



Online Learning at UNM-Los Alamos Student Guide

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Online Learning at UNM-Los Alamos

Student Guide

Online Learning Overview

Welcome to Online Learning at UNM-LA. Many of your courses at UNM-LA are or will soon be offered online. You may also hear online education called distance learning, online learning, or E-Learning. Whatever it's called, it offers unique opportunities and unique challenges to students.

This guide is primarily directed at students who will be taking a fully online class. However, because it contains materials about the learning management system we use in online, hybrid, and web-enhanced courses, some parts may be of interest to students taking these courses as well.

Many of UNM-LA's online courses are offered through a system called Blackboard Learn. Others are offered using outside course materials developed by publishers, and some are a combination of both. This guide will refer to these online course delivery systems as your "online classroom."

At UNM-LA, we offer three varieties of online education:

Online courses

In an online class, you do not enter a classroom – the course is taught entirely online. You might never meet your instructor in person. You may access your virtual classroom using a program called Blackboard Learn ("Learn"), or you may access it on a publisher site. Your course materials, such as the syllabus, assignments, quizzes and exams, will all be accessed through your online classroom. You will interact with your instructor and classmates using email, online discussions (bulletin boards), chat, wikis, and in some cases audio links or phone. Depending on the style of teaching, you may interact at scheduled times, or, more likely, you may interact at different times, as you do in email (asynchronously). You will be expected to complete the course work on schedule and within the semester, just as you do in a traditional classroom. Since you will not be attending regularly scheduled classes, you have the flexibility of working when you like, from wherever you choose. The specific technologies that you use will depend on the class and the instructor.

Have you heard that online courses are easier and take less of your time than traditional classes? Don't believe it! You cover the same materials in an online course, and you spend at least as much time doing coursework. Although you do not have to commute to campus or sit in a classroom, your instructor will probably assign activities to cover the materials that you would have covered in a traditional class. For a traditional 3-credit course you would expect to spend 2-3 hours outside the classroom for every credit – that's 3 hours in the classroom and 6-9 hours per week outside of class. For a 3-credit online course you can expect to spend 9-12 hours per week working on the course. That's 1-2 hours per day. You'll spend some of that time working at the computer and some of that time reading, writing, studying, working problems, etc.

Hybrid courses

In hybrid courses, also known as “blended courses,” you normally meet in a classroom for about half as much time as you would in a traditional classroom, and the remainder of the time you work out of your online classroom. You will be expected to attend the scheduled classroom sessions and to complete all of the work that is assigned online.

Web-Enhanced courses

In web-enhanced courses, you will meet in a classroom for the usual amount of time (e.g., 2.5 hours per week for a 3 credit course). You will do some activities via your online classroom; this might include simply accessing handouts, or it could include quizzes, discussions, videos, and other materials available on the internet.

Are You Ready To Take an Online Course?

Are you ready to take an online course? Succeeding in an online course requires that you be prepared with certain attitudes, skills, behaviors, and equipment.

If you have questions about taking a specific course online, please contact the instructor of the course (the instructors’ email addresses are in the printed schedule or available on the schedule link here: <http://losalamos.unm.edu/academics/class-schedule.html>). Or contact one of the UNM-LA advisers here: **(505) 662-0332**.

Attitudes, Study Skills and Behaviors

Because you do not physically see your instructor or attend classes regularly, when you take an online course you need to be prepared for an environment that is quite different from a traditional classroom. This environment that requires that students have some attitudes, skills, and behaviors that differ from those in a traditional classroom.

- You need to be comfortable working independently, without face-to-face interactions with your instructor or classmates.
- You need to be skilled at reading and writing, because you must read most of the materials that are presented to you, and you will use writing to communicate with your instructor and classmates. You will write most of your assignments and submit them online.
- You need to be motivated to take the course.
- You need to know how to plan and manage your time effectively, which will help you complete your reading and other assigned activities and to turn in your work when it is due. If you fall behind, it can be difficult to catch up in an online course.

To see how well prepared you are for taking an online course, take the **Online Readiness Assessment in Appendix A**. This appendix also contains more information about what to expect in an online course.

Computer Skills

Because you spend a lot of time working with a computer when you take an online course, you will be much more likely to succeed if you already have a basic set of computer and internet skills. If you are not comfortable using a word processor, using email, moving around and searching on the internet, uploading, downloading, and printing files, or managing a file system on your computer, you are advised to obtain instruction and practice in these basic skills before taking an online course. **Appendix B** lists a

set of basic computer and internet skills needed for online courses and a source of videos where you can obtain more training.

Computer Environment

Your computer must be set up to have a minimum set of hardware and software. You will need to have reliable access to the internet at least once per week, preferably at least three times per week. For some courses, such as those requiring you to view videos, listen to audios, or access very large files, at least once a week you will need access to a high-speed (broadband) internet connection, using cable, DSL, satellite, Ethernet, or wireless technologies. If you don't have high-speed internet access at home, wireless access is available on the UNM-LA campus, in many libraries, and in some coffee shops and restaurants. **Appendix C** describes required and recommended computer and internet configurations needed for online courses at UNM-LA.

Admission and Registration Information

Admission and Registration

You must be admitted to UNM or to a UNM branch to register for online classes at UNM-LA. There are several admission options, depending on whether you are in a degree program or want to register as a non-degree student.

You can find information on the UNM-LA web site regarding admission (<http://losalamos.unm.edu/admissions/index.html>) and registration (<http://losalamos.unm.edu/students/registration-and-records/index.html>). Or call Student Services at **505-662-0332**.

Online Course Schedules

Most online courses are scheduled within the normal UNM semesters, unless otherwise noted in the UNM-LA course schedule. You should expect to log in to the course on the **first day** of the semester or on the day that the course starts (listed in the schedule). You should expect to complete all coursework by the end of the semester or by the last day of the class, the same as in a traditional classroom. You may have a final exam scheduled during finals week.

