



A Student's Guide to Online Education



Table of Contents

Introduction to Online Degrees	3
Dispelling Common Myths	4
Getting Started	5
Taking Action	5
Do your Research.....	5
Choose an Accredited School.....	6
Prepare Financially.....	6
Prepare Mentally.....	6
Types of Online Degrees	7
Associate’s Degrees.....	7
Bachelor’s Degrees.....	8
Master’s and Graduate Degrees.....	8
Professional and Master’s Certificate Programs.....	9
Conclusion	9

Introduction to Online Degrees

It has never been easier for a motivated person to earn a college degree. This is a bold statement considering the current condition of the United States economy and the increasingly challenging task of financing an education. However, there have never been so many opportunities for employed adults to find online degree programs that conform to and work around their jobs and family responsibilities. Online programs provide an outlet for professionals to engage in coursework that helps them increase their earning potential and advance their career while meeting the demands of every day life.

“Right now, someone who doesn’t have a college degree is more than twice as likely to be unemployed as someone who does. And so many of the Americans who have lost their jobs can’t find new ones because they simply don’t have the skills and the training they need for the jobs they want.”

-President Obama

If you have ever considered going back to school to learn more about your field, secure the skills you need to ensure job security and potentially make more money, online education is a path for you to consider. Many Chief Academic Officers agree that online educations are comparable to traditional brick-and-mortar educations. Additionally, when enrolled in an online program you can attend classes at any time from anywhere and interact with students and faculty members from across the country and around the world.

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Students need to know about online education so that they can motivate themselves to continue pursuing a higher degree of learning. They need to know that an online education can give them the flexibility they need to balance their personal along with their business life.

- Juliet, *Online Education Blog Comment*
Blog.Edvisors.com

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Dispelling Common Myths

Myth - Online schools are not accredited.

Truth - There are companies out there that try to con people into purchasing degrees, but they are almost instantly recognizable as scams. Here are a few ways to tell:

- Is the school's contact information difficult to find or missing from the website completely?
- Does the website makes claims that sound too good to be true? For example, *receive your degree in a week, no exams, only \$299!*
- Is the school accredited by one of the nationally recognized accrediting agencies?
<http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html>

Myth - If you earn a degree online you do not have as many resources at your disposal.

Truth - Many online schools give students access to a library system, career services center, tutoring services, advising and financial aid.

Myth - Online schools lack a "classroom" feel and teacher-student interaction.

Truth - In an online setting there is plenty of opportunity to connect with professors and other students. With a quality technology-based learning environment, students and faculty members can connect in more ways than ever before. The online community is a world community with people of all ages and backgrounds learning together.

Myth - An online education will reflect poorly on my resume.

Truth - Many employers are only interested in candidates who are able to prove that they are multi-taskers. Being able to work during the day and study at night will show potential employers that you are a hard worker and serious about your career. No matter where you go to school an education will reflect very positively on your resume.

“**Online Education is a great idea for individuals who are supporting themselves financially without help from family. I work 40+ hours and will definitely consider online courses in the future.**

- Jessica, Online Education Blog Comment
Blog.Edvisors.com

Getting Started

If the idea of an online degree program or online certification has piqued your interest you may want to ask yourself a few questions to determine if it is the right avenue to help you meet your goals.

Self Evaluation

- Am I career-oriented, looking to earn a degree or certification at my own pace and on my schedule?
- Am I interested in being able to work full time while I go to school?
- Am I looking for a specific license or certification that may not require four years of coursework?
- Am I interested in personal and social development, interacting in a class setting with groups of people from all over the world?

If any of these questions ring true to you choosing an online degree or certification program could be one of the smartest personal and financial decisions you ever make. The steady rise in online degree enrollment comes as no surprise due to the growing degree opportunities and the diversity of enriching coursework from heralded schools. Best of all, online educations can be tailored to fit the needs of any student. An online course of study will work for you in the same way that the education of a person who attends a physical campus works.

Taking Action

Once you decide that you want to proceed with an online education there are a few steps you should follow to make sure you choose the right school and the right program for your needs.

1

Do Your Research

Your education is a big investment and an online program is not something you should jump into with little information. Researching online schools is just as important as researching traditional schools. Things you should be concerned with are cost of attendance, time commitments and admission requirements. However, your number one concern should be academic content. Once you have chosen an area of study you should find out which schools offer related programs. Request information about every school that you think might work for your individual situation. The only way to compare what each school can offer you is to request detailed information.

2 Choose an Accredited School

Accreditation ensures that the education provided by a particular institution of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality. You should only concern yourself with schools that are accredited by nationally recognized accrediting agencies. You have probably heard of schools like the [University of Phoenix](#), [Kaplan University](#) and [Everest University](#) which offer primarily online programs and are leaders in the online education field. However, many well know brick-and-mortar institutions like [Boston University](#), [George Washington University](#) and [Loyola University](#) have developed online divisions as well. The key is choosing the school and a program that works around your professional and personal obligations and meets your financial needs. To help you with your research [Edvisors.com/schools](#) provides a full directory of accredited online schools as well as a listing of which degrees and programs each school offers.

