

INTRODUCTION TO ONLINE COURSES AT RCC

Online and hybrid courses at Roxbury Community College are offered on the internet via Jenzabar/MyRCC

As part of our commitment to your health and safety, as well as our desire to ensure your educational success, RCC is offering a variety of instructional methods to help students to choose the course that best fits their learning style. Those courses that cannot be completed virtually will meet face-to-face with proper safety and social distancing protocols to ensure the health and safety of everyone.



ONLINE = A fully online course without set meeting times (Asynchronous)

Online courses are completed fully online, without in-person meetings. You can complete the work at a pace that best suits your schedule, but you must submit assignments and exams by set deadlines.



HYBRID = A course with scheduled face-to-face meeting times, and an online component without set meeting times

Hybrid courses are completed on campus with designated meeting days and times with the remainder of the assignments completed online.



VIRTUAL = A fully online course with scheduled meeting times Synchronous)

Virtual courses are completed online but have set meeting times. You are required to login and participate in course meetings via web-based communication (Microsoft Teams or Zoom) at the scheduled days/times.

Your instructors will communicate with you about how your course will virtually meet prior to the first session. Feel free to email them questions prior to the start of your first day of class to make sure things are as clear and as accessible as possible.

Why choose to study online?

Online courses can offer students flexibility and convenience in scheduling that can sometimes be difficult to balance with face-to-face courses. In spite of these benefits, online courses can come with unexpected surprises for students. First and foremost, online courses require the same, if not more, time, energy, and attention than traditional classes. Students must be able to motivate themselves without the physical presence of others in the class and with the distractions of the home environment. Students must also have solid computer skills to be successful in online courses. Understanding how to create new documents, save files, download and upload documents, and navigate the internet are necessary for anyone taking an online course.

The benefits of face-to-face instruction can't be denied. There's an immediacy to the learning, with an entire class present in the same environment, moving through the material together. Asking questions can feel more natural, and demonstrations may seem more organic and hands-on. It's also useful to have in person reminders about due dates and upcoming expectations. Sometimes, translating those expectations to an online environment can make things more challenging.

However, this doesn't mean that online learning can't simulate those experiences, and the best way to bring the benefits of an in-person environment online is to mimic the in-person components as much as possible.

For example, if you were in a classroom, you would want to make sure you were fully engaged with the instructor and your classmates. You'd also want to make sure you gave off the impression of being fully engaged at all times. Being on a computer can lead to more distractions, so push yourself to stay focused on the lecture for the remainder of the course without navigating away or checking your phone. Leaving your camera and microphone on can help with this, as can writing down notes throughout course sessions, including questions that come up throughout your lectures. Raise your hand when you have a question, or politely request to ask a question in case your instructor can't see you. This may make you feel like you're spotlighted, but it's really no different than when you're in an in-person classroom environment. Just like face-to-face learning, questions benefit everyone.

Successful Online Learners

- Regularly visit the course website (several times per week) to check for updates and information from your instructors.
- Practice clear and consistent communication with instructors and student support staff.
- Understand that if you send an email, a response can be quick, but if you do not get an immediate response you should wait at least 24 hours before getting worried.
- Have good time management skills.
- Plan out blocks of time to ensure they can complete all required assignments.

- Set up a quiet, comfortable work environment, free from distractions.
- Remain engaged with the course; ask questions, take full advantage of all online content.
- Practice active listening skills in order to be active learners – take notes on class material and engage with the instructor, other students, and course content accordingly.
- Are comfortable using the Internet and have basic computer skills

Availability

Your course will be available on the first day of class. Check your class syllabus and other communication from your instructors about how your class will meet.

Attendance

Although it may seem easier to attend courses online without the need to commute, students sometimes struggle with the time-management required to get themselves in an academic mindset while learning from home. It's best to schedule your courses in a calendar application on your phone to give yourself reminders about when your class is about to begin. Computer problems and internet connection issues can occur. It is recommended that you try to login 5 minutes before your start time.

