Frequently Asked Questions about Online Learning

General Questions
1. Will I ever meet or can I meet my professors in person?

Unless this is a hybrid course, there are no scheduled times to meet with the professor, however, all professors have regularly scheduled office hours (4 hours per week) as well as office hours by appointments (12 hours per week). If you would like to meet with your professor personally, then schedule an appointment or drop in during office hours. A few professors also have office hours by chat and/or video cams and a few have a get together sometime throughout the semester, but this is NOT required.

2. How do I get into an online course?

Register for it using the online registration system during the registration period. You must first meet with your advisor and be cleared to register. Online courses are open to all La Roche students.

3. Are the rules/expectations for both professor and online student?

Yes, some of these are spelled out for students on the Learner Requirements and What to expect web pages under home tab, ready list. In addition, many professors will spell what is expected from you in an About this Course document or syllabus located in the Blackboard course.

Professors must abide by their faculty contracts and faculty manual. In addition, many of them will spell out their responsibilities related to how often they check the course website, how quickly they will return assignments, how often they check email, etc. through the syllabus or about this course document posted in Blackboard.

4. Are there holidays or vacations for online learners?

Yes, you follow the academic schedule posted by the college although some online students use breaks to get caught up.

Access Questions
1. If I have trouble accessing Blackboard, email, or La Roche intranet, who can help me?

First, you want to make sure you have an Internet connection and adjust your security settings as directed in the hardware/software document. Your ISP (Internet Service Provider) can help you with firewall issues. Second, for email and network issues (our intranet), you must contact the IT department at La Roche. For Blackboard issues, contact Irene Joos. Please note that the College does not FIX or adjust your personal computers; that is your responsibility. Most students have a family
member or friend who can help with security issues or settings. See the contact information on the left side of the web page of the online website.

2. Who assigns the technology numbers? Can you explain my email address? Login? Password? If these do not work what should I do? The example on the email login is different than my numbers, is that OK?

All numbers assigned to you are done through the IT department at La Roche.

Your email address is your FirstName.LastName@stu.laroche.edu.

Your login or UserID consists of the first 2 letters of your last name followed by a 6 digit random generated number. (For previous or returning students it may be first 2 letters of your last name followed by your student ID number or the first six letters of your last name, the first letter of your first name and a single digit number usually a 1).

Your password depends on the system you are using. For Blackboard it is your 6 digit student ID number. IT will send you a document with your UserID and passwords for your network, email, and My.Laroche.Edu accounts. For Blackboard you will get an email when you register for an online course.

Yes, the example is just that an example and varies from students depending on admission year and term.

3. What about the security message after I get on? Should I change my password as suggested by the BB site?

If you get a security message, say No, you want to display ALL content in the Blackboard site.

If you change your password, you will need to remember it. It might take a few days to have it reset if you forget it.

4. When there is a mechanical problem with BB, how will that be communicated and how does that affect the student’s grade for the week? What about if I have problems with my computer or connection? What if I cannot get my homework sent to the professor? Will I be penalized?

It depends on the problem. For routine maintenance work, you will be notified via email and/or broadcast announcement in Blackboard. For unexpected problems like storms, there may not be any notification if there is loss of electricity. Faculty teaching your courses will also email you when they notice difficulties. While rare, most faculty will extend due dates for problems with Blackboard. They may be less understanding for procrastination type problems. If you are having technical problems with YOUR computer or connection, email or phone your professor prior to the due date and time; don’t wait until after it is due to say you are having problems. Most professors will extend the deadline for the assignment; if you do not communicate in a timely manner, there will be no extension.
5. Can I connect to the Wright library through my BB logon?

Only if the professor sets a link in the external links button, however you can access it from the intranet site link in the external links button, and select resources, Wright Library. A link to the Library is also available on the online website under resources.

