

2009

Student Handbook for Distance Education



Piedmont Community College

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CONTACT INFORMATION FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

Location:

The Distance Education office is located in H Building (Learning Resources Center) on the Person campus.

Office Hours:

8:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday

8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Friday

Staff:

Libbie McPhaul-Moore/336-599-1181, ext. 445/mcphaul@piedmontcc.edu

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Piedmont Community College

Distance Education

P.O. Box 1197

Roxboro, NC 27573

Fax: (336) 599-9146

For information about Distance Learning at PCC, you can go to our website at <http://www2.piedmontcc.edu/lrc>

WELCOME

Dear Student,

The Distance Education Staff would like to welcome you to Distance Learning at PCC! Our courses offer an alternative approach to traditional learning. Students who are unable to attend on-campus classes are given the opportunity to pursue their education via distance learning.



It is very important that all students carefully read the material presented in this handbook. You will find information on how to retrieve your course syllabus using a web-based course management system called Blackboard. You will also be instructed on how to submit homework, when and where to take your exams, and other important information about your course.

Distance Education's primary function is to assist departments in the delivery of distance learning courses. It is important for you to know that while our group plays a role in administering courses, we do not play a role in deciding the content of courses, nor do we play a role in teaching courses. Those latter responsibilities are fully assumed by your PCC faculty instructor.

Knowing this difference is important because it means that you will contact your instructor for some things, while you will contact us for others. If you have any questions about the information in your syllabus, questions regarding your course work, or questions regarding your course grade, please contact your instructor directly (contact information will be listed in your syllabus). If, however, you have questions about Blackboard, telecourses, teleweb courses, questions about obtaining course DVD's and other materials, questions about proctored exams, or questions about any of the information in this handbook, please call us at (336) 599-1181, ext. 445 or ext. 246.

Have a good semester!

Distance Education Staff

IS DISTANCE LEARNING FOR YOU?

WHAT IS DISTANCE LEARNING?

Distance learning is any learning that takes place with the instructor and student separated from each other geographically or in terms of time. For example, an instructor may record a video tape or make a streaming media file with learning objectives and planned activities months or weeks before a student accesses the tape or the file to learn from it. Visit <http://www2.piedmont.cc.nc.us/DL/IsDLforyou.htm> for a self-analysis to help you decide if you have the basic skills to be successful.

DISTANCE EDUCATION MISSION

The mission of Piedmont Community College's distance learning courses is to provide increased access to education for busy people to accomplish educational goals. They enable students with demanding work hours, hectic schedules, or childcare difficulties the freedom and flexibility to obtain an education at their convenience at any time or any place.

DELIVERY METHODS

Distance Education at PCC is available in a number of delivery methods. Courses are offered via the Internet, Telecourses (College-by-Cassette or DVD), Teleclasses (Videoconferencing), TeleWeb, and Hybrid.



Internet courses give students access to their classes 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Once logged in, students are able to view their syllabus, course documents, assignments, and materials. The majority of tests are taken online. Some instructors, however, require that tests be taken on campus. Requirements include access to a personal computer capable of providing graphical access to the Web, as well as appropriate Web and email software.

Telecourse is one of the distance learning delivery methods at PCC. Telecourses require students to view videocassettes or DVD's for successful completion of the course. Courses are supplemented by printed materials (text, study guide, readings) and an instructor is available throughout the course for assistance. Exams are usually taken on campus. (A \$15.00 refundable deposit is required when checking out DVD's.)

Teleclasses (Videoconferencing) are delivered in a video-conferencing environment with two-way interactive audio and video between the Person and Caswell County Campuses. Students attend class in the Distance Learning classrooms on the Person County Campus in Roxboro or the Caswell County Campus in Yanceyville. The instructor will be in one location, with the class televised to the other location. Students at the remote location are able to see and talk to the instructor.

Hybrid courses blend traditional class meetings with the World Wide Web, email, and other Internet resources to provide opportunities for student-faculty and student-to-student interaction in person as well as online. Requirements typically include class meetings once a week and access to a computer capable of providing graphical access to the Web, as well as appropriate Web and e-

mail software. This allows the student much more flexibility, while maintaining face-to-face contact with the instructor typical of traditional education.

TeleWeb courses are an interactive instructional system that integrate telecourse delivery (videotapes, DVDs, or CDs) with online activities and resources. Students view lessons through telecourse delivery and use the Internet to participate in class discussions and instructional activities. Teleweb courses require access to a computer capable of providing graphical access to the Internet, as well as appropriate Web and e-mail software.

REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR EACH DELIVERY METHOD

Below you will find a quick reference to help you know what you need to have, do, and know to complete courses at PCC. The information is presented according to type of course delivery.

Delivery Type	Hardware or Software	Communications	Attendance	Level of Independence
Telecourse	You should have a VCR for recording aired broadcasts or playing tapes of the course lectures OR you should have a DVD player for playing DVD's of the course lectures.	Good written communications outside of class (usually via email) are essential. Communicate early and often!	Attendance is not required for these classes accept when specified by the instructor for tests or other reasons. Face-to-face orientation is mandatory. The date for this meeting will be in the course brochure.	Telecourses require you to set your own schedule for studying and meeting paper and assignment deadlines. You may be in close proximity to PCC, enabling you to actually visit the instructor for the course in lieu of less simultaneous interaction such as email, but reliance on email and other communications such as the phone and your ability to communicate clearly are required.
Internet	You should have your own computer for optimal learning. The computer should meet minimum requirements. You may also need certain software. Your instructor or Blackboard course will list	Good written communications via email or discussion boards are essential. Communicate early and often!	These courses do not usually require attendance, but there are a few exceptions. Check the course syllabus or with your instructor for specifics. Completing an orientation is mandatory.	Internet courses demand the most from you as an independent learner. Like telecourses, they require you to set your own schedule for studying and meeting paper and assignment deadlines. You will also have to manage your time

