

## Online Degree Guide

Online degree programs vary widely in their methods of instruction, expectations of students, scheduling, and cost structure among other things. Be sure to contact the college you're interested in attending to discuss the details of its online degree programs and student services.

### **Is online study right for you?**

*Keep in mind that colleges vary in how they deliver online education.* For example, Black Hawk College currently uses Canvas as its course management system (CMS). Other colleges may use different CMS's. Also, BHC's courses are asynchronous (students can participate in the class any time of day). Other colleges may offer synchronous courses (students must participate at scheduled times).

If you've never taken a course online, visit BHC's online learning webpage at <https://www.bhc.edu/academics/online-learning/> where you also will find an interactive Online Learning Orientation. Also see "What Makes a Successful Online Student?" at <http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/tutorials/pedagogy/StudentProfile.asp>

Experience online learning at Black Hawk College before considering applying to an online degree program. Take an online course or two before graduating from BHC.

### **Questions to ask**

Can I complete the program 100% online? Are all the classes needed for my major, and to graduate from the transfer school, routinely and reliably offered online?

Are any campus visits required such as orientation meetings, required advising, exams, project presentations, etc.?

Will I need to log into courses at particular times (synchronous access) or when it's convenient for me (asynchronous access)?

When does each course start and end?

From the time I start, how long will I have to complete the degree and graduate?

What are the technology requirements (hardware, software, internet connection speed)? Does the college supply technology, or offer product discounts?

What books and other supplies are required? Are they available in a digital or virtual format?

Are tuition and required fees for online courses the same as for face-to-face courses? What may impact my total cost i.e. time I take to complete the degree, my course load each term or year?

Are all the resources offered to on-campus students also offered to online students? For example, as an online student will I be eligible for student health insurance if offered by the college?

## Degree quality

It's important the online degree you're considering focus on the same learning objectives and outcomes that it claims for its traditional, on-ground degree. Although the learning method might differ, you want to know you can acquire an equivalent body of knowledge during your online experience.

Online student support services vary greatly from school to school. Does the school you're considering provide online advising, enrollment and payment, tutoring, Library access and assistance, Career Services, and other online support services for students?

It is helpful to know how experienced the college and its instructors are in delivering online education. This information should be available on the college's website and is often indicated in individual faculty profiles. If you can't find this on the school's website, ask.

Colleges seek a variety of accreditations for the institution overall and then possibly for individual divisions and programs within the institution. Inquire whether these accreditations apply to the online programs.

## Choosing an online degree outside of your home state

If your home state is different than that of your transfer school, confirm with the transfer school that it accepts online students from your state.

Information about state reciprocity can be found on the transfer college's website. You may also want to consult the "National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements" website at <http://nc-sara.org/>

If you are considering a degree that will lead to a professional license in your state, or includes field placements such as clinical experiences, student teaching, practicums, or internships, it is highly recommended that you seek guidance from the appropriate licensing agency in your home state before beginning an out-of-state program and an online program. Programs that prepare students for nursing, teaching, psychology, counseling, and business frequently require in-person experiences, though there can be others.

## Seek advising

Speak with a Black Hawk educational advisor about any questions or concerns you may have about a transfer program, whether it is offered face-to-face, or online.

QC Campus Advising / Moline, IL  
Building 1, First Stop Center  
Phone 309-796-5100  
Email [advqc@bhc.edu](mailto:advqc@bhc.edu)

East Campus Advising / Galva, IL  
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