

LEARNING AT A DISTANCE

Express
Summer 2020

Student guide



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SHERBROOKE

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ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR
ESTRIE HIGHER EDUCATION



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Everyone on the virtual starting line!

As a result of the exceptional situation brought about by the coronavirus pandemic, universities wishing to continue to fulfil their educational mission have had to act quickly. Distance education has emerged as the main alternative to face-to-face instruction, allowing students to continue studying in their program under better conditions than would have been the case under other potential alternatives.

Even if it sometimes makes use of previously known tools, distance learning is a new experience for many members of the university community. Teaching staff have had little time to adapt their courses for remote instruction and to familiarize themselves with the technological tools at their disposal. For that matter, not all of you, as students, are familiar with the technological tools and applied pedagogy of distance learning.

Furthermore, the new context may be a source of additional personal challenges for you. Of course, everyone is striving to do the best they can in these extraordinary circumstances.

It is important that everyone show kindness, empathy and patience toward all parties, including teachers and students—and this first and foremost means being understanding toward... yourself! If each individual does what they can to help create a harmonious atmosphere, the distance learning experience is more likely to prove enriching and to help achieve educational goals.

In spite of the significant difficulties raised by our current situation, we wish everyone a most rewarding and fruitful summer semester.

Faculty pages

Some faculties have created coronavirus-related pages for students. You can consult the [UdeS FAQ](#) or explore the faculty pages below:

[School of Management](#)

[Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences](#)

[Faculty of Law](#)

[FMSS \(Intranet\)](#)

[Faculty of Education](#)

[Faculty of Science](#)

[Faculty of Engineering](#)

Key terms in distance learning

● Asynchronous activity

An online activity that takes place at an unspecified time that can be chosen independently by each student.

Examples of asynchronous activities include participating in a forum, filling out a formative questionnaire or viewing documents and videos.

● Synchronous activity

An online activity held at a specific time and that consequently requires the simultaneous participation of all students.

Examples of synchronous activities include web conferencing, online team meetings and remote mentoring sessions.

● Face-to-face class

A class held in a classroom and requiring the physical presence of students.

● Distance learning (DL)

Instruction provided remotely and not requiring the physical presence of students.

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Technological tools and DL

- Institutional email inbox
- Moodle
- Web conferencing for synchronous activities (Teams and Adobe)
- File management on the cloud (365 and OneDrive)

There are many relatively new technological tools available for taking DL courses. Each has its own technical requirements in the way of computer specifications, software, types of accessories used, etc. If you have not received any information about such requirements before the semester begins, check your institutional email inbox, and then contact your program coordinator promptly if necessary.

Generally speaking, DL requires:

- a working computer or tablet;
- a stable Internet connection;
- a headset or speakers;
- a microphone;
- a webcam.

Most newer laptops come with built-in webcam, microphone and speakers.

Help! I don't have the equipment I need

If you lack the required equipment or yours is not working, contact your program coordinator without delay to see if arrangements can be made. Should you choose to purchase a device, place your order early and keep in mind that deliveries may be delayed in the current pandemic context. Note that UdeS has agreements with certain providers that offer [student discounts](#) on certain products.

Institutional email inbox

All official communications from UdeS are sent via institutional email. It is therefore crucial that you activate your @USherbrooke.ca email address and check it daily. This is the email address your teacher will use to communicate with you. You can visit the [email](#) page to [activate](#), access and [configure](#) your email address.

Moodle

[Moodle](#) still exists in DL and is sure to be used extensively in most courses. You can visit Moodle to download folders and files (texts, presentations, videos, etc.) uploaded by your teachers and to consult learning and assessment instructions. You can also submit assignments, teamwork and exams online via the platform. In addition, Moodle forums are also frequently used.



Tips:

- To help you get to know this tool, we recommend that you visit the Moodle [documentation](#) page. Among other things, it will tell you [how to access your course list](#), and provides [help for students](#) and [general assistance](#).