	specific software you will need			in order to meet the course requirements. As you may be geographically more distant from the campus or the instructor, reliance on information posted to the course website or Blackboard will be your first resource for knowing what to do, when to do it and how it should be done.
Hybrid	You should have your own computer for optimal learning. The computer should meet minimum requirements. You may also need certain software. You can get some of this software from the free downloads section. Your instructor or Blackboard course will list specific software you will need.	Good written communications outside of class (usually via email) are essential. Communicate early and often!	Mandatory attendance is in force for these classes just as in classes that regularly meet face-to-face. The room where they meet is posted in the course brochure. An orientation is conducted the first day of class.	These courses require you to be as independent and resourceful as any course taught face-to-face on campus. Regular class meetings set the pace.
TeleWeb	You should have your own computer for optimal learning. The computer should meet minimum requirements. You may also need certain software. You can get some of this software from the free downloads section. You	Good written communications outside of class (usually via email) are essential. Communicate early and often!	Attendance is not required for these classes except when specified by the instructor for tests or other reasons. Face-to-face orientation is mandatory. The date for this meeting will be in the course brochure.	Teleweb courses demand as much from you as an independent learner. Like telecourses, they require you to set your own schedule for studying and meeting paper and assignment deadlines. You will also have to manage your time in order to meet the course

	<p>should have a DVD player for playing DVD's of the course lectures.</p>		<p>requirements. As you may be geographically more distant from the campus or the instructor, reliance on information posted to the course website or Blackboard will be your first resource for knowing what to do, when to do it and how it should be done.</p>
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THE SUCCESSFUL DISTANCE LEARNER

Based on advice from experienced distance instructors and students, tips are provided to help you get the most out of distance learning.

GOOD STUDY HABITS AND ABILITIES

One way to be a successful distance learner is to develop good habits and abilities early. These habits and abilities are:

- check your email at least once a day
- send copies of all project-related email to the whole group (when working on a group project)
- depend on yourself as much as possible
- use resources available to you, including online help, tutorials, manuals, course syllabi, assignment directions, and the Internet
- monitor your own progress by noting where you are in the course, which assignments you have completed and which lie ahead
- communicate with your instructor and peers
- reach out when you need someone to talk to, feel frustrated or need help
- remember you are not alone
- contribute advice or ideas about the real-world as it applies to the subject matter you are studying

Learners who have good learning self-awareness usually have good strategies for better understanding new information and may be more successful in a distance learning environment. Learning self-awareness (metacognition) is your ability to be aware of how well you are learning; in other words, to know when you understand or don't understand new information when you read it or it is presented.

LEARNING STYLE

When it comes to learning, everyone is different, having their own preferred approaches to new material and their own preferred style of learning. Assessing your skills and preferences will help you select the type of learning strategies that are most likely to keep you interested and help you reach your learning goals. Visit this site for a self-analysis and more information on learning styles, <http://www2.piedmont.cc.nc.us/DL/LSI/canfield.htm> .



SELF-DISCIPLINE AND MOTIVATION

Another characteristic shared by successful distance learners is self-discipline. This characteristic is usually seen in the learner's ability to stay current with class assignments, participate on a regular basis in online discussions, and develop and adhere to a schedule for class activities.

One thing you can do to promote self-discipline is to dedicate a place for studying. Your own space where you can shut the door, leave papers everywhere, and work in peace is necessary. If you try to share study space with the dining room or bedroom, food or sleep will take priority over studying.

Distance learners must have self-motivation. Unlike traditional courses in which the students and instructor meet face-to-face once or several times a week, most learning activities and communication in distance courses are asynchronous, meaning that class members participate and complete their assignments at different times throughout the day or week. This arrangement can allow you to do class work when it's most convenient for you. However, with this increased freedom and flexibility comes responsibility. It will be up to you to motivate yourself to keep up with assignments.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Set aside a significant amount of time each week for class work. Distance education classes require as much time and effort as instructor-led classes, if not more. Develop a schedule and stick to it. Without the structure of weekly class meetings, you may be tempted to put off class work until the last minute. Instead, you should give yourself extra time to do your work, because technological difficulties and asynchronous communication can slow down the process.



To be prepared, read the syllabus and other course materials carefully to understand:

- class requirements
- assignment due dates
- the proper form assignments should take
- the time it will take to get assignments in the proper form, and
- contact information for your instructor and classmates in case you need help.

Once you have the big picture, mark important dates on your calendar.

Technology is not all that we might expect and problems occur that are beyond our control. Servers go down, computers crash, programs freeze and work may be lost.

There are, however, things that are very much in your control. Plan ahead; allow time for downloading and installing software (such as plug-ins) that you need for class. Your instructor will often list these in your course syllabus. Download and install this software early, then practice using it. Software programs take time to learn, and the night before an assignment is due is not the time.

If you'll be accessing the Internet from work, find out if your company has a firewall. A firewall may prevent you from accessing particular web sites or using browser plug-ins to view video and audio, and interfere with file transfers.

Expect and plan for glitches and delays by starting assignments early, backing up your work regularly and making contingency plans for chats or online exams. Don't wait until the last minute!

TIME COMMITMENT

Along with time management goes time commitment and perhaps creating your own study space away from outside distractions as mentioned above.

Completing course assignments and other learning activities can take from five to fifteen hours or more per week. And you may find that you need to be online almost every day. So before enrolling, be sure you can set aside enough time to keep up with your daily or weekly assignments.



CLASS COMMUNICATION

Distance classes require a great deal of communication with the instructor and fellow students for assignments and class activities. But without regular face-to-face meetings, it's hard to develop personal relationships. In fact, it's easy to get isolated and feel lonely. Get to know your instructor and classmates by sending email, participating in discussions, and joining chat rooms. You'll find that just like in regular classes, people are your greatest resource. They can give you help, advice and support when you need it, and help get you through the rough spots. You'll also have a richer, more rewarding learning experience if you reach out.

Good communication skills for distance course participation include:

- Clearly expressing yourself in writing
- Thinking ideas through before responding
- Observing “netiquette,” remaining polite and respectful in your communications
- Asking for help when you need it

In distance courses, nearly all communication is written, so it is critical that you feel comfortable expressing yourself in writing. If you feel that you are weak in this area, try to brush up on your writing skills and find out how much writing is required for the course before enrolling.

Communicating clearly on the Internet without creating misunderstandings is a challenge. One problem is that you haven't any facial expressions, body language, or environment to help you express yourself.