Course Specific Questions:

1. How is the class presented?

Professors use a variety of teaching methods to deliver the course. It all depends on the course and the nature of the content. Some courses are heavy reading and discussion. For example, a literature or business law course. Some courses require students to watch videos by either renting them, using the textbook web site, watching selections on YouTube, or some other video delivery site. Yet other professors rely on a textbook DVD. Other courses rely heavily on PowerPoint’s, lessons written by the professor, textbook readings, discussions, and assignments which can take the form of web activities, papers, projects, etc. as well as exams or tests.

2. If I have trouble with an assignment, can I meet with the professor? How do I communicate my problems to the professor?

Yes you can meet with your professor if the professor resides locally; for those not local, a web conference can be used provided you have access to a webcam. Email is the official means of communicating in the online courses; however, professors will also provide you with a phone number to receive phone calls. Some professors also hold web chats and have a Q&A discussion forum for posting your questions. Help is available. Also note that you have access to the writing center and tutoring services provided at the college. If the problem is related to library resources you have access to the librarians.

3. How many days a week do I need to sit in front of the computer? How much time do I need to spend on a 3 credit course?

That depends on you and the course. There is no set amount of days. Some professors may require you to check in 2-3 times weekly; others daily for shorter periods of time, and still others once a week. A generally rule to follow is to check in at least 2-3 times weekly.

Now for sitting in front of a computer, some courses may require a lot of reading, composing your responses to discussion questions, and then going on line to post your responses and reply to others post so this may take 2 days in front of the computer – one for your post and the other for responding to others posts. The requirement may be to post your comments before Wednesday and respond to others post during the second part of the week. On the other hand, a computer course will require you to be in front of a computer for extended periods of time – long enough for you to practice and learn the skills required. You may however only need to check into Blackboard once or twice during the week.

How much time is a tough question to answer. It depends on you and your skills or ease at learning the material. For example, some students taking a math course where math is difficult for them, will
need more time. Here is a general rule of thumb for 3 credit courses (online or on campus). A 3 credit course requires 3 hours per week plus outside preparation time of 1-3 hours per 1 hour of credit.

4. How will I be graded for attendance? Class participation?

That depends on the course. Some courses have no “attendance” requirements; the requirements are related to completing the course assignments by the due date; other courses require you to check into Blackboard at least 3 times per week. Class participation takes the form of discussion posts; the number varies with each course. For example, you may be required to post by Wednesday and respond to others posts by Sunday at midnight.

5. How will I be graded for the entire course?

Generally it is no different from an on campus course except you will be submitting work electronically and taking tests online through Blackboard or the textbook website. You may have assignments, projects, papers, discussion forum participation, and exams. This varies from course to course and will be spelled out in the course syllabus. Each course’s grading policy is also spelled out in the course syllabus.

6. Will I take my tests on campus? Will each class have a clear syllabus to follow?

Most courses have you testing online through Blackboard if there are exams or quizzes. Some courses have you taking self tests at the textbook website or completing take home tests that you download and complete offline. And yet other courses have no exams. Very few courses require you to come to campus and that will be spelled out early in the course. Each course will have a course syllabus posted according to the College guidelines for content of a syllabus.

7. When there are big assignments scheduled, will weekly assignments be suspended?

That depends on the course and nature of the assignments. This will be spelled out in the course syllabus or schedule on the Blackboard course site.

8. In a classroom environment you might get 3 absences or lates with a penalty, does that translate into online learning?

That depends on the course and the professor. Since there is a lot more flexibility around schedules and to work earlier on materials when you know you have to be out of town, most professors don’t have a 3 absences policy. The material is there for you to complete the work. Submitting material late with a penalty is also spelled out in the course syllabus.

9. Who should the student go to when they have problems with the lack of or poor communications from their online professor? What is a reasonable response time for communications from a professor?

Most professors try to communicate regularly with students (2-3 times per week through posting in Blackboard). Individual email communications and how professors handle them should be spelled out
in the Blackboard course site. For example, a professor might say I check my email daily during the semester except for Saturdays and Sundays; other professors check their email once a day during the semester. If it is NOT the weekend and 2 days have passed, assume the professor did not receive your communication and send it again.