How to Find Online Courses Offered at UNM-LA

There are several ways to find online courses offered at UNM-LA:

- Online courses at UNM-LA are listed in the printed UNM-LA Class Listing, available on campus, through local newspapers, in several locations around the Los Alamos area, and on the Class Schedules page on the UNM-LA Web Site: <http://losalamos.unm.edu/academics/class-schedule.html> - scroll down to the link for online (Web-based) classes.
- You can find UNM-LA online courses in the LoboWeb listing of courses when you search for classes to add:
 - Go to <http://my.unm.edu>, and log in using your NetID.
 - After you log in, click on the **Students** tab and then on **LoboWeb (Students)**.
 - Click on **LoboWeb Main Menu**, and then on **Registration & Records**
 - Under Registration, click on **Search Class Schedule for Classes to Add**, then select **Accept Financial Responsibility** and click on **Submit**.

- Under **Search by Term**, select the term you’re interested in and click on **Submit**.
 - On the next screen, click on **Advanced Search** to display UNM-LA classes.
 - On the **Search Class Schedule... - Advanced Search** screen, select:
 - **Subject:** (select one or hold down Ctrl to select more),
 - **Instructional Method** – click on **Online**
 - **Campus: Los Alamos**
 and then click on **Section Search**. All UNM-LA online courses in the subject(s) that you selected will be listed.
- You can find UNM-LA online courses in the UNM schedule at <http://schedule.unm.edu> . Select the term you’re interested in, and then click on **Los Alamos**. Click on the department offering the subject of interest. In the Description column, online courses will have the word “Online” in the Description column.

Course Fees

UNM-LA currently assesses the following fees (at this writing) to students taking online courses; these are listed in the Course Schedule for each semester. Fees are subject to change for future semesters.

Online course, 1-2 credits	\$15-25
Online course, 3-4 credits	\$50
Hybrid and Web-enhanced courses	no fee at present

You Should Know...

You Still Must “Attend” Class - Differently

“Attendance” and “participation” mean something different in an online class. Your instructor will let you know what’s expected of you in terms of how often you should log in and which activities, such as discussions, require your frequent participation. Successful students log in frequently and participate enthusiastically in the course activities.

If you decide to drop the class, it is **your** responsibility to do so. Your instructor will not drop you if you simply stop showing up (stop logging in or stop turning in assigned work), and you will be assigned a grade at the end of the semester, even if you haven’t shown up for a while. If you decide to drop, you should be aware of University-wide posted deadlines for tuition refunds and mandatory assignment of grades; these are listed on the Academic Calendar for each semester.

You also need to be aware that dropping a course may affect your financial aid status.

Your Online Classroom Participation May Be Monitored

Blackboard Learn and other online course delivery systems allow your instructor to monitor your participation in your online class. In addition to seeing all of the posts and comments that you make in discussions, wikis, and journals, your instructor has access to records of when you logged in and what course materials you opened and submitted during each session. This data is made available to the instructor to help the instructor identify students having difficulties with the course or with using

features of the online classroom, to monitor participation, and to resolve issues dealing with submission of materials.

The Learn Online Classroom Environment

This section contains specific information about the Blackboard Learn online classroom environment. Instructors who use different online classrooms will provide you with comparable information about how to access and use them.

Access to a Learn Course Requires a UNM NetID

In order to access a course offered in Learn, you must have a UNM NetID. After you have been admitted as a UNM student, you can obtain a NetID by going here: <https://netid.unm.edu/>. You must use your NetID in order to log in to the Blackboard Learn environment to access your course.

Logging In to Your Course

- You can log in to Learn here: <http://learn.unm.edu>, using your UNM NetID and password.
- You can also log in to Learn by going to <http://my.unm.edu> and logging in. On the screen that is displayed, you will see a button that looks like this, next to the Login/Logout button:



Clicking on this button will take you to a login screen for Learn. Use your UNM NetID and password to log in to Learn from this screen.

After you log in, you will see a list of online courses in which you are currently enrolled. Click on the one you want to see.

NOTE: You cannot log in to any Learn course before the first day of the semester or before the first day that the course is offered, if it starts later. This is UNM policy.

Getting Early Information about an Online Course

If you want early information about your online course, you must contact the instructor, and we strongly encourage you to do so. Your instructor's email address can be found on the printed and online schedules at <http://losalamos.unm.edu/academics/class-schedule.html>, or by searching the UNM directory at <http://directory.unm.edu>. If the instructor's email address is not listed there, you can obtain it by contacting UNM-LA at 505-662-5919.

Training for the Basic Learn Environment

You need to familiarize yourself with the Learn environment at UNM, if you haven't already done so. Blackboard Learn will be your entry point to your online courses, and it is the environment through which the online courses are delivered. **It is critically important that you learn how to use Learn effectively when you are taking an online, hybrid, or web-enhanced course.**

You can find documentation and training videos on how to use Learn here:

<http://online.unm.edu/help/learn/students/>. It contains several FAQs about Learn and

documentation on how to use its features, which you access using from the menu on the left of that screen. You can consult this page at any time if you have problems. You will also find links to detailed information about how to use Learn on the **Tech Support and Resources** page that is inside each Learn classroom.

UNM-LA also offers a free online training course that deals with taking an online course and using basic features of Learn. Some instructors may require you to take this, while others may make it optional. You can find information about taking this course here:

<http://losalamos.unm.edu/academics/online-learning/students/student-howtotakeanonlinecourse-handout.pdf>

Instructors do not use all of the tools that Learn provides, and they will let you know which ones you need to use for each class.

Email Inside and Outside of Learn

Learn provides two options for communications via email. In addition, LoboMail (UNM email) is available for use for course communications. Your instructor will let you know which method to use for your class.

Inside Learn (internal email): Learn has a self-contained email environment, called Course Messages, which allows you to send a message (very much like email) to your instructor and the students in your class. You can't send email into this environment from an outside email account, and you can't send email from this environment to an outside email account. It all stays within Learn. Your instructor may or may not choose to use Course Messages; that is the instructor's decision. If the instructor does choose to use Course Messages, you need to remember to check your messages within Learn every few days, and you'll receive a notification that you have messages when you log in.

