
Online Courses: Before the Course

Understand the expectations

Before students take an online course, they may believe that an online course will be easier, or require less time, than an on-campus course. In fact, online courses require as much time, and often *more* time, than on-campus courses.

Online courses may include a variety of material to be covered each week, including real-time activities, recorded lectures, videos, notes, and readings. In order to cover the required material, online courses may include more readings than a typical on-campus course. Furthermore, because the learning process is largely independent, you may need additional time to work on practice problems or to critically analyze the material.

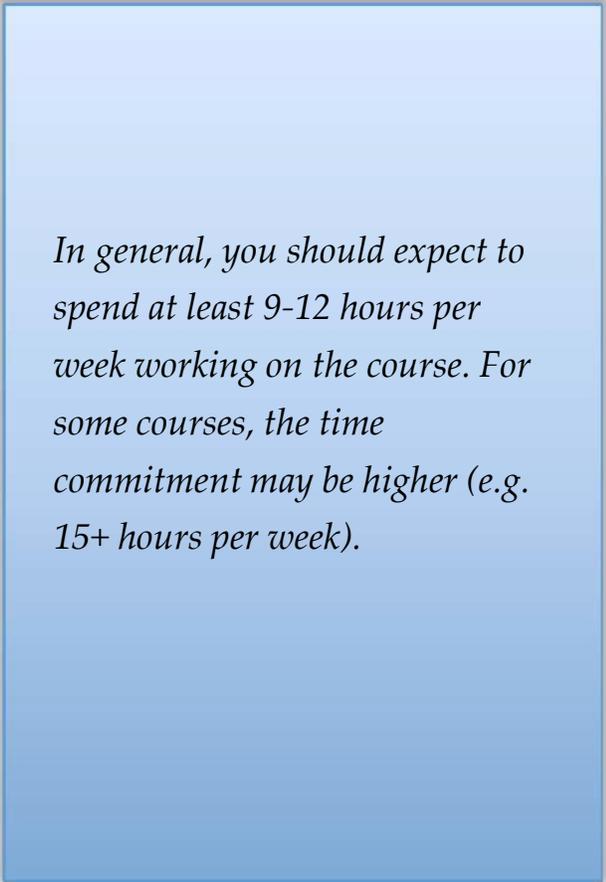
Some instructors are explicit about the expected time commitment in the course syllabus. If this information is not included in the syllabus, it may be helpful to ask the instructor directly what the expectations are.

For more learning strategies, go to:
[http:// sass.queensu.ca/ learningstrategies/ topics](http://sass.queensu.ca/learningstrategies/topics)

Before taking an online course, make a realistic assessment of how much time you can devote to the course. If you have a job, other courses, or family obligations, think carefully about how much time you have for academic work.

Also consider your level of motivation. For example, many students consider enrolling in an online course over the summer. Online courses are a great way to earn credits at a time when your academic load is not as heavy.

However, think carefully about your summer plans, including work or volunteer commitments, time with family and friends, and relaxation. Summer can be a great time to take an extra course, or a course you could not complete during the academic year, but you may also find yourself with less time or motivation than you had anticipated.



In general, you should expect to spend at least 9-12 hours per week working on the course. For some courses, the time commitment may be higher (e.g. 15+ hours per week).

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Ask yourself: Am I ready for an online course?

Online courses offer many benefits. However, before taking an online course, it is important to carefully consider whether or not online learning is right for you. Online courses require you to work and learn independently, keep yourself motivated, manage your time, and stay on track.

Before taking an online course, consider the following:

Do I have time to devote to the course each week? Is it enough time?

Do I have a space where I can work without distraction?

Am I motivated to take the course? Am I able to keep myself motivated?

Am I organized and able to meet deadlines?

Do I enjoy working independently?

Do I have access to the necessary technology?

If you answered 'yes' to most of these questions, you are ready to succeed in an online course.

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Plan the logistics

Online courses require access to a computer with specific software and hardware, as well as access to high speed internet.

Before beginning a course, look at the technology requirements. If you are unsure whether you have the required technology, consult with Queen's IT Services:

www.queensu.ca/its

If there are assigned texts or course packs, buy them before the class is scheduled to begin.

Having all the materials will ensure you begin the class ready to go.



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