



Student Handbook For e - Learning



Bluewater DSB based this handbook on the eLO handbooks of Simcoe County DSB and Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB, and would like to thank them for the use of their materials.

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Part 1- Introduction to e-Learning

Welcome to e-Learning at Bluewater District School Board!

This student guide introduces you to e-learning at BWDSB. As a BWDSB eLearning student, you are expected to be familiar with the information in this student guide, and to follow the guidelines and procedures that are contained within it.

Involvement in educational interactions through our e-learning environment requires a code of conduct, which guides the community. Common courtesy and good manners are imperative in the relationships between individuals and groups interacting through online learning. As a student within the e-Learning community, the Code of Conduct and all other guidelines in place in your BWDSB school will protect you.

Overview

Taking courses by e-Learning is becoming a mainstream practice in business and post-secondary education. E-Learning offers you access to selected credit courses anywhere, anytime via the Internet.

BWDSB is offering e-Learning courses to all high school students through e-Learning. Students may wish to select an e-Learning course because the course in their home school is oversubscribed or it is not offered. Your guidance counsellor can help you select the e-Learning course that is right for you.

Start and end dates of the courses are the same as those for any traditional course in your school.

Your teacher is a certified teacher. This teacher is located at a school within the board. Teachers will post office hours during which they will be available for direct contact via chat and email. If you need to communicate beyond these hours, then you will be able to make use of indirect messaging through email and threaded discussion.

Your Attendance and Successful Participation

The Learning Management System will automatically keep track of your login, the IP address of the machine you are working on, and the total time logged in for each session. While logged in you may work on course content or communicate with your teacher and your classmates and submit assignments.

If you are unable to login due to technical issues please contact your in school supervisor/ contact immediately in person or via email and explain your challenges. You may also contact your teacher who will be able to follow up with you through email and help to resolve problems you may be having.

If you are away or unable to login for a period of 3 consecutive days you must notify your teacher of the absence. If you will be away or unable to log in for a period of 5 or more days, you must receive permission from your home school principal. Your home school is defined as the school where you are officially registered.

Your teacher will be available and logged in during her/his eLO period on a daily basis. The teacher will also be available throughout the week through scheduled chats, and email, and can also be reached during their scheduled "office hours", which they would have identified for you during your first week of class. Your teacher MAY identify scheduled chats, assignments and threaded discussion opportunities in which your participation and attendance are **mandatory**.

In order to be successful in an on-line course you MUST stay up to date on assignments and participate in the discussions. If an extension on an assignment is necessary you must negotiate this with your teacher on an individual basis via the communications tools within the LMS.

Course Structure

Each course is broken up into a series of units called modules. Modules are broken down into sections and supports for you. Each module may have all, or some, of the following components:

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|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Content | 8. Assignments |
| 2. Expectations | 9. Resources |
| 3. Overview | 10. Tests |
| 4. Discussion | 11. Teacher Web Page and blog |
| 5. Reviews & Quizzes | 12. Threaded Discussions and chats |
| 6. Questions | 13. Email |
| 7. Drop Box | 14. Course Outline |

1. Content

For every course, you will begin by looking at the content for a given module. When you click on content you will access the learning material for each module. This material represents all of the information that will be assessed and evaluated by your teacher. There may be references, made in this material, to information for which you will be responsible or that will enrich and support your understanding of a concept.

2. Expectations

The expectations section describes what you will know, or the skills you should be able to demonstrate by the end of the module. The expectations are available to you here in order to develop your awareness of what you will be studying in the module.

3. Overview

The overview section outlines the focus of the module. This section will provide you with a quick look explanation of what will be covered in the content of the upcoming module.

4. Discussions

You will be required to contribute to “classroom discussions” through threaded discussions. Your teacher may periodically post questions on the discussion board. It is an expectation of the course that you respond to the posts of others and share your outlook on the questions or issue posted there. This interactive discussion is a very powerful tool to help develop a community think tank that will support your learning.

5. Reviews and Quizzes

The review may be a quiz that is scored instantly or by your teacher -- depending on the nature of the questions and the course. Use the review (quiz) to help you prepare for the module test or exam. Not all modules contain a review page.

6. Questions

Many of the modules will contain questions to reinforce your understanding of a skill, attitude or concept. Your teacher will instruct you if the responses to the questions need to be submitted to them in order to provide the teacher with an assessment of your understanding of a concept.

7. Drop Box

You will be provided with a secure drop box inside the LMS. This is the electronic storage location for all of your completed assignments. Your teacher will be extracting all the assignments and tests you submit to them from this location. Your drop box has a time stamp feature built into it that will keep track of the date and time you submitted a piece of your work to your teacher. Drop boxes have a limited size so your teacher may make other arrangements with you for uploading larger files.