Learn email (mixed internal/external). Learn has an email tool that allows you to send email to the UNM email addresses of your instructor, teaching assistants, and classmates. It does not preserve a copy of the message that you send within Learn, and replies to the message will be sent to the sender's external email; they won't be sent back into the Learn email.

Outside Learn (external email): LoboMail is UNM's university-wide email system. Your UNM email address is *your_NetID@unm.edu*. It is important that you regularly read email sent to this address, especially if it is your instructor's chosen method of communication for the course.

Information for ANY Online Classroom

Rules of Netiquette and Behavior Online

This open and interactive learning environment provides several opportunities for communication among students and online instructors in discussion boards, chat, and emails. Online communication should be conducted in a professional and courteous manner at all times; you should be guided by common sense, respect for your instructor and classmates, and basic rules of etiquette. Students are expected to communicate respectfully with each other and with the instructor at all times and to refrain from making inappropriate comments. The guidelines listed in **Appendix D** should be followed by all students whenever communicating online with instructors and/or classmates.

Create a Back-up Plan Now!

A backup plan is an insurance policy for you against computer or internet problems. Computer malware, such as viruses, worms, and Trojans are an increasing problem for us all, and one can sneak in and clobber your hard drive and wipe out all of your programs and files. Power outages happen. Memory fries. Hard disks crash. Your internet connection goes down for several days. These computer problems can happen to all of us. Put a plan in place that allows you to continue with your coursework if you have a computer or internet problem; otherwise, work that you lose or cannot complete may not be accepted or may be counted as “late.” Information on how to create your backup plan is included in **Appendix E**.

UNM-LA Computers, Campus Wireless Network Access, and Computer Accounts

If you never come on campus at UNM-LA, you can skip this section.

Computers for student use are available in hallways, computer classrooms, the Library, and the Academic Support Center (ASC). Students may use computers in computer classrooms when no class is meeting there. If you want to use a computer in a classroom or hallway, you will need to obtain a UNM-LA local domain account, which you can create or can be created by the UNM-LA IT staff. Log in using your UNM-LA ID and password. Computers in the UNM-LA Library do not require a login, but you will still need your UNM NetID and password to access a Learn course.

UNM-LA has a campus wireless network. Wireless access is available as open (not encrypted) or secure (encrypted; log in authentication requires a UNM-LA domain account). To access the UNM-LA wireless network, see the instructions at <http://losalamos.unm.edu/campus-life/computing-services/wireless-network.html>.

To obtain a UNM-LA local domain account to access the secure wireless networks, contact UNM-LA Computing Services, here: <http://losalamos.unm.edu/campus-life/computing-services/index.html>

Tips for Success in Online Classes

Timetable

Before the semester begins:

1. Obtain admission to UNM, UNM-LA or another branch campus of UNM.
2. Obtain a UNM NetID and make sure that you can log in to <http://my.unm.edu>.
3. Register for your online course.
4. Email your instructor to find out if an in-person course orientation will be offered (varies by course).
5. Set up your computer environment to be ready to use Learn.
6. Obtain basic Blackboard Learn training, if you have not taken a course that uses Learn in the past.
7. Purchase your textbook(s) and other required course materials.
8. Make sure you have budgeted enough time in your schedule for an online course.

On the first day of the semester (or first day the class is available in Learn):

9. Log in to your online course and begin familiarizing yourself with the environment, location of the syllabus and schedule, materials describing the course, course orientation materials provided by your instructor, etc.
10. Read the syllabus and course outline or semester calendar, and note when assigned work will be due.
11. Note your instructor's attendance (login and participation) policy.

During the first week of the semester:

12. If your instructor offers a face-to-face course orientation, attend it if possible. If no face-to-face orientation is offered or if you cannot attend, work through the orientation materials that your instructor provides.
13. Make a master semester calendar for yourself, showing due dates for assignments, exams, etc. for ALL of your courses. This allows you to see when several things are due at once, and it helps you to plan your study time. If you use an electronic calendar, make sure you back it up.
14. Set interim goals and deadlines for yourself. For example, if a term paper is assigned, decide by what day you need to select a topic, by what day you need to complete a first draft, etc., in order to turn it in on time.
15. Connect with your classmates; email them, chat, or engage in discussions with them.
16. Send email to introduce yourself to your instructor if the instructor does not have an introduction activity for the course set up.

During the semester:

17. Log in to the online environment regularly. The most successful online students log in at least three times per week, and many find that scheduling a regular time and place for doing online course work helps them keep on track.
18. Complete your assigned work on time. Organize your study schedule so that you have ample time to complete reading, research, etc., before assignments and exams are due. Avoid overscheduling your time. Make sure you understand the consequences of turning work in late or failing to complete it. Be aware that if you fall behind, it can be much more difficult to catch up in an online course than in a traditional course.
19. Make a weekly "to do" list for yourself for all of your classes, and cross off each item as you complete it.
20. Periodically look at "My Grades" (available on the first screen you see after you log in to Learn or in the Course Menu on the left side of the Learn screen in your online classroom) or the online grade-book that your instructor uses, to monitor your progress. Discuss your progress with your instructor.
21. Make sure you understand what work items are required and which ones are optional or for extra credit.
22. If you have questions or difficulties, don't hesitate, don't avoid the problem, and don't be shy – **contact your instructor!**
23. Attend online office hours and participate regularly and enthusiastically in online communication activities, such as chats and discussions. Communicating about the materials you are studying is an important part of your learning experience.
24. If you live within reasonable driving distance of campus, find out if your instructor has in-person office hours and attend them, or schedule an appointment to meet your instructor.

25. Make use of supplementary resources that often accompany online courses; many publishers make resources such as flash cards, tutorials, video clips, and practice quizzes available to online students who use their textbooks.

Resources for Online Learning

UNM-A Library

For information about using UNM-LA's library services, see the library's website at <http://losalamos.unm.edu/library/index.html> . In particular, note the library's resources links on that page. Computers are available for student use in the library; you will need a picture id in order to check out a mouse or headphones. For questions, call **505-662-0343** or email ulalib@unm.edu .

