

What Students Should Know Before Enrolling in Distance Education

Where Are You Thinking of Enrolling?

- By whom is this institution accredited? Is the accrediting association recognized by the US DoE or CHEA?
- Where can I find a list of members of that association?
- (If not regionally accredited) What transfer institutions or employers have accepted its credits and credentials? What provisions has it made for my completion of any program it discontinues?

What Program Are You thinking of Enrolling In?

- Are there any residency requirements?
- How long has this program been enrolling students?
- What other institutions offer similar programs and do they grant the same credential for similar work? How does the program differ from any similar one offered on site at a similar institution?
- How is the program reviewed to keep it current?
- How does the variety of courses offered compare with similar on-site programs?
- What have graduates of this program done with their credential? How can I get in touch with some of them (preferably those with goals similar to mine)?
- How is the effectiveness of the program (not the students) assessed? Can you give an example of any change that has happened because of that assessment?
- How are course materials made available to students? How will continuing access to current information resources be assured and what will the cost be?
- What arrangements have been made for me to complete any required laboratory requirements?

Who Designs, Delivers and Monitors the Program?

- Who designs and delivers the program (and if they are different, how is the delivery controlled)?
- Where can the qualifications and current professional activity of the faculty be found in writing?
- What arrangements are made to ensure faculty-student and student-student interaction?

Other Expectations of the Institution and Available Student Services

- What academic, linguistic, and technical skills does the institution require for students enrolling in this program?
- What equipment must I have access to and how will the institution help me in any problems that arise concerning the interface between my equipment and their offerings?
- What counseling, career, financial aid, or other non-classroom services are provided for distance education students?
- Is there a student handbook for distance education students? If not, where are these issues addressed?
- What is the process for filing complaints?
- What is the institution's refund policy if I should have to withdraw from this program?

Final Check on the Integrity of the Degree

- How can I assure outsiders that the degree represents an assessment of my work rather than that of someone else?
- What plans does the institution have for the continuation of this and other programs for the foreseeable future?
- Where is there official written representations of the faculty's qualifications, the program's course sequence and requirements, the nature of student/faculty interaction, assumptions about technical skills

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