8. Assignments.

Assignments are provided for you to complete as you advance through the course. The assignments are submitted directly to your teacher via the drop box. The assignments will make up a large percentage of the work that will be assessed and evaluated from which to create the final grade for your course. The weighting of each assignment will be given by your teacher.

9. Resources

Often there will be a resource toolbox of materials and software titles to support the assignment linked into the module.

10. Tests

Some modules (or groups of modules, i.e. units) will include a test or exam. This may be sent to you by your teacher as an email attachment.

11. Teacher Web Pages and Blogs

Each teacher will maintain a webpage within the LMS and as a way to introduce themselves to this virtual community. There is a possibility for the teacher to use a built-in weblog on the web page as well. Both of these can be accessed through the LMS. These tools can be used to provide information to all class members. If your teacher elects to use these tools it you should develop the habit of mind to visit daily (at least) to check for updates that may affect your course.

12. Threaded Discussion and Chats

Teachers will post office hours on your course homepage. The threaded discussion board is a venue in which you can interact with your classmates and your teacher. Remember this is an academic environment and the use of chat short forms is not allowed. Your teacher may require that you take part in these interactions. Teachers will archive all discussions. All material covered on the discussion board may be part of your course work or may appear on a test or assignment in the future.

13. Email

The email component of the LMS is secure and confidential. This will be one of the key communication methods in your course. Each individual in the class will have an email address which you may use to send them information of discuss a group work assignment. If you have a question for your teacher please feel free to email your teacher at any time. The teacher will reply to you as soon as possible. *If you fail to receive a response from your e-learning teacher in a timely manner, please notify the guidance department in your home school to express your concern.*

14. Course Outline

The course outline is an important component of your e-learning course. On this page you will find an outline of the goals of the course, due dates, drop dates and assessment and evaluation criteria for the course.

Course Materials

All materials to support eLearning courses are available through the LMS. There are links from the lessons to sites on the Internet. Every attempt is made to keep the links active, however, due to the very nature of the web this may not always be the possible. If you find a dead link please notify your teacher so the issue may be investigated.

Dropping a Course

If you find that you need to drop your e-Learning course it is important that you follow the directions below. Remember you will not be physically within the confines of a classroom and therefore your presence within the learning community is not as apparent. It is important for you follow the steps outlined below in order to avoid missing course drop dates and to ensure that the dropped course does not show on you official Transcript.

You must do the following to drop a course:

- Contact the course teacher and discuss the course drop with them;
- It is also **essential** that you inform your home school guidance teacher that you are dropping the course. You have not officially dropped the course until your guidance teacher removes you from the course class list.

You must complete all course drop forms and return to your guidance department up to or within 5 days of the official midterm exam date, in order to ensure that there will be no official record of your involvement in this course on your Transcript. This date can be found on the course outline provided within the Learning Management System

NOTE: The course can be dropped after that date; however, your official transcript will show your involvement in the course.

Part 2- Orientation

How to Be Successful in your eLearning Course

Former eLO students in Bluewater have given this advice regarding how to be successful in eLearning courses:

- Treat this course as you do your other courses – Use your eLO period to complete the course work – every day.
- Keep up with the assignments.

In addition we suggest the following:

- Seek help when you need it – either from your eLO teacher, other students in your eLO course, or a teacher in your own school who has taught eLO.
- If you are not getting the help you need in your course please contact your guidance teacher asap.

Research studies have identified some student characteristics which result in higher success rates in eLearning courses. Students who strive to be:

- Organized
- Self-directed and self-motivated
- Good time managers
- Responsible
- Independent
- Flexible – with a willingness to learn
- Good problem solvers
- Good computer skills
- Good communication skills
- Interested in the subject matter

Should be able to succeed in eLearning courses.

You may have chosen your e-Learning course because it fits your schedule and enables you to access course material on a schedule that suits your individual needs.

You will spend at least as much time with your e-learning courses as you would expect to spend in a regular classroom, including homework completion. Each course should require around 110 hours of classroom time plus time at home for completing assignments.

Orientation Module

You will find an online orientation module within the LMS which teaches how to navigate within your course, and complete its required components. This module is the initial assignment for all e-Learning courses, is mandatory, and **MUST** be finished prior to the end of the first week of the eLearning course.

Instructional Software

E-learning courses often require the use of specific software. You may use computers at your school as directed by your guidance counselor. If you are working from a computer outside the school it is your responsibility to provide and support the hardware, networking, software licensing and technical support for your own computer.

If you have troubles with the operation of the LMS please contact the help line at the number given inside your LMS account, located on the My Home page's Support widget at the bottom centre of the page. If you do not want to phone, there is an email link as well.