RCC's online attendance policy for online instruction is the same as in-person instruction; students are expected to attend all scheduled class meetings. The course syllabus will include the instructor's specific attendance policy. If you need to miss a course, please contact your instructor immediately, and as early as possible. Remember that an absence does not excuse you from required coursework and that it's your responsibility to complete any assignments in a timely fashion. Students are responsible for all coursework during an absence. Excessive absences will have a negative effect on students' ability to meet the course objectives, and may result in a failing grade.

You can review more information about Roxbury Community College's attendance policy via the Student Handbook, which can be accessed here: www.rcc.mass.edu/student-handbook

Participation

Face-to-face instruction lends itself well to class participation. Being in the same space allows more personal interaction between instructors and students. Sometimes, online learning environments make communication more difficult. It's harder to pick up on facial expressions, non-verbal communication (raising hands), and even verbal communication. This is why it's important to take initiative as online learners to communicate consistently and professionally with your instructors and classmates. Showing that you are actively engaged with the instructor, the course material, and the coursework, will clearly communicate where you stand in the class to everyone involved. Ask questions when appropriate, keep up with the assignments, and try not to get behind with your coursework.

Accessing Your Online Course

Online courses at RCC use MyRCC as the learning management system. MyRCC can run on any browser as long as it is up to date.

- Go to myrcc.rcc.mass.edu
- Log in with your RCC Jenzabar username and password that you've had assigned from IT. If you have not done so already, go to <https://rcc.mass.edu/technology-resources/myrcc> to learn how to login to your email account.
- On the top left side of the page, under the Quick Links menu, you will see My Courses.
- Here you will see the courses you are enrolled in.
- Select the name of your course to access your course.
- From there, follow the course instructions as detailed by your instructor.
- If anything goes wrong when signing in or during the class.
 - First email your instructor right away that you are having trouble.
 - If the link is not working, check that you are using the correct link, if there is a meeting ID and password in Zoom you can try entering it in manually, if all else fails you can try restarting your system.

****RCC also provides each student with access to Office 365, which includes Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and an email account via Microsoft Outlook.*

Netiquette

Online communication can be more challenging than face-to-face communication. Misunderstandings are easy when it is not possible to see someone's body language or expression or hear the inflection in their voice.

Students should use appropriate style and language for a classroom setting. Your posts should be free of spelling errors, and you should pay careful attention to formatting, including capitalization, grammar, and punctuation. Good grammar and formatting ensure that posts and messages can be clearly understood. It is best to avoid the informal communication style of text messages, Instagram, and blogs.

All posts and messages must be free of discriminatory comments based upon race, sex, gender identity, disability, religion, and sexual orientation. The College will not tolerate behavior based on bigotry, which has the effect of discriminating unlawfully against any member of the community.

Video Conferencing

Many of your classes will use video conferencing software (like Zoom) to deliver instruction. Here are some steps to get the most out of video conferencing instruction as a student.

1. Plan a test run.

Before your class is set to start, it might be a good idea to open up the required software and make sure you don't

need to run any updates and that you have everything downloaded that you will need. You may not be "allowed" in your class session yet, since you're testing before the class is scheduled to begin, but it's still good practice.

2. Arrive to your virtual class early.

- Just like a face-to-face course, it's always best to arrive a few minutes early to ensure you are situated and comfortable.
- Make sure you have the study materials you know you will need.

3. Eliminate distractions

- Set your phone to silent and set it aside. Focus completely on the lesson and try not to navigate away from the video conference window, or work on other tasks, only the work your instructor is tasking you with in the moment.

4. Announce yourself / make sure your instructor can hear you.

- Briefly introduce yourself to make sure your microphone/sound is working and that your instructor can hear you.
- Make sure your name is displayed clearly and correctly on the screen, especially if you're dialing in on a phone, or have your camera turned off. You want to make sure your instructor knows you are present and engaged.

