



MONTGOMERY
COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Virtual Campus
Student Handbook

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

May 2019



Table of Contents

Welcome to Montco's Virtual Campus	3
Virtual Campus Mission	3
Types of Courses	3
MC ₃ Academic Calendars	4
Computer Recommendations	4
Web Browsers	5
Is Online Learning for You?	5
Virtual Campus Information Sessions	6
Computer Skills Needed	7
Basic Skills	7
Email Skills	7
Web Browser Skills	7
Word Processing Skills	7
Responsibilities of Online Student	8
Tips for a Successful Online Student	8
Netiquette	9
Blackboard	10
Submitting Work in Online Courses	11
College Policies	11
Copyright, Plagiarism and Fair Use	11
Online Student Resources and Services	12
Digital Support	12
Tutoring Center	12
Testing Center	13
Library Resources	13
Financial Aid	13



MONTGOMERY

COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Academic Advising	13
Disability Services	13
Veteran's Services	13
Text Alerts	14
FAQs	14
Are online classes easier than traditional classes?	14
How do you know if online classes are a good fit?	14
Are online courses accessible from anywhere?	14
Will I be required to come to campus during the semester if I am taking an online course?	15
How much time is required for an online class?	15
Since the class is online, does that mean it is self-paced, or can the student complete it whenever?	15
Do all online and hybrid classes use Blackboard?	15
What is Blackboard?	16
Is there a test that I can take to measure my readiness for online education courses?	16
Do I need to own a computer?	16



Welcome to Montco's Virtual Campus

We are pleased to have you enrolled in courses on the Virtual Campus of Montgomery County Community College. Before you start your online course, please take a few minutes to browse our new Virtual Campus Student Handbook. The Virtual Campus Student Handbook is designed to acquaint you with the Virtual Campus, and provide you with the information you will need to be successful in your course.

Our online instructors complete a training program that focuses on online design and development, student-learning outcomes, addressing student-learning styles, regular and effective communication, and creating a human presence in the online class. The success of our online offerings is based on providing quality online education with trained and enthusiastic instructors. Our belief is a motivated student can learn anytime, anywhere. As an online student, you will attend classes online through Blackboard, our Learning Management System.

Remember, with Montco's online learning classes, you can earn a certificate or associate degree, as well as preparing for a new career or transfer to a four-year institution.

We are so excited you are here and wish you a rewarding and successful learning experience!

Virtual Campus Mission

The Virtual Campus at Montgomery County Community College (MCCC) works to support the College's Mission and Strategic Plan, and is one of the fastest growing areas of the College. The Virtual Campus has been integrated across the College and is designed to ensure that all components remain the primary responsibility of the areas that are traditionally responsible for them.

Types of Courses

ONLINE COURSES:

"Fully ONLINE" courses are delivered entirely online and are accessed through Blackboard using a web browser. Students are expected to log into online courses several times a week and to submit all coursework through Blackboard unless otherwise instructed.

"Mostly ONLINE" courses are delivered online with the exception of one or two tests that are required to be proctored. When registering for a Mostly Online course, the course



section description should denote how many tests are to be proctored. Like a fully online course, these courses are accessed through Blackboard using a web browser. Students are expected to log into online courses several times a week and to submit all coursework through Blackboard unless otherwise instructed.

HYBRID COURSES:

HYBRID courses provide a combination of classroom and online instruction via Blackboard. Hybrid courses usually meet once per week in the classroom and have at least 30% of instruction delivered online. Expectations for Blackboard course access will be explained by the course instructor, usually during the first live class session.

FACE TO FACE COURSES:

All lecture (F2F) classes have a section in Blackboard, but it is up to the instructor whether or not he or she uses Blackboard to post documents, assignments or grades in Blackboard. The instructor should specify in class or in the syllabus the expectations for student access to Blackboard for a lecture course.

MC₃ Academic Calendars

The College's [Academic Calendars](#) can be accessed on the MCCC website. Click the "+" sign by the Academic Semester/Year and review the important dates for that semester.

Computer Recommendations

Students must have access to a full desktop/laptop computer operating system. Accessing online courses from a tablet or other mobile device is not sufficient to perform certain Blackboard functions. MCCC has established the hardware and software recommendations for students taking online courses.