Communications Tools

These tools include secure email, chat, threaded discussions and drop boxes. The Learning Management System is a self-contained, password protected environment that has ALL necessary tools to complete any course. **DO NOT SHARE PASSWORDS.**

Virus Protection

- We strongly encourage users to install and maintain anti-virus software. We also encourage users to exercise discretion when opening any email attachments to avoid exposure to malicious programs.
- We run the latest virus updates on our servers and work hard to keep our systems virus-free. Please be sure that your virus checker has the latest updates (i.e that you keep your definition files up-to-date).

Part 3: Expectations and Community Guidelines

E-learning Communication Protocols

E-Learning will require considerable communication, via electronic means, between the individuals of the community. In order for you and your teachers to work together in your virtual classroom norms of communication must be established and observed. The following conventions will help to ensure that you are an efficient and courteous member of the e-learning community:

- Be considerate of the opinions and feelings of others in all interactions.
- Use positive language at all times.
- All communications with your teacher and fellow students should use full sentence structure, and traditional spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Keep personal information to yourself, this is a professional venue.
- Keep your password a secret.
- Express your opinion, answer questions and take part in discussions.
- Allow all class members to become involved and express themselves.
- Assign a chairperson for discussions and multi-person chats.
- Communication with classmates and teachers must be held within the LMS.
- All interactions and communications are archived by the system.
- Abuse of communications protocols may result in loss of LMS privileges, suspension or removal from the course.
- Read and understand the terms and conditions set out by Desire2Learn around the operation of the Learning Management System.
- The members of the e-learning community must monitor the actions of the individuals.
- You must identify all posts, as you are responsible for your opinion just as you would be in a face-to-face environment.

Saving and Protecting Your Work

There is one thing that we know about computers; they sometimes fail! As a student in an eLearning class, this is something you must be prepared to deal with.

It is your responsibility to save copies of all assignments submitted for evaluation. Create a folder on your computer's hard drive for each course that you are taking. It is strongly suggested that you develop the habit of making backup copies of all assignments. Burn copies of your work to a CD, or a memory stick (aka USB drive, flash drive, thumb drive), or save it in a virtual environment (ex. GoogleDocs). Do not wait until it is too late, set up your personal protocol now, and stick with it.

Keep a backup copy of both partially completed work and completed modules.

Ensure you have up-to-date virus protection software on your computer and scan all incoming and outgoing files.

Assignment Completion and Submission

You are responsible for establishing your own schedule based on the teachers established minimum **and** maximum requirements. It is in your best interest to ALWAYS refer to the instructional or assessment rubrics in order to find out the success criteria for the assignment you are completing.

Teachers may facilitate the timelines through the use of the LMS which can be set to allow for certain material to be released, quizzes opened and assignments accepted at specified times. It is expected that you will complete all assignments on time. You must negotiate any extensions with your teacher.

All assignments must be submitted to your teacher through the assignment drop box. Your submissions cannot be accessed by anyone other than your teacher. It is possible for your teacher to set the time at which submissions may begin and close.

Once you begin a course, you must demonstrate your commitment to complete the course by regularly submitting module assignments and participating in online discussions. You are more likely to succeed by working at a consistent pace and communicating with your teachers on a regular basis.

You may move rapidly through the course material. However, it is very important that you do not miss out on the opportunity for feedback from your teachers before going too far ahead. Having this feedback will be very important as it will ensure that you understand the material and have mastery of the critical concepts that will be needed to proceed successfully.

Academic Honesty Guidelines

Bluewater District School Board promotes the highest standards of academic conduct. These standards MUST be adhered to when you are involved with research to support your course work. You must learn proper procedures for citing the work of others and you will succeed by being honest about the work that you submit. You should strive to avoid plagiarism (the uncredited work of someone else from sources such as the Internet, books, magazines and other sources).

You are strongly encouraged to work with your teacher to ensure that the work which is submitted is honest, unique to you, and reflects your best work. All instances of academic dishonesty will be investigated thoroughly and reported to your principal and parents (if you are under the age of 18). Learning how to create unique scholarly work is a very important skill for you to develop.

Academic dishonesty will be reported to the principal and investigated thoroughly. Following verification, parents will be contacted and consulted (if the student is under the age of 18).