These guidelines should help you:

- Be clear. Make sure that the subject line or title matches your content.
- Always include a subject line with an email message. The subject line should include, at the very least, the course ID as well as a description of what the email is about. Include your first and last name.
- Think two or three times before responding to a posting in anger. Try writing out what you have to say, editing it and setting it aside for a few hours before rereading it again and deciding to post it. Think to yourself, am I sure this is what the other person really meant with their posting? Could I have misinterpreted it? Better to ask for clarification before launching
- Do not use ALL CAPITAL LETTERS--it's equal to screaming.
- Avoid offensive language.
- Make a good impression. Your words and content represent you. Review and edit your words and images before sending.
- Be selective on what information you put in an e-mail. Information on the Internet is public and can be seen by anyone in the world, including future employers.
- Remember you are not anonymous. What you write in an e-mail can be traced back to you.
- Be brief. If your message is short, people will be more likely to read it.
- Be careful with humor and sarcasm. They come across differently online and can easily be misinterpreted. This does not mean to avoid humor. Humor has its place in any classroom, on-ground or online. Just be sure to identify humor as such to avoid misinterpretation.



COMPUTER SKILLS

You don't need to be a computer geek or guru to succeed, but you do need to have some basic technology skills, such as word processing and using a web browser. If you don't presently possess these skills, you will need to pick up on them fairly quickly. If you don't think you can learn these technology skills easily, you may need to develop new skills, take a class or do some reading before enrolling.

You will need skills in:

- basic word processing
- how to send and receive emails
- uploading and downloading files
- how to send and receive attachments, and
- navigating and conducting research on the Web

Spend some time at your computer and on the Internet every day, getting comfortable with your equipment and surroundings. Practice your computing skills until you feel confident that you can complete class assignments.

COMPUTER ACCESS

The personal computer is the primary learning and communication tool in most distance courses. Needless to say, you will need regular access to a computer with an Internet connection. With the availability of new technologies, a computer capable of playing multimedia presentations is ideal. You may find it especially convenient to have such a computer both at work and at home.

SELECTING AND CITING INTERNET INFORMATION

As you browse the many resources on the Internet, you will find web pages on just about any topic you can think of. If you are doing academic research, it is strongly recommended that you make use of the library as your primary source to research and collect articles and books on your topic. Resources found on the Internet can still be used; however, you must conscientiously evaluate the source and content of the Web page.

Some questions to ask yourself:

- Who is the intended audience of the Web page?
- What is the source type? Is this a memo, a letter, a personal page, an unpublished article, a conference proceeding?
- Is the author or publisher of the web page listed clearly? Is there an e-mail link to the author for questions or comments?
- Is the author or publisher a professional, or an expert in the web page topic?
- Is the URL appropriate to the content of the page?
- .edu and .org sites are hosted by educational institutions. Example: <http://www.unf.edu>. Personal web pages at an academic site (student and faculty pages) usually contain a username in the URL.
- .gov sites are hosted by the government. Example: <http://www.ed.gov>
- .com and .net sites are hosted by commercial interests. Many personal home pages are hosted commercially.
- Does the site indicate the last page update? Has the site been updated recently?
- Read the Web page content critically. Is there evidence of bias?
- Are links from the page current and relevant?



STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY

The further you progress in higher and continuing education, the more responsibility you will need to take for your own learning. You will begin to define and prioritize what you need to know, how you will learn it, and how you will assess your progress. Outside direction and measures of your learning will continue to be a part of your education, but these will serve more to guide and direct you in your exploration of knowledge.

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

As you explore the many avenues of learning available and begin to define your individual path, you will still need to work with your instructors to make sure you are meeting the requirements of the individual courses. Proving you understand the subject matter and can apply what is taught is still important.

DEVELOP SELF-DISCIPLINE

This need may seem fairly obvious, but without self-discipline, you cannot be a successful online learner. In residential classes, you have an instructor and peers with whom you interact on a regular basis. You also typically meet at a certain time and place each week. This interaction and schedule help to keep you on task in your coursework. In an online learning environment, especially if you do not meet at specific times, it's much easier to put off assignments, discussion, and responsibilities. In this context, self-discipline means motivating yourself to pay regular and consistent attention to the work that needs to be done, and doing it without delay or procrastination. Even more than in a residential course, falling behind in an online class can jeopardize your likelihood of completing the course and earning the credit.

COMPUTER REQUIREMENTS

It will be essential for you to have access to a computer if you take a course delivered via the internet. Even in telecourses, instructors are likely to provide a course website through a system called [Blackboard](#). Students are expected to check their email on at least a weekly basis for communication with their instructors. Having your own computer may be more convenient, but having access to someone else's computer (e.g., one provided in the Student Success Center) will do.



These requirements refer specifically to your computer hardware. Remember, it is OK if you satisfy or exceed the "Recommended" settings. "Minimum requirements" are meant for basic use of Blackboard. If you require any additional plug-in software applications, always check with the appropriate vendors as the "minimum requirements" may change.

You should also check with your instructor for any other hardware/software requirements specific to your course. Remember, always be prepared for your online class before it begins for the best learning experience!

HARDWARE

Hardware/ Platform	Apple Macintosh		Microsoft Windows	
	Minimum	Recommended	Minimum	Minimum
Operating System	MacOS 8.6	MacOS X 10.2 Jaguar	Operating System	MacOS 8.6
Processor Speed/Type	300 MHz PowerPC G3 processor	800 MHz PowerPC G4 processor, or better	Processor Speed/Type	300 MHz PowerPC G3 processor
CPU Memory	64 MB of RAM	256 MB of RAM	CPU Memory	64 MB of RAM
Monitor Resolution	800 x 600	1024 x 768	Monitor Resolution	800 x 600
Internet Connection	56 kbps Dialup Modem	Any high-speed connection (e.g. Cable Broadband or DSL)	Internet Connection	56 kbps Dialup Modem
Free Hard Disk Space	100 MB	500 MB or greater	Free Hard Disk Space	100 MB

Audio (Sound) Card	16-bit sound card	24-bit sound card	Audio (Sound) Card	16-bit sound card
Video Card	Virtual memory turned on and allocated to at least 64 MB	Virtual memory turned on and allocated to at least 128 MB	Video Card	Virtual memory turned on and allocated to at least 64 MB

BROWSERS AND REQUIREMENTS

Web Browsers: Windows

Browser	XP	Vista	Notes
IE 8	Compatible	Compatible	
IE 7	Compatible	Certified	
Firefox 3.0.x	Certified	Certified	Must run version 3.0.3 to use the Learning Environment Connector.