Academic Support Center (ASC)

UNM-LA has an Academic Support Center, where adult tutors volunteer their services and other resources are available to students. See its web page at <http://losalamos.unm.edu/asc/index.html> . If you can come on campus during times when tutors are available, you will be eligible for the same face-to-face tutoring services as students in traditional classes. See the ASC website, above, for additional services offered. Computers are available for student use in the ASC.

Purchasing Textbooks

The UNM-LA bookstore is online, and its website is here: <http://losalamos.unm.edu/campus-life/ordering-books.html> . You may also purchase your textbooks from a seller of your choice.

Support

If this is your first time using Learn or another online classroom, you will need to learn how to use the environment, and you may run into difficulties. Even if you're an old hand at taking courses online, you may still experience occasional problems. If you do have a problem, don't hesitate to ask for help. Here are some resources:

For questions and problems in Learn

1. Use the on-screen help that is listed on the Support tab in your online classroom in Learn.
2. Search FASTINFO on the UNM web site for specific information: <https://unm.custhelp.com/> . If you do not find your answer, use the **Ask a Question** or **Chat** tab.
3. Contact the Learn help desk on main campus at **(505) 277-0857**.
4. Contact IT support at UNM-LA (staffed lightly) at the UNM-LA Help Desk in Building 6, or email UNMLA_ITSUPPORT-L@list.unm.edu
5. Contact resources provided by your instructor, if any.

For questions and problem in another online classroom (not Learn):

1. Use the on-screen help that is provided with the online classroom. It almost certainly will contain a link to help information and contact information for customer/student support.
2. Contact your instructor, or contact resources provided by your instructor.

Resources for Further Information:

Learning, Online Skills, Time management, and Computer Training Resources

Learning: Your First Job” by Robert Leamnson

http://www.unm.edu/~itc/UNMLA/UNMLA_Template/UNMLA_Template_Files/T-Learning_robert_learnson.pdf

Study Effectively with the ANSWER Method (video)

<https://youtu.be/CPxSzyIrcI>

Studying Tips for Students

<http://www.learningscientists.org/blog/2016/5/1/weekly-digest-8>

Time Management

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/time.html>

Lynda – training videos for computer and online skills

<http://lynda.unm.edu/> - need UNM NetID and password to log in

Basic training for computer use

<http://www.ctdlc.org/remediation/>

Blackboard Learn Training Videos for Students

(Note: these may contain features that are not included in UNM’s version of Learn.)

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLontYaReEU1seUE3ACG3sEc3zR7Br7URU>

Appendix A: Are You Ready for an Online Course?

Online Readiness Assessment

For each question, record the answer that best describes you. After you obtain your score, be sure to read the explanations of the questions that follow. They contain information about factors leading to success in online courses (18 questions).

1. My need to take an online course is:

- a. High – I need it for graduation, my major, or my job.
- b. Medium- I could take it later, on campus, or substitute another course.
- c. Low – It's for personal interest; I can take it anytime.

2. Seeing the instructor and other students and feeling that I am a part of a traditional, face-to-face class are:

- a. Not important to me
- b. Somewhat important to me.
- c. Very important to me.

3. Participating in face-to-face discussions in the classroom is:

- a. Usually not very helpful to me.
- b. Sometimes helpful to me.
- c. Often very helpful to me.

4. When I have an important job to do, I usually:

- a. Try to complete it before it's due.
- b. Need to be reminded in order to get it done on time.
- c. Put off working on it until the last minute, sometimes finishing it late.

5. When the instructor gives an assignment, I usually prefer to:

- a. Read the instructions and figure out how to do it myself.
- b. Try to follow the instructions, but ask for help when I need it.
- c. Have the instructions explained to me.

6. I like to receive feedback from the instructor on my papers and exams:

- a. Within a couple of weeks, so that I can review what I did.
- b. Within a few days, or I forget what I did or why I did it.
- c. Right away, or I get frustrated.

7. Keeping my schedule in mind, the amount of time I expect to devote to an online course is:

- a. More than I would spend on a traditional classroom course.
- b. About the same time as for a traditional classroom course.
- c. Less time than I would devote to a traditional classroom course.

8. I can use a computer at home or at work to do my coursework:

- a. Anytime I need it.
- b. Most of the time.
- c. Rarely or never; I must borrow a computer or use a public or campus computer.

9. I have access to the internet at home or at work to do my coursework:

- a. Anytime I need it.
- b. Most of the time.
- c. Rarely or never; I must use the internet from a public location, such as a library or campus.

10. Using a computer, I am:

- a. Expert: very comfortable and very skilled.
- b. Intermediate: moderately comfortable and moderately skilled.
- c. Beginner: uncomfortable, and my skill levels need significant development.

11. Using the internet, I am:

- a. Expert: very comfortable and very skilled.
- b. Intermediate: moderately comfortable and moderately skilled.
- c. Beginner: uncomfortable, and my skill levels need significant development.

12. When I have to learn to use new apps on my computer:

- a. I look forward to it and usually master it quickly.
- b. I'm a little nervous, but do it anyway.
- c. I put it off and try to avoid it.

13. As a reader I am:

- a. Very confident. I understand textbooks easily, with little or no help.
- b. Average. Sometimes I need help understanding the material, but I usually get it eventually.
- c. Fair. I have trouble understanding textbooks, and I depend on lectures, discussion, and tutoring.

14. I can express my ideas and thoughts in writing:

- a. Fluently and with ease, and my instructors give me high marks on my writing ability.
- b. Fairly well, although I sometimes struggle with expressing my thoughts, and my instructors sometimes correct my grammar, spelling, or wording.
- c. With difficulty; I do not write easily or clearly, and my instructors have suggested that I need to improve my writing.

15. I am willing to ask for help and explanations from the instructor and to call the instructor's attention to problems with course material or the online environment.

- a. Almost always.
- b. Sometimes.
- c. Rarely or never.

16. I have completed college credit courses totaling:

- a. More than 50 college credits.
- b. 25 to 49 college credits.
- c. Fewer than 24 college credits.

