



## What to expect in an online course at RVCC this Fall

You have received this document because you are enrolled in an online course this Fall at Raritan Valley Community College. This information is designed to help you succeed in your online courses and have a positive experience.

Online courses, like all college courses, require a lot of reading. **Start strong by reading this document closely so you are ready for your course, and know what to expect!** Login instructions are at the end of this document.

### There is no set meeting time

Unlike other recent online experiences you may have had during the COVID-19 stay-at-home mandate, RVCC online courses are not delivered over a web conferencing system like Zoom. This means that *generally* there is no set meeting time. You can log into Canvas at times that are convenient for you each week, as long as you meet all your deadlines.

This does *not* mean it takes less time than a face-to-face or Zoom course, it just means that *you* can decide when you spend that time. *You* are responsible for logging into Canvas, understanding what your tasks are each week, and making sure that you complete everything on time. You will communicate with your instructor and classmates on the course topics, but managing your time is your responsibility.

### You'll have regular, frequent deadlines

An online course will move forward in weekly modules or content modules, each with specific due dates. You'll have deadlines to meet each week or every few days. Your assignments will include things like posting to a discussion forum, reading course material, doing assignments, and taking exams. Refer to the Canvas calendar, the Canvas course Syllabus tab, and the Canvas course *Modules* tab the first time you log in, so you can learn about the deadlines in your course right away. It will be up to you to set up time to work on your online classes, and to make a commitment to "attend" the same times each week by logging into Canvas, and to keep up with the material.



## **How to be successful in an online course**

### **Understand that you are responsible for your own learning**

Online learning can be very convenient since you decide when to do the readings and assignments. It can also be dangerous, since it's easy to procrastinate and fall behind in a class where no one is reminding you of your assignments or deadlines. It's up to *you* to take responsibility for succeeding in your online course.

*Students who are successful in online courses are ready to take control of their own learning.*

Before the start of the semester, your instructor will have posted material for you to read and watch, questions to discuss, assignments to complete, and assessments to demonstrate your learning, such as quizzes and tests. It is your responsibility to make sure you understand the material as you work through it, and if not, *it's your responsibility to ask questions* of your instructor, your classmates, or go to the Academic Support Center for free tutoring help.

### **Ask Questions**

Always remember to ask any questions you have – about the material, deadlines, or technical issues. Your instructor is there to help guide you through the material, so don't be shy about asking questions. If there's something you don't understand even *after* carefully reading the instructions, it is very appropriate for you to contact the instructor for clarification. When you do, it is helpful to start with a new, blank email, and put the class name and number in the subject line. Then, in the body of the email, be sure to formulate specific questions so that you get a useful answer and keep moving forward in the course. If you just ask, "what do I do?" the answer is likely to be, "read the Canvas course and find out!"

### **Teach the dog**

Your course material will likely include PowerPoints, written notes, and videos from your instructor. It's your responsibility to view these and test your own understanding. If you live with family, roommates, or pets, feel free to teach them what you learned each day. This is a great way to test your own understanding - it's hard to teach something unless you really know it, and the act of teaching can help you solidify concepts in your mind, while highlighting areas you are less clear about.

## **Make a schedule**

Set aside a schedule for yourself and stick to it. It is very easy to ignore an online course and fall behind, and it can be extra challenging to get caught back up. Students who are successful in online courses tend to make a weekly schedule and stick to it.

**Set aside time two to four days each week** to work on your online courses and stay on schedule. Depending on your learning style, you may find it easier to carve out two big timeslots a week, or you may prefer to do a little bit work on most days each week.

**Do assignments early.** This way you are giving yourself extra time if you run into any problems. If you wait until just before a deadline to start an assignment and get stuck, there might not be time for you to contact the instructor for help. Start work early - you'll learn more and feel good about what you're doing.

## **Get Help**

The RVCC student Academic Support Center (<https://www.raritanval.edu/student-life/student-services/tutoring-services>) is a GREAT resource for *free* virtual tutoring or online chat. Also, remember if you need help you can make an appointment to meet virtually in Microsoft Teams or Zoom, or attend existing professor office hours, all posted in your Canvas course.

## **Post to the discussion forums often**

In many classes you will connect with your classmates through the Canvas discussion forums set up by your instructor. You might have some discussion assignments that are worth points, and other discussion opportunities that are just for asking questions or socializing. Making the time to contribute to *all* discussions, graded or not, will improve your overall online learning experience. Connecting with your classmates and the instructor is an important part of a college class experience, so try not to think of discussion postings as secondary or less important, regardless of course credit. Don't wait for your classmates or instructor to start a conversation, be the first to reach out.

## **Plan ahead for testing**

All STEM and many non-STEM classes require in-person testing at RVCC testing center. If you are not local, you can schedule with your local community college and your professor to test at their testing center. This usually requires an additional fee per test of \$25-\$50 per test

## How to access your online course

At Raritan Valley Community College, online courses are delivered through a system called **Canvas**. Canvas is the *Learning Management System* we use. You'll often see Learning Management Systems referred to with the acronym *LMS*.

For an overview of Canvas, watch this video:

<https://community.canvaslms.com/videos/1124>

### How to access Canvas:

1. Log into RVCC Lion's Den <https://lionsden.raritanval.edu>
2. Scroll down to the Canvas tile and click on it.



3. Log into the Canvas account using your G number and network password.
4. For help with your password, call 908-231-8811 (RVCC Help Desk) or email [helpdesk@raritanval.edu](mailto:helpdesk@raritanval.edu)

**Note that your courses may not appear in Canvas until the first day of the semester.**