Depending on which Moodle features your teachers use, some of these sections may be helpful for you to refer back to. Your programs and teachers are the best source of information on which resources you need to be familiar with, according to the ones they are using.

Need some help figuring things out?

Technical support is available by phone at 819-821-8000, ext. 74444 or by email at moodle@USherbrooke.ca.

Web conferencing for synchronous activities

Two web conferencing platforms are used at UdeS. Make sure you know which option your teachers have chosen before going any further.

Teams

[Teams](#) can be used to hold synchronous web conferences and to collaborate remotely thanks to document sharing. It offers a variety of features for remote collaboration and file management.

Tips:



- [Download the Teams](#) application to your computer;
- Check out the tutorial [joining a Teams web conferencing session for a remote class](#) (PDF), also available in [video format](#).

Adobe Connect

[Adobe Connect](#) can be accessed through your Moodle course site. Please refer to the [troubleshooting](#) page as needed.

Tips:



- Run a [connection test](#) at least 24 hours beforehand to make sure you are able to connect and that you have the required add-in.
- For regular synchronous sessions, connect 15 minutes in advance.

File management with cloud computing

Office 365

Several programs in the Microsoft Office 365 suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams, etc.) are available to you free of charge through UdeS and can be installed on your computer, cell phone or tablet. The [Office 365](#) suite overview page provides quick access and [documentation](#) to familiarize you with these tools. You can also collaborate and share files with your teams using the [Office 365 Group](#) tool.

OneDrive

[OneDrive](#) allows you to back up your files to the cloud and open or edit them from any device of your choosing. It offers 1 terabyte of free online storage. You can also sync your files stored in OneDrive with your workstation (Windows or Mac OS X) and share folders and files for viewing or co-editing with peers. For more information, visit the OneDrive [Help & Learning](#) page.

2

What a DL course looks like?

- Course syllabus
- Contacting your teacher
- Submitting work
- Remote teamwork
- Intellectual integrity
- Class recordings
- Netiquette

Program coordinators enjoy a great deal of latitude as to the format of a DL course. Your experience in a given course will most likely differ significantly from what a peer at another faculty might experience in their own DL. The answers to the following frequently asked questions should give you a better idea of how to approach and take the various DL courses offered at Université de Sherbrooke during the 2020 summer semester.

What's in the course syllabus?

The course syllabus, also sometimes called the *plan d'activité pédagogique* or course outline, is a key document for you to consult. It contains all the information relating to a course and how it will unfold (e.g., schedule, content, objectives, assessments, required materials, etc.). The syllabus helps you better understand the course requirements and plan your learning. In a DL context, the syllabus becomes a valuable resource since it tells you the dates

of the synchronous sessions and the DL assessment measures (remote exam if applicable, work to be coordinated remotely, coaching sessions, etc.).



Tips:

- The syllabus can usually be found on your Moodle course site.

How do I contact my teacher?

Your teacher's contact information can be found on the course syllabus and in the [UdeS directory](#). At the beginning of the semester, your teacher will clarify their preferred means of communicating with students (email, Moodle forum, etc.) and the response times to expect, e.g., 48 working hours. Do not hesitate to contact your teacher if you need further information after reading their instructions.

What will the assignments and exams be like?

Distance assessment measures will be communicated to you directly by your teachers. Some teachers already detail this information in their syllabus. Check your UdeS [email](#) regularly for updates.

In the DL context, assessment can take on a variety of forms, such as practical assignments, critical summaries, analytical texts, hypothetical situations, problem-based learning, case studies, real-world assignments, self-evaluations, oral presentations in synchronous sessions, online debates, book reports, etc. Distance learning assessment measures are chosen by each teacher in accordance with the course's educational objectives and technological/instructional feasibility.



Tips:

- Technology stress is very real. Don't hesitate to ask for clarifications about the process, or even to ask to be able to do a practice run or simulation of the assessment. For example, in the case of a remote exam, ask your teacher if they can make a similar formative exercise available that will use the same technologies. This will give you a clear idea of the technological environment to expect, and enable you to give your full focus to the tasks you are being evaluated on.

