Is Distance Learning for Me? Recording Fall 2011

Is Distance Learning for Me?

Slide 1 – Is Distance Learning for Me?

Katie: Hello and Welcome to today’s webinar Is Distance Learning for me offered through the Extended Learning Institute at Northern Virginia Community College.

If you have any trouble with the software throughout the presentation please give the eNOVA hotline a call at 703.764.5051 (this number is also in the text chat). This is a real time person that will help you trouble shoot your problem and join us back in the online classroom.

This webinar is being recorded, so everyone who is participating today will receive an email with a link to playback this webinar. This will give you the opportunity to review anything that you may have missed. The recording playback provides you with a drop-down topic list, rewind and fast forward tools that allow you to go directly to the parts you want to review.

Slide 2 – eNOVA Basics

The tool we are using for today’s webinar is called eNOVA. It is Saba Centra software that we use in a variety of ways at ELI. We use this tool for Webinars, e-meetings, and some classes meet in real-time. Some instructors also use this for their office hours to meet with students in real time.

The primary way we will communicate today since we did not ask you to obtain a microphone will be using the icons across the top.

**use STAR tool* to demonstrate the ICONs available for the Webinar**

Depending on how you joined the webinar today, will determine how you view the webinar icons. They may be located along the top as text buttons or the bottom left or right as icons.

The **Green check** mark is used to confirm or say yes

The **Red X** for no

**Raised Hand** is for asking questions, This hand is a visual cue for us to see that you have a question, but you will need to type your question in text chat. So, you can go ahead and do that throughout the presentation and we will answer it in real time.

The **text chat tool**. Which is a keyboard with a text balloon above it. You may see this as a chat with a + sign in the lower left of your screen or a text button at the top, which you will click on to open the text chat. Please type all questions you have in the text chat.

If you have used this tool before, can you give me a green check and if you haven’t a red X? The more you use it the more comfortable
Slide 3 -- Agenda

Today’s Agenda is:
Introductions
ELI Basics
Course Information
Basic Skills/Technology Requirements
Questions to Consider
Payment Information
Course Enrollment
Student Support Services
AND
Contact Information

Slide 4 - Introductions

Katie: My name is Katie Aimone and I am the Orientation Specialist at ELI. I work with new students to help with the transition to distance learning courses. Now Christy Jensen will introduce herself.

Christy: Thank you Katie. Hello, my name is Christy Jensen. I am a counselor at ELI. As a counselor I assist students with various academic issues including course selection, identifying a degree in alignment with one’s goals, as well as understanding the connection between a degree and career choice.

Katie: Now we want to learn a little about you. You will use the tools we just went over, using the green check for yes and the red x for no.

Are you a current NOVA student?

Have you taken or attempted a Distance Learning course?

Now Christy will talk about ELI Basics.

Slide 5 - ELI Basics

Christy: Now I would like to share some background information about ELI.

ELI is an acronym for Extended Learning Institute
ELI is the distance learning division of Northern Virginia Community College often referred to as NOVA and has been in existence since 1975.
NOVA is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
ELI offers 15 NOVA degrees and specializations and 13 certificates.
ELI offers over 300 courses per semester. If you are interested in pursuing a degree or certificate at NOVA that is not offered through ELI it is highly likely that you may find
some course that are required for your degree through ELI.

*Slide 6 - Course Descriptions*

A great way to learn more about course being offered through ELI is to access ELI’s web site.

Select Course Description

*Slide 7 – Course Descriptions*

Select semester of Interest

*Slide 8 – Course Descriptions*

Select subject of Interest

*Slide 9 – Course Descriptions*

Select description

*Slide 10 – Course Descriptions*

The course description will include an overview of the course as well as a list of the course objectives. For course materials you will be referred to the Alexandria campus bookstore. Although NOVA has six campuses each with their own bookstore, ELI works exclusively with the Alexandria bookstore. Books and other course materials can be picked up in person or ordered online and shipped to an individual.

*Slide 11 – Course Descriptions*

The course description will also include an overview of the number of assignments and exams and how to get started using Blackboard. The course syllabus is only available in the Blackboard course site.

Katie will now discuss course formats.

*Slide 12 – Course Formats*

Katie: ELI has several different course formats. There are two primary formats that you will see—one is online and one is the virtual hybrid. All ELI courses will have an online presence in Blackboard, which is the course management system that we use at NOVA and through ELI. The virtual hybrid courses will have a combination of blackboard and the tool we are using today, eNOVA.

If you ever take a class that says “meet in real time”, means you will log in at the time
for example, Tuesday’s at 10am or Wednesdays at 6pm and you will meet in real time with your classmates and instructor. If your course does not mention “real time” meetings, you will be expected to work on your own. This information will be listed in the “notes” section in registration so you will know that before enrolling.

Some courses have weekly or mid weekly deadlines and you will be expected to log into blackboard throughout the week, each week of your course.