17. I have passed online courses before (from any college or while in high school or in my work):

- a. 3 or more.
- b. 1 or 2.
- c. None - this would be my first online course.

18. My grade point average is:

- a. Above 3.2.
- b. 2.4 to 3.2
- c. Below 2.4

Scoring:

Score 3 points for each **a**, 2 points for each **b**, and 1 point for each **c**.

Interpretation:

40 or more: You are probably prepared to take a UNM-LA online course.

Between 28 and 39: An online course will probably work for you, but you may have to make changes in your schedule or study habits, or you may need additional computer training or equipment.

27 or below: An online course may not be a good option for you at this time. Check with your advisor to discuss other UNM-LA course options, to discuss additional preparation you may need, or to discuss how you can work to change your study or work habits.

Explanation of Questions – What Are Your Problem Areas?

In this survey, questions were targeted at specific areas. Look at your questions and answers to discover where changes or additional preparation may help you succeed in an online course. The comments below refer to each of the above questions, by number.

1. Motivation and Self-Discipline: Because online courses give you additional flexibility and freedom of time and place for learning, online students need to be motivated and self-disciplined. When your need or desire for the course is high, motivation and self-discipline are usually easier to achieve. If your motivation or need for an online course is low, you may have difficulty making yourself log into the online classroom and doing the work on your own.

2, 3. Interactions between student and instructor and between students are important in online courses, but the interactions are seldom or never face-to-face. Opportunities for feeling “part of a group” are present, but very different in an online course. If you feel a high need for interaction with your instructor or classmates, you will need to be able to adapt how you achieve that. Your instructor will build a class environment through discussion questions, group projects, or other activities. You become part of the “group” through your participation and contributions to these activities. If you have a strong need for face-to-face interaction, you may be dissatisfied with an online course.

4. Time Management: Online course work requires self-discipline, the ability to motivate yourself, and the ability to manage your time in order to complete work when it is due. Time management is a skill that is not difficult to develop, and it is essential for success in an online course. You will benefit from setting aside regular study times and sticking to them. You will benefit from carefully structuring the time you have available for studying and working on your online course. Make sure you know the dates and times when interactions with the instructor or other students are required, and make sure you know when assigned materials are due. If you aren’t good at managing your time, you should learn and begin using some time-management techniques before beginning an online course.

5, 13, 14. Reading and Writing Skills: Written materials (text, study guide, handouts, instructions), whether online or printed, are the primary sources of information in an online course. Instructors may

supplement with audio and video clips, but reading will occupy a large portion of your study time. Your primary method of communication with your instructor and other students will be via the written word, in email, discussions, chats, essays, reports, and papers. Students who are skilled at writing are more likely to succeed at online courses than students who have difficulty expressing themselves in writing. If your placement test scores are not high enough to place you into a college level reading and writing courses, we recommend that you do not attempt an online course until you have brought up your skills to a college level. If you are uncertain about this, discuss it with your academic adviser.

6. Feedback: Most online courses are structured so that you turn in and receive feedback on your assignments electronically and within a few days, sometimes more quickly than conventional courses. However, if your course requires that you mail in assignments, the delay in receiving feedback can extend to a week or two.

7. Time and Difficulty: Most students report that online courses take as much or more time than conventional courses, and they are as or more difficult. You may save commuting and classroom time when you take an online course, but you may spend more time dealing with the technology. Your instructor will give you assignments that will substitute for the classroom experience and for the time you would spend in a classroom. For a typical 3 credit online course, you can expect to spend 9-12 hours per week on coursework. If you cannot devote the required time to an online course, you should defer taking one until your schedule can accommodate it.

8, 9: Access to computer and internet: Online courses are dependent on frequent and reliable access to computers and the internet. While it is not required that you have a computer and internet access at home, it makes taking an online course much, much easier. Many public libraries have computers and high-speed internet access, and these are available on the UNM-LA campus in the libraries, building 6, and unused computer classrooms. However, hours and sometimes length of access are limited. If you don't have a computer or internet freely available at home, make sure that you can schedule sufficient time for their use elsewhere before you register for an online course.

10, 11, 12: Computer and Internet Skills: Online courses are dependent on computers, communication technology, and the internet. While you do not need to be an expert, it helps if you're comfortable using these technologies, and if you are not, we recommended that you build up your skill base before starting an online course. (**Appendix B** contains a list of computer skills needed, and **Appendix C** contains a list of hardware and software required and recommended for using Learn.)

15. Assertiveness, willingness to ask for help: When there are problems, either with the course material or course environment, successful students are willing to call these to the instructor's attention and ask for help. If you don't understand the instructor's expectations, an assignment, a concept, or an idea, you need to be willing to ask. Chances are that other students are having the same difficulty, and calling it to the instructor's attention helps not only you but your classmates. If you have problems with your computer environment or with Learn, you need to be willing to call it to the instructor's attention or ask for help either from the instructor or from the other support resources. If you have personal problems, such as illness or a death in the family, you should let your instructor know why you are temporarily unable to participate, so that he/she doesn't assume that you have just lost interest in the course. Students who willingly make their questions, problems, and needs known to the instructor are more likely to succeed in an online course.

16, 17, 18: Prior academic experience and success. Students who have succeeded in conventional courses and in other online courses are more likely to succeed online. However, if you are otherwise

prepared to take an online course, don't let your inexperience deter you; prepared students have a high success rate in online courses. If this is your first online course, work through the online documentation and training that is offered in using Blackboard Learn before the semester begins, if at all possible.

Materials for the above assessment were freely borrowed from Monroe Community College and Genesee Community College.

Appendix B: Computer Skills for an Online Course

Because you spend a lot of time working with a computer when you take an online course, you will be much more likely to succeed if you have mastered the basic set of computer skills listed below.