Web Browsers: Mac

Browser	10.4	10.5
Firefox 3.0.x	Certified	Certified
Safari 3	Certified	Certified
Safari 2	Compatible	Compatible

Firefox 1.5 and 2.0 are not supported for Blackboard Learn. It is recommended that Firefox 1.5 and 2.0 users upgrade to Firefox 3.0 to access the latest security patches and Mozilla support.

Mac OS 10.3 is not supported for use with Blackboard Learn.

Java Virtual Machine

Java Standard Edition 5, 32-bit (1.5.x) and later is the supported version for all operating systems.

Key to Support Levels

Certified	Certified configurations are fully tested and supported.
Compatible	Compatible configurations are partially tested but should function properly.
Not Supported	The configuration is not tested or supported by Blackboard.

FIREWALLS

Many companies have firewalls installed to protect their networks and prevent unwanted installations of software and possible viruses.

Note: There are also software firewalls for home users. If you have installed such a firewall and are facing difficulties connecting to your Blackboard resources, contact your ISP or the manufacturer of your firewall to determine if your software firewall is causing these issues.

POP-UP/SPAM BLOCKERS

If you have installed pop-up/cookie/spam blockers on your computer, you may experience difficulties connecting to Blackboard resources. Please contact the appropriate Help



Desk to determine if such software could be the cause of your difficulties.

VIRUS SCANNERS

You should have anti-virus software installed & running on your computer when connecting to any PCC resources. Some of the most popular virus scanners include McAfee VirusScan, Symantec (Norton) AntiVirus, Command Antivirus, Virex, and Sophos Anti-Virus.

There are thousands of computer viruses today. An effective way to reduce any possible damage/harm to your files is to have a virus scanner configured on your computer to constantly perform background system scans. This requirement is for your own protection and for the protection of all Blackboard users. Also, one of the most common methods of passing a virus is through the sharing of files (e.g. via web sites, emails, floppy disks, ZIP disks, or CD-ROMs). Always be cautious of whom you are downloading files from, and verify downloaded files are safe first before opening them.

BROWSER PLUG-INS

For some courses, you may be required to have one or more of these plug-in application programs. Generally, plug-in software should already be present on your computer. However, we recommend that you verify that (1) you have these plug-ins installed & configured on your web browser, and (2) you have at least the minimum required version for each plug-in.

Vendor	Plug-in Name	Required Version
Adobe	Reader (a.k.a. Acrobat Reader)	5.1 +
Apple	Quicktime	6.3 +
Macromedia	Flash Player	5.0 +
Microsoft	Windows Media Player	6.4 +
RealNetworks	RealOne Player	version 2
Sun	Java VM	1.4.1 +

Remember, all these plug-in software applications are FREE downloads from the vendors. For installation assistance with these plug-ins, please contact the technical support of the respective vendors.

MICROSOFT OFFICE VIEWERS

Microsoft offers free viewers for users to view documents created by the Microsoft Office product suite (i.e. Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint). Below are just a few:

[Microsoft Word 97/2000 Viewer \(Word 2000\) for Windows](#)

[Microsoft PowerPoint Viewer for Windows](#)

[Microsoft PowerPoint Viewer for Mac](#)

For the full list of Microsoft Office Viewers, visit
<http://office.microsoft.com/assistance/9798/viewerscv.aspx>

To create and/or edit Microsoft Office files, you will need the Microsoft Office suite (if you do not have this already, it is available for purchase from the PCC Bookstore for an academic price). If you already have an older version of a Microsoft Office product, you can download the free Microsoft Office Converters.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

In the distance learning environment, some responsibilities shift from the instructor to the student, given the independent nature of the learning experience. In addition to setting and sticking to your own schedule, reading all the assigned chapters and keeping up with due dates, you must do a few things to make the distance learning process work:

- Use dark ink for faxed assignments.
- Place your name on every assignment.
- Check with your instructor for the file format for assignments and how to submit them.
- Identify yourself in all email messages using your actual name, as your email address may not identify who you are.
- Evaluate the course delivery method as well as the course.
- Ask for help when you need it.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Given the lack of face-to-face contact in the distance learning environment, instructors invest a great deal of trust in distance learning students. High expectations are held for the level of maturity and integrity in the distance student.



The following is taken from the PCC Plagiarism Policy:

Whether intentional or unintentional, plagiarism is “the wrongful act of taking the product of another person's mind and presenting it as one's own” (Alexander Lindey, *Plagiarism and Originality*, 1952).

To view the entire Plagiarism Policy, including definitions of academic dishonesty, go to <http://www2.piedmontcc.edu/DL/Plagiarism.htm>

STUDENT SERVICES

Admissions

If you wish to enroll at Piedmont Community College, you must complete and submit an Application for Admission. You can apply online by accessing the online application, http://www.ncmentor.org/applications/nc_community_college/apply.html?application_id=1516

You may also request an application from our Admissions Office at the following address:

Piedmont Community College
Office of Admissions
1715 College Drive
P.O. Box 1197
Roxboro, NC 27573

Or fax the application to: 336-598-9283

Financial Aid

To find out about financial aid opportunities available at PCC, consult the PCC website or call 336-599-1181 ext. 286 or 381. The Application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA) can be completed on line at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov> . Piedmont Community College's federal school code is 009646.

Veterans may be eligible for special benefits. For more information refer to the PCC Catalog and Student Handbook at <http://www.piedmontcc.edu> or call the Office of Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs at 336-599-1181 ext 286 or 381.

To explore your career options, contact Career Services at 336-599-1181 ext. 255 or e-mail marcels@piedmontcc.edu.

PCC's Career Connections website has been created for the benefit of PCC students and graduates. The site shows jobs listed by employers interested in the skills of PCC students. Job seekers can e-mail their resume via the website to employers of their choice.

