

The 3 Most Important Things to Consider When Choosing to Study Online



Your guide to choosing a study mode, a course and a college that is right for you.

By Dr. Isabelle Cunningham



Online study is a wonderful benefit of our high tech age! If you have a computer, internet access and basic computer skills, you are in a position to train in almost any field you can imagine from the privacy and comfort of your own home. Even better, you can usually choose to work on your course material at times that fit in with your current lifestyle, you save time and money because you don't need to travel and you are not limited to choosing a college that is physically located close to you. You can choose to study with any online training provider, world-wide!

I have created this little e-book to assist you in making the best possible choice when you select the online course that will be most beneficial, rewarding and enjoyable for you. Though I am the Principal of an online college myself, this e-book is not intended to 'sell' you our training programs. It is intended to provide you with some ideas to consider, which have evolved through my experiences as both a teacher and student of distance education, to assist you in deciding what type of programs you might choose for yourself, regardless of which training provider you choose, what subject you want to study or what outcomes you hope to gain from your training.

There are, of course, many things to ponder when you start considering the idea of undertaking any training program including whether it is online or at a physical college and I will discuss some of those issues with you here to help you develop a clear vision of what you are wanting to achieve for yourself. I will also talk about the 3 most important things to consider when choosing to study online and show you how you can make sure you select a course and a training provider that will best suit your individual needs and provide you with the outcomes you desire.

ONLINE VERSUS ON-CAMPUS STUDY



I have heard many people say they learn best in a face-to-face environment and they feel hesitant to embark on off-campus training programs. This idea is usually the result of one or more of the following problems.

- 1/ People with visual or tactile learning styles need to see and do, rather than just read or hear, in order to really absorb new information. They fear they will not be able to understand and assimilate the course work properly if the teacher is not standing in front of them.
- 2/ Some people feel they will become too isolated, not get the support they may need and miss out on valuable interaction with other students if they study online.
- 3/ Others worry they may get stuck, not understand something and be unable to get the guidance, clarification and support they may need to really succeed in their studies.
- 4/ Some are concerned they will 'slack off' and feel they may lack the personal motivation or self-discipline required to study alone at home.
- 5/ Something about a building can give people a false sense of security when it comes to the subject of course accreditation and validity. Some people worry that studying online is not legitimate and their qualifications may not be real or recognised.

All of these are valid concerns and important factors to consider when choosing a study mode. If the course you want to do is offered at a college close enough for you to attend and they offer the program you want to do at times that suit you, and you feel more comfortable with face-to-face study then on-campus training may be your best option. However, if your location, other

commitments and the time you have available to study or the programs being offered in your area can't be met on-campus, online training with the 'right' training provider is an excellent option. But first you will need to make sure all of the potential problems listed above have been considered and safeguarded against, within the colleges program, to ensure you are not disadvantaged through choosing to study online.

In selecting your online training provider you might like to ask them the following questions.

1/ How have the variations in people's individual learning styles been factored into the way the course material is presented? *(This is very important if you are not a visual learner and just reading is not always enough for you. You will need to have a combination of text, audio, visual and practical course material to ensure you get the full benefit of your training course).*

2/What will happen if you are unable to understand any part of the course work properly? *(You will need to be certain you can get support and guidance from your teacher via telephone and email whenever you feel the need to talk to someone).*

3/ What student services dose the college provide to ensure you do not become too isolated? *(Some online colleges provide online student support groups, where you can chat with other students, share information and gain peer support).*



3/ What will happen if you get stuck, don't understand something or have personal issues arise that hamper your studies? *(The college you choose should have a safety net program in place to aide and support students if times get tough. This could include the ability to easily access free guidance counselling, having one particular teacher or caseworker that actually gets to know you and who you can contact and speak with whenever you need support along with the ability to defer studies if necessary).*

4/ What will happen if you do not hand your course work in on time? *(Some colleges won't even notice! Some others will wait for a period of time and then simply write you off and cancel your course. However a training provider that is as serious about getting you through your training course as you are, will be looking for you if you slip off the radar. They will want to help you identify what the problem is and be eager to implement support programs to help you get back on track and complete your training course).*

5/ Is the course accredited and with whom? *(Not all courses are government accredited, particularly in the holistic wellbeing or complementary health fields as some modalities are not recognised by the government authorities. However your course should be accredited with a reputable industry association, you should be able to join that association as a full member upon your graduation and you should be able to get professional insurance based on your graduation from the course).*



Once you locate an online training provider, who offers all of the above (essential) student services and support programs required to make off-campus study at least as attractive and easy to succeed in, as on-campus study, you will be ready to look at the 3 most important things to consider when choosing to study online.

Remember, if you find an online college that offers the same types of student services, teaching methods, support programs and individual care as the best of the physical colleges, studying online has some real advantages. As we discussed before... You can study where and when it suits you, you save time and money because you don't have to travel and you are not limited in what subject you can study by what is offered locally.

The 3 Most Important Things to Consider When Choosing To Study Online 'Course Outcomes, Investment and Passion'

COURSE OUTCOMES

Reflect for a moment on what you want to achieve through doing the course you are considering.