Technology Requirement	Standard
Internet Connection	High-speed internet, such as DSL or cable
Windows Operating System minimum requirements	Windows 7 or newer 800-MHz or faster 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor 2 GB of RAM
Macintosh Operating System minimum requirements	Mac OS X 10.6 Intel Core™ Duo 1.83GHz or faster processor 2 GB of RAM
Hardware	Webcam and microphone are recommended, but not required
Software	Office 365 (Free download from MC ₃); Foxit PDF Reader
Web Browsers	Firefox is recommended Chrome is compatible with most functionality Internet Explorer 11+ or Safari 6+ are supported



Web Browsers

Students should have at least two internet browsers installed and properly configured on personal computers. If technical difficulties arise in one browser, the problem may be resolved by accessing Blackboard in a different browser.

e-Learning Services recommends the use of Firefox or Chrome. Internet Explorer and Safari are the least compatible browsers for accessing Blackboard content. If a student experiences issues accessing content with Internet Explorer or Safari, he or she should attempt access with other recommended browsers before contacting the Blackboard Help Center.

Is Online Learning for You?

Our main concern is that you successfully complete your online course. It is important to be familiar with the necessary skills and tools you need to succeed in an online course. Important things to consider include the following requirements:

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

- Do you have consistent/easy access to a reliable computer with a broadband internet connection (high-speed, such as cable, DSL or fiber) and with necessary programs and software, including some type of word processing program, for the course(s) you want to take?
- Do you have computing skills that will enable you to function efficiently in an online course (downloading and saving files, creating folders, changing settings on your computer, typing and word processing, sending email with attachments, etc.)?
- Do you have word processing skills such as creating, editing and saving documents?
- Do you have internet skills that will enable you to navigate and access specific URLs, use online library resources and log into secure web pages?
- Have you set up your MyMC3 student email account? Can you access it? Are you willing to access it several times a week and use it for ALL school-related correspondence?

COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS

- Will you be able to access and navigate your online course(s) as often as required (at least three times a week for a total of 12-15 hours per week) in order to have timely interaction with the instructor(s) and/or other students in your course(s)?



- Are you able to communicate with others effectively using online technologies, such as email programs, chat rooms, blogs and discussion boards?
- Can you express yourself clearly and concisely in written messages and assignments?
- Do you have good reading comprehension skills so that you can effectively read and understand directions, reading assignments and information in your textbook?
- Will you ask questions when you don't understand assignments or instructions from your instructor(s)?

PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

- Will you meet the online course requirements listed in your course syllabus (frequent assignments, frequent communication, group assignments and a significant amount of reading)?
- Do you understand that frequent participation will be required in each of your online courses, and you will need to dedicate at least 12-15 hours per online course per week in order to be successful?
- Do you have access to an alternative computer that meets all requirements in case something happens to your computer, so that your participation will not be affected?

ORGANIZATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Are you self-motivated with good organizational and time-management skills (not needing to be reminded of due dates, etc.)?
- Can you ignore distractions (social networking, instant messaging, TV, family, etc.) while working on your online coursework in order to complete assignments effectively and on time?

If you answered NO to any of these questions, it's probably not in your best interests to take an online course this semester. Without these basics, you may not experience success in an online course.

If you answered YES to all of these questions, you have the time and skills to take an online course.

Virtual Campus Information Sessions

Information Sessions are offered for all first-time hybrid and/or online students, and they may be online or face-to-face, depending on the instructor. The schedule for these sessions will be emailed to students before the semester begins. You must register for a session via Google Forms.



Computer Skills Needed

You need basic computer skills to be a successful online student. Below are lists of necessary skills:

BASIC SKILLS

- Create, save, copy and locate files/folders
- Navigate between two or more applications
- Minimize/maximize windows

EMAIL SKILLS

- Send, open and reply to a message
- Enter a message subject
- Create an email message
- Add an attachment to an email
- Send an attachment
- Open and/or save an attachment

WEB BROWSER SKILLS

- Create, save, copy and locate files/folders
- Navigate between two or more applications
- Minimize/maximize windows
- Go to a specific URL
- Follow a hypertext link
- Conduct a basic search using a search engine
- Download and install plug-ins
- Zip/unzip a file (Compress)
- Update browser, as needed
- Upload an assignment file
- Respond to a forum post

