

ONLINE STUDENT HANDBOOK

The Online Student Handbook acts as a beginner's guide to the processes, language, and differences with learning in an unfamiliar environment.

*Online Student
Support Guide*



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About Distance Learning

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 of online technical and academic support services and resources with a click of a button, our “Virtual Campus” provides an excellent opportunity to achieve educational and career goals online.

Brazosport Official Policies

Online Student Privacy Statement

Brazosport College has written policies and procedures for protecting the privacy of all enrolled students, including distance education. These policies incorporate the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#) and are published in the [Student Guide and Calendar](#) under Access to Student Records, [Course Catalog](#) under Academic Services and Enrollment Policies, Student Records Board Policy [FJ-\(Local\)](#) - Student Records.

In addition to the above stated policies, both faculty and students also have a responsibility for protecting privacy as described below.

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 college board policies pertaining to Student Records.

Student Responsibility

In order to maintain confidentiality, BCNET student account passwords are generated by the student and any password reset is completed through the [Password Assistance](#) web site or thru webmail.brazosport.edu. The student can also change their password using a college owned computer if they are on campus or by visiting the Information Technology helpdesk. It is the student’s responsibility to keep their password confidential as indicated on the [Information Technology](#) web page and within the [Student Account Security Agreement](#). Students are required to agree to the terms specified within the Student Account Security Agreement which they must accept on their first login to myBC. Information Technology does a random check to verify students have accepted their security agreement. If they find the student has not accepted the agreement, their account is disabled. The BCNET student account provides access to hardware, software, and networked services on and off campus.

Within their online courses, work submitted to an open discussion forum or team-based assignment can be accessed by other students within the course, yet any other assignments, grades and email correspondence are not viewable by other students.

Because information technology is a very important factor in protecting student privacy, the Information Technology department also employs several tools and processes for protecting student data which include:

- Software, Hardware and IT service acquisitions
- Firewalls
- Secure Data Centers
- Information security audits

Identity Verification in Distance Learning Courses

Brazosport College ensures that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit by the use of Secure login and passcodes.

Brazosport College uses the Brightspace learning management system by Desire2Learn (D2L) for creating, hosting and delivering online courses. Student access to Brightspace is achieved through entering the students BCNET student account and password. The Student BCNET account is automatically created at the time the student completes an application thru the Admissions office. Each student is given a unique ID with a temporary password which includes their personal identification number (PIN). The student must change their temporary password before they are allowed to log into Brightspace.

Each student is required to accept the online security agreement thru the college's secured student account management system. The online security agreement covers student responsibilities regarding the proper use of Instructional Technology (IT) resources, such as attempting to circumvent security or administration of access, unauthorized use of resources, violation actions of the agreement, proper use of student accounts, and responsibility of owning such accounts. A Student ID and password provides access to many different services on and off campus, including logging into the integrated learning platform and accessing registered online classes.

Passwords can be reset by the student online using the secured [Account Reset Assistant](#) system as mentioned earlier or by showing the appropriate identification to an Information Technology, Help Desk staff member on campus.

The unique ID and PIN is assigned at the time of registration to Brazosport College. Students can obtain their ID and PIN, plus password through two separate emails sent to their personal email account, which the student provides on their registration application or by showing appropriate identification to an enrollment specialist in the Registrar's office or Information Technology department on campus.

Copyright

The Intellectual Property Policy for Brazosport College sets forth guidelines and rules which

apply to ownership, distribution, and commercial rights to Intellectual Property including Patentable Products, Trade Secrets, and Copyrightable Works including but not limited to inventions, software, audio/video media, and academic material as developed by Brazosport College administrators, faculty, staff, or students.

All Intellectual Property created by a Creator(s) (includes, but not limited to college, employees and students), during the term of employment or while a student of College, is the sole property of the College, except as limited in the College Intellectual Property Policy (EDD-R (Local)).

This policy does not apply to students of the College except where: (a) the student(s) has contributed to the creation of Intellectual Property with one or more non-student Creators covered by this Policy; (b) the student(s) created Intellectual Property as a result or consequence of a requirement of College course work; or (c) the student(s) created Intellectual Property with the help of the College, College Employees, or any College facilities, equipment, materials, or support. Students who qualify under the above exceptions shall be treated as Creator(s).

The above is not an exhaustive list of Academic policies, for a full listing please consult the [Course Catalog](#), online [Board Policy Manual](#), and the employee share drive.