Academic Counseling

Receive academic counseling by calling 336-599-1181 ext. 255 or 281.

Registration

Register by telephone by calling: 336-599-1181, ext. 255 or 281.

For questions concerning registration, grades, transcripts, withdrawals, etc., contact the Records Office at 336-599-1181, ext 281 or e-mail palmerl@piedmontcc.edu.

Students with Special Needs

Students who require special accommodations to access distance learning education must document the special needs and request the accommodations. Call Brian Totten in the office of Disability Services at 336-599-1181 ext. 296 or e-mail tottenb@piedmontcc.edu. The information that you provide Mr. Totten will be kept confidential.



Bookstore

Contact information for the Bookstore is available through the web page or by calling the College, 336-599-1181, ext. 263. The manager of the PCC Bookstore will handle questions and comments through e-mail, phone, fax, mail, or in person. Books can be delivered to distance students by mail if they live greater than 50 miles from the College.

Learning Resources Center

Orientation and general information about the services available from the Learning Resources Center and procedures to access these services is provided through the Learning Resources

Center web page. The Reference Department is available by phone, email, or fax for individual questions. Call 336-599-1181, ext. 235.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR DISTANCE LEARNERS

As a distance learning student, you will likely have many questions about how to proceed once you have registered for your course(s). Information is provided here on completing assignments and turning them in, communicating with your fellow students and your instructor, and other important issues.

BLACKBOARD LOGIN

Internet courses will use web sites for the support and delivery of instruction. For these courses, PCC relies on Blackboard (Bb). For telecourses, the instructor may also use course websites available through Blackboard. You will have a website in Blackboard for each course you take each semester. In order to access Blackboard, you will need a username and password:

New and returning students will use the following:

- Your **username** is a combination of your first initial, middle initial, last name, and the last 2 digits of your student identification number.
- Your **password** is your student ID number found on the form you received when you registered for class.

Example:

Jane Doe Smith, 0071234
User name is **JDSmith34**
Password is **0071234**

Identification number is found at top left side of form received at registration.

I am sure I am typing the right password, why can't I log onto Blackboard?

Since Blackboard hides the characters that you are typing, you will not know exactly what you have entered, so mistyping characters is common. Try logging on again.

Changes you make to your course schedule after the beginning of the semester take from 24 to 48 hours to be reflected in Blackboard's records. If you've just added a class to your schedule, try logging in again tomorrow morning after the system has updated.

Remember that Blackboard passwords are case sensitive (e.g. Uppercase "A" is not the same as lowercase "a".) Check to see if you have accidentally engaged the "Caps Lock" key.

If you use the numeric pad on your keyboard to enter numbers, make sure that you have engaged the "Num Lock" key. Otherwise Blackboard may be receiving strange characters.

Be sure you are at the correct website <http://courses.piedmontcc.edu> (Note: This is the last page that can be bookmarked and still allow you access to your Blackboard courses at PCC - bookmarking any later pages will result in a security error and not allow access to the site.)

What do I do if I can't remember my Blackboard password or can't log in?



First try the "forgot your password?" link located under where you would normally enter your password. The instructions for resetting your password will be sent to your student email account.

VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

Instructors may hold “virtual” office hours (when he or she can be reached by phone, in the Blackboard discussion board, in a chat room, etc.) especially around times when tests or projects are assigned or due.

SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

Your instructor will supply directions for submitting assignments as well as due dates, rules and other conditions. Be sure to read over any directions he or she provides. These will likely be in the Assignments area posted in the course website in Blackboard.

Submit assignments according to the directions provided by your instructor. Possibilities include:

- Email – you can use the communications button of Blackboard and attach it
- Digital Drop Box – this is a feature of Blackboard under Student Tools
- Fax – your instructor will provide an appropriate fax number.
- Upload assignment page – link located within the assignment
- Drop off in person – an option open to some; Instructors will direct students where to drop off assignments.

Instructors will confirm receipt of assignments via email as requested. Make sure the email address listed for you in Blackboard is correct.

Use Microsoft Word to create all the documents you send to your instructor unless instructed otherwise.

If you send assignments electronically (as email attachments or via the Digital Drop Box), your instructor may require that you name the files a certain way so he or she can organize them easily. Check the Assignments area of your Blackboard course to review instructions.

Using Rich Text Format (or 'RTF' as it is called) allows any word processing program to read the document without having to worry about 'translating' it into the proper format. We recommend that you send your file as a RTF file to make sure it can be read. To save a file in Rich Text Format, the steps generally are as follows:

1. From the File menu select Save As
2. A dialog box will pop up that gives you the option of where to save your document, what to name your document, and to determine the format of your document. Click on the down arrow in the format box and choose Rich Text Format.
3. Type a "File name" for your document, if necessary. When naming your file, use all lowercase letters without any spaces or special characters (i.e. - @ # \$ or %). For example, project1.rtf is an acceptable filename, while Project #1.RTF is not.
4. Click the Save button.
5. Your document will now have the extension .rtf instead of .doc.

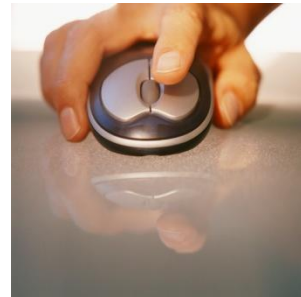
EXAMS AND OTHER ASSESSMENTS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Your instructor will inform you of how your performance will be assessed in his or her course. This will be expressed most likely in the Syllabus and/or in the Assignments area on the Blackboard site for your course. Instructors may choose from one of the following or devise their own method for determining your performance:

- In-person exams at a PCC campus (proctored)
- Internet-based testing/quizzing in Blackboard
- Take-home downloads from your Blackboard course (open-book)
- Research papers
- Course projects

If your instructor requires proctored exams and you cannot come to one of PCC's campuses, discuss arrangements for a proctor. [Proctor certification forms](http://www2.piedmontcc.edu/DL/online_services.htm) are available by going to http://www2.piedmontcc.edu/DL/online_services.htm Your instructor will provide specific rules for the proctor of your test or exam.

To take a proctored exam on one of PCC's campus, students must present a picture ID. Children and food are not permitted in the testing areas. All cell phones and pagers must be turned off and placed in a locker during testing. Allow yourself enough time to take an exam.