3 Prepare Financially

Online classes are priced comparably to physical classes. It is important to consider how you will pay for your online education. Although you will probably be working part or full time while going to school you might still need assistance with tuition. Financial aid is accessible to students enrolled in online programs. [The Student Loan Network](#) can help connect you to [federal](#) and [private student loans](#) and [scholarship](#) information. Many companies also offer tuition reimbursement programs. You should check to see what benefits your company offers.

4 Prepare Mentally

Online education has come a long way in the last decade. You should not expect to watch a webcast of a lecture or sign on once every couple of weeks to hand in an assignment. Even though you are working on your own time, you need to be responsible enough to keep up. Just like physical classes, online classes involve lectures, homework, quizzes, group presentations and exams. Whether you go to school online or on campus, the work is going to take up a lot of your time. Like anything worthwhile, online courses are challenging, stimulating and will require a certain level of dedication to stay on track.

Types of Online Degrees

There is no shortage of literature illuminating the benefits of a college education. An undergraduate degree is now looked upon as a professional workforce requirement rather than an accomplishment and in a competitive job market a graduate degree is increasingly appealing to employers. Almost any degree that you can acquire through a traditional university can be acquired through an online university.

Associate's Degrees

Associate's degrees are known as the two-year degree. The actual amount of time to earn an Associate's degree can vary, but they stand as an excellent stepping stone to advancing in the workforce or moving on to a four-year Bachelor's degree. Associate's degrees represent over half of all of those earned through online education.

Associate's degrees usually fall into three categories:

Associate of Art (A.A.) - The academics of an A.A. degree are usually designed to be transferred toward a Bachelor's degree in the arts such as teaching, liberal or fine arts.

Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) - These degrees are tailored to suit a specific career after graduation. A.A.S. degrees are often attached to a career field such as Medical Secretary, Funeral Services and Technology Support.

Associate of Science (A.S.) - The academics of an A.S. degree are usually designed to be transferred toward a Bachelor's degree in a scientific field like biology, chemistry or computer science.

Requirements - Associate's degrees only require a high school diploma or equivalent. Classes will vary from one degree to another, but in general students will take core coursework (science, math and English), major requirements specific to the field of study and elective courses. Associate's degrees can be an excellent starting gate for anyone looking to further their career and increase their earning potential.

Bachelor's Degrees

Bachelor's degrees are generally four year degrees, but online education gives you the ability to condense the process if you choose. Bachelor's degrees are available online in almost any field of study including concentrations within [criminal justice](#), [education](#), [engineering](#), [nursing](#) and [psychology](#).

Requirements - The above list could really go on and on. Students generally need a high school diploma or equivalent to apply to an online Bachelor's program. Every student then has certain requirements for their degree to graduate which will vary from one institution to another. But a student must generally take core subjects in writing, arts, cultural studies, English, math, and social and natural sciences along with their coursework required for their major. Bachelor's degrees are required for many careers, and many professionals are taking advantage of online Bachelor's degrees to start, finish, or supplement their education.

Master's and Graduate Degrees

Pursuing a graduate degree online has become increasingly popular for a number of reasons. As with all online degree programs there is a greater availability and quality of enriching coursework to take online. Students and professionals everywhere are realizing that pursuing a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) or Doctorate in Psychology (PsyD) can be personally and financially rewarding. Some higher education degrees that are available online include Masters of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MS), Master of Education (MEd), Master of Public Health (MPH), Doctor of Education (EdD) and Doctor of Engineering (DEng).

Requirements - The coursework for graduate degrees is very intense, but in many cases classes can be taken on a part-time basis. These programs all require a Bachelor's degree and sometimes, in the case of a Doctorate, a Master's degree.

“Online classes are awesome! I’ve done several already and will be doing more to complete my BS in nursing. It’s convenient, it’s challenging because you need to be disciplined and not distracted, and most of all, rewarding.”

- Roxanne, Online Education Blog Comment
Blog.Edvisors.com

Professional and Masters Certificate Programs

Certificate programs are designed to give a person the knowledge and skills they need to perform a certain job or task. Professional and masters certificates are utilized to either supplement a degree or gain additional knowledge in a specific field. They are usually recognized by an organization or association that sets the standards for the industry involved. Professional certificate programs are offered to managers and professionals who want to improve their performance and enjoy the career advantages of a particular professional certification. Popular certifications include Project Management, Six Sigma, Supply Chain Management, IS Security, Business Analysis, HR Management and Leadership. These programs are offered through many accredited online universities.

Conclusion

The power of education speaks for itself. Over a lifetime people with higher education degrees make almost \$1 million more than those without. Although online education is not necessarily the right tool for every student, for many working professionals it's an excellent option for starting, continuing or finishing a degree. Online education simply reduces the gap between those who are able to attend traditional universities and those who are not.

To search for online degrees and online courses, visit - <http://www.edvisors.com>

Additional Resources from Edvisors

Edvisors Student Services Resources

College Search and admissions help at HowToGetIn.com

Graduate School Resources at GraduateCenter.com

Scholarship Search at StudentScholarshipSearch.com

Free College Scholarships at ScholarshipPoints.com

Student Credit Help at StudentPlatinum.com

Student Loan Network Resources

Private Student Loans at PrivateStudentLoans.com

Federal Loans at StaffordLoan.com

Federal Parent PLUS Loans at ParentPLUSLoan.com

Financial Aid Podcast at FinancialAidPodcast.com

FAFSA Online Application at FAFSAOnline.com