

# Learning at a Distance

A Student's Guide to Online Learning  
at Framingham State University

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# Learning at a Distance

## A Student's Guide to Online Learning at Framingham State University

If you are reading this document it assumes you are enrolled in an online class or you have an interest in taking an online class in the future. The guide was developed to help students make the transition from sitting in a classroom to the online learning environment. Please reference this information at any time or [view the support site online](http://elearning.fscmedia.com/student) at <http://elearning.fscmedia.com/student>.

### Framingham State University

The Distance Education Program at Framingham State University enables students to achieve their educational goals online, on time, ongoing. Hundreds of undergraduate and graduate online courses are offered annually. Students will find dedicated faculty teaching these courses and strong administrative support for the program.

Students who enroll in online courses use such words as *interactive, challenging and collaborative* to describe their educational experience. Quality is emphasized in the course design and in our online teaching.

The growth of online education at Framingham State University is attributed to a dedicated group of online educators, strong administrative support, and students like you. As Director of Education Technology, I thank you for being part of this exciting learning experience.

*Robin S. Robinson, Director Education Technology and Interactive Media*

### How to Succeed Online

Students who succeed in an online class often share these characteristics.

- Independent
- Self-Motivated
- Self-Disciplined
- Good at time management
- Have a keen interest in the course

**Learning online may require you to adopt new strategies to succeed.** Most students find that taking online courses requires a high level of personal organization and self-discipline. Practicing good study habits is a place to begin.

### Strategies for Success

**If you have a question, ask.** Remember that most classes meet only online. Be clear with your comments and requests and keep your instructor informed if you have questions or experience any difficulties.

The university provides 24/7 toll free Blackboard support. **Call 1-844-718-1602** if you have questions about using Blackboard or experience any technical problems.

Address your academic questions to the course instructor. You also have the option of contacting the Office of Graduate Studies (508-626-4014) or the Office of Continuing Education (508-626-4603).

Address questions about the online learning experience to the Education Technology Office at 508-626-4927.

**Become familiar with Blackboard**, the Learning Management System used to support online learning at Framingham State University. If this is your first online class, review the Blackboard Student Tutorial before the class begins.

**Log on to Blackboard** early. All online students receive a welcome message before classes begin. If the email does not arrive *before the course begins*, contact the Blackboard support line, 1-844-718-1602, for your username and password.

**Familiarize yourself with your course site and instructor expectations.** Your instructor will email a welcome message when the course is opened (not always before classes begin.) Open each menu option listed in your class site so that you become familiar with the course tools. Find the course syllabus, schedule, class requirements, methods of communication, and know where to go for help.

**Review course expectations.** Although most online courses are taught asynchronously, some professors do schedule real-time online collaboration sessions or ask you to meet on campus to review course material or to take an exam. If you are unsure of the expectations, ask.

**Be organized.** Many students find that online courses are at least as time consuming, perhaps even a bit more, than face-to-face classes. Schedule time to log into your course site on a regular basis, participate as requested and stick to your schedule for the duration of the course. If you allow too many days to pass by you may find it difficult to catch up.

**Complete all assignments on time.** *Online courses are not self-paced*, but they are flexible. If it works better for you to complete your work in the evening, that is perfectly fine as long as it meets the due date set by your instructor. Become familiar with the course syllabus and know when your assignments are due.

**Be an independent learner.** Online courses require that you work from written directions or written communication from your instructor or classmates. Participate in the online discussions as directed by your professor and share your views to broaden your understanding of the course material.

Some students have said that online collaboration often provides more opportunities to explore the course content in-depth than is possible during an in-class discussion.

**Communication skills are a key factor** in an online class. It is important to write clear and concise statements when you communicate online. Remember the person reading your comments does not see your expression or hear your tone of voice. Take advantage of the environment and prepare your comments in Word before posting them online or sending an email to your classmates or instructor.

**Become familiar with communication policies** for your course. Most instructors will reply to your emails within 24 to 48 hours. Knowing the preferred method of communication will help alleviate the feeling of isolation when taking an online course.

**Reward yourself occasionally!** Online courses are as in-depth as a face-to-face class. Plan to do something special for yourself after you have studied or worked hard on a project.

### About the Technology

**Experience with Blackboard, the system used to host your course, is not necessary**, *but you do need basic computer skills to succeed in an online class*. If you know how to navigate a web site, use a drop down menu, browse for a file on your computer, have used a word processor like Microsoft Word, and are able to send an

email with an attachment, then you have the technical skills needed to take an online course.

**Access to a computer is required.** An internet-ready computer (PC or Mac) with high-end capacity in terms of speed and RAM is needed to access Blackboard course material. [Learn more](#) ...