COURSE EVALUATION

It is very important that you complete course evaluations at the middle and end of each semester. We provide convenient Internet-based surveys for you to do so. When a survey is available, an announcement will be made in Blackboard. All you will need to know is the course number. Your instructor will use this information to gauge how they are doing and make improvements to courses and their delivery methods as needed. All responses are made anonymously. Your input is very important!

COMMUNICATION FOR DISTANCE LEARNERS

Communications between students, instructors and technical support staff are a vital component to your success in distance learning. PCC encourages contact to ensure that students will feel connected to the class and to help remove the "distance" in distance learning.

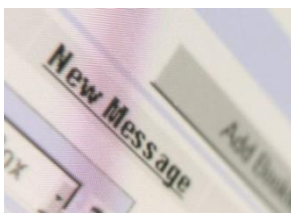
Keep in mind that your instructors are human and will not be available to you "online" 24 hours a day. Check the course syllabus for your instructor's schedule and preferred method of communication.

Be sure to check your e-mail account regularly for messages from your instructor. If, after reviewing the course website and reading introductory e-mails from your instructor, you are unsure about any of the course requirements and policies, you must e-mail your instructor as soon as possible for clarification.

STUDENT EMAIL

Email Address: For your email address, the email system will use a combination of your first name, middle name, and last name. The system will generate an email address as follows:

- The first letter of your first name.
- The first letter of your middle name.
- The first six letters of your last name.
- @students.piedmontcc.edu



If your last name has less than six characters, then all the letters will be used.

Example: If your name is Joe Roger Smith, your email address would be jrsmith@students.piedmontcc.edu.

You will use the first part of your email address to login to your Outlook Web Access account.

Password: During account setup, your initial password is set to your student ID number. For assistance with your username and password, please contact Shawn O'Hara, 599-1181, ext. 496.

WEB MAIL

To receive your email, go to: [Outlook Web Access, https://students.piedmontcc.edu](https://students.piedmontcc.edu)

If you receive a message about the certificate, please click the "Yes" button to accept the certificate. We are using a free based Web Certificate from [Start COM Free SSL](#). To read more about how we are protecting you, please visit their website.

If you are using IE7 you may get a warning about viewing an unsecured site. Please select the option to "Continue to the site anyway".

BLACKBOARD COMMUNICATION AREA

The Communication area of Blackboard offers features for instructors to communicate with students and vice versa. The Send Email option will give you various options for emailing instructors and fellow students. The Discussion Board option allows you to post messages, questions, and comments where everyone in the class can read them.

BLACKBOARD COURSE INFORMATION

The Distance Learning staff recommends that students print a copy of this sheet for each Distance Learning class they take. Check the boxes as you review the course for relevant information.

Students should know the information listed below within three days after the starting date of class.

- Contact Information
 - Instructor's name
 - Instructor's e-mail address
 - Instructor's office number (if applicable)
- Course access information
 - I know how to find the course
 - I know how to access the course using a Username and Password
- Course content and materials NOT included in the course website (if applicable)
 - I know the textbook titles and how to acquire them
 - I know what the other course materials are (such as CD-Rom(s), lab kits, etc.) and how to acquire them

- Methods of communication - How will students be communicating with the instructor and each other? (Check all that apply)
 - E-mail - any personal e-mail account is acceptable
 - Discussion board postings
 - Scheduled "live" chat sessions
 - Office hours online
 - Other communication tool _____
- Instructor's communication policy
 - I know approximately how long it will take for the instructor to respond to general questions about the course
 - I know approximately how long it will take for the instructor to grade and return my work
- I know the course assignments and how much they are worth (check those that apply)
 - Written assignments
 - Online quizzes
 - Online exams
 - In-person exams
 - Course projects
 - Discussion Board
 - Other _____
- I know how assignments are to be submitted (check those that apply)
 - Regular e-mail
 - E-mail attachment
 - Other _____
 - Technical requirements and computer literacy requirements (check those that apply)
 - This class has specific computer hardware requirements - I understand them and can adhere to them
 - This class requires specific software programs, and I know how to acquire them
 - This class requires that I have specific computer skills - I understand them and can perform them
- Important course dates (check those that apply)
 - I know the due dates for all the assignments
 - I know where to find the due dates for all assignments
 - This course is self-paced and has no due dates
 - I know the start date of class
 - I know the end date of class
- I know whether or not I have to be on campus for this class for an exam or orientation
- I understand the instructor's "drop" policy (if applicable - your instructor may not have one)

LIBRARY SERVICES AND RESOURCES

The Learning Resources Center (LRC) has a variety of resources and services specially designed to support distance education faculty and students at Piedmont Community College. For complete information, visit <http://www2.piedmontcc.edu/lrc>

LRC Sites	
Person County LRC	599-1181, ext. 266
Caswell LRC	694-5707, ext. 240

Learning Resources Center Hours of Operation

Person County Campus:

Monday – Thursday

7:30 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Friday

7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Saturday

8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Caswell County Campus:

Monday – Thursday

7:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Friday

7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Saturday

Closed

HOW TO GUIDES

LOG IN TO THE PCC BLACKBOARD PORTAL

1. Use a computer to get to the Internet.
2. Once on the Internet, go to the PCC Blackboard site <http://courses.piedmontcc.edu>.
3. Click on the Blackboard Log-In button.
4. Enter your username and password. For assistance with your username and password, visit the Log-in FAQ page, <http://www2.piedmont.cc.nc.us/DL/Accessing%20Blackboard/login.htm> or refer to page 19 in this handbook.
5. Then click on the Log In button or hit the enter key on the keyboard.
6. You should now be at the “My PCC” screen.

Each course has a separate site with materials. To enter the Blackboard site of one of the courses you are enrolled in that uses Blackboard, simply click on the name of that course under MY COURSES (far right side of the screen). You will go to the location of that course site.

Then, check out each of the course areas by clicking on the test links or buttons located on the left side of the screen.

IMPORTANT: Be sure to read the announcements on each course site at least twice weekly. If you miss checking, click on the tab that says "View Last 30 Days" to find older announcements.