WORD PROCESSING SKILLS

- Open a new/existing file
- Save a file
- Rename a file (Save As)
- Cut, paste, format text
- Create a screenshot
- Insert screenshot in a file
- Print a document

Responsibilities of Online Student

- Is responsible for maintaining his/her own equipment and internet connection.
- Is expected to use professional communication at all times. (See Netiquette.)
- Is responsible for meeting all deadlines plan ahead. Procrastination is the enemy.
- Is expected to have a high-speed internet connection, although most SOWELA online courses will be able to run on a dial-up connection (just expect it to be slow).
- Is proficient in the use of computers and productivity software such as email and word processing.
- Participates in the class with the instructor and classmates.
- Takes notes!
- Reads, listens to and/or watches course materials as often as required by the course.
- Develops self-discipline.
- Can problem-solve; for example:
 - What if you have a family emergency?
 - What if the electricity goes off?
 - What if your computer crashes?
 - What if you lose your USB flash drive (or other external storage device)?

Tips for a Successful Online Student

- **Find the time of day when you work best online.**
Some students are productive doing their online learning during their regularly scheduled lunch breaks at work, while others are most productive early in the morning before their family wakes up or late at night when family responsibilities are over. Experiment, and find the time that works best for you.
- **Meet the course deadlines.**
Students who fall behind have a more difficult time completing the course material.
- **Be prepared to apply yourself.**
Students who don't succeed report that they viewed the online classroom as an "easy course." However, most online courses are as demanding (if not more so) than classroom courses.



- **Become familiar with the online classroom system as quickly as possible.**
Give yourself time to learn the online learning system of your online classes so that you can more efficiently concentrate on course content.
- **Log into the course at least once a day during the duration of the course.**
Students who participate consistently report a much higher level of satisfaction with the online learning experience.
- **Download and print documents that you wish to study in more depth.**
- **Save your work on disks.**
Sometimes computers do bad things, so it is wise to back up your material.
- **Interact with the instructor.**
Be certain to stay in regular contact with the instructor. Ask questions. Ask for help. Offer ideas. But stay in touch with the instructor!
- **Create a classroom buddy system.**
Much like in a regular classroom, students who team up with another student or other students succeed.
- **Create a schedule for yourself.**
Although this course material can be done at any time of day that you choose, many students find it best to create a standard schedule that they keep to. Utilize the course calendar or some other system so that you know when assignments are due. Staying on top of course material will ensure that you complete the course segments in a timely fashion.
- **Tolerate change.**
Online instruction is still a new field, and successful students (and instructors) need to recognize that technology can be recalcitrant and that systems may fall apart. To successfully handle the challenges inherent in online instruction, we must be willing to learn while doing.

Netiquette

Network etiquette (netiquette) is "cyber speak" for etiquette online and in email: manners, civility and shared rules. The rules of netiquette apply to everyone who uses the internet or any kind of network to communicate to any other person in the world. Here are some very simple rules to follow that will help you to converse more smoothly with your fellow computer users.



- Treat other people in cyberspace the way you would like to be treated. Remember that without facial expressions some comments may be taken the wrong way.
- Review discussion threads before you enter the discussion. Be careful to write only relevant comments.
- Maintain threads by using the “Reply” button rather than starting a new topic.
- Limit the abbreviations that you use, such as “u” for “you,” “k” for “OK,” and “nei” for “anyone.” This will ensure that everyone understands your message.
- Assume that the other person will not immediately know what you are talking about; give a little background information to help the reader understand your topic or position.
- Respect other people’s privacy.
- Writing something in all CAPS is equivalent to yelling. Try to avoid this.
- An emoticon is a text representation of an emotion. For example, :) is equivalent to a smile. Do not overuse emoticons, but they can be useful to avoid having a statement be misinterpreted.
- Do not make insulting or inflammatory comments to other members of discussions. Be respectful of other’s ideas.
- Do not leave the subject field of an email blank. Your email provider may send it to BULK or JUNK instead of the inbox of the receiver, or your anti-virus software may think that it is a virus of some kind. A subject also allows the receiver to tell what the email is about at a glance.
- NEVER give out personal information of any kind via email, chat or instant message. Phishing refers to the tactic used by criminals in which they will send a legitimate sounding email to your address and ask for information to verify an account. A reputable company, such as a bank, will not ask for usernames, account numbers or passwords through email.

