember Why You Are in School: You enrolled in classes for a reason, whether it was for a credential, a better job, or intellectual curiosity. Thinking about your personal goals will help you stay on track. It may even be helpful for you to visit [Germanna's Career and Transfer Center](#) to stay focused on your career goals.

- Create a Realistic Schedule: Online classes are great, especially if you need flexibility due to other obligations, such as work and family responsibilities. It is important that the study schedule you create is realistic.

- Be Introspective: The more you do something, the better you get. If this is the first time you have taken an online class, it will take a few weeks to become confident. Learn from your mistakes and discover what works for you.

- Reward Yourself: When you finish a project or accomplish a goal, reward yourself! It is always important to acknowledge your accomplishments.

Watch this [Navigating Online Learning](#) video to listen to how one Germanna student stayed motivated while taking online classes.

Canvas: Frequently Asked Questions

Navigating a Canvas Course

[How do I view my grades in a current course?](#)

[How do I use the Syllabus as a student?](#)

[How do I use the Course Home Page as a student?](#)

[How do I view Announcements as a student?](#)

[How do I reply to an announcement as a student?](#)

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Assignments

[Submitting an Online Assignment in Canvas](#)

[How do I submit a media file as an assignment submission?](#)

[How do I view the rubric for my assignment?](#)

[How do I upload a file as an assignment submission in Canvas?](#)

Discussions

[How do I view Discussions as a student?](#)

[How to I reply to a discussion as a student?](#)

[How do I edit or delete discussion replies as a student?](#)

Modules

[How do I view Modules as a student?](#)

[How do I mark a module item as done for a module requirement?](#)

Profile and User Settings

[How do I reset my password as a student?](#)

[How do I change my login password as a student?](#)

[How do I add an additional email address as a contact method in Canvas as a student?](#)

Working in Groups

[How do I join a group as a student?](#)

[How do I leave a group as a student?](#)

[How do I create a group as a student?](#)

[How do I upload a file to a group?](#)

[How do I create a discussion in a group?](#)

[How do I submit an assignment on behalf of a group?](#)

Quizzes

[How to take a Quiz/Test in Canvas](#)