

Dear student,

Welcome to the wondrous and innovative world of Distance Learning! The Nutrition Live at UPRRP project funded by the USDA was developed to deliver quality education while meeting the necessities of students of a variety of backgrounds and learning styles. Taking up distance learning will allow you to study when and where is most convenient for you and your lifestyle! It is the intention of the Program of Nutrition and Dietetics, for you to benefit the most out of this learning experience; thus in this section some important issues, tips and strategies will be exposed and discussed.

Time management

Online courses can be synchronous or asynchronous (refer to the handbook for a description); in the case of it being asynchronous, you will be setting your own time frame to complete assigned work. It is essential that you plan ahead how much time of each day will be dedicated to your course. Choose and establish days and times a day you would prefer to study. Write them down on your agenda or schedule to remind yourself.

When courses are taken through the semester, you should start working on your assignments early, so you may take a day or two before due dates to review your work adequately. Yet, when taking summer intensive 3-week online courses, you must keep in mind the word INTENSE and remind yourself to work every day on the assigned workload. A 3-credit nutrition course during the semester meets for 3 hours a week for 15-20 weeks approximately; this means 60 hours of face-to-face time in the classroom. Summer intensive online courses last 21 days approximately (including Sundays and Saturdays). To cover the 60 hours, one must dedicate 3 hours a day every day to manage the workload appropriately. In case of a 2-credit course, to cover the 45 hours students meet with the professor in the semester, one must dedicate a minimum of 2.25 hours a day to do so.

Once you have established a studying schedule that fits you, communicate it to your family and friends, so they can support you by avoiding interrupting or distracting at times when you have planned out to study. And most importantly, stick to your plan! In the end, this will help you keep up with the assigned workload and avoid working on your tasks at the last-minute.

Workspace

Set out a place to study where you are calm and free from distractions. Make sure you have at hand all the materials you might need to work: laptop or electronic device of your preference, a steady internet connection, textbook, additional lectures, chronometer (to time your quizzes and tests), calculator, notebook or paper and pens. Preparing your chosen place of study beforehand will allow you to focus without having to stop every five minutes to go look for something you forgot; that can be an annoying distraction.

Create your space in a soothing, organized environment that motivates you to study, not somewhere that makes you stressed, since it could take a toll on your performance.

Keeping motivated

A key aspect to an effective distance learning experience is to keep yourself motivated to study. When preparing an online course, the professor must design activities to keep students engaged in the course; however, the class will be as you make it to be. Keep motivated by approaching topics in a way that is most compelling to you. Let's say you like to work or study in groups; write to classmates and check their availability to coordinate a study session. Or if you know there are topics or activities that interest you and your classmates, talk to the professor about discussing those topics. He or she will appreciate your input.

Keep in mind not all activities or topics will be of interest to you, still you must comply. Get through these unpleasant activities quickly to get them out of your way. Odds are when you immerse yourself in them you will learn to appreciate their importance.

Taking tests and quizzes

Online tests and quizzes differ than those taken in traditional classes for many reasons. For starters, you always have access to textbooks, the internet and your notes during them. Nevertheless, if you rely on notes and the textbook to complete your exam or quiz, you will spend a significant amount of time looking for the answers. All quizzes and tests have a time limit established by the professor -with tests being available for 2 hours on average-. This means you should rely on your knowledge to complete them. Prepare for quizzes and exams the same way you prepare for traditional courses examinations; that way you will not encounter the difficult problem of running out of time.

Academic Honesty

The University of Puerto Rico has a strict policy against academic dishonesty. Being honest about your work is inherent to your quality as a student, and any transgressions will not be tolerated. Read about your rights and duties pertaining academic honesty in the section *Student Practices in Academic Honesty* and *Copyrights Violations* for more information on this topics.

If an activity is planned out to be completed individually, comply accordingly. If the instructor notices it was done by team work, he or she will call you out to discuss it. Avoid being singled out by professors as a dishonest student. If you are not sure whether something was meant to be done in pairs, group or alone, ask the instructor; he or she will gladly explain it to you.

Meeting with the professor

Contrary to taking traditional classes, you do not get to see your instructor face-to-face during class to discuss any questions or concerns you might have. Emails can be impersonal but are an

effective way to converse about issues that may arise. Remember to keep a cool head, an appropriate and respectful attitude, and proper writing skills.

If this approach does not work for you, meet up with the professor. He or she will most gladly schedule a meeting during the office hours established in the syllabus or set an appointment to talk on the phone or skype.

We hope you enjoy this new learning experience and communicate with us your comments or questions via nutrition.live@upr.edu.