Table 1. Basic Computer & Internet Skills Needed for Online Learning

Access <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logging in to the computer and logging in to apps and websites, including using and managing passwords• Logging out from the computer and logging out from apps and websites• Understanding the difference between the local computer and “the internet.”
Data entry <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typing• Controlling the cursor with a mouse, touchpad, stylus, or other input device
Browser <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using URLs (web links) to connect to websites• Using toolbar for navigation and setting options on browser• Opening and viewing links, scrolling, navigating in websites• Print files or screen content from a website• Selecting links on the website using the mouse pointer or fingertip/stylus• Downloading files from internet to computer• Using bookmarks• Reading status information on status bars• Using tabs to open multiple web pages• Using forward and back buttons
Search <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using a search engine such as Google, Bing, or Yahoo to find information on the internet
File Management <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Navigating computer’s file system,• Opening and closing files• Copying, moving, and deleting files• Renaming files• Setting up and using folders to organize files• Finding saved files• Saving files to external storage devices such as flash drives (aka thumb drives, USB drives) or online, “in the cloud”.• Searching computer’s or external storage device’s file system for files
Window Management <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using and managing multiple open windows and multiple tabs within a window• Opening and closing applications• Scrolling• Selecting, moving, and sizing windows
Word Processing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entering and editing text, including copying, pasting, and simple formatting,• Saving, closing, and opening files• Printing files

<p>Email</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating, sending, replying to, and forwarding messages, including attachments • Sending messages to multiple recipients
<p>Forms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing and submitting online forms (filling in fields, selecting buttons and check-boxes)
<p>Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backing up files from computer to an external device or “cloud” site on the internet • Downloading and installing software from the Internet onto computer • Installing software from external devices (CD-ROM, DVD, flash drive) • Attaching and uploading files • Using anti-malware software to protect computer from viruses and other malware
<p>Hardware</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting components • Connecting computer to the internet

A basic introduction to computer skills can be found at <http://www.ctdlc.org/remediation/>
If you need to work on some of your computer skills, visit “lynda” for a large selection of training videos: <http://lynda.unm.edu/> . You will need your UNM NetID and password to login. Search for “Computer Literacy for Windows” or “Computer Literacy for the Mac” to get started. Many tutorial videos on a variety of subjects are available for free to UNM students at lynda.

Appendix C: Computer Environment Needed for Blackboard Learn

Your computer must be set up to have the minimum set of hardware and software described in Table 2, below. You will need to have reliable access to the internet at least twice per week, and preferably more frequently.

Whenever possible, connect to Learn over a high-speed (broadband) connection to the internet (for example, using DSL, cable, wireless, or satellite) rather than a dial-up connection. Much of the time a dial-up connection will be adequate, although slow. However, a high-speed connection will make it much easier to view video clips, graphics, PowerPoint slide shows, and some demonstrations, and files will download much more rapidly.

If you do not have access to a high-speed internet connection at home, plan your time so that you can use the computers in the UNM-LA Library or in another location with high-speed internet access to view items where a high-speed connection is optimal. UNM-LA has a public wireless internet that you can use if you have a laptop with wireless access.

NOTE: Not all public computers will have all of the above software, and you may not be able to install it or have it installed for you. Some public computers will limit the amount of time you can use them, and free public connections to the internet may not be secure. Insecure wireless connections are not encrypted; these are vulnerable to snooping.

Table 2. Setting Up Your Computer Environment for Learn

Please note that the links in this table were up to date as of this writing. However, web sites sometimes change their links, and so you may need to search for the product. Using the product name and “download” in the search usually finds the correct page quickly.

REQUIRED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Hardware: At a minimum, your computer should have a hard drive, 1 GHz CPU, 2GB of RAM or higher, 1 GB free disk space, a mouse, touchpad, or other cursor control device, and an Ethernet card or wireless interface for internet access (or a 56K modem, if other ways to access the internet are not available). A high-speed connection to the internet is strongly recommended.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● NOTE Regarding tablets and smart phones: Using Learn with a tablet or smart phone (mobile device): Blackboard Learn is not guaranteed to work well with tablets and smart phones. However, a tablet or smart phone can be useful for reading and viewing information in Learn. For these purposes, a mobile browser such as Chrome or Firefox will <i>probably</i> work. A mobile app for Learn is also available for UNM, called Bb_Student or Blackboard App. The mobile app is NOT required for using Learn on a mobile device. Your courses using Learn have not been tested with all possible smart phones and tablets or with the mobile app, so be aware that some features or functions may not work or may not display cleanly. <p>It is recommended that if you use the mobile app, use it only for reading and accessing information and not for critical work that will affect your grade, such as submitting assignments</p>

or taking a quiz or exam. If something goes wrong, UNM Learn support will not be able to help you recover. Further, some pages may not render clearly in the mobile app; for these you will need to use a laptop or desktop browser.

You will probably have a better experience using Learn on your phone or tablet if you access it with a browser app such as Chrome or Firefox. These apps are available through online stores such as Google Play and iTunes. A downside of using one of these browser apps is that the size of the text may be very small. See UNM's page on mobile apps, here:

<https://goo.gl/Waaa9y>

- **An internet connection and internet interface** (cable modem, DSL modem, wireless receiver, wired Ethernet network connection, etc.)
- **NOTE regarding free software:** When downloading free software, DECLINE any offers to install additional software such as web-search tool bars. These sometimes create problems or contain ad-ware.
- **A web browser:** The browsers that are supported depend on the operating system and its version, and the version of Learn that is installed. **Learn 9.1 Q4 2015** is in use as of this writing.
 - For Windows, in general, the browsers that work are Chrome (Stable Channel), Firefox (Final Release Channel), Edge (Windows 10), and Internet Explorer 9, 10, and 11. More problems have been seen between Internet Explorer and Learn than with the other browsers.
 - For a Mac OS, in general, the browsers that work are Chrome (Stable Channel), Firefox (Final Release Channel), and Safari 6.0 or higher (varies with MAC operating system version).
 - This page contains a link to check your browser's compatibility with Learn (Browser Checker). <https://goo.gl/1vZg5E>
 - Free downloads of these browsers are available:
Chrome: <https://www.google.com/intl/en/chrome/browser/>
Firefox: <http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/>
Safari: <http://www.apple.com/safari/>
Edge: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/microsoft-edge>
- **A word processing program** such as MS Word.
 - UNM students may download, for free, Office 365 Pro Plus. This contains MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and other Office programs. You may also use Office 365 online. For instructions, go here: <http://it.unm.edu/software/students/index.html>
 - A free, basic word processing program that is compatible with many MS Word files is available online at <http://drive.google.com>. Use of this program requires that you obtain a free Google account available here: <http://accounts.google.com>.
 - A free download, OpenOffice4, also compatible with MS Word, is available here: <http://www.openoffice.org/>.
 - Note that these free programs may not be compatible with MS Word .docx files, but they are compatible with .doc files.