**Use a Blackboard preferred browser** to connect to the Internet. The features and functionality in Blackboard require that you use an updated internet browser capable of running JavaScript and Java and that Cookies are enabled. Mozilla Firefox is the preferred browser of the University. *Other browsers may function but are not supported by Blackboard and are not recommended.*

When working at home, most faculty and students find that a 56K modem provides acceptable Internet access but cable or DSL will work faster.

If you use a Macintosh computer it is important that you are running OS X or newer. Older Mac operating systems do not work well with Blackboard's online collaboration tools.

**Become familiar with the technology requirements** for your course. Some professors require that you use specific word processing applications like Microsoft Word or that you have access to applications like Microsoft PowerPoint or Excel.

Other professors use real time collaboration tools like Skype or Blackboard Collaborate and may require you to purchase a microphone.

These expectations are outlined by your instructor with their course information. If you do not see a requirement listed, ask.

### Getting Started with Blackboard

**Blackboard** is used at Framingham State University to complement and supplement our online course offerings. All online, hybrid, and Web-enhanced courses are hosted by Blackboard on a dedicated server, accessible from any internet ready computer - PC or MAC - at any time, and from anywhere.

### Blackboard Frequently Asked Questions

**Review the information** in the Blackboard Frequently Asked Questions: <http://www.framingham.edu/online-learning/resources/frequently-asked-questions.html>.



To get you started we included the questions asked most often.

**Q. I forgot my password, now what do I do?**

From the login page click "Forgot your password." An email will be sent to you with new password information. Still having problems? Please call the Framingham State Technology Resource Center at 508 215 5950.

**Q. My email changed. How do I update my address on Blackboard?**

Use the Personal Information Link from the Tools box of your Blackboard home page to update your email address, change your password or set privacy options.

**Q. My Course is not listed on Blackboard, now what do I do?**

Your welcome letter is your confirmation that you are enrolled in your online course. If you log into Blackboard and your course is not listed, chances are **your instructor has not made the course site available**. If you wish to confirm your enrollment, call our 24/7 Blackboard support line at 1-844-718-1602 for assistance, or Student Services at 508-626-4545 or [registrarsoffice@framingham.edu](mailto:registrarsoffice@framingham.edu). ETO is also available by phone 508 626-4927 or email at [ETO@framingham.edu](mailto:ETO@framingham.edu) or view us online at <http://www.framingham.edu/online-learning/>.

Learn more .... <http://elearning.fscmedia.com>

### Blackboard Usernames and Passwords

Standard usernames and passwords are used to connect you to Blackboard, the campus network, library databases, myFramingham and web email. Your account information is emailed to you before classes begin.

#### To log on to Blackboard:

- Go to: <http://framingham.blackboard.com/>
- Enter your assigned username and password.
- Click Login or [Enter].

#### Forgot your password?

Passwords are synched across university resources including, Blackboard, myFramingham, Email and your network login. To change or reset your password go to <https://password.framingham.edu>. Call the Technology Resource Center at 508 215 5950 for assistance if you cannot reset your password.

### Top Ten Blackboard Start-up Tips

Approximately three weeks before the semester begins emails are sent to all students enrolled in an online class. When your email arrives **follow these ten steps** to become familiar with Blackboard and your online course.

1. Log in with your assigned username and password before the semester begins.
2. Verify your personal information (university email is preferred).
3. Locate the course link in the My Courses Box. *(The link will appear if the professor has made the site available.)*
4. Read the announcements (and check back often for updates).
5. Find the syllabus and download a copy for reference.
6. Review all material posted (enter every content space).
7. Complete an orientation exercise when asked.
8. Reference the Student Tutorial located on the course menu.
9. Use updated web browser (Firefox is preferred).
10. If you need assistance, ASK! 1-866-361-8970 – 24/7 Blackboard support.

Note: Not all professors use Blackboard in the same way. **If you experience a problem contact the 24/7 Blackboard support line at 1-844-718-1602 for assistance.**

Blackboard  
mobile™

Access courses **anywhere, anytime**  
using the FREE Blackboard Mobile™  
Learn App.

<http://www.blackboard.com/Platforms/Mobile/Resources/Blackboard-Mobile-Learn-Demos.aspx>

## Academic and Technology Resources

Online courses are exactly the same as their in-class counterparts except for the method of delivery. Our online courses are designed to meet the same accreditation standards as in-class courses. All of the support services available to on-campus students are also available to students who take classes online. Become familiar with these resources.

### Offices of Graduate Studies and Continuing Education

At the Offices of Graduate Studies and Continuing Education at Framingham State University you'll find that excellence goes hand-in-hand with intellectual development and enrichment. Both offices provide a comprehensive range of study including graduate, undergraduate and certificate programs, noncredit courses, and programs for educators. Whether you take classes on campus or online, you'll get personal attention and practical training.