Blackboard

You will attend classes online through Blackboard, our Learning Management System. While you still will have due dates for assignments and will need to follow a weekly schedule, you have more control over when you participate in the class. Just make sure to meet your deadlines!

If you need help with using Blackboard, please feel free to access the [MCCC Knowledge Base](#) Blackboard content. The Knowledge Base will provide you with articles and videos on getting started and using Blackboard.



Submitting Work in Online Courses

Unless otherwise instructed, all coursework for online classes should be submitted through Blackboard. Online courses contain [Assignment submission](#) items for submitting work as attachments so the instructor can use the [Blackboard Grade Center](#) to keep records of student submissions. Unless instructed to submit assignments through Course Messages or Email, all assignments should be submitted using Assignment links.

In addition to Assignment links, Discussion Boards, Blogs, Wikis and Journals are all separate tools in Blackboard that allow for submission of work. Instructors also may deliver quizzes and exams in Blackboard. Check the syllabus for information about the need for proctoring for any exams delivered online. Failure to follow proper submission protocols for online coursework can adversely affect a student's grade.

College Policies

Students are expected to review, understand and follow academic-related College Policies. The current policies are located in the "[Policies](#)" tab on the top of the student's Blackboard page.

Copyright, Plagiarism and Fair Use

Plagiarism is defined as "any passing off of another's ideas, words or work as one's own." It is a form of cheating and a violation of academic integrity, and is taken seriously by reputable colleges, such as MCCC. Most students are honest, ethical and hard-working, but a few take shortcuts in their coursework and some commit plagiarism inadvertently because they do not understand what it is. This is unfair to those who exercise due diligence to avoid plagiarizing. Ignorance is not a legitimate excuse. Students should take responsibility to become familiar with the specifics of plagiarism. When in doubt, check with your instructor and ask for clarification.

Copyright is based on the idea that we are all entitled to the fruits of our labors. It is the ownership of intellectual property, like the patent, trademark and trade secret. Copyright is a legal concept giving the creator of an original work of authorship exclusive rights to it, usually for a limited time, after which the work enters the public domain. Generally, it is "the right to copy," but also gives the copyright holder the right to be credited for the work, to determine who may adapt the work to other forms, who may perform the work, who may financially benefit from it, etc. Copyright infringement is defined as "the unauthorized or unlicensed copying of a work subject to copyright." Because the principles of copyright and fair use are pertinent to a discussion of plagiarism, they are included as well. For example, it is considered fair use to photocopy or print out one



chapter of a book or one article from a journal issue, but not the entire work. Rules governing the use of copyrighted materials in classrooms and in course reserves are of particular concern to faculty, who are expected to become familiar with and apply them in their course preparation.

An important part of copyright law is the Fair Use Doctrine. It was designed to balance the rights of a work's creator with the work's potential benefit to society, as well as free speech rights. Fair Use allows the photocopying, downloading and printing of copyrighted works, without securing permission, for these purposes: criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship and research. The following four factors must be considered when determining if the use or duplication of a work is legal:

- a. Purpose and character of use
- b. Nature of the copyrighted work
- c. Amount of the portion used in relation to the whole work
- d. Effect of use on the potential market or value of the copyrighted work

Online Student Resources and Services

DIGITAL SUPPORT

Phone: 215-641-6495

Email: helpdesk@mc3.edu

Live Support: <https://support.mc3.edu>

Hours of Operation:

Monday – Thursday 7:00 am – 10:15 pm

Friday – Sunday 7:00 am – 5:00 pm

TUTORING CENTER

Blue Bell, College Hall 180 – 215-641-6452

Pottstown, South Hall 159 – 610-718-1945

Email: tutoring@mc3.edu



MONTGOMERY

COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

TESTING CENTER

Blue Bell, College Hall, Library – 215-641-6646

Pottstown, South Hall 163 – 610-718-1995

Email: testing@mc3.edu

LIBRARY RESOURCES

Blue Bell, College Hall – 215-641-6596

Pottstown, South Hall – 610-718-1864

Email: refdesk@mc3.edu

FINANCIAL AID

Blue Bell, College Hall – 215-641-6566

Pottstown, South Hall – 610-718-1800

Email: financialaid@mc3.edu

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Blue Bell, College Hall, Student Success Center – 215-641-6577

Pottstown, South Hall 151 – 610-718-1800

Email: advising@mc3.edu

DISABILITY SERVICES

Blue Bell, College Hall – 215-641-6575

Pottstown, South Hall – 610-718-1800

Email: disabilities@mc3.edu

VETERAN'S SERVICES

Blue Bell, Veteran's Resource Center – 215-619-7307

Pottstown, South Hall – 610-718-1800

Email: veterans@mc3.edu



TEXT ALERTS

MCCC has a state-of-the-art notification system that is capable of sending you notifications instantly and simultaneously on several kinds of devices.

