

Handbook for students

enrolled in distance courses offered by the

Nutrition and Dietetics Program at the

University of Puerto Rico



United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture



<http://nutritionlive.uprrp.edu>

NutritionLIVE

at UPR-RP

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Nutrition Live at UPR-RP

The Nutrition and Dietetics Program at the UPR Río Piedras Campus received a grant from the USDA in 2011 to develop the project Nutrition Live at UPR-RP. The project's objectives include to provide a broader educational experience to enrolled students, improve teaching, support the evidence on the use of alternate teaching methods taking into account the different lifestyles, learning styles, increase need of availability for enrollment in courses (i.e., course offerings) and, potentially reduce the time to complete program and decrease economic burden (i.e., room and board) for students who live in remote areas of the island.

The Student Manual aims to provide the student with the basics tools needed to participate in an online course.

The objectives of the manual include:

1. Familiarize with distance education concepts.
2. Recognize resources and tools available at the portal.
3. Describe guides and documents required to do course related tasks.

Introduction to distance education

Distance education refers to courses where the student and facilitator do not necessarily interact in a physical classroom. It uses Internet, email and other technology and forms of communication to achieve learning objectives. Some courses use a combination of distance education and face to face interaction, also known as *hybrid* courses. Evidence suggests that distance education learning, whether it is fully online or in a hybrid format, is effective for the achievement of learning outcomes in the Nutrition and Dietetics field.

Courses using a distance education format can also include student activities where all students must interact or participate in an online activity at the same time, or *synchronous*. Alternatively, learning activities can be completed individually at the student's convenience in an *asynchronous* manner.

Delivery Methods

Courses within the Nutrition Live at UPR-RP project may be hybrid or fully online and may also include both synchronous and asynchronous activities depending on the course content and instructional design.

Fully online courses are completed entirely online. Students can take an online course wherever they are as long as they have access to internet and at times that are convenient for the students' schedules. Professors or instructors provide coursework and dates for submission for the students to comply and not fall behind with the academic load.

Hybrid courses combine online and traditional face-to-face instruction with online technology. Scheduled meetings at pre-determined sites are held throughout the course to complement online work, which amounts to at least 30% of the coursework.

Important Websites and Links

Website: <http://nutritionlive.uprrp.edu>

Blackboard Learning: <http://blackboard.uprrp.edu/>

Edu 2.0: <http://uprrp.edu20.org/>

University Policy on Distance Education

The University of Puerto Rico's Certification No.123 (2005-2006) establishes in Goal V, Technological Actualization, that the University of Puerto Rico anticipates to institute and maintain a technologically up-to-date university, so that functions of teaching and learning are optimized, and supports the creation of initiatives of online education and distance education.

Distance education is an educational methodology framed in a formal learning process in which instruction, or at least part of it, is imparted with student and instructor being at different locations, either in a synchronous or asynchronous manner, and to which information and communication technologies are the bond between student, educator and institution.

Offering distance education will contribute to achieving important institutional goals as it is program offerings between units, internationalization and diversification, and enrichment of available academic offerings to all students.

It is of particular benefit for numerous people who the University serves, such as: non-traditional students, professionals interested in continuing education, graduate students and students are looking to enroll in high demand courses and degrees that are not offered at their campus or university system.

Hence, to stimulate the creation of and support initiatives of distance education offerings, as well as integration of online courses in traditional face-to-face programs, the Board of Trustees establishes University Policy on Distance Learning of the University of Puerto Rico in which it is stated that:

1. Distance programs and courses are to be in harmony with the mission, goals and objectives of the academic programs in the Unit, and to be accountable for quality criteria established for: courses, student learning expectations, academic rigor and efficacy based on merits, by the University.
2. Distance/online programs will offer a support system of learning and services for students, and a system of training and support for professors, comparable to those offered at traditional programs of higher learning and that are appropriate to the modality being used.

