

ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY

Student Guide for Online Education

This booklet is designed to assist the SCSU student in online courses.



ST. CLOUD STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

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Permission granted by Minnesota State University Moorhead to use a modified version of the Student Guide for Online Education.

https://www.mnstate.edu/uploadedFiles/Level_2/Content/Instructional_Technology_Services/MSUM_Online_Ed_Student_Guide.pdf

Introduction to Online Education

Online education at St. Cloud State is designed for students who desire the flexibility of studying anytime, anyplace without the time and distance constraints of attending class on campus.

The university offers more than 200 online courses each semester including many major program courses for undergraduate degrees such as criminal justice and community psychology. Degree completion opportunities are available for six graduate programs as well as Bachelor of Elective Studies (BES), Associates of Arts (AA) and Science (AS), and Nursing RN- to-BSN. [Courses and programs](#) are listed on our website.

We want you to have the convenience to learn your way – online, on-campus or both.

Definitions

Accessibility - Accessibility means that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, interact, and contribute in a course. Accessibility in a distance learning course is determined by the features of the instructional technologies provided by the University and by the way that faculty members use those technologies to create materials and design courses.

Asynchronous - Literally means "not at the same time." Asynchronous tools, such as e-mail and discussion board, allow participants to communicate without all participants being online at the same time.

Class Attendance - Attendance in distance learning courses will be determined by the active participation of the student through the completion of class activities, such as the submission of an assignment, completion of an exam, attendance in an online chat, or the posting of a post to a discussion forum. Simply logging in to the course in the learning management system is not considered attendance.

Distance Learning (DL) – Distance Learning (DL) includes fully online and blended courses and is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Interaction between the instructor and the student is regular and substantive, and can be initiated by the instructor or the student.

FERPA – The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) requires that educational records be treated in a very specific way to ensure the privacy of students and their records. Online students need to be aware of the students' rights to privacy regarding their educational records. More information about FERPA can be found at SCSU's [Policies and Procedures](#) webpage and at the [U.S. Department of Education's](#) website.

Learning Management System (LMS) – Learning Management System (LMS) is a web-accessible software application that provides for the administration of course content, delivery of assessments, communication and collaboration between students and instructors, and the ability to track grades and other relevant performance data. St. Cloud State is currently using D2L Brightspace as its learning management system.

Synchronous – Literally means "occurring at the same time." Synchronous tools, such as text chat, require all participants to be online at the same time.

Qualities of Online Learners

Are you ready to be an online learner? Two important questions that you need to ask yourself include:

1. Are you self-motivated?
2. Do you have technology skills and availability?

While online courses offer greater flexibility, they also require more self-discipline and independence than courses on campus. You will be successful if you are a self-starter and able to work well independently with minimum supervision.

Also keep in mind that online courses require as much time as on-campus classes. Plan to devote about 12 hours a week to most three-credit courses.

Visit the [SCSU Online website](#) for more information.

Take the Self-Assessment

Online education is a positive experience for most students. You can check your readiness for online learning with our distance learning self-assessment. Don't worry - no one will see the results but you. This is designed to help you make an informed decision regarding your learning comfort zone.

[Online Learning Self-assessment](#)

This quiz was adapted, with permission, from a questionnaire developed by the Extended Learning Institute of Northern Virginia Community College.

Frequently Asked Questions about Online Learning

FAQ-1

Do I need to come to SCSU Campus?

Some courses are taught in a hybrid setting - meaning that some courses are part online and part face-to-face. Other courses are completely online. The online course catalog will tell you if the course is hybrid or completely online.

FAQ-2

Can I just take a course, or do I have to be accepted as an SCSU student?

You need to be registered as a student at SCSU to take courses; whether online, hybrid, or in class. To enroll in entirely online courses, you must fill out an [online application](#).

FAQ-3

Will I have to be online at a particular time?

Some instructors require students to be online at a particular time to take quizzes or exams, or to participate in chat sessions. You may contact your instructor for details.

FAQ-4

How do students register for online courses, and how will I know when the course begins?

Students can view the [course schedule](#) and register for online courses on the university's website. To learn more about the admission and registration process, visit the [campus website](#). Once enrolled in an online course, students can verify course start dates in [eServices](#).

FAQ-5

How do I get my course books?

You may order the textbooks from [Husky Books Express](#). Husky Books Express is a convenient, streamlined online book-buying service for SCSU students.

FAQ-6

Can I take both online and on-campus courses?

Yes. Students can take online, blended, and on-campus courses to best suit their program and schedule.

FAQ-7

What if I cannot login to D2L Brightspace?

Contact D2L@stcloudstate.edu or the MN State System Help Desk at 877-466-6728.

FAQ-8

How are exams administered?

This is determined by the faculty. Some faculty administer proctored exams (on-campus), while others administer them online. Your instructor will provide you with the details.

FAQ-9

I don't have a computer at home. Can I still take an online course?