5. Mute your microphone. Unmute it when you need to ask questions.

- Video conferencing tools pick up an incredible amount of secondary sound, so when you're not actively asking a question or participating in class, it's best for all involved to mute your microphone.
- Feel free to unmute your microphone when you need to answer or ask a question, and then mute it again once your participation is complete.

6. Dress appropriately, just like you would for class.

You may be learning remotely, but you should dress just like you were attending class face-to-face.

7. Leave your camera on.

Leaving your camera on shows your instructor that you're engaged and paying attention to the lesson. It also allows them to pick-up on your non-verbal communication.

8. Take notes.

- Note taking is a great way to retain information, especially online. And it communicates to the entire class that you're engaging and taking the content seriously. You'll perform better on homework, tests, and quizzes as well.
- If you prefer to type your notes, let your instructor know that's what you're doing so they don't think you're ignoring the lecture to work on something else.

9. Practice active listening skills and engage with your instructor and classmates.

Since your microphone will mostly be off, it's good to practice active listening skills, which is another reason why leaving your camera on is helpful. For example, a professor may ask a question like, "Does everyone understand what I mean?" You can nod your head. Or a student may answer a question and you may nod your head in agreement. All of this adds to the online learning environment.

10. Use the chat feature to ask questions.

- Video conference tools have a chat feature you can use to type questions to your instructor or sometimes even to other students. Using this to ask questions is a helpful way to get information you need without interrupting the flow of the virtual lecture.
- If you are unable to answer a question via email, consider asking your instructor to meet through TEAMS or Zoom. 15 minutes of conversation, can sometimes be more productive than emailing back and forth for several days.

11. Email the instructor for personal requests, or ask to speak with them privately after the class session.

Honor and respect everyone's time by keeping personal requests offline. Email your instructor privately, or ask to quickly speak to them after the class session is over.

using the link below. You will need to log-in to make appointments with your Roxbury.edu email address and a 10-character password of your creation.

- If you have questions about tutoring, or if you need to reset your Wconline password, email Joyce Atkinson, Coordinator of Learning Services, at jatkinson@rcc.mass.edu. For more information: www.rcc.mass.edu/tutoring.

Student Accessibility Services

Student Accessibility Services can help connect students with academic accommodations, assistive technology, alternative formatting, educational evaluation resources, community-based training, employment opportunities, and more. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted directly by emailing Josh Crary at jcrary@rcc.mass.edu or call 857-701-1410. More information can be found here: www.rcc.mass.edu/student-accessibility-services.

Library

The library at Roxbury Community College offers information resources and services that support the academic programs of the College, including over 60 online databases containing tens of millions of articles from journals, magazines, and newspapers. RCC Librarian's are also available via phone, email, or live chat. www.rcc.mass.edu/library.

Testing and Assessment Center

The Testing Center is available to provide placement testing in English, Math and Science; administers GED/HiSET exams; assist faculty with scheduling make-up exams; and assist with administering exams for student with accessibility needs, among other services. www.rcc.mass.edu/assessment.

Project Access

RCC understands that being a student is challenging, and plenty of obstacles, can get in the way of academic success, now more than ever with the Covid-19 pandemic. If you need additional resources, please contact Lisa Carter at lcarter@rcc.mass.edu, or call 857-701-1277.

You can find more information and make virtual appointments with Lisa by visiting: www.rcc.mass.edu/project-access.

Advising

The mission of Roxbury Community College's Academic Advising Center is to help students successfully complete their degree or certificate programs through the strengthening of necessary skills, and the development of academic and career goals.

- Academic Advisors are available to offer support in your academic and career goals.
- You can set-up a time to connect with an Academic Advisor for a live video-chat appointment.
- Go to <https://rcc.mywconline.net/> to sign up for an appointment with an advisor.
- For instructions on how to set-up an account, go to

Course Policies

Course policies will be printed throughout the syllabus, covering topics such as grading categories, assignments, and attendance. While many of these policies will be similar across RCC courses, each instructor may have a slightly different approach, so it's important to read each syllabus carefully in order to understand the differences.