3. Instructional design of courses must respond to the content and characteristics of the student learning online and will promote systematic and flexible interaction between students and faculty.
4. Professors offering online courses will comply with the same duties, responsibilities, and qualifications required to full or part-time professors, as established in the regulations of the University of Puerto Rico and will have competencies needed in the handling of technology and instructional design of online courses.
5. A continuous system of evaluation will be established and maintained to evidence learning of students in this modality and effectiveness of online courses and distance programs.
6. It will be responsibility of each institutional unit that intends to offer distance education options to comply with the general principles and the stipulations stated in this Policy and make sure that offerings are in accordance.
7. The President of the University of Puerto Rico or its authorized representative, will promulgate and disseminate procedures to implement all that has been established in this Policy, facilitate the compliance of all statements, to make sure uniform implementation and administration, and to establish a way of financing of the rates and fees accordingly; nevertheless, Chancellors and Academic Senates of the different campuses may issue regulations to be implemented in their unit regarding distance education, as long as it does not contravene what has been stated in this Policy or norms and/or procedures issued by the President of the University.
8. The President of the University will interpret norms and procedures established, as well as deciding upon any dispute that arises in relation to it.

The Board of Trustees will be able to amend this Policy *motu proprio*; or by petition of the President of the University, as long as the University Board has been consulted.

Technology Requirements

Courses will be taught using the Blackboard Learning Management System, Edu 2.0 or MOODLE. Any personal computer with high-speed Internet connection should be sufficient to access course contents. The computer should meet minimum hardware requirements (PC or Macintosh, less than three years old) and have installed:

1. Microsoft Office 2007 or newer version;
2. Adobe Acrobat Reader (available to download for free at <http://get.adobe.com/reader>);
3. Adobe Flash Player (available to download for free at <http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer>);
4. Quicktime Player (available to download for free at <http://www.apple.com/quicktime>)

Students that do not own a personal computer can access the course by visiting any of the computers within the campus. A list of computer laboratories and hours of operation in each College is provided in the appendix. It is recommended that students using the computer

laboratories or public access computers acquire a set of earphones to avoid disrupting nearby students and a USB pen drive to store course documents as necessary.

Learning activities may include the development of activities by students for which a headset with microphone will be necessary to record audio. Some laptops may have a built-in microphone but a headset is still required to ensure the quality of audio recordings.

Student Computer Skills

Courses within the Nutrition Live at UPR-RP project were designed as a mean to increase computer skills among students enrolled in web-based courses. While taking these courses, students will develop such skills that will aid them as future takers of the RD exam and as professionals in the ever advancing technological world lived in.

Students will need skills in:

1. basic word processing;
2. sending and receiving emails;
3. uploading and downloading files;
4. sending and receiving attachments;
5. searching and retrieving information resources on the Web;
6. assessing the relevance of information on the Web;
7. conducting research on the Web; and
8. implementing academic honesty and preventing plagiarism.

Student Responsibilities

- Students are expected to possess good written communication skills via email, discussion forums and instructional activities. Continuous and promptly communication is essential.
- Students are expected to communicate with professor diligently in the event of any difficulties with course content or access.
- Participate in any training related to the use of the Blackboard, Edu 2.0, MOODLE® platform or other technology training related to distance education courses.
- Students are expected to seek assistance from the technology support team to avoid any delays in completing course work.
- Students are expected to complete each educational unit as indicated in the schedule for each course. Distance Education Courses demand the most from students as an independent learner therefore they will have to manage their time in order to meet the course requirements.

Students are expected to maintain copy of their work in personal computers or hard drive in the event of any irregularities with the servers.

Online Etiquette

Online Etiquette, also known as “netiquette,” is a set of guidelines or rules to follow for interacting properly and appropriately online.

The Golden Rule: Do unto others, as you’d have others do unto you. It is easy to forget that we are communicating with another person when all we are doing is looking at a computer screen. In this way, whether you are emailing or posting a response to a discussion, it is easy to misinterpret what your classmate has written. It is also easy to forget that someone else may misinterpret what you have written. Before posting a response, or emailing a reply, ask yourself the following question: Would I say it to the person’s face? Think about what you want to write and reread what you have written before you post anything. Remember that your tone of voice cannot be heard through your writing.