Learn more about Copyright as well as accessing alternative legal sources by visiting CopyRight@BC.

Online Course Formats

There are several types of online courses, each are based on what format it is to be run under. Course formats are set by the Division Chair and Dean of Instruction.

- Total Online: courses with no instructor on-campus contact
- OnlineLive: courses with scheduled virtual meetings times
- Hybrid: courses with some instructor on-campus contact
- Supplemental: courses with 100% instructor on-campus contact with resources, grades, and syllabus available online

Terms & Definitions

Term types and definitions change and are added over time, so the following is not an all-inclusive list.

Academic Terms

Online courses, no matter if modality (on-campus or online) follow the same term length.

- Fall Semester (15 weeks)
- Fall 1 and Fall 2 (each run 8 weeks)
- Winter Mini-Mester (3 weeks)
- Spring Semester (15 weeks)
- Spring 1 and Spring 2 (each run 8 weeks)
- May Intersession (3 weeks)
- Summer Semester (11 weeks)
- Summer 1 and Summer 2 (each run 6 weeks)

Definitions

The following are some terms often used while working in an course online.

“**Attachment**” is an electronic file (could be an image, presentation, document) which is added as part of an email message or discussion post in your course.

“**D2L**” is used to refer to our online learning management system (LMS) and stands for Desire2Learn. You will also hear it referred to as our Virtual Campus or Brightspace.

“**D2L Email**” is a tool in your online course used to send messages with others in the course. This email is different than your BC email and even has a different email address. Many instructors will ask you to use your D2L email for course communication.

“**Discussions**” is a tool in your online course used to interact with the instructor and other students. Typically, the instructor will post a question to discussions and then require you to reply.

“**Download**” or “**Downloading**” is the action of getting a file (image, presentation, or document) from your online course down to your computer.

“**Dropbox**” is a tool in your online course used for submitting assignments to the instructor.

“**Email**” is a tool used to interact/communicate with others. You have a Brazosport College email (xxxx@brazosport.edu) and a D2L online course email (xxxx@online.brazosport.edu). You must be logged into the Virtual Campus to view messages sent to your D2L address. You can forward your D2L email to any address by following the manual on [Using D2L Email on page 9](#).

“**File**” is something created by a software program like Microsoft Office such as a document file, PowerPoint file, or an Excel file.

“**File Name**” is a title given to a file an electronic file (such a Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint) to distinguish it from other files. File names should NEVER contain spaces or grammatical syntax such as &, %, \$, #. Your instructor will request you submit homework in their course, so knowing how to probably name a file is important.

“**Forum**” is typically used when talking about the discussion tool in your online course. It is a discussion section or category containing a variety of discussion items.

“**Online Course**” is often used as a descriptor for all online course types.

“**Uploading**” or “**Upload**” is a process of moving files from your computer or other device into your course online. Term Usage: Have you “uploaded” your syllabus?

“**Downloading**” or “**Download**” is a process of moving files from a course online to your computer or other device. Term Usage: You can “download” your hybrid syllabus at any time.

“**Virtual Campus**” is sometimes used to describe the access point to where you log into D2L and access your courses online.

“**Digital Higher Education Consortium**” or “**DigiTex**” is a collaborative of Texas community and technical colleges which share online courses through the state of Texas for students who are unable to take a course on their home campus. We offer several total online courses via Digitex so if you are in need due to a course not being offered during a specific semester speak to one of our counselors about Digitex.

Are you Ready for Online Learning?

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

To help better understand yourself, how you learn, and how to use strategies to help in your own learning take the [VARK QUESTIONNAIRE](#). VARK is a short survey that provides a profile of your learning preferences and gives strategies to 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.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can Anyone Take a class online?

Yes, anyone who registers for an on-campus course can enroll in a course offered online. Just keep in mind online courses are not easier than on-campus classes, they often require much more time and self-discipline to succeed.

Will I be required to attend class meetings?

This is typically determined by the type of online course you take and the instructor. Typically, total online courses have no required meetings times, while online live and hybrid do. It is always best to contact the instructor to confirm.

Can I earn a degree totally online?

Yes, Brazosport College offers the Associate of Arts Degree fully online. Refer to the [Course Catalog](#) in Distance Learning under Online Degrees to access specific listing of courses.

How can I register for an online course?

