

# Ready for Online Distance Education? Read these 10 Rules first

Contributed by Mary Jackson  
Saturday, 06 September 2008

Accreditation - this is perhaps the most important of the rules. Accreditation confirms that the college meets certain educational standards that are set by the accrediting education agencies. If you earn credits from an accredited online distance education college, chances are you can transfer them to another accredited institution of your choice. Your chances for acquiring a new job or getting a promotion are greatly enhanced if your degree is accredited.

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Be on the look-out for unaccredited online distance education colleges otherwise known as "degree mills". There are many fake institutions granting "accreditation" to any organization willing to pay some money for it. Before you pick your college, make sure you research that it is accredited by a legit body. If you are not sure the college you wish to attend has a legitimate accreditation, consult with the United States Department of Education or CHEA to confirm.

Does the college and degree program you wish to pursue fit with your long-term goals and career? if you are thinking let's say, enrolling in an online associate degree program and later hope to earn a bachelors degree (online or campus), find out how likely it is that your associate degree coursework will transfer by looking for a list of colleges which have accept transfer credits.

Class size is as important in online education as it is in a traditional college classroom. Do your research on the average class sizes at the online distance education institution you are considering. Small classes make it easier to interact and voice your opinion.

It good to know more about the instructors of the programs you are interested in. Are they qualified to teach that class? Do they have experience in their field or specialization? Have they taught online classes before? How long have they been teaching? Get the answers to these questions. It is more reassuring if more instructors hold degrees from the college that you're planning to enroll.

Find out if it easy to contact your instructor or administration should you have questions or need help. The level of support offered to students varies considerably from college to college. Choose one in line with your needs and expectations.

Since most colleges begin their online distance education programs anytime and all the time, don't feel pressured to begin your program right away if you're not psychologically ready. Online education calls for motivation, thus you should only begin when you feel emotionally set and ready to put the effort to get through with your learning.

Check out if your program will be offered entirely online or if it will require residency at some point in the course. Some online courses have site projects and require residency so let this not come as a surprise to you.

Check if the institution you're interested in offers any form of financial aid assistance. You may be pleasantly surprised to find out that financial aid, loans and the scholarships available to you. In addition, many colleges and universities offer tuition installment plans which help make college more affordable. Ask before you enroll whether such programs exist.

Take your time to research your best degree option and college out there. Don't settle for less than you deserve. Unlike there before when online programs were limited, now there are enormous options and colleges to choose from as most traditional colleges are already offering some programs online.

## About the Author:

Find more online distance education resources and discover why college accreditation is important to your education.