

FAQ on the EEC & Distance Education

Online courses are often the answer for students who are very busy, have difficulty driving to college, or who live far away. With a different format from the traditional learning environment, students should consider a number of factors to determine their chances for success. The FAQ below may help students determine their readiness and compatibility for such courses.

1. Is a Distance Education (DE) or Online class easier than a traditional class?

No. Distance Education classes may be more difficult, because of the amount of self-discipline, motivation, and time required to successfully complete a DE class. While they do offer flexibility and convenience for people with already busy schedules, the motivation for completing the assignments, taking the tests, and all other requirements falls to the student. The student must log in to the course every day to check for announcements, updates, new postings, etc., and take the appropriate actions. Most DE courses are NOT self-paced; there are deadlines for turning in assignments and taking the tests, just as a traditional class would have.

2. How do you know if Distance Education classes are a good fit?

Distance Education classes are definitely not for everyone. In a typical DE class, the student will work independently and in an asynchronous environment. There is not much real-time interaction between the students and the instructor. Additionally, the student's typing skills, reading, communication skills, and general computer skills need to already be in place. You need to know how to attach documents, upload and download files, email, and post discussions. The successful DE student will be self-motivated, have good time-management skills, have self-discipline, and be independent.

3. Are Distance Education courses accessible from anywhere?

Yes, distance education courses are available anywhere there is high speed internet access. If you have internet access, you should be able to access your courses. People considering DE courses need to consider what type of internet service they have access to. If only dial-up internet is available, distance education courses may not be the answer to your education needs. If the internet service in your area is not ideal, check other resources in your area, such as the public library that might be better.

4. Will I be required to come to campus during the semester if I am taking a DE course?

It is a possibility:

Courses marked as "B####" are "Hybrid" and will have 51-84 percent of instruction will occur in Blackboard.

Courses marked as "L####" will have 85-100 percent of instruction will occur in Blackboard. Some instructors require that students come to campus to take exams. Depending on the course, students might also be required to come to campus for activities related to course work.

Courses marked as "F####" are "Hy-Flex," and students have the option of attending class virtually or in-person at the scheduled class time.

Courses marked as "S####" are "Streaming," and students attend class virtually using web-conferencing software at specified class times.

5. How much time is required for a DE class?

A DE class will typically require significantly more time than a traditional one. Students should understand that each hour of class credit requires three hours per week: one hour in lecture and two hours of personal study/homework. Thus, a three-hour course requires nine hours per week: three in class and six on your own. A best practice for students involves logging in to their course three to five times per week to check for announcements, emails, new discussion postings, assignments, or assessments. Waiting until just before the assignment or assessment is due is not recommended, as technical glitches are a very real possibility. If something does happen while taking an assessment or trying to submit assignments, students should notify the instructor immediately. Don't wait two or three days to inform the instructor.

6. **Since the Distance Education class is online, does that mean it is self-paced, or can the student complete it whenever?**

No. The majority of DE classes will have assignments/assessments that have due dates associated with them. Once those dates have passed, the assignment/assessments will show as "missed" and students will not be able to access and submit assignments/assessments. Students need to contact their instructors immediately if they are having trouble with assignments/assessments. Again, it is important complete work in advance, and **not** to try to complete course material just before the deadline.

7. **Are all Distance Education classes Blackboard classes?**

Yes, every instructor uses Lee College's LMS, currently Blackboard, for their DE classes. However, some instructors only use Blackboard as a pass-through to an electronic textbook or electronic courseware site (e.g., MyMathLab, MindTap, etc.)

8. **What is Blackboard?**

Blackboard is a company that develops Learning Management Systems. It is a self-contained place to present material to students. Blackboard can be used in a variety of manners, e.g., online or hybrid instruction, to enhance a traditional class, as a community for users such as the drafting community or the nursing community, honor societies, or Faculty Learning Communities to post information relevant to all its members. The advantage of using such a system is that it is self-contained; therefore, sensitive information is not accessible to unauthorized users.

9. **Do I need to own a computer?**

Yes. DE courses are designed for the student who, for various reasons, wants to study at a different location from the school and instructor, but who has access to high-speed internet.

10. **What are the basic computer requirements?**

To be successful in an online course, students who use their personal computers must have high-speed internet access. Online course users will need at least two internet browsers: for PC users, Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox; and for Mac users, Safari and Mozilla Firefox.

PC users need an operating system of Windows XP, Windows Vista, or Windows 7. Mac users will need an operating system of 10.5 or 10.6. To view all information, including pop-ups, etc, JAVA should be installed on the computer.

11. **If I choose to take a Hy-Flex or Streaming class virtually, what equipment is required?**

Students should have a personal computer or laptop with a webcam and microphone. Hy-Flex and Streaming courses generally use the web-conferencing platform WebEx. Instructors teaching Hy-Flex or Streaming classes may require

students to turn on their cameras during class; therefore, having a fast internet connection is also recommended.

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