The course requirements might vary by course. You will probably see online discussions consistently across all courses; however, how much you do that might vary. In blackboard, there is a feature called discussion board and it is a way to communicate with your instructor as well as your classmates. For some courses the first assignment might be an introduction of yourself. This is a way to start the communication with your classmates as well as get comfortable with the tool for the coursework to come.

Another requirement might be Peer reviews—you may have to write a paper and have your peers review and in turn, you will need to read and review your classmates.

Group projects are also used in ELI courses—one class that uses this for example is Speech. You may use this tool, or email or other ways of communicating with your classmates to complete your group project.

Some courses may require you to view videos and/or utilize CDs or other websites and online tools that the publisher of the book may use.

You should be comfortable using your student email to communicate with your instructor. If you are brand new to NOVA, when you apply you will receive a free student email. This is the email that ends with @email.vccs.edu

For World language courses, or possibly other courses instructors might require a voice recording program called Wimba. This is software that we provide for you through ELI. It is a free download that you will have access to through the course material.

*Slide 13 - Critical Dates*

ELI courses can vary in course dates and deadlines and being familiar with Critical Enrollment dates is important for success in an ELI course. A link to important dates can be found on the homepage of ELIs website. On the main website, select Critical Course Deadlines under the Announcements.

*Slide 14 – Critical Dates*

This will take you to a page where you select the term you are planning to enroll.

*Slide 15 – Critical Dates*
Which will open a PDF or word document of dates to make note of for example: start date, refund date, Inactive Student Drop date, Last Withdrawal date and end date.

**Slide 16 – Sample Quick-Start Syllabus**

These dates can also be found on a Quick Start syllabus, a document you will receive in the postal mail before your course begins. There is a sample quick start syllabus on the ELI website which is shown on this screen. You will receive a Quick Start specific to the course and term you are enrolled. The Quick Start will give you contact information for your instructor as well as basic information on how to get started on our course work.

In addition to these dates, you will want to be aware of fixed deadlines. Some courses have weekly or mid-weekly due dates. Courses also vary in length. Some courses are 8 weeks, some 12 weeks and some 16 weeks. You will want to be familiar with all these deadlines in order to be successful in your course. You will want to start the course immediately so you don’t miss any deadlines.

**ELI courses do have Exams that will need to be proctored, now I will talk about ways to Take your Exams.**

**Slide 17 – Proctored Exams**

This slide shows you the ELI website and you can see on the right side Testing Information. This will give you information about the different ways of taking exams through ELI. All exams must be proctored. There are three different ways for exams to be proctored depending on where you live and what course you are enrolled in.

**Slide 18 – Proctored Exams**

Students living in N.VA you are expected to take exams at a NOVA campus. There are 6 campuses and each campus has a testing center. When you go to take your exam, you will need to take the printed and filled out Exam Pass which you can find in your Blackboard course site and a photo ID. Your Drivers License will work, your NOVA card is another option-- The NOVA card is an official form of identification and the first card is always free. As an ELI student, you do not need to pick up your NOVA Card, but know it is available if you want it.

When you are on campus taking an exam you will need to pay for parking. There are either metered spaces or a parking garage that you can pay by the hour or you can purchase a parking decal.

If you are outside of the Northern Virginia area, you will need to identify a proctor. A proctor is someone who is available to supervise an exam, this can be a full time educator, Professional Librarian, or a Military educational officer or embassy staff member. If you are near another VCCS school or University you can check with their testing center.
And for some of you a third option might be available. This is a pilot program that some courses are using. ELI has partnered with Proctor U and to utilize this service and take your exams using a webcam, microphone and speakers. If this is an option for your course, more information will be provided.

**Slide 19 – Basic Skills**

*To be successful in an ELI course, there are some Basic Skills you will want to be able to do, or be comfortable learning:*

Create a new folder  
Save a file  
Cut, copy and paste  
Find a lost file on your hard drive  
Download a file  
Send and receive email  
Send an attachment file in email  
Use an internet browser to search for information on the web  
Participate in class discussion forum in Blackboard

If you do not know how to do these, it does not mean you can't take a course, it just means you should have a way to learn and a comfort in learning these skills.

ELI has mini tutorials on the website that you can watch and learn some skills for example one tutorial is on adding an attachment to an email and another is creating a voice recording using Wimba.

**Slide 20 – Required Technology**

In addition to those skills, you will also need to have reliable access to your email and access to internet. MS Office 2000 or later to complete word processing assignments. As well as access to software such as adobe reader, real player or windows media player.

Now, Christy will talk about questions to consider.

**Slide 21 – Questions to Ask About Distance Learning**

Christy: First, Why are you interested in a distance learning courses?

Consider the reasons why you are interested in enrolling in the course –do you need the course right now or is this the last course required for your degree? Answers to these questions will play into your motivation for the course.

Second, How effectively do you manage your time?
One of the reasons we find that students are not doing well in their distance learning courses is because they do not manage their time effectively. Often they misjudge the amount of time required. Or they are taking a campus and online course, but tend to focus attention on the campus course and neglect the distance learning course.