Students who are found to have infringed on the norms of academic honesty will receive a consequence as determined by the principal. These consequences may range from having to redo the original assignment, or completing an additional assignment, to being removed from the course. This could also affect the possibility of being accepted into future e-learning courses.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty

Situations involving cheating on assignments, tests or exams (by any method); plagiarizing the work of others or knowingly furnishing false information to the school are considered to be infringements on Academic Honesty. Listed below are concrete examples of SOME of the possibilities of Academic Dishonesty:

- substituting on an exam
- substituting in a course or fraudulent representation of the identity of a student by logging in using your credentials and taking part in the eLearning community
- paying someone else to write a paper
- copying with or without the other person's knowledge during an exam
- doing class assignments for someone else
- plagiarizing published material, class assignments, or lab reports
- turning in a paper that has been obtained from another source
- adding items to a bibliography that have not been used in the generation of the assignment
- obtaining an unauthorized copy of a test in advance of its scheduled administration
- using unauthorized notes during an exam
- collaborating with other students on assignments when it is not allowed
- fabricating information and passing it off as a scholarly resource
- providing course materials or answers to current or potential students

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a very distinct form of dishonesty in which one person makes use of another person's ideas or words directly or as a paraphrase and representing them as the ideas of the individual making the statement. The following should be considered when judging if an act is plagiarism.

- you must give credit to the originator of the thought when making statements of the ideas of that person.
- presenting the sequence of ideas or rearranging the material of someone else in your own words, without giving appropriate acknowledgment *is* plagiarism
- Submitting information that has been created by someone else as your own.

Avoiding Academic Dishonesty

- If an action you are considering "feels" wrong or unethical it likely is... if you live by this and ask questions of your teacher you will be guided in the right direction. It is important that you become aware of the situations that could lead to claims against you because post secondary institutions and employers are VERY concerned about infringement on academic honesty. The following tips may help you avoid problems: Do not share your computer login info or leave your computer logged in and unattended in a public area.
- use quotation marks, footnotes, and parenthetical textual notes to cite the work from other author's or research sources
- Follow accepted methods of citation
- Do not copy from previous work or share your work with others in the course with you or after the unit or course is finished.

It is best to keep all rough notes in order to show the process of your research and writing and that the product is your own.

Privacy Policy

The LMS is a self contained virtual classroom. When you are using the LMS you are not able to copy content from the LMS and use it for personal use at another time. This includes comments in discussion, chats, course materials or assignments. The display of work or opinions must be made with the LMS only and cannot be posted on the open Internet or elsewhere.

It is very important that you identify yourself within the eLearning community. However, you are not to provide others with personal information about yourself to others inside the community or beyond. Keep personal information to yourself and do not use the community or your personal website in anyway that would allow you to be identified or located by others within the community or beyond. It is suggested that you capitalize on the interactive nature of the e-learning learning environment while keeping personal facts PRIVATE. Therefore, it is not considered proper etiquette to ask questions of other members that may lead to the loss of their privacy or yours.

Cyber bullying is a REAL consideration when using the Internet. If you feel threatened or harassed please discuss with your teacher using the secure email within the LMS. Please note that the guidance teacher in your home school is willing to discuss any issues you may face in traditional or eLearning settings.

Part 4: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting

Assessment

All assessments will be written within the LMS. You will access these from within the course content section and hand them in to the drop box. Your teacher will give you instructions as to how these will be written. It is important that you be ready to "write" the test as soon as you open it as the event will be timed by the LMS.

Just as in all traditional classrooms the teacher is responsible for the assessment of all student work. Reporting results to the student will be done via email as soon as the assignment is marked. As each member of the class works independently some will complete assignments before others. It is essential that you do not undermine the credibility of eLearning by sharing material.

Regardless of the student's start date in the course, all assignments must be completed by the end of the semester.

Evaluation Policy

The course outlines summarizes the course evaluation policy, and follows the expectations set out in both the Bluewater and Provincial Ministry of Education Assessment & Evaluation Documents (found on the Bluewater DSB website and the Ontario Ministry of Education website). Please ensure you read and understand this policy. Contact your teacher or guidance counselor if you need clarification.

Reporting

Report card results for e-Learning will be reported by the teacher for that course. If you attend regular classes in your home school you will receive two (2) report cards for each reporting period. You will receive one from your home school with all marks from traditional courses and a separate report card from the eLearning teacher's home school. This eLearning report will typically arrive one week after your home school reports is released.

Your home school will enter your final mark for your eLearning course on your official transcript. Because eLearning courses are coded the same as face to face courses post-secondary institutions will have no way of determining the mode of delivery by which a student has taken a course (Bluewater District School Board adds an "A" designation in the 6th digit for internal purposes, but this digit does not appear on the Official Transcript).

Communication with Parents, Guardians and Students

Under 18 All parents may provide their email address to the e-learning learning teacher to facilitate efficient communication regarding your progress in your eLearning course. Teachers will also communicate concerns and progress via telephone to parents. Meaningful and timely communication with parents supports the success of students. Parents should feel free to contact the e-Learning teacher at his/her home school whenever the need arises.

Over 18 All communications will be made directly to the student via email and telephone.