The Office of Graduate Studies (Graduate Studies, 508-626-4014) and the Office of Continuing Education (508-626-4603) are located in Dwight Hall, Room 204.

### Education Technology Office (ETO) (508) 626-4927

ETO provides students and faculty with academic support for software, online courseware and instructional applications. The office is located in Hemenway Hall HH105 and HH109. The online address is <http://www.framingham.edu/online-learning/>. Contact ETO at [ETO@framingham.edu](mailto:ETO@framingham.edu) or call 508-626-4927 if you have questions about the online learning environment or have questions about Blackboard.

### Whittemore Library

[www.framingham.edu/henry-whittemore-library/](http://www.framingham.edu/henry-whittemore-library/)

Off-campus Library Access is available to all online students. The Whittemore Library at Framingham State University is a member of the Minuteman Library Network, which has over 5 million books and multi-media materials between the member libraries. Whittemore Library has over 200,000 items in the general collection, and subscribes to an array of databases and full text electronic journals.

All of these materials are available to online students. Books can be either mailed or picked up at a convenient location, upon request.

The library subscribes to a number of online databases and other electronic resources. Click the link to the [Whittemore Library](#) tab from Blackboard or go to the library web site to get started. You will be prompted to log in with your Blackboard login and password if not already connected to Blackboard.

**Reference librarians** are also available to help you choose appropriate resources for a particular research topic. Please call 508.626.4654 to speak with a reference librarian or e-mail the librarians at: [reference@framingham.edu](mailto:reference@framingham.edu). Reference librarians are available to hold classes on introduction to library resources and research techniques during the day, evenings and weekends.

### 24/7 Blackboard Support Toll Free 1-844-718-1602

Blackboard Support is available to both faculty and students at all times of day. The service is provided as an extension to the Education Technology Office.

Visit the Blackboard Online Resource Center to access Blackboard support tools, chat with a technician or report a technical problem. Resources are also available through the TTY (Teletypewriter) access number, 703-464-0515.

### myFramingham

<http://my.framingham.edu>

**myFramingham** connects all students with a secure access to personalized information and the ability to complete self-service transactions online. Course schedules, personal information, grades, financial aid and account balance information can be obtained from anywhere on the world-wide web after logging in. Students also are provided the ability to register for courses and pay bills online. Log onto myFramingham to:

- View your grades
- Register for classes
- Check Financial Aid awards
- Pay your tuition bill
- Access resources and services for students
- Receive important announcements
- Learn about campus events

### Student Email

[login.microsoftonline.com](http://login.microsoftonline.com)

All students receive an official Framingham State University student email address, which will be your [username@student.framingham.edu](mailto:username@student.framingham.edu). This email address is used as one of the official means of communication to students by the university.

Students are responsible for all information sent by the University through this email address and students should check this account on a frequent and consistent basis in order to stay current with University-related communications. It is also recommended that students use this email address to conduct University business and to communicate with faculty and staff.

To learn more about our technology resources and services, please visit the Information Technology Web site at <http://www.framingham.edu/information-technology-services/index.html>.

### Additional Web Resources

#### Framingham State University

<http://www.framingham.edu/online-learning/>  
508.620.1220

#### myFramingham (Academic Resources)

[my.framingham.edu](http://my.framingham.edu)

**eFollet Bookstore** <http://www.efollett.com/>

**eTutoring** [www.etutoring.org](http://www.etutoring.org)

**Password Reset** [password.framingham.edu](http://password.framingham.edu)

**Student Email** [login.microsoftonline.com](http://login.microsoftonline.com)

### Academic Offices and Support Services

#### Office of Graduate Studies

<http://www.framingham.edu/graduate-studies/index.html>

508-626-4014 (Graduate Studies)

#### Office of Continuing Education

<http://www.framingham.edu/continuing-education/index.html>

508.626.4550 (Continuing Education)

#### Education Technology Office

[eLearning.fscmedia.com](http://eLearning.fscmedia.com)

508.626.4927

#### Technology Resource Center

508.215.5950 or email: [IT@framingham.edu](mailto:IT@framingham.edu)  
(help desk)

### CASA

Center for Academic Support and Advising

<http://www.framingham.edu/center-for-academic-support-and-advising/>

### Whittemore Library

<http://www.framingham.edu/henry-whittemore-library/>

### Blackboard Support

#### Blackboard

<http://framingham.blackboard.com>

#### 24/7 Blackboard Support

1-844-718-1602

#### Blackboard Mobile Learn

Access Blackboard from any mobile device, any time.

<http://elearning.fscmedia.com/blackboard-mobile-app>

#### Blackboard Student Learning Center

[https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1\\_SP\\_14/Student](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_SP_14/Student)

#### eLearning@FSU

<http://elearning.fscmedia.com/>