How do I hand in my work?

First, review the work that will be assessed for inattention errors, spelling, etc.

Next, for certain online submission tools, after submitting your work, you can make sure that it was properly submitted by opening your uploaded work directly from the platform itself (Moodle or other). This way, you can make sure everything is there.

In case of technical difficulties during a synchronous assessment (set time and duration), follow your teacher's instructions. If your teacher did not give instructions, send them your completed work by email, using your @USherbrooke address. Be sure to provide a description and screenshots immediately to explain what is preventing you from submitting your work on time.



Tips:

- Submit your work a few hours before it's due. This will help you avoid major stress in case of technical issues... sometimes, a computer update can come along at the worst possible time!
- In case of technical problems during a remote assessment, follow the instructions given by your teacher;
- Check out the *Soutien à l'apprentissage* tips.

How do I work remotely as part of a team?

Your program and teacher may have identified specific tools and practices for completing work remotely; you should check with your teacher first.

In case no particular methods have been established, **Teams** offers a variety of tools that facilitate teamwork. You can [create a team in Teams, add your teammates](#), and then chat, share collaborative files or [hold web conference meetings](#).

Finding teammates: In a distance learning course, finding teammates can be a little more challenging. If the teacher hasn't already provided a method for forming teams, you can use the Moodle forum or the course Teams conversation to do so.

Tips:



- Note that a team meeting in Teams can be scheduled directly from Teams or using your Outlook calendar. In both cases, the meeting appears in both your calendars;
- Draw up an agenda to structure your meetings;
- For larger teams, assign a facilitator to keep track of time and establish a speaking order to make sure everyone has a chance to be heard;
- Arrange for a secretary to take notes;
- Prefer the use of real-time collaborative tools with comments and tracked changes over emailing successive working versions back and forth (e.g., you can put a Word document in the Teams *files* tab or in a OneDrive space shared by one of the team members).
- Check out the [Soutien à l'apprentissage](#) tips.

How can I make sure I'm demonstrating integrity in my work?

Integrity means behaving responsibly, equitably and openly toward yourself and others, and showing respect for the intellectual community to which you belong. Before handing in an assignment, you can use this [5-question tool to check the integrity of your work](#).

Your teacher may also ask you to sign a [statement of integrity](#) when submitting a file.

Examples of behaviours to adopt

- Be well prepared, read the instructions, and plan and manage your time wisely;
- Follow the instructions, and use only the materials that are permitted;
- Collaborate with other students only to the extent allowed by the teacher;
- Cite the source of any material that is not your own (including translations);
- Reuse previous work only if you have been given permission to do so;
- In teamwork, make sure each team member is familiar and complies with the principles of integrity.



Tips:

- [How to find royalty-free images](#)
- [Copy, paste... and cite \(video\)](#)

Can I record a class?

It may be tempting to make an audio or video recording of a class to help you study up later. However, to do so, you first need to request and obtain the teacher's permission. Your teacher has the right to refuse to allow a class to be recorded, or to set limits on the use of the recording. Serious issues are at stake, such as image and privacy rights.

If you have obtained permission to record a class, you must do so while also respecting the image and privacy rights of the students in the course, and the copyrights of any material presented during the course.

Consent to record - Your teacher may also decide to record a session. In this case, and due to our current exceptional context, the directive that students'

consent is required to be able to record a class has been “lifted until further notice,” according to the [UdeS Coronavirus page](#) (accessed April 29, 2020).

Does online learning require a specific netiquette?

Netiquette refers to manners, respect and politeness when using electronic means of communication. It involves not just avoiding inappropriate language, but also being mindful of potential misunderstandings when using humour or sarcasm, for example.

Helpful tips

- Communicate with the same respect as in face-to-face conversation.
- In French, unless you’re given permission to use the more familiar *tu*, use *vous* when speaking to teachers (in English, avoid first-name basis unless your teacher agrees to it).
- Read over your communications with teachers (check for mistakes, attachments, etc.) before sending anything.
- Sign off your emails and communications with your name.
- Only use “Reply to All” if appropriate in the circumstances.