**Last Date to Withdraw without a Grade Penalty:
November 14th**

First Assignment Due Date

You must complete an assignment by this date to avoid being Administratively Withdrawn (WA): This date will depend on the individual course. Please check your syllabus and with your instructor.

End Date

The last day to complete all assignments and final exams will depend on the individual course. Please check your syllabus and with your instructor.

Institutional Supports

Learning Center

- Getting extra academic support outside of your online coursework is an important supplement to academic success.
- Tutoring is available virtually at the Learning Center

this link, www.rcc.mass.edu/online-tutor-and-advisor-support or contact Mimosa Nguyen-Ha at mnguyenha@rcc.mass.edu, or Alexandra Valdez at avaldez@rcc.mass.edu.

Financial Aid Office

- Early and regular communication with the office of Financial Aid is important, both to ensure you're getting the financial support needed for your time at RCC, and to ensure you're up to date concerning your financial obligations of your education.
- You can contact the Office of Financial Aid through business hours, Monday through Friday, by calling Phone:857-701-1226 or emailing Finaid@rcc.mass.edu

Textbooks

Textbooks may be ordered online through Barnes and Noble at <https://bncvirtual.com/rcc>.

Some RCC faculty use free online textbooks. These will need to be downloaded to your computer. If you would like to get a physical copy of a free online textbook, you may request these through Barnes and Noble for an additional fee.

Academic Integrity

The goal of education is to learn, and sometimes learning as you face stress and challenges navigating your coursework, especially when you're completing it online, which can sometimes make you feel more isolated and unsupported. Having academic integrity means you value the struggle because you understand that's where the learning happens. Using shortcuts that engage in academic dishonesty not only are serious violations of the RCC Student Handbook, they also don't help you learn anything, which undermines your time, effort, and investment in yourself. If you're feeling stuck, scared, stressed, or nervous, please reach out to your instructors, your advisors, tutors, and anyone else at RCC so you can receive more support. You need to get your work done, but you don't need to feel alone doing it.

Avoiding plagiarism

In the spirit of maintaining academic integrity, it's helpful to review examples of academic dishonesty and plagiarism. According to the RCC Student Handbook, academic dishonesty includes the following examples:

- Use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations.
- Dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments.
- The acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the College faculty or staff.
- Plagiarism, which is defined as the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials

prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

- Taking credit for work done by another person or doing work for which another person will receive credit. Copying or purchasing other's work or arranging for others to do work under a false name.

If you're doing an assignment requiring research and you have questions about how to site or use a source because you're nervous about the potential for plagiarism, please don't hesitate to reach out to your instructors or academic support staff (tutors, advisors) for answers and additional support.

Conclusion

The appeal of online learning is found in its flexibility and convenience. However, students must remember to couple flexibility and convenience with discipline to fully realize the benefits of online courses. Whether courses meet at a set time online or the material is freely accessible by video, the successful student manages their time wisely. They schedule ample time to read, study, complete assignments, and engage via the chat feature or discussion board. If you are prone to procrastination, rely on the instructor to remind you to submit assignments, online courses may pose a challenge for you.

Student Technology Support at RCC

<https://www.rcc.mass.edu/technology-resources/login-help-rcc-myid>

Links to Technical Support



OneDrive

Microsoft's cloud storage software. You can use it to store files that you want to keep available to you wherever you are.



Teams

A video call software, also from Microsoft. It offers a suite of tools for collaboration, meetings, and file sharing.



Zoom

Video call software widely used for business, telemedicine, and education.



Word

Word processing software for writing papers, resumes, and other documents. Probably Microsoft's most popular products.



PowerPoint

Presentation software from Microsoft. You can make slides and PDFs with it.