When leaving Blackboard, click on the "Logout" button at the top center of the screen to prevent others from accessing your account.

SEND EMAIL WITH AN ATTACHMENT

To send e-mail from within Bb you must first click on the Communication Button located on the navigation panel on the left side of the course screen.



Next click on Send E-mail.

Now you really have a lot of choices in your Bb email environment. Do you want to send a message to a classmate or to your instructor? Do you want to send the message to everyone in the class? Would you like to receive a copy of this message? How about attaching a picture?

Here's a list of the choices that you have and what they mean to you:

- All Users: This will set up an email form with the email addresses for everyone in the course, including instructors and TAs.
- All Groups: This will set up an email form with the email addresses for every student in any group that has been created by the instructor. You have access only to the group that you have been assigned to.
- All Teaching Assistants This will set up an email form with the email addresses for all of the Teaching Assistants in your course.
- Selected Users: This will set up an email form allowing you to choose any number of students, Teaching Assistants or Instructors simply by checking the box next to the desired recipient's name.
- Selected Groups: This will set up an email form allowing you to choose any number of groups that have been created by the instructor.

Choosing All Users brings up an email form with the "TO" section already filled out with all of the participants in this course. You must fill out the Subject line (as in regular email) and place your message in the Message box. You can check to send a copy to yourself if you like.

If you are not sending an attachment with the e-mail message, Select Submit.

If you are sending an attachment with your email message, select Add under Add Attachments.

Click on Browse to locate the file that you want to attach to your message. NOTE: You should then see a list of your files.

Locate and select the file that you want to attach to your message.

Click on Open to attach the file to your Blackboard email. NOTE: Your file should now be located in the File box to the left of Browse as shown below.

Click the Submit button. This returns you to your e-mail text box.

Click on Submit to send the email message and attachment.

When you click on Send your message will be delivered to the email boxes of the chosen recipients and you will get a message telling you that your message was sent.

POSTING TO THE DISCUSSION BOARD

To leave a message:

1. Go to your Blackboard course
2. Click Communication and the link for the Discussion Board OR click the Discussion Board button if it is listed
3. Click the link for the forum in which you wish to add a message
4. Click the button labeled Add New Thread

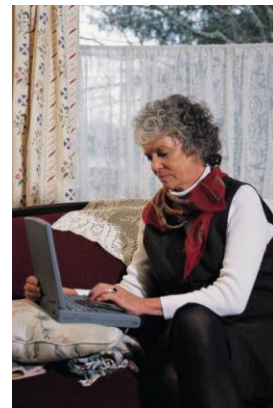
5. Type in a subject and the text of the message
6. Leave the default setting of 'Smart Text' at the bottom of the message window
7. If you have an attachment, click Browse beside the 'Attachment' window, find the file on your own computer and click Open
8. After you have attached your file or you have completed typing in your message (you may also cut and paste from another document), click the Submit button
9. click Okay

To respond to a message or question already posted:

1. Go to your course Blackboard
2. click Communication and the link for the Discussion Board OR click the Discussion Board button
3. Click the link for the forum in which you wish to reply to a message
4. Click the subject link for the message (not the sender, this will email them directly)
5. Read the message
6. Click Reply
7. Type in a subject and the text of the message
8. Leave the default setting of 'Smart Text' at the bottom of the message window
9. If you have an attachment, click Browse beside the 'Attachment' window, find the file on your own computer and click Open
10. After you have attached your file or you have completed typing in your message (you may also cut and paste from another document), click the Submit button
11. click Okay

TIPS FOR TAKING ASSESSMENTS IN BLACKBOARD

- Do not take the quiz until you are ready.
- Close down all other programs running on the computer. Having multiple programs open may cause problems that result in loss of quiz data.
- Use Internet Explorer 6.0 or higher to take the quiz. Other browsers can cause problems.
- Do not resize or refresh the screen after loading the quiz; make sure it is the size you want before going into the quiz. Most browsers refresh the page when you refresh the screen. This means it will try to reload the quiz and prohibit you from taking the test.
- Do not wait until the last minute to take the quiz. If something goes wrong there will not be enough time to resolve the issue.
- Do not click on the Save button after each question unless the test can be taken multiple times.
- When entering the quiz, click only once. Sometimes it takes a while to load the quiz. If you click twice, you will get a message saying you already took the quiz and will be prohibited from completing it.
- Do not use the back and forward buttons while taking a quiz.
- Do not click on the Submit button until you are either done or have run out of time.
- Fill-in-the-blank questions are case sensitive. Your instructor will review these types of questions and manually award points accordingly.
- If you are working on a dial-up connection, make sure your ISP time-out settings are set to the maximum allowed time.



- Turn off any Instant Messaging or e-mail notification. If you receive an Instant Message, Blackboard may assume that you have abandoned the quiz and erase any answers you have entered.
- If you use a "dial-up modem" to connect to the Internet, turn off "call waiting". If you receive a phone call and call waiting is on, Blackboard will assume that you have abandoned the quiz and erase any answers you have entered.
- If you are using AOL to access the Internet, minimize the AOL window and use a different browser. However, you may find that AOL may not consider using a separate browser "online activity" and may terminate your connection without warning. If this occurs your quiz answers will be erased, and you should consider alternative access to the Internet to properly complete your quiz/test.
- When you are finished answering all items, click the "Submit" button at the end of the quiz/test (scroll to the bottom of the page).
Note: Once you submit the answers you cannot make any changes.
- If you encounter any problems taking the quiz/test, contact your instructor immediately.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What do I do if one of my courses does not appear in the "My Courses" box?



If you successfully login to Blackboard and see either no course(s) listed, only your old course(s) listed or not the course(s) you're looking for, the access problem is likely due to one of the following:

You are using an older username and password to login.

Blackboard does not yet have a record of your enrollment in the course in question. Registrar information takes 24-48 hours from time of enrollment (not counting weekend days) to be reflected in Blackboard;

The instructor of the course you're looking for is not using Blackboard (i.e., not every course uses Blackboard).

Are distance learning courses easier than taking the class on campus?

Students have different opinions about the difficulty of distance learning classes. The course content and objectives are the same as in face-to-face courses. The reading requirement can be intensive. All agree distance learning courses require a lot of discipline. You must be your own motivator.