FAQs

Online courses are often the answer for students who are busy, have difficulty driving to the college, or live far away. With a different format from the traditional learning environment, students should consider a number of factors to determine their chances for success. These FAQs below may help you determine your readiness to successfully complete such courses.

Are online classes easier than traditional classes?

No. Online classes are more difficult due to the amount of self-discipline, motivation and time that is required to successfully complete an online class. While they do offer flexibility and convenience for people with already busy schedules, motivation for completing the assignments, taking the tests and all other requirements falls to the student. The student must log in every day to the course to check for announcements, updates, new postings, etc., and take the appropriate actions. Most online courses are NOT self-paced and do have deadlines for turning in assignments and taking tests, just like a traditional class.

How do you know if online classes are a good fit?

Online classes are definitely not for everyone. In a typical online class, the student will be working independently and in an asynchronous environment. This means there is not much real-time interaction between students and the instructor. In addition to good typing, reading and communication skills, there are a number of general computer skills needed too. You need to be able to attach documents, upload and download files, email and post discussions. The successful online student is self-motivated, has good time management skills, self-discipline and is independent.

Are online courses accessible from anywhere?

Yes, it is available anywhere that has high-speed internet access. If you have internet access, you should be able to access your courses. People considering online courses need to consider what type of internet service they have access to. If only dial-up internet is available, distance education courses may not be the answer to your education needs. If

the internet service in your area is not ideal, check out other resources in your area that might be better, such as the public library.

Will I be required to come to campus during the semester if I am taking an online course?

It is a possibility:

- a. Courses marked as “Mostly Online” may require you to come to campus for exams, labs or competencies, but instruction will occur in Blackboard. This is dependent on your instructor.
- b. Courses marked as “Online” will have 85%-100% of instruction occur in Blackboard.

How much time is required for an online class?

An online class is typically going to require significantly more time than a traditional one. Students should understand that each hour of class credit requires three hours per week: one hour in lecture and two hours personal study/homework. It is the student’s responsibility to log in and check for announcements, emails, new discussion postings, assignments or assessments that have been released, and complete the work. In addition, students should not wait until the last minute to submit assignments or take exams or assessments. Technical glitches are a very real possibility. If something does happen while taking an assessment or trying to submit assignments, students should notify the instructor immediately.

Since the class is online, does that mean it is self-paced, or can the student complete it whenever?

No. The majority of online classes will have assignments and assessments with due dates associated to them. If a student fails to complete them on time, the student will not be able to access and submit them. Students need to contact their instructors immediately if they are having technical trouble with assignments/assessments or any other part of their online course. Again, it is important to complete work in advance, and not to try to complete course material immediately before the deadline.

Do all online and hybrid classes use Blackboard?

Yes, every instructor uses Blackboard.



What is Blackboard?

Blackboard is a company that develops Learning Management Systems. It is a self-contained place to present material to students. Blackboard can be used in a variety of manners, such as online or hybrid instruction, or to enhance a traditional class. It also can serve as a virtual community for users, such as the drafting community, the nursing community, honor societies or faculty learning communities. The advantage of

Blackboard is that it is self-contained, so sensitive information is not accessible to unauthorized users.

Is there a test that I can take to measure my readiness for online education courses?

Yes! MCCC would like every student to be successful. Students can take the [Online Readiness Quiz](#) prior to registering for an online class. Students also can access the Online Readiness Resource in order to gain familiarity with the online learning environment.

Do I need to own a computer?

Yes. Online courses are designed for the student who wants to study at a different location than the college and has high-speed internet access. If you do not have ready access to a computer or only have access to dial-up service, you should seriously consider taking the course in either a Hybrid or traditional setting.