Spelling and Grammar Count: The quality of your writing is important. Keep in mind that your writing is what your instructor and classmates will see and remember you by. Be sure to check facts and pay attention to the content of your writing, ensuring that your contributions to the class are clear and logical. Checking for spelling, grammar and punctuation is another important reason to reread what you have written.

The Three P’s: Always be pleasant, polite, and prepared for class.

Share Your Knowledge: Individuals asking and responding intellectually to one another generates a quality discussion. If you have something of value to contribute to a discussion, share the wealth. Don’t be afraid to share something you know.

Stay Away From CAPS: Writing in all capital letters is generally seen to be online “shouting.” Steer clear of writing an entire post or email in all capitals.

Copyright Laws: Be sure to give credit where credit is due when posting to a discussion board or sending an email, just as you would give a citation when writing a paper.

Reference: Netiquette Rules. <http://www.networketiquette.net/>

Student Practices on Academic Honesty

Academic and scientific honesty should permeate every aspect of college life. It is the institutional policy of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus to promote the highest standards of academic integrity and heavily sanctions the violation of such. Lack of integrity and academic fraud includes: plagiarism, falsification, invention or false attribution and any sort of deceit or deviation of such practices and conducts generally accepted in the academic community, which is not consequence of mistakes or honest and involuntary differences in interpretation or data management.

It is responsibility of the university staff to watch out for academic compliance of basic academic integrity principles and to denounce to the dean any violation to the norms of academic responsibility. The same responsibility is shared by students.

All assignments and written evaluations must be the student's own intellectual work. Transgressions to basic academic integrity will not be tolerated. The following document details the consequences of plagiarism and academic dishonesty at the University of Puerto Rico <http://www.uprrp.edu/images/opusculohonestidad.pdf>

To avoid misunderstandings as to what is included as plagiarism or violations of academic integrity, access this module of the Indiana University Bloomington: https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/plagiarism_test.html to further understand the concept and how to avoid unconsciously practicing it.

Copyright Violations

Institutional policy on copyright violations, stated in the Circular Letter No. 95-01 of 1993 by the President of the University of Puerto Rico, protects all types of work made permanent through tangible expressions. It includes: literary, musical, and dramatic works; pantomimes, pictures, films, architectural, and computer programs. Among the known copyright laws and subject to protection under the Federal Copyright Law is the exclusive right of holder of the protected work to its reproduction.

Reference: **Circular Num. 95-01 Año 1995** – *Reproducción No Autorizada de Obras Protegidas por la Ley de Derechos de Autor.*

http://acweb.upr.edu/vpit/economicd/eco_docs/cir9501.pdf

Technological support

After the student learns the learning platform system used by the professor, it is important he or she becomes familiarized with the platform. Information for using Blackboard Learning Management Systems is available via the project's website (<http://nutrition.live.uprrp.edu>). Information can also be accessed on the following website: https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_SP_12/Student. This webpage provides several documents, modules, frequently asked questions and forums to be accessed by students taking courses using this virtual learning environment.

For using other learning platforms such as Edu 2.0 accede for additional information to the webpage <http://uprrp.edu20.org/help/general?topic=overview>. For Moodle™, access http://docs.moodle.org/20/en/Student_tutorials.

Using Skype™

Some courses will be using the program Skype™ as an educational tool. The program must be downloaded and installed prior to the session; it can be downloaded free of cost from the website: <http://www.skype.com/en/>. Quick manuals of the basics of using Skype™, from downloading and installing the program to adding contacts and establishing video calls, are available at the following link: <https://support.skype.com/en/user-guides>. Make sure that the instructions appropriate for either Windows or Mac are followed.

Reasonable accommodations

As stated by the Law of Integrated Educational Services for People with Impediments (Law 51, June 7, 1996): “Students who receive Vocational Rehabilitation should communicate with the professor at the beginning of the semester in order to plan for reasonable accommodation and/or acquisition of needed special equipment, according to the recommendations of the Office for Persons with Impediments of the Deanship of Student Affairs”. This applies to distance education also; therefore, it is important for students to communicate these needs to the instructor as soon as possible.

Contact information

Website: <http://nutritionlive.uprrp.edu>

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