Yes, as long as you're sure you'll have regular access to a computer that's connected suitably to the Internet. Some of our students use computers they have at work. There are also computer labs on campus with Internet access.

FAQ-10

Are online classes more difficult than traditional (on-campus) classes?

You can expect to spend *at least* as much time on an online course as you would if you took the class in a traditional classroom setting on campus. There is often a significant amount of reading and writing, and you may need to log in to your course and check the

announcements and discussion forums several times a week, if not daily.

As a rule, you should anticipate two to three hours of work each week for every credit hour the course is worth. For example, for a three-credit course you should expect to spend at least six to nine hours working on that course every week. If you are taking more than one course, then you should expect to spend that amount of time on **each** course **each** week.

Requirements of Online Learners

Computing Knowledge

Online learners must be able to use basic Internet functions and have a moderate amount of skill with commonly used software applications such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, etc. In addition, you must have knowledge on how to store and upload files and how to use email. Be sure that you will have constant access to a computer and Internet source when needed for your class.

Organizing Your Time

Set aside a time that works for your schedule on a daily basis to sit down and work in the online course. 2-3 hours per week of study time for each credit is recommended. Do not rely solely on your instructor to remind you of due dates and participation expectations. You must be self-disciplined.

Communication Skills

Communication with your instructor and other students is an integral part of the online learning environment. Three common ways you can expect to communicate with your instructor include email, online course discussion boards, and possibly phone or web conferencing.

Online learners need the ability to communicate effectively using the written word. In addition, online learners should be comfortable expressing themselves and reflecting on the information covered within the course platform, while being as clear and concise as possible. You need to feel comfortable asking questions if you have them. You aren't on your own in an online class; the instructor is still there to answer questions through email or discussion posts.

Student Resources

Academic Advising

Contact the Academic Advising office if you have specific questions about advising, majors, graduation requirements, and services and resources.

Accessibility Services

St. Cloud State University is committed to providing equitable access to learning

opportunities for all students. To request accommodations, contact [Student Accessibility Services](#).

Financial Services

For information on FAFSA, [cost of attendance, tuitions and fees](#), or if you have questions about student bill, payment options, visit the site.

Online Tutoring

Tutor.com is a *free* online tutoring and academic support tool available to all St. Cloud State online students. To learn more visit [Online Tutoring](#).

Proctored Testing

A proctored exam is an exam that is administered by an individual who supervises the student while they are taking the exam. The proctor's function is to ensure the integrity and security of the exam in a secure environment. To learn more, visit the website and view the [proctored testing](#) information.

Registration

To view the [Registration Guide and Schedule](#), visit the Student Registration & Financial Services site.

University Library Services

St. Cloud State's University Library is dedicated to providing the online learner with resources equivalent to those used by students taking face-to-face courses. Please see the [Library Access for Online Students](#) site for assistance.

Academic Integrity

Copyright law, which allows the creator of an original work to benefit from it, applies to the Internet as well as printed publications. When you find information on the Internet, you **must** cite it in the same way you would any other publication. To learn more about citing sources, visit the University Library's site and view the tutorials: [SCSU Academic Integrity](#)

Complaint Process

Saint Cloud State University is a member of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA), a voluntary, regional approach to state oversight of postsecondary distance education. If you wish to submit a complaint regarding online education at St. Cloud State, refer to the [Student Complaint Process](#).

Technology Resources

Technology Requirements

An online program offers a lot of flexibility. In order to get the most out of this benefit, a personal computer with Internet access is essential for completing assignments and interacting with others.

Online courses at St. Cloud State and other Minnesota State Colleges and Universities schools are primarily managed through the [D2L Brightspace](#) system. Before using D2L Brightspace, make sure your computer meets the minimum requirements.

- Ensure that your browser has JavaScript and Cookies enabled.
- You must have the ability to check email. Remember, St. Cloud State email is the official form of communication with your professors.
- If multimedia is used in a course, you will need a sound card with speakers/headphones.
- You will need standard versions of at least Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint. These programs are [available for free to students](#) through Office 365.
- Perform a [System Check](#) to make sure your computer's software is compatible.
- Technical support is available at [HuskyTech](#).

D2L Brightspace

An online learning management system (LMS) is where you will log in to your course to view announcements, course readings, instructions, and directions from your instructor. D2L Brightspace is the LMS used by all Minnesota State campuses, including St. Cloud State.

For more information and student help documents, visit [D2L Brightspace Technology](#)

Login to D2L Brightspace

1. Login with your StarID and password at D2L Brightspace.
2. Your StarID and password are the same login you use as your email and eServices.

Contact Us

If you have questions or need additional information, we are here to help. Email our office at: scsuonline@stcloudstate.edu or call (320) 308-3181.

SCSU Online Learning

To learn more about online education at SCSU, [visit our website](#) or [contact us](#).

Minnesota State Online

Web chat and more resources available at [MN State Online](#).