

# Making Online Students into Professionals

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Program for Online Excellence in Teaching

# Lake Superior College

Duluth, MN

- About 10,500 students
- 200 faculty
- 200 online classes/semester



# Duluth Now



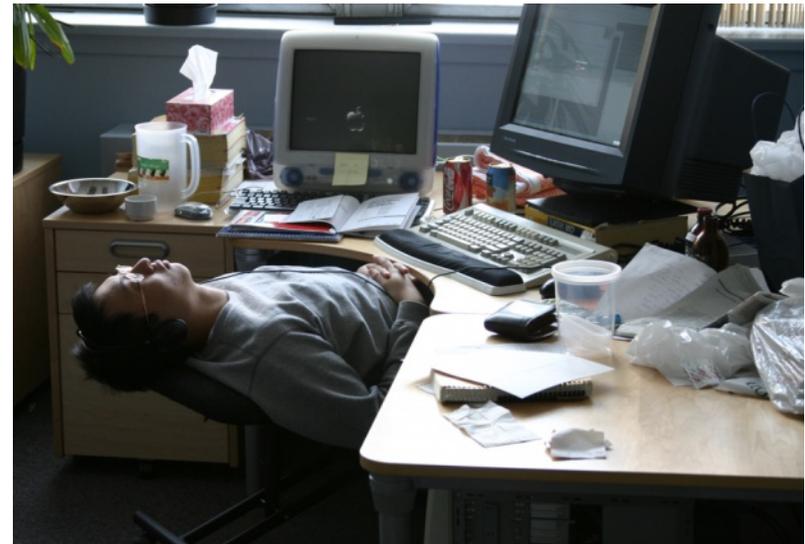
What is  
professionalism?

## Professionalism

Employers want it

Many students do not show it

*Professional  
fluency*



# What qualities define professionalism?

Employers  
want  
professional  
fluency



What would  
you do with  
this email?

Hello,

For question three how is my answer not correct?

I thought the syllabus explains your late policy?

I put a citation to your syllabus in the beginning about your policy on late work.

Also for question 4.

How is a chat room not a place to talk with the class and with the instructor?

Also how is the LSC library not available to all students--and you can make appointments with each other for times to be there!

Thanks,

“Billy”

**What kinds of unprofessional behaviors have you seen by students (or faculty and staff)?**

# Lake Superior College Push for Professionalism

Came up with new college-wide outcomes Spring 2017

## **Professional Demeanor**

Professional demeanor is meant to be assessed objectively based on appearance and actions, including but not limited to observable behaviors such as:

- Displaying friendliness, empathy, and politeness in any situation.
- Dealing with unpleasantness appropriately; acting respectfully when facing disagreement or difference.
- Being assertive when appropriate.
- Demonstrating confidence in abilities and seeking clarification when needed.
- Appropriate presentation requires an understanding how professionals in each context act, and then conforming.

# Syllabus language

**At LSC, we uphold standards of professional demeanor, including:**

- Being on time
- Dressing appropriately
- Being prepared to engage in the learning process
- Engaging in professional and respectful oral and written communication
- Taking personal responsibility for actions

# F2F Pilot

## Spring 2018 Pilot: 6 instructors

- Packet for instructors
- Pre-semester questionnaire
- Teach and log professionalism behaviors
- Midterm and final survey of students

# F2F results

## Student Surveys

- Students don't see writing as important but they know they need to work on it
- They don't value personal appearance or want to work on it
- Meeting deadline is important and they need to work on it

## ● Advisory Board Survey

- Writing is important across industries
- Personal appearance is important
- Timeliness is important (can easily lead to termination)

# What about professionalism online?

Received a system-wide innovation grant to expand project to online classes

Revised packet for online class

Online Professionalism Packet:

[https://lsc0365-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/ax8729ap\\_lsc\\_edu/Etlc7z0JtVxPkwr3-GqEvAcBex-TjbQA9jC7qbID4c21DQ?e=OoRqyD](https://lsc0365-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/ax8729ap_lsc_edu/Etlc7z0JtVxPkwr3-GqEvAcBex-TjbQA9jC7qbID4c21DQ?e=OoRqyD)

- Definitions
- Rubric
- Teaching ideas

# Online Packet

## Professional Fluency

### *Tools and Tips for Online Work*

*This packet was originally prepared by the Professionalism Rubric Task Force in support of the MAP Area 2: Professional Fluency, during Fall semester, 2017. It was adapted by Kelli Hallsten Erickson and Amy Jo Swing as part of an Minnesota State Education Innovations Shark Tank part 2 grant during the summer of 2018.*

#### **A note from the professionalism task force:**

Are you wondering how you might go about teaching professionalism? Each program (and even class!) has its own needs regarding professionalism, so no one way of teaching will work for everyone. Through our conversations about the rubric, however, some ideas came to light that we wanted to share. If you find you have a tip to share, please let Amy Jo Swing know.

