

**Learner Support Agreement (LSA): Facilitating Online Learning by
Moving Out of the Middle**

A netcourse offered by The Concord Consortium

Please read this document carefully, as we detail both our expectations of you and what you can expect from all of us at Concord's Online Learning Services. If you've never taken a netcourse before, you're in for a grand ride! But, to make the experience the best for all, we'd like to set some guidelines that we can all agree upon.

Once you've read the LSA, please reply to this email with an accepting statement, so we know you have read it and agree to its terms of collaborative learning and cooperative exchange. Please print out or file a copy for yourself, keeping it where you can find it for reference.

Pre-class: Learners will be provided with an introductory email that includes a class URL for access to the Moving out of the Middle (MOOM) netcourse. This URL will remain constant throughout the semester. Regular access to Netscape or Internet Explorer (java-enabled, version 4+ or higher) is required for participation. These can be downloaded free from their websites or at download.com.

During class: The primary method for accessing the instructor will be through the Discussion Board in the netcourse itself, and via email. Most of the communication will be done in the course discussions, but occasionally, when there is a private issue or urgent question, email will be appropriate. The response time for learner questions will be between 24 and 48 hours. Sarah is available non-U.S. holiday weekdays, from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time for telephone questions (978-371-5848).

Participation is required. We recognize the posting of comments and assignments to the MOOM Discussion Board as "participation." If you just read course materials and discussions without posting yourself, you have not yet met your responsibility. Post every week or be sure to inform both the Instructor and your classmates of upcoming absences of more than 7 days (hopefully there won't be any!). MOOM participants learn in collaboration with one another. Your teammates will need you to do your part to fulfill their role(s). If we know of an unusual circumstance that creates an absence of more than 7 days, we can avoid assigning a team responsibility to the absentee party and creating frustration for others in the course. The success of

the group depends on each of your personal commitments to making collaboration within the course work well.

We acknowledge that this kind of interactive exchange with participating peers may not be something you are used to. If you think you will have profound trouble meeting this requirement for cultural or other reasons, we hope you will email us first, alerting us to your quandary and not decide simply to drop the class. We will gladly do all we can to assist you in making a transition to a communication style that works online, or to adjusting your assignments so you can participate in an alternative way. These agreements must be made individually, and generally are not accepted from participants who are citizens of the United States.

All of us continue to learn about this new genre of communication and how to do it best. One lesson we've learned the hard way is that while you may "feel" invisible sitting alone before your monitor, we have found that students notice when others are silent and wonder (and worry: "where's so-and-so?" "...doesn't s/he care?" "...like MOOM?" "...like me?"). You may be surprised how painful your absence might be for others, once they have met you and group bonding has begun. For the next 12 weeks you are connecting with others by enrolling in this course. Netcourse etiquette calls for communication with everyone to ease the experience for all. Even when you "disappear" (from the viewpoint of your MOOM colleagues), what you've already posted lives on, reminding people you were once with us. Of course, the unexpected will happen too. It always does. Your obligation is simply to let people know why your usual level of participation is about to shift or has suddenly shifted. Keeping everyone informed will be very much appreciated! You can always phone your instructor if you suddenly are without an internet connection.

And don't worry, you'll know what to post. The assignments will be clearly explained. Specific expectations for each week are presented. Don't hesitate to post your question to the "Questions About Assignments" discussion forum if you ever feel confused about what is expected. Generally, it is assumed that students will spend approximately five to seven hours per week on class assignments and participating in class discussions. To maximize your flexibility in scheduling time for yourself to work on MOOM, the current week and the upcoming week will always be open and available. New sets of activities start each Wednesday morning. Weekly postings are all due by midnight, Tuesday night (EST). It's best to plan on visiting the course at least three times per week.

After the course ends: Class materials will remain accessible to participants. After the course's official end-date, discussions will be self-moderated.

Technical support: For Internet connectivity questions, you should check first with your local ISP provider. There will also be a thread in the discussion area for technical support, and the response time will be between 24 and 48 hours (or occasionally, 72 hours, if over a weekend). While Sarah can assist you with questions regarding navigating Blackboard, you will be responsible for making your computer "go."

Class announcements: this listserv will be the vehicle for weekly announcements to the group, as well as, for instance, notifications of our server being unexpectedly down. (Hopefully this won't happen!)

Feedback: The instructor will provide weekly, private feedback to all in personal Discussions in the "Groups" area of MOOM. The instructor will also model the moderating strategies of focusing and deepening dialogue that are taught in the course on the public "Discussion Board."

Refunds: ***After registration, there will be no refunds for non-participation.*** You may, however, within one week of the course opening, substitute another person in your place, if you are unable to participate.

Reminder: please reply to this email with an accepting statement, so we know you have read the LSA. You're welcome to include any questions the agreement raises for you as well. Thank you, and welcome again!