

# Distance Learning

As a distance learning student in the MSIS program, your course lectures, class discussions, and learning materials will be delivered via Blackboard Course Content Management Software and the Wimba Live Classroom technology. Course lecture presentations are accompanied by audio capabilities to enhance the learning experience. Each course has its own website that will be an important guide for you throughout the semester. Whether you take your classes remotely or in person at a scheduled time, you are considered a regular member of the MSIS program and must fulfill the same requirements on the same UALR academic schedule as the on-campus student. Instructors do have the option of altering requirements for distance learning students, but the courses will be the same in terms of content and rigor.

## Enrolling in an Online Course

The Information Science Department has developed a distance technology model that permits students to attend their MSIS classes either in person or online. Students attending online will be able to see the course materials being presented on the classroom screen, hear the conversions in the classroom, and be able to ask questions and participate in discussions along with the students sitting physically in the classroom. Instructors will record each class meeting so that students can revisit any part of any class meeting at any time. Because students can either take the class in person or online no differentiation is made between these Web-enabled courses and traditional courses on students' transcripts. As long as enrollment does not exceed the physical class size, students can choose for any given semester whether to attend physically or online.

## Taking an Online Course

Please keep the following important items in mind:

- Distance learning is not an independent study. It is very important that you follow along with your course, just as if you were attending the class on-campus. Also though you are not able to physically attend class, your instructor is still available for office hours, and will answer your questions via email, online discussion groups, or chat. Do not hesitate to ask your instructor if you have questions or need assistance.
- All communications from the Information Science staff will come via email. Make sure that your email address is up-to-date in BOSS. We will use your preferred address (as indicated in BOSS) for correspondence regarding exams, system problems, etc.

- Major course exams must be taken in person. To facilitate the examination process for students outside of the Little Rock area, the MSIS program will adopt a proctoring system to allow distance students to take their exams within their local areas.
- At the end of the MSIS program students must defend in person their Master's thesis or project. Students living outside of the Little Rock area can come to the UALR campus to do their presentation.

## Ordering Textbooks

To view and order your textbooks on-line, visit the [Link for the UALR Bookstore](#).

## Finding a Proctor

If you are a remote student (i.e. you do not live within 50 miles of the Little Rock, AR area) you are responsible for finding your own proctor at a library, community college or university in your area. Your nomination is subject to approval by the MSIS program coordinator. Acceptable proctors include:

- A librarian at an academic or public library
- Testing centers at 2 or 4 year colleges and universities
- Commercial learning/tutoring centers
- A Learning Center or officer of higher rank than the student if in the military
- Corporate education centers

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** An acceptable proctor must be able to receive and return exams in a timely manner. We will not confirm proctors who cannot receive and send exam materials by either fax or email attachment.

Unacceptable proctors include:

- Relatives
- Friends
- Neighbors
- Co-workers
- Places of worship
- Private residences
- Direct supervisor

Please be aware you may be charged a fee by your proctor. These practices vary among colleges, universities, and private testing centers. Remote students are responsible for any fees incurred with the administration of your exam, including postage to return the exam.

Your instructor will need the following contact information for your proctor: Name, Title, Institution, Street Address, Phone, Fax, Email Address, and Website. We will verify your proctor and explain to them the procedures we ask them to follow. If the proctoring is mailing the completed exam back to the instructor, we will ask your proctor to fax us the completed exam prior to mailing it.

To locate a proctor, contact your local public library, community college or university or, if you are in the military, contact your education officer. Start by asking if the facility has experience in proctoring exams. You can also check the following links to find a proctor in your area.

Please note that some testing centers require that exams be scheduled several weeks in advance. These arrangements should be made as soon as possible. If you are having trouble finding an acceptable proctor in our area, please email your instructor right away.