#### **A note about online professionalism:**

Teaching and learning online encompasses many of the same professionalism aspects of as face-to-face teaching and learning; therefore, the professionalism rubric is the same for both. However, the practice of professionalism and the execution of professional standards and demeanor change in the online environment. This packet is meant to guide instructors in promoting online academic professionalism.

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# Packet: Rubric

Professionalism Rubric

	<b>Proficient (exceptional)</b>	<b>Acceptable (baseline)</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>
<b>Communication (Written or Oral)</b>	Effectively develops and expresses complex ideas in a manner appropriate to a professional audience and purpose. Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, or presentation are minor.	Develops and expresses ideas in a manner appropriate to a professional audience and purpose. Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, or presentation do not substantially detract from the message.	Does not adequately develop or express ideas in a manner appropriate to a professional audience and purpose. Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, or presentation substantially detract from the message.
<b>Timeliness</b>	Complies 100% with instructor-defined attendance and due date policies.	Demonstrates substantial compliance with instructor-defined attendance and due date policies.	Demonstrates lack of compliance with instructor-defined attendance and due date policies.
<b>Respect</b>	Brings meaningful discussion, information, or resources to the learning environment, incorporating diverse perspectives while interacting positively with others.	Actively listens, validates diverse perspectives, and interacts appropriately.	Is present but does not participate in discussions; does not validate diverse perspectives, or interacts inappropriately.
<b>Taking Personal Responsibility</b>	Proactively manages his/her schedule and makes arrangements in case of absences.  Proactively seeks resolutions to problems in a courteous manner.  Accepts and learns from consequences of his or her decisions to apply positively to future situations.	Manages his/her schedule and makes arrangements in case of absences.  Seeks resolutions to problems in a courteous manner when required.  Accepts consequences of his or her decisions.	Poorly manages his/her schedule and is not proactive in making arrangements in case of absences.  When required to seek assistance, is late to do so and/or is discourteous.  Does not accept consequences of his or her decisions and may externalize blame.

**Tips on Using the Rubric:**

- This could be informational, for you and/or the students, to define behaviors.
- Points could be assigned to each level to be a separate grading item for the course.

# Definitions

## Respect

**What we'd like to see (from the "Proficient" category on the rubric):** Brings meaningful discussion, information, or resources to the learning environment, incorporating diverse perspectives while interacting positively with others.

***Layman's Terms Definition:***

Students appear in the course ready to go; they've done the work and are ready to engage with the instructor and classmates. They listen to others with the intention of understanding them; when they participate, it's to make the conversation richer and better. They help make the course feel like a positive place to share ideas.

***Teaching Tips:***

- In Discussion boards, have students acknowledge the previous speaker's ideas before sharing his or her own. You can model this for students and give them examples. For example:
  - "Brenda, I appreciate that you saw how being a good critical thinker is an important attribute for Google employees and that it's connected to being creative, coming up with new ideas. I also think it has to do with making connections among seemingly disparate ideas..."

# Teaching Tips

## ***Teaching Tips:***

- Define specifics in grammar, mechanics, usage, presentation for students (e.g. “avoid run-on sentences,” and then explain what a run-on sentence is and how to either seek and fix them or avoid them altogether). Choose the aspects that are most important for your students moving forward in college and their careers. (See Appendix 3)
- Define what the purpose is for writing/oral communication for:
  - This specific class
  - Further fields of study
  - Career fields
- Describe different audiences (groups of people/individuals) students might face and how messaging for those audiences will change based on audience expectation AND demographics.
- Create clear grading criteria for assignments based on their oral/written communication.
  - For example: “Your report has been carefully proofread to correct errors in spelling and capitalization.”

# Sample Assignments

## Appendix 1: Grade Improvement Prompt

I remember one faculty member telling me that he had students respond to their first disappointing test grade with a goal-setting activity. He'd start with the prompt: "So what's a realistic amount of grade improvement for your next exam?" After that, each student created a list of what they needed to do and when they needed to do it in order to accomplish that goal. The instructor provided regular reminders and a review of the goal and accompanying activities before the next test. That exam debrief included discussion of who reached their goal and why they did or did not, followed by another round of goal setting.

1. What is a realistic goal for improving your test score on the next test?

From \_\_\_\_\_ (Your score on UT2) To \_\_\_\_\_ (your score on UT3)

2. How will you get there?

What three things did you do to prepare for Unit Test 2?

a.

b.

c.

What three changes will you make to prepare for Unit Test 3?

a.

b.

c.

# Samples

## **Appendix 4: Sample Discussion about Professionalism for Online Classes**

Please post a 200-350 word response to the following questions. Feel free to use personal experiences, links, videos, articles, and other resources to support and enhance your ideas.

Make sure to use professionalism in your response and to reply to at least two other students, commenting on a specific idea in their postings.