Your instructor may have specific requirements for the word processing program that you use.

- **Adobe Reader** (free download from <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>) - you will use this to read .pdf files. At your option, you can set up your browser to use Adobe Reader instead of the browser's built-in pdf reader. Other free pdf readers should also work, but they may not support as many features.
- **Disable the pop-up window blocker** in your browser for this site: <http://learn.unm.edu> (Disabling the pop-up blocker for a single site is usually found in browser Options settings).
- **Enable cookies** in your browser for this site: <http://learn.unm.edu> (usually found in browser Options settings)

RECOMMENDED (may be required for some courses – check with instructor)

- **Speakers:** An internal speaker, external speakers, or inexpensive headset that plugs into your computer. Speakers and headsets are available wherever computer equipment and accessories are sold. Most computers have an internal speaker built-in.
- **Microphone:** An inexpensive microphone if your course will have live chat or Collaborate sessions. Microphones are widely available wherever computer equipment and accessories are sold. New laptops, phones, and tablets usually have these built-in.
- **Webcam:** may be needed if your course will be using video conferencing for any class meetings. These are usually built into laptops, tablets, and phones. Inexpensive webcams are widely available wherever computer equipment and accessories are sold. Check with your instructor regarding specific requirements.
- **Java Runtime Environment** – latest version of JRE 8 (as of this writing). A free download is available here: <http://www.java.com/en/download/index.jsp>. Most students will *not* need the Java Runtime Environment (JRE), but it is used for some features, such as editing equations.
- **Video player: Additional** free software, for watching video clips (ask instructor for requirements)
 - Windows: VLC Media Player - free download from <http://www.videolan.org/vlc/download-windows.html>
 - Mac: Apple Quicktime (ask your instructor for recommended source and version)
 - Adobe Flash Player 10 or later (free download from <http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>)
 - Adobe Shockwave Player 10 or later (free download from <http://get.adobe.com/shockwave/>).
- **MS Office File Viewers:** free downloads for viewing files created in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and more. May be needed if MS Office 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, or 365 is not loaded on your computer
<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/download/search.aspx?q=viewer>
- **Computer security programs** including a virus detection program, a firewall, and programs that protect your computer from spyware. These are important whether you are running MS Windows or Apple Mac OS. Free and effective versions of all of these are readily available as downloads. UNM recommends and supplies **Symantec Endpoint Protection**, which is free anti-malware software, from UNM's site here: <http://it.unm.edu/download/> (you will be

required to login with your UNM NetID and password).

Appendix D: Rules of Netiquette and Online Behavior

This open and interactive learning environment provides several opportunities for communication among students and online instructors in the Discussion Boards, chat, and emails. Online communication should be conducted in a professional and courteous manner at all times; be guided by common sense, collegiality, and basic rules of etiquette. Students are expected to be respectful to each other and to the instructor at all times and to refrain from making inappropriate comments. The following guidelines should be observed by all students whenever communicating online with instructors and/or classmates.

- **Write professionally** at all times.
 - Use standard English, not “Textlish.”
 - Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
 - Use acronyms and emoticons sparingly, if at all. These can sometimes help communication, but they can also impede it if your recipient is not familiar with them.
 - Don’t submit anything that was composed while you were under the influence of street drugs or alcohol. Your mental state will most likely show.
- **Be considerate of others’ time.**
 - Don’t overwhelm your classmates or instructor with emails or lengthy discussion contributions.
 - Write concisely and stay on topic.
 - Respond promptly to emails, especially when something is requested from you.
- **Be respectful** of other people.
 - If you disagree, do so respectfully, without sarcasm or ridicule.
 - TYPING IN ALL CAPS is usually interpreted as the equivalent of SHOUTING.
 - Flaming or ranting is unacceptable - it's the online equivalent of throwing a tantrum in the classroom.
- **Be calm.** If you are upset or frustrated or angry, keep this out of your communications with your fellow students or instructors. An angry or sarcastic comment does little to win respect or cooperation.
 - Think about what you are going to say before you type, and say it in an unemotional, professional manner.
 - When asking for help, take the time to provide adequate information for the instructor or classmate to understand your problem. That will save time in the long run.
- **Think twice before clicking on Send.** Make sure you are saying what you mean to say.
 - Remember, when you are communicating online, you don't have the nonverbal cues you get when you are face-to-face, and it's easy to misinterpret the written word.
 - Ask yourself, how will the person on the other end interpret a message? While no one can anticipate all reactions, think about how your message may be received, and read over each message before sending. Remember, that's a real, live, feeling person who is reading your email or discussion.