- [Link for National College Testing Association List of Participating Institutions](#)
- [Link for Sylvan Learning Centers](#)

## Scheduling an Exam

You should examine the course syllabus to find exams, dates, and the instructor's policy on make-up exams. If you have a take home exam or final project, you may not need a proctor. Check with your instructor and the course syllabus to find out if you will need a proctor. Please note the following:

- Students located in the Little Rock, AR area are considered local and are expected to come to the UALR campus to take any exams required by the course.
- Students located outside of the Little Rock, AR area are considered remote and will need to arrange for a proctor at a local college, university, or library. Remote students are responsible for making these arrangements and for any fees incurred for this service.
- If you fail to appear for your scheduled exam or make-up exam, you may not be able to re-schedule. If you cannot make it to the exam, you will need to contact your instructor in advance.
- If you are a remote student and a presentation is required for class, contact your instructor early in the semester to learn what alternative methods of presentations are possible.

## Student Exam Responsibilities

Before you schedule your exam, you should email your instructor to find out the time frame in which you must complete the exam. Once your instructor has released the exam so it is available to be taken:

1. You will receive email notification from your instructor/MSIS Staff reminding you to register for the exam with your proctor.
2. Your exam and instruction sheets will be emailed or faxed to your proctor.
3. You will receive an email confirming that your exam has been sent to your proctor. (It is your responsibility to contact your proctor to verify the receipt of your exam.)
4. Your proctor will email, fax as well as mail your completed exam back to the instructor for grading.

## Proctor Responsibilities

We will provide the exam and instruction to the proctor via fax or email. We ask that the exam proctor checks the student's picture ID and provides a secure, quiet space for the student to take their exam. Supervisory procedures would include explaining the instructions conveyed by the instructor, verifying as far as possible that the student does not use anything for the exam that is not allowed by the instructions (such as books, notes, or electronic devices), and (if possible) periodically checking on the student to make sure exam rules are being followed and finally collecting the exam from the student.

Immediately after the exam is completed, we ask that the exam be faxed to the instructor then returned via US mail in an institution envelope. If an envelope is not available, a note on letterhead or the business card of the proctor in charge will suffice. The student is responsible for providing postage, as well as paying any fees the proctor charges for the service.

At no time should the student be allowed to leave the room with the exam. In the event that a student is suspected of cheating on an exam the proctor should inform the student of the suspicion and that this fact and an explanation of the suspicion will be recorded for transmission to the instructor. The student may, at his or her own choosing, complete the rest of the examination.

## Contact for Academic Questions

If you have questions about homework assignments, projects, and exams, as well as any other course specific information, you should contact your instructor.

## Contact for Technical Questions

If you require student support, please visit the [Scholarly Technology and Resources STaR](#)), or contact [the UALR Information Technology Services](#) at (501) 916-3110.

## System Requirements

In order to fully participate in the blended web learning experience, the minimum recommended configuration for your laptop or personal computer should include 256 MB memory (higher if possible), Internet at 56K or above (DSL or broadband is even better), and a soundcard with microphones and speakers (a headset works well). Supported Operating Systems include Win Vista, Win XP, Win 7, Mac OS, and Linux. Supported Browsers include Internet Explorer, FireFox, Mozilla, and Safari (Mac OS only). You should only have one version of Java Installed, version 1.5 or later should work well.

## Determining if Distance Learning is right for you

You should carefully consider whether distance learning is right for you. Online courses take a great deal of self-discipline and time-management skills. Most students who enjoy and are successful in their distance learning courses share some important characteristics. Among these characteristics are the abilities to work independently, to manage time effectively, and to stay motivated throughout the course. The flexibility inherent to the distance learning courses is easy to abuse, and students who often find themselves behind schedule may not be the best candidates for online learning.

In addition, most successful distance learning students are highly comfortable using technology to complete assignments, read lecture notes, and most importantly, communicate with the instructor and other students. If you normally ask a lot of questions in class or spend much time at the instructor's office hours getting one-on-one assistance, you might be unsatisfied if you are unable to meet the scheduled class time.