3

Conditions for successful DL

- Adapting your work environment
- Study strategy
- Remote exploration (library)
- Motivation
- Stress management
- Autonomy

Distance learning raises personal and organizational challenges that require some adaptation on your part in order to have a successful educational experience. Keep in mind that your academic success demands genuine personal commitment, significant autonomy and effective organization. The following sections suggest actions to help you achieve your goals.

Adapting your work environment

Studying remotely gives you the freedom to choose where you study. This being the case, pay special attention to your work space and how it is laid out. Take a few moments to create a clean, pleasant and functional space that will help you be productive. Avoid places that can easily distract you or affect your concentration (e.g., studying close to the TV or in bed).

Tips :



- Opt for a quiet, noise-free and well-lit location (ideally, the sources of light should be in front of you).
- Constantly distracted by your alerts? Don't hesitate to turn them off.

To avoid risks of developing musculoskeletal problems, be sure not to neglect the ergonomics of your [home workstation](#). It is recommended that you build micro-breaks into your study sessions: check out the following set of [micro-break exercises](#)!

Adopt study strategies

A 3-credit undergraduate course typically demands 135 hours, or an average of 9 hours per week over 15 weeks. In a face-to-face course, this number of hours includes classroom instruction, readings, individual and team work, and assessments. Even if the time spent in a synchronous (online) session may be less than the time spent in class, a DL course comes out to the same number of hours as a face-to-face course in terms of your time investment.



Tips:

- Identify the best times to take your online course.
- For regular synchronous sessions, log on 15 minutes in advance.
- Split the modules into smaller sections: set realistic study goals!
- Also consider shorter stretches of time: you can accomplish a lot in 20 minutes! It's better to work in small but steady bursts than to try to get everything done in a single sprint.
- Avoid the pitfalls of procrastination by visualizing yourself studying. This will help get your mind on task and make it easier to get down to work.

Still struggling with time management?

Are you familiar with the [Agenda](#) app? Using Agenda, you can create a personalized schedule. Your courses will be automatically integrated, and you will have access to reports and summaries.

Exploring remotely

In the DL context, you have access to a number of remote resources and services through the UdeS [Service des bibliothèques et archives](#). This includes help and advice on documentary research. You can even use a [chat](#) option to communicate directly with librarians!

Cultivating your motivation

To stay engaged and motivated in completing your distance learning courses:

- Plan a realistic work schedule... and stick to it;
- Prioritize your actions to help you achieve your goals;
- Set achievable goals in the time you have available;
- Pat yourself on the back for each achievement;
- Be active on your course forums and chat with other students to break the isolation;
- Incorporate active breaks (moving, walking, stretching, etc.) and moments of relaxation and fun into your schedule.


When it comes to scheduling, it's important to find a balance between discipline and flexibility. An overly rigid schedule will rapidly lead to discouragement. Check your schedule every day, and stick to it: now that's motivating!

Do you have a bit of a tendency to wait until the last minute to do your work?

Follow the [advice](#) of the SVÉ!

Handling stress

[Stress management](#) means learning to cope with the sources of stress. Feeling stressed and even overwhelmed at times is normal. It is important to recognize the stress factors in our lives, and to welcome our emotions without judgment and take the time to decode them. You can then draw up



an action plan such as turning to a friend or professional for support or doing some journaling, relaxation, sports or other self-care activity.

Would you like some extra support? Here are a few handy resources, according to the source of your stress:

- [Stress management \(UdeS\)](#)
- Financial issues: [Fondation FORCE](#)
- [Serenity and mental calm](#)

Developing greater autonomy

Autonomy means knowing yourself and your limits, being able to think on your own and taking the initiative to seek out digital resources to find answers to your questions.

Being autonomous does not mean getting organized all alone. On the contrary, it means being able to tell when you need some help in order to make positive progress.

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