- Allow for the possibility that you can misinterpret someone else's message. If you're unsure of the writer's meaning, or if you're feeling annoyed or angered by what they said, before you pound out a sharp retort and send it off, ask the writer for clarification.
- **Stalking and derogatory comments are inappropriate.**
 - Do NOT: stalk a classmate, make derogatory or inappropriate comments and jokes, or forward emails that make fun of or put down someone because of their race, gender, age, religion, physical characteristics, disability, or sexual orientation. These types of communications are unacceptable and subject to the same disciplinary action that they would receive if they occurred in the live classroom. Worse, if you do the above in online discussion, blog, or email, you leave tangible evidence of misbehavior!
 - If you have concerns about something that has been said to or about you or other classmates, you should let the instructor know.
- **Spamming, phishing, and hacking are not allowed.**
 - Do not send advertisements or solicitations to buy something to your classmates or instructor (spamming).
 - Do not attempt to obtain private information from your classmates via deceptive means (phishing).
 - Do not attempt to break into a classmate's computer or the university's network (hacking).
- **Plagiarism, cheating, and other violations are unacceptable.**
 - Plagiarism, cheating, and other violations of ethical student behavior are serious actions in a learning community. Just like derogatory comments, this behavior is subject to the same disciplinary action as if the behavior occurred in the live classroom. See <http://pathfinder.unm.edu/campus-policies/academic-dishonesty.html> for campus policies.
 - Do not copy and distribute copyrighted materials unless you have permission to do so.
- **Respect the privacy of your classmates.**
 - Do not ever forward or copy and paste the contents of their emails, course messages, discussions, or blogs outside of the online classroom.
 - Do not provide their email or other contact information to anyone outside of the class.
- **Avoid distributing malware (e.g., viruses, Trojans).**
 - Run virus-scanning software daily on your computer, and keep the software up-to-date.
 - UNM IT provides free antivirus software to students and faculty, available here: <http://it.unm.edu/download/> (Symantec Endpoint-protection, as of this writing).

Appendix E: Create a Back-up Plan - Now!

This information applies to any course you take that requires use of a computer, not just an online course.

NOTE: Learn is a fairly stable environment, but like most computer systems, occasionally it does crash or lose connectivity to the internet. It's especially important to keep a backup copy of work that you submit (such as attachments to assignments, or contributions to discussions or blogs), "just in case." This is a good idea when working in ANY online program.

Make it a habit to keep a copy on your computer of each assignment that you submit.

When making a discussion post, even if Learn is functioning perfectly, an internet crash might occur while you are typing in the post or reply, and all your unsaved work would be lost. Or you might forget to click on **Submit** before moving to another screen. It's a good practice to create your discussion post in a file that is located on your computer and then to copy and paste it into the text entry area of the discussion posting screen in Learn. You can create your work in a word processor file or a text file. This method can be helpful if you're creating course messages from within the Learn environment, too.

In tests in Learn, there is an autosave function that saves the answer to each question a few seconds after you answer it, when you move to the next question, so even if there is a crash it's very likely (not guaranteed) that your answers will be preserved.

A backup plan is an insurance policy for you. Computer malware, such as worms, viruses, and Trojans are an increasing problem for us all, and one can sneak in and clobber your hard drive and wipe out all of your programs and files. Power outages happen. Memory fries. Hard disks crash. Your internet connection goes down for several days. These computer problems can happen to all of us. It's wise to have a plan in place so that you can continue with your coursework if you have a computer or internet problem; otherwise, assignments that you've completed but lost in a crash before they are turned in may be counted as late or even may not be accepted.

- **Step 1: Find out what options are available** so that you'll have a computer available in case of an emergency (for example, the computer or internet connection you normally use is suddenly unavailable). Identify at least one alternate computer and internet source that you can use, and verify that you can use it to login to Blackboard Learn. Don't just assume that it will work or that you can use it anytime. Find out what times it's available. Find out if you need anything special to use it, such as a picture ID, or if you need to supply your own mouse. Make sure it has software that you use in the course, such as Adobe Reader and Javascript. Your plan could be as simple as using another computer in your house or getting permission from your employer to allow you to use a work computer in case your computer goes down. It could involve getting a library card and checking to see when the local library computers are available.

NOTE: You can use any of the computers in the UNM-LA Library, computers in the hall in building 6, computers in the Academic Support Center, or computers in unused classrooms, when these locations are open. (You will need a UNM-LA login to use

computers in the computer labs or classrooms.) You need a picture ID to check out a mouse and headphones in the UNM-LA Library. On the UNM-LA campus, you may connect to the campus wireless networks from your laptop; see <http://losalamos.unm.edu/campus-life/computing-services/wireless-network.html> for more information.

- **Step 2: Download and print out crucial course information each week**, before a computer emergency occurs. At the beginning of the semester, print out or store on a thumb drive the syllabus and the schedule or course outline, and keep them in a safe place. At the beginning of each week, capture the work that is assigned for that week, e.g., readings and written assignments. You may download the work to a thumb drive or other media, or you may print it out, along with the information you need from the links in your assignment. Print out or save any additional web addresses you need, such as the link to the publisher's textbook website. It is also helpful to have a printed copy of the names, phone number, and external email addresses of the instructor and of some other students in the class.
- **Step 3: Back up your critical files**, such as assignments and essays, while you are working on them. There are a lot of ways to back up a file. You can copy the file to a CD-ROM, DVD, USB flash drive (aka thumb drive, jump drive, flash memory drive), to an internet backup "cloud" service, to your web site or blog. You can email the file to your UNM email account as an attachment (a copy will be stored on the UNM email server). These files have a way of disappearing from your computer just before they are due! (Why this happens is an ongoing mystery to most college instructors.)

A USB flash drive is a relatively cheap and convenient way to keep your critical files at hand wherever you are, because it is small and easy to use, and it plugs into a USB port on most computers. There are also several "cloud" services (online storage services) that allow you to back up your files on the internet. UNM provides Microsoft OneDrive for free as a part of Office 365 Pro Plus. To find other sites that offer "cloud" storage, search on "online storage services review" for reviews of sites that provide this service; many allow free storage of up to 2-5 GB.

Some common, reputable USB flash drive manufacturers include:

Kingston	Patriot
Sandisk	Transcend
PNY	Corsair
Adata	Lexar
Verbatim	

Look for a USB flash drive that uses USB 3.0 (if your computer supports it). USB 2.0 still works well, too, and is less expensive.

USB flash drives often appear to be more durable than they actually are. Improper use or storage can bend the USB connector and render the drive unreadable. It is not recommended to store a USB flash drive on a keychain unless it was specifically designed for that. If you do use a USB flash drive as your storage medium, it is highly recommended to keep a backup on a cloud service, hard drive, DVD, or second USB flash drive, as USB flash drives have been known to fail at inconvenient times. Data on a failed USB flash drive is not recoverable.

If you use your USB flash drive on a public computer, remember to take it with you when you leave!