1. How do you define professionalism both in college and in your future career or current job? (If you have not yet chosen a career, think about workplaces in general.)
2. What would you consider the top two traits of someone who displays professionalism?
3. How can you display professionalism online?
4. What would be characteristics of someone who is not acting professionally, especially in an online class?

# Online Pilot Fall 2018

## Five instructors from all five divisions

- A pre-semester questionnaire indicating their personal definitions of each aspect of professionalism and its importance to their students
- A teaching strategy log indicating how they taught the aspects and the effectiveness of those strategies
- Administration of two surveys to their students at midterm and the end of the semester

## Pre-semester question themes

- **Communication** is extremely important in all fields, but in different ways (charting in health care, lab notes in biology, critical discourse in philosophy)
- **Timeliness** can mean the difference between having a job and being unemployed and is seen as a sign of respect
- **Respect** goes both ways, includes courtesy and also Netiquette (online)
- **Taking personal responsibility** means ownership, staying in communication with others, meeting deadlines (so all of the rest, really)

## Mid-term student surveys (69 students)

- 100% of students said learning to be professional was very important (75%) or important (25%)
- Students said the most important aspect of professionalism in work and school were respect and responsibility, least important personal appearance and writing.
- They say they are already good at respect and responsibility but not good at writing, using time wisely, and personal appearance.
- They say they need to work on writing (23%) and using time wisely (40%)

*Interesting that in an online class, they don't think writing is important but know they need to work on it.*

# Student ideas for teaching professionalism (mid-term)

- Modeling and reinforcing professional behaviors
- Tying ideas to workplaces
- Using multi-media
- Holding students accountable
- Using technology to track classes

## End of term student survey (69 students)

- Ninety five percent of students are likely or very likely to apply professionalism principles in the future
- Fifty-nine percent of students feel they need to work on using time wisely, followed by communication, both oral and written, (8.45% and 9.86%)
- Students want to keep working on meeting deadlines (25%), treating others respectfully (24%) and communicating appropriately in person (17%).

# Student ideas for teaching professionalism (end of semester)

- Emphasize better writing practices.
- Provide videos or other visuals about how to act in the workplace.
- Integrate into FYE courses.
- Model appropriate behavior and make teacher accountable
- Keep bringing it up all semester long.
- Be very specific about why professionalism is important in the workplace.
- Provide lectures, presentations, outside speakers, etc. in AND outside of classes (like during Student Success Day).
- Talk to students about how to study and the different options for studying success so they can choose which path will work best for them.
- Teach students to become self-sufficient by not immediately answering questions and have them find the answers
- Set up mock interviews to practice
- Set deadlines and stick to them. Suggest ways of keeping track of these deadlines, like paper planners or websites/apps.
- Even though lots of students hate them, group projects are the best way for students to learn how to work with others.

# Teaching Logs

- Include language in syllabus
- Connect professionalism to workplace scenarios and expectations
- Teach professional email writing/behaviors
- Include discussion on professionalism
- Have students create rubric on professionalism (own criteria)
- Assign a grade for professionalism/professional demeanor
- Address unprofessional behaviors as they arise
- Student self-assessment and improvement plan
- Tell students employers are asking us to teach professionalism
- Use videos to show professionalism

# Results

Students understand some professional behaviors are important (using time, respect) but not others (communication, appearance)

Students have great ideas for teaching professionalism

- modeling
- keeping all accountable
- using multi-media
- tying ideas to workplaces

Instructors are doing good work:

- reinforcing professional behaviors—active not passive modeling
- keeping students accountable through grading and correcting
- including students in the conversation about professionalism
- Tying behaviors to workplaces

## What's next?

- Roll out packets and rubrics to all instructors, online and F2F
- Have all faculty and staff reinforce professionalism language
- Collect more assignment and tips for teaching professionalism
- Keep including students and employers in the conversation

## Answer to “Billy’s email”

Dear “Billy,”

I appreciate that you want to ask me about the grading on your quiz.

A couple of notes concerning my perspective on this email:

At the beginning of the semester, I have no idea which particular student is in which of my courses. I have many classes with many students. Please always indicate which course you are in when you communicate.

When you start a question with the phrase, "How is my answer...", you are really seeming to say, "I am right, and how dare you mark me wrong--defend your grading". It is a very aggressive form of a legitimate question. It might be helpful if you assumed that I meant well by the students in my course. You could have said, "I am confused by your marking, as I really thought that I understood what you were asking. Because I got it wrong, could you tell me what I missed?"

We ask Lake Superior College students to be **both professional and appropriate** in their communication with the faculty in their classes and with their classmates. Your comments here come across as accusatory. If you were communicating like this with, say, your boss or supervisor, you might get yourself into trouble with this approach.

**So, can you try again?** Re-write this so that I know which class you are in, and see if you can clarify specifically which questions are unclear and what your answers were. Then I will have a context for your concerns.

I will look forward to your reply.

# Contact



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All materials OER and available at:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1wc9G1UYNsRDNUBhSdiKPdsTqrItJ92C6?usp=sharing>