



Guide to Selecting an Online Transfer Degree Program

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?

Online learning is a rewarding and convenient option for busy people to accomplish their educational goals. But don't mistake convenience for easy. Online learning requires self-discipline, critical thinking, and good writing skills. You don't need specialized technical knowledge to achieve success though you do need an up-to-date computer with reliable Internet access. Using a smart phone as the only way to access a course is very challenging and not all course materials may be easily visible.

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 ask how courses are taught (the **modality**): commonly they are **asynchronous** (access the course any time of the day or night) or **synchronous** (must participate at scheduled times). Some courses offer a blend of modalities, or may require certain parts of the course to be in-person such as a clinical experience.

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 <https://www.uis.edu/ion/resources/tutorials/pedagogy/successful-online-student/>

Black Hawk College is a great place to experience online learning before applying to a fully online transfer degree program. Take an online course or two before graduating from Black Hawk.

Questions to ask about the online program

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?

What is the learning modality -- synchronous, asynchronous, blended, or something else?

When does each course begin and end? Are there various start times throughout the year?

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 virtual format? Do I have the option to buy a hard copy textbook or materials if I prefer?

Are tuition and required fees for online courses the same as for face-to-face courses? What may impact my total cost i.e. how long I take to complete the degree, or the number of courses I take in a term or year?

Degree quality

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

Is the college and its instructors experienced 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, be sure to ask.

Are all the resources that are available to on-campus students also offered to online students? As an online student will you be eligible for student health insurance if offered by the college? Online student support services vary greatly from school to school too. Does the school provide online advising, tutoring, library access, career services, and other support services?

Colleges seek a variety of accreditations for their 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 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.

Seek advising

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

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