- Do you just want to learn something new as a hobby or for personal interest?
- Do you want to add a new skill to your professional tool box?
- Do you want to expand on your current business with a new modality or develop your career in a new direction?
- Do you want to start a whole new career in a field that you have no previous training or experience in?

It is important to know what you want the outcomes of your training course to be and to ensure the course you choose will deliver those outcomes for you. Many people don't consider what they will do once they have completed their course and can find themselves in a similar position to before they started. A little more knowledgeable, with another certificate but no real idea how to apply what they have learned.

Before you embark on any new study course with any training provider, make sure you know what you will be able to do with your new qualification, once you have it.

- Will you be looking for a job in a new field and competing with a whole lot of other new graduates?
- Will you be in the same job or career as you are now with additional qualifications but filling a similar role to what you are now?
- Or will you be in a position to start creating (or expanding) on your own business?

It is important to have a very clear picture of how the training provider you choose intends to assist you in applying your new qualifications. Many colleges part ways with their students once the student graduates. Look for a college that has a graduate program so you will have support, guidance and assistance in using your new qualification to achieve the outcomes you desire, after you have completed your training course.



You might also want to consider how flexible or versatile the course is.

- Will you only be able to work in one field or perform one specific role on completion?
- Or does the course offer multiple qualifications and flexible outcomes that will provide you with a wide variety of employment options?

INVESTMENT

There is an old saying that goes, 'if you think education is expensive, try ignorance'. It is true that we all have a much better potential to earn a good income when we are educated, skilled and qualified. However the cost of some training courses can be extreme and you would have to work in your new profession for a fairly long time, earning a very good income before you recoup your original course investment.

Compare course fees and examine what your course fees cover to make sure there are no hidden additional cost.

- Will you have to pay additional fees for any student services?
- Will you need to pay for books or other materials on top of your course fee?
- Will you need to buy any expensive software or programs in order to complete your course?
- Will you need to travel or participate in any face-to-face components that are not covered in your original course fee?
- Will you be charged an extra fee if your course takes you longer to complete than originally expected?

Does your course fee include any materials, resources or support programs to assist you after you graduate? Is a course fee payment plan available if you need it? It is also handy to find out what sort of income graduates from the same course typically make so you can decide if the course fee is viable in comparison with what you will expect to make for yourself after you graduate. You might also like to consider the study time frame and how long it will be before you can start making an income as a result of your new qualifications.

PASSION

I realize that in an e-book about how to choose the best training course for yourself, passion is not a subject title you might expect to see. But, passion is the most important things to consider in choosing to study online or on-campus.

Passion is defined in one dictionary as 'strong and barely controllable emotion'. If you are going to embark on a course of study, the best inspiration is surely passion. If you choose a topic to study that you are passionate about, which offers a career or life path that excites you, you are almost guaranteed to succeed!

When you are passionate about your subject, you want to read about it. You want to complete the exercise and assignments; you are naturally motivated, inspired and enthused!

If you are considering undertaking a course that will provide you with another skill or qualification in an area that seems smart, sensible or that could be financially beneficial but it doesn't make your heart sing, please think again. This life is not a dress rehearsal; this is the main event and I would strongly encourage you to live every moment doing something you love doing and that you feel passionate about. When people work in their passion they are infinitely more successful. This is



because our passions are aligned with our natural abilities and innate aptitude. We are naturally very good at the things we are passionate about.

If you want to change something in your life and you are considering a course of study as the vehicle for that change, and if you are wanting to breeze through your studies with high motivation and

great success, I highly recommend following your passion. If you are going to study to gain a new qualification to enhance or change your career, again I encourage you to follow your passion. If you do, you will wake up for work every morning feeling excited and eager to start your work. You will be mixing with people who are like you and share your passion and whose company you will enjoy and be enriched by. You will not only make a better income (because you will be doing something you are a natural at) you will actually be enjoying every moment of your life while you make that income instead of forfeiting a big part of your life, doing something you don't love, simply to finance the little bit that is left over.

When you are choosing a training provider to help you reach your goals and deliver you into your passion, make sure they are as passionate and inspired by the subject they are teaching, as you are.

5 INSIDER TIPS!

As you research to discover which college will best suit your needs, keep an eye out for these tell-tale signs.

- 1/ Does the language the training provider use on their web site sit well with you? You are going to have to read a lot of what they have written, so it's best if you like the way they communicate from the outset.
- 2/ Can you 'meet' (see photos and read about) the staff before you start, online? We all relate better to people when we have a visual and know a little bit about them. You will probably do a lot better in your studies if you feel you can connect with your teachers.
- 3/ How informative and easy to navigate is their web site? It may be an example of how informative and user friendly their course material might be.
- 4/ Can you telephone or email the teaching staff or Principal directly to make enquiries about the course? Or do you have to settle for a telemarketer trying to sell you the course?
- 5/ How long has the college been operating and what kind of experience do the people who wrote and deliver the course material have? This information should be readily available and make you feel confident about what you will be learning and from whom.

Whatever it is that inspired you to read this little e-book, I hope it has been useful to you and at the very least given you some points to consider in choosing the next path you will take on your journey.

No matter what subject you are considering studying or what training provider you choose, I wish you every success and in closing would like to share my favourite quote with you...

"The true measure of success is in how much joy you feel"



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