

Expectations of Students Taking Online Courses

*The introductory courses in the special education master's programs are typically in an independent study format where all of the assignments and materials are posted on Blackboard at the beginning of the course and you work at your own pace while adhering to due dates. All of the remaining courses are in a regular class format where assignments and materials are posted in a scheduled manner (typically weekly) so that the class moves through the course as a group; you are not allowed to work ahead, but must keep up with the pace of the class. Some courses will have chat sessions, some will have required live sessions conducted by the instructor using Adobe Connect, and some will have live question/answer sessions that are optional. The format of the class is determined by the instructor, thus it is critical that you find out what the format of the class will be before the class begins. However, you should assume that any online course will expect you to participate actively and in a schedule determined by the instructor. Finally, and most importantly, **be aware that the biggest mistake students make about taking online courses is thinking that they will be easier than face to face courses.** The opposite is true since online courses are typically more time-consuming and difficult than face to face courses. Success with online courses can be achieved by doing the following:*

Before the Class Begins (preferably weeks before)

- **Order your textbooks.** Go to the University Bookstore website (the UND homepage at www.und.edu) and find out what the textbooks are for each of your courses and order all books in time to have them for the first class. Instructors will expect you to have textbooks by the first class and if you do not, you may be delayed in completing assignments thus losing points towards your semester grade.
- **Login to Blackboard** (click on Blackboard on the UND homepage and then My UND) to see if there are any announcements for your classes or syllabi posted.
- **Check the computer requirements for online courses** (under Bb Basics on Blackboard) and make sure that you have the equipment required for each course including computer speed (dial up typically is not sufficient), headset microphone (the microphone in the computer is not sufficient), and a webcam. Additionally, you are responsible for ensuring all equipment is working prior to the first class.
- **Check all the information in Bb Basics** which describes all aspects of using Blackboard for an online course. You will be expected to know how to post comments on a blog, use the discussion board, retrieve and submit assignments, check your grades, and many more aspects of Blackboard. It is your responsibility to find out how to use all of the various components and content areas of Blackboard.
- **Change your email on Blackboard** to the one you use most frequently. Your U-mail UND email is the default. Your instructors may send informational emails regarding your courses and if you do not change your email address to the one you use most frequently, these emails will go to your U-mail account.

During the Class/Throughout the Semester

- **Plan to spend sufficient time on the course.** You are expected to put in the same amount of time in online courses as you would if they were face to face courses on-campus. For example, if a three credit course were meeting on-campus it would meet for 3 hours each week for 16 weeks. In addition to this meeting time, you would be expected to spend an additional hour for each hour of class on assignments and readings. Thus, you would be expected to spend at least 6 hours each week on a three credit class (e.g., readings, working on assignments, chat sessions, live Adobe Connect sessions).
- **Check the Announcements on Blackboard** for each of your classes on a daily basis, Monday through Friday. Checking it once a day will ensure that you are aware of any new information being conveyed through the Announcements content area for the class.
- **Communicate with the instructor.** Even though you may not see the instructor each week, any needed communication with the instructor should be done via email or telephone in a timely, prompt manner.
- **Plan to take the course as presented.** Just as with an on-campus course, you should refrain from asking for the course to be customized to fit your vacation and/or professional schedule.