Is there an orientation that I can take that will familiarize me with Blackboard?

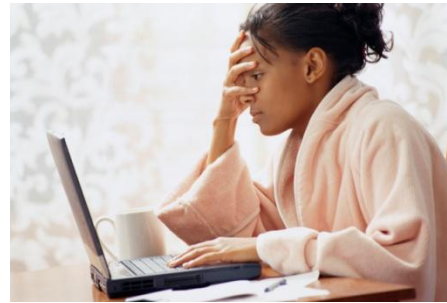
There is an online orientation and demo course located at <http://www2.piedmont.cc.nc.us/dlorientation> . To access the orientation/demo, your username is online and your password is student.

Who is responsible for initial contact, the student or the instructor?

Unless otherwise instructed, the student should access the course on the first day of classes, just as you would attend class on the first day in a traditional classroom.

How do I drop/add a distance learning class?

The procedure for dropping or adding a course is the same as the procedure for dropping or adding a traditional on-campus class.



What about exam proctoring for students living too far from campus?

Proctoring arrangements may be available to students living at a distance from PCC. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain an instructor-approved proctor if you are unable to come to campus to take an exam. See http://www2.piedmont.cc.nc.us/DL/online_services.htm for the necessary forms.

Can I work at my own pace or do I have to follow a weekly schedule when I take a distance education course?

Distance Learning courses vary greatly in terms of the flexibility they afford students. Most courses have some restrictions on how far ahead students may work, imposing weekly or biweekly deadlines on assignments and other activities. You may want to check your course syllabus before your course begins to determine whether or not class deadlines and requirements will meet your needs.

Am I ever required to come to campus for a distance education course?

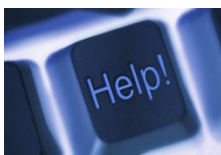
Some distance learning courses may require trips to campus. To find out more about whether or not your course will require you to come to campus, please contact your course instructor before the add/drop period ends. Information about individual courses can be found by visiting the Online Services for Distance Learners web page, http://www2.piedmontcc.edu/DL/online_services.htm

Do distance education courses require less time to complete than regular on-campus courses?

No, in fact, research shows that they often take more time to complete.

Are there other students in my distance education course and will I be “aware” of them (will I know their names and will I be able to communicate with them)?

Student-to-student interactions will vary across courses. Some courses will require weekly interactions via an online discussion board, while other courses may require no student-to-student interactivity.



Will I get any help from the instructor during the semester, or am I on my own?

All distance education faculty are available via phone and email. In any course, the level of one-to-one interaction between faculty member and student varies. In a distance course, however, there is an added factor that shouldn't be overlooked. Receiving help depends upon the extent to which the student seeks that help.

RESOURCES

Online Services for Distance Learners

http://www2.piedmontcc.edu/DL/online_services.htm

Blackboard Technical Help (Troubleshooting)

<http://www2.piedmont.cc.nc.us/DL/Accessing%20Blackboard/accessBb.htm>

Distance Education Office

Located within your campus Learning Resources Center or email mcphaul@piedmontcc.edu

Blackboard Questions

Visit Online Services, http://www2.piedmontcc.edu/DL/online_services.htm or email mcphaul@piedmontcc.edu

Technical Questions

Distance Education Coordinator at 336-599-1181, ext. 445

Distance Learning Orientation/Demo Course

<http://www2.piedmontcc.edu/dlorientation>

Learning Resources Center

<http://www2.piedmontcc.edu/lrc>

Piedmont Community College

<http://www.piedmontcc.edu>

Distance Education Faculty

http://www2.piedmont.cc.nc.us/lrc/Distance_Learning/DLfaculty.htm

Student Success Center

<http://www2.piedmontcc.edu/ssc/>

Student Support Services

<http://www2.piedmontcc.edu/SSS/>

DISTANCE EDUCATION STAFF

Dean, Learning Resources Center

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Peggy Bane
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banep@piedmontcc.edu

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

A Help Desk is now available to students enrolled in courses that utilize Blackboard. This 24-hours-per-day, 7-days-per-week service is available to provide assistance to Internet students who have questions about using Blackboard

You can search the Knowledge Base for answers to commonly asked questions. You can also connect with a Blackboard support representative through several options. The live Chat option allows you to get answers quickly, while submitting a Ticket typically takes up the least amount of your time. Of course you can Call and speak to a support representative too.



Website - <http://d2.parature.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=4287>

Toll-free Phone - 866-852-5588

A technical support staff is in place at PCC to take care of various needs you will have when receiving instruction via distance technologies. Generally your needs can be taken care of by the DE Coordinator.

For help with login problems and other difficulties working with Blackboard: Visit the Distance Education staff in the Learning Resources Center, H Building, 8:00 am - 9:00 pm Monday-Thursday and 8:00 am - 5:00 pm Friday.

You may also contact Technical Support via e-mail at mcphaul@piedmontcc.edu (Libbie McPhaul-Moore), vaughna@piedmontcc.edu (Angela Vaughn), or stenlue@piedmontcc.edu (Earl Stenlund).

Please provide the following information in your e-mail:

- Your complete name
- Your Blackboard username
- The Blackboard course in which you are enrolled
- A description of the problem, including which area of Blackboard you experienced it in, and what steps you followed that brought you to the problem.

- Any error messages you received. It is important that you provide the exact error message. One easy way to do this is by selecting, copying and pasting the message into an e-mail message that you send to Technical Support.
- Where you are experiencing the problem (e.g. on campus in the LRC, at home, at work etc.).
- If you are at home, how you are connecting to the Internet (e.g. using a dial up modem or a cable modem) and the name of your Internet Service Provider.
- When the problem occurred.
- Your Web browser (e.g. Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator) and version (e.g. 4.5, 5.0, 6.0 etc). You can locate this information from within your browser by clicking on "Help" and then clicking on "About....".
- Your operating system (e.g. Windows 98, Windows ME, Windows 2000, Windows XP, Windows NT etc).
- The software you are using when the problem occurred and the version (e.g. Microsoft Word 2000, Microsoft Word 2002/XP, Microsoft Power Point 2002/XP).
- Any troubleshooting steps you have already attempted and the results.

