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### Welcome

Welcome to Upper Valley JVS Adult Division's Online Courses. This handbook was created to help you get started understanding the world of distance learning and the technology you need in the business world today.

### Are Online Courses for Me?

Distance Learning requires an additional set of skills in order to succeed. The skills you master on the job or in a classroom are just one portion of the abilities you will need to master the online course environment. Important skills include: self-motivation, self-discipline, computer/keyboarding, and time management. A keen interest in the course will help as well. If you are not sure if distance learning is for you, we encourage you to take our Online Readiness Assessment at [www.formspring.com/onlineready.com](http://www.formspring.com/onlineready.com)

### Policies and Procedures

As with on-campus classes, online classes have policies and procedures regarding attendance, grading, withdrawing from the class. Most of these policies are described in the current student catalog ...

### Easy Online courses – The Myth

A serious misconception that students have about online classes is that they are "easier" than their traditional counterparts. In most cases, this is not true. This is not because your instructors have a policy of making online students do more work; online students have the same requirements as classroom students. However, achieving the same goals online is often more challenging. The additional challenges in online classes arise from personal equipment issues, student skill levels, and the very nature of the virtual environment.

### The Virtual Environment

Let's Talk! In a classroom discussion, students have real-time conversations with the instructor and other students in the class. In an online class, discussion occurs a chat-room-like tool called the *Discussion Board*. Discussions are initiated by the instructor on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Many times class requirements will mandate the number of responses to the question as well as responses to other student questions/discussions.

Some instructors will schedule "Office Hours" via a synchronous chat. Your instructor will provide you information on that. The Office Hours are a wonderful opportunity to have real-time conversations and really get to know the other students.

Quite frequently students may have assignments involving group work which will be more time-consuming in an online course than in the traditional classroom.

## Before the Course Starts

### Required Equipment: Software & Hardware

All online courses require that you have access to a computer that is connected to the Internet and are comfortable with using that computer.

**Equipment Issues:** Please review the equipment requirements prior to enrolling in an online course. Complying with these requirements will minimize your frustration.

**Internet Connection:** A stable internet connection is required

An e-mail account that you can access and check on regularly is required. You should be able to send and receive mail and attachments with this email account.

A high speed connection or 56Kbs or faster is best.

**Web Browsers:** Some ISP provide a customized browser, but we recommend using Internet Explorer. Customized browsers can cause problems in the online course environment including the submission of attachments and online quizzes.

**Anti-virus/Anti-malware** (spyware): It is strongly recommended that you install and maintain this software on your home computer to avoid infecting your computer and others with computer viruses and worms.

Please update your internet security application and firewall protection often.

### Student Skill Level

Students often underestimate the computer skills necessary to take an online class – or overestimate their own skills. At the very least, students taking online classes must be proficient in using email including attachments; downloading material from the web; and creating, opening, saving and closing. Many classes require additional skills, which are mentioned in each courses individual requirement. If you have concerns about your skills, please talk to the instructor.