Third, How much time do you have available to work on course requirements?

Before you register for your courses you should think about all of your commitment for the semester. Are you doing volunteer work? Do you have a lot of family commitments? If you have children, what will their schedules be like and how does this affect you?

Rule of thumb – for every credit hour your course is worth you should plan to spend 2-3 hours per week on the course. For example if you are taking a 3 credit course you should expect to spend 6-9 hours per week on the course. This is a guide - some instructors will tell you to expect to spend 12-15 hours per week on a course. Keep in mind the time frame provided was for a sixteen week course. If you are enrolled in an eight week course you should expect to double the time required per week.

Fourth, Are you an independent learner?

Are you hesitant to ask questions? In a classroom environment, your instructor can pick up on nonverbal cues and body language. When you are working online, the instructor cannot pick up on nonverbal cues and body language. While your instructors are here to assist and support you it is important for you to be able to ask for help in real-time.

Finally, Are you comfortable with technology?

It is very important that you are comfortable with technology prior to beginning a distance learning course. You should be exposed to various technologies in your distance learning courses. If you are not strong in technology it does not mean that you can never take a distance learning course, but perhaps now is not the right time to take a course. If you are not comfortable with technology or do not have the basic skills covered you might consider working on strengthen your skills and increase your comfort level before taking a course.

_Slide 22 - Is Distance Learning for Me?

Here are some resources to assist you with thinking about the questions that were just covered.

Complete the SmarterMeasure assessment by going to ELI’s web site and select the Are You Ready for Distance Learning? button located in the middle of the page. This is an assessment that you can take to identify and assess your strengths and opportunities for growth as they relate to distance learning courses. The assessment
covers six areas - life factors, individual attributes like procrastination, time management, learning styles, technical competencies, there is an assessment for reading rate and recall, and also a quick assessment for typing speed and accuracy. For more information refer to the handout that you will receive with the follow-up e-mail.

You can also review the Orientation section of the website. This section will include a ten question quiz to help you get started thinking about elements to consider prior to enrolling in a distance learning course. To access the quiz –

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Select Orientation

*Slide 24 – Is Distance Learning for Me?*

Select Is Distance Learning for Me?

*Slide 25 – Is Distance Learning for Me?*

Your responses will be color coded with a red, yellow, and green light. Red meaning stop and give careful thought to this element, yellow is caution, and green means “go to go”.

*Slide 26 – Payment Information*

Now I will discuss payment information.

The tuition for ELI courses is the same as the tuition for courses taken on any NOVA campus. Here is a list of current tuition/fee charges. Prior to the start of courses there may be a grace period for when tuition is due. After the grace period has passed tuition is due by the next business day following course enrollment. It is possible to use financial aid to cover the cost of courses offered through ELI. The first step in applying for financial aid is to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Often referred to as the FAFSA. Individuals interested in learning more about financial aid are encouraged to visit NOVA’s Financial Aid web site.

*Slide 27 – Enrolling in Courses*

Next I will cover enrolling in courses.

Before enrolling in any courses at NOVA you need to complete an Application for Admission. There is no application fee. The application can be completed online by clicking on the “Apply Now” tab located on ELI and NOVA’s web site. If you are returning to NOVA after an absence of one year, you must re-apply prior to enrolling in courses. Next make arrangements to take the English and/or Math placement test. The placement tests are great tools to help you assess where you are right now and
help you to create an appropriate educational and academic plan for yourself. Refer to the handout you will receive with the follow-up e-mail for detailed information about enrolling in courses and taking the placement tests.

While you are waiting to receive your quick-start syllabus you can go to the Course Description section of ELI’s web site to find information about preparing to begin your course and purchasing your course materials.

*Slide 28 – Student Services*

There are many resources available to help you be successful. Here is a sample of the resources.

*Slide 29- Connect with ELI*

There are also many ways for you to stay connected through ELI. You can visit ELIife-ELI’s student blog to stay up-to-date with various topics pertaining to distance learning. You can become active in the virtual student union. You can join us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

*Slide 30 - Contact Information*

Remember, you are not alone. In addition to the resources presented there are many staff at ELI as well as your instructors here to help. Katie and my contact information have been posted for you along with the ELI Hotline phone numbers – local and toll-free. Also, remember if you are online you can utilize the Live Chat feature of ELI’s website to connect with a staff member in real time during standard business hours.

*Slide 31 – Thank you!*

Thank you for attending today’s webinar. Remember to check the Announcements section of ELI’s website for additional webinars and resources. If you have any questions at this time, please utilize the text chat tool (keyboard icon) to type your question. You should receive a follow-up e-mail within 24 hours that contains a link for you to play a recording of today’s webinar. After you exit the webinar you will be asked to complete a very brief online evaluation. Your feedback is important to ELI. If you have no questions you can exit the webinar by selecting file and exit or click on the “X’ in the upper-right hand or left corner.