Students register for courses online just as they would for on-campus classes. View [steps for enrollment](#) for specific information on applying, TSI placement, advising, and tuition, and preparing for class. If you are a current student just log into your MyBC to register for any course type.

Are online classes harder than on-campus courses?

Online class have the same objectives, readings, and assessments as an on-campus course. But because they are online they require more self-discipline and time management skills to be successful in them.

To view more [FAQ's visit the Distance Learning page](#).

Testing Online

Testing is done using the Quiz tool in an online course. For high stake exams such as a midterm or final the Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor maybe used by your instructor for a more secure testing environment.

Respondus LockDown Browser prevents students from printing, copying, or accessing other applications/browsers during an exam. Students are locked into the test until it is submitted for grading. Students access the LockDown Browser during the startup sequence of the exam, there is no PRIOR download needed.

Respondus Monitor is an additional setting which adds a video monitoring component to the LockDown Browser and requires students to use a webcam. The monitor feature walks students through a set up and verification process prior to accessing questions and then monitors activity till the end of the exam.

Zoom, a virtual meeting tool, can also be used by your instructor as an additional proctoring method for live proctoring with the Respondus LockDown Browser. When used, the instructor watches students remotely during the online exam.

Helpdesk Student Technical Support

[IT helpdesk](#) is typically the main funnel for all student support.

Students have access to a variety of resources for working with D2L, including:

- Manuals
- Videos

- Online Course Tools Tour

Manuals, videos and more are available on the [Distance Learning website](#). Inside D2L there are support access links on the login page, My Home page, and on each course home page.

The **Online Course Tools Tour (OCTT)** is available to students 1 week prior and up to 3 weeks after each semester. [Students must RSVP to attend](#). Sessions are an hour long and introduce navigational and support features of D2L as well as how to work with course tools such as posting to Discussions, submitting a Dropbox assignment, taking a Quiz and viewing Grades.

Faculty may offer a participation grade for attending the tour. Check with your instructor for confirmation.

Additional Support

The most up to date access to both technical and academic support services is in the Virtual Campus under your MyCourses area and inside each online course.

READ your Syllabus

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

- Course navigation
- First week activities
- Course topics
- Assignment and quiz due dates
- Participation and submission policies
- Student and instructor response times
- Grading criteria

Success Tips

Don't Wait & Act Quickly

If you are having trouble navigating through the course, submitting homework, or understanding an assignment ASK FOR HELP immediately. What may take you hours to work out on your own may take your instructor or the BC Helpdesk just a minute or two, 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 answer and continue in your course. It is a win, win situation.

Manage Your Time

We can't stress this enough; time management is essential to being a successful student online. Managing your time is taking control over the amount of time you spend on specific activities

daily. To help manage your time use the course syllabus, your course calendar, stay connected with the instructor and don't wait to ask questions or keep up with readings and due dates.

Other things to do to help manage your time is to:

- Create a 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 so you can concentrate and focus attention on the work at hand. The local library may be an alternative study space.
- Prioritize assignments: When studying focus on the more difficult assignment or project first. You will be fresh and more alert.
- Identify resources to help: Use our campus counselors, instructor, friends, and tutors. We have Math and English tutors available that can assist if you feel you are falling behind or having issues with an assignment. View our [Student Success Center page](#) for information on how to schedule a time for either a Writing or Math tutor.

Skills for Learning Online

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

Computer Skills

- Copy and paste in and between documents or from a document to an email
- Use spell check
- Attach a document to an email message
- Print documents
- Run two or more software programs at once and be able to switch between them
- Open and close documents and folders
- Find files that are saved and downloaded to your computer
- Send and receive email

Internet Skills

- Open an email an attachment
- Run a search on the internet
- Follow links from one page to another
- Print a webpage
- Bookmark web pages to quickly access later
- Use search engines to locate information on the internet

Accessing Your Course Online

The Virtual Campus (otherwise known as D2L or Brightspace) is the portal which provides access to your online courses. Go to <https://online.brazosport.edu> to login.

To login you will need to enter your BC username and password. The username would be your first initial+lastname+last 4 digits of your student ID (example: jsmith1234). The password would be what was initially entered when activating your BC account. If you need experience technical issues with login:

- Contact the BC Helpdesk (phone: 979-230-3266 | Email: helpdesk@brazosport.edu | [Chat](#))
- Access [Password Assistance](#) information
- Access [Student Account](#) information
- If this is your first time here, view [First Time Login Help](#)

End of Handbook