

Choosing an

ONLINE UNIVERSITY



WALDEN UNIVERSITY
A higher degree. A higher purpose.

 A MEMBER OF
THE LAUREATE
INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITIES NETWORK

Pursuing a degree requires dedication, self-discipline, and commitment. It's an important life decision that will affect your family, your career, and your ability to make significant contributions to your field and your community.

Online universities are empowering adult learners by delivering insights and teaching real-world skills that are applicable to daily responsibilities and critical to career advancement. Choosing the right online institution, and ensuring that your education will serve you for a lifetime, requires thoughtful consideration and answers to some very important questions.

Your selection of a university deserves careful thought and close scrutiny. Talk to representatives of each university you are considering to ensure that the program you choose offers academic rigor, comprehensive student services, and specializations that will help you make an impact in your personal and professional communities.

Our goal in providing this checklist is to offer a frame of reference from which you will be able to choose the online university that's right for you.

- Verify Regional Accreditation**
- Investigate the Program's Quality and Relevance**
- Consider the Costs**
- Determine the Quality of the Student Experience**
- Research the Faculty**
- Check the Technology Requirements**
- Ask About Admission Requirements**

U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT 2008 RANKINGS

Walden University offers some of the largest online graduate programs by enrollment according to *U.S. News & World Report*.



- #1 Education
- #1 Public Health
- #2 Nursing
- #4 Management (Business)
- #10 Engineering

DIVERSE: ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION 2007 RANKINGS

Walden University was ranked a top producer of graduate degrees for minorities in 2007.

Doctorate

- #2 Business – African American
- #3 Psychology – African American
- #5 Business – Total Minority

Master's

- #5 Education – Total Minority
- #6 Education – African American
- #6 Education – Native American
- #7 Education – Asian American
- #8 Education – Hispanic American

VERIFY REGIONAL ACCREDITATION



Growth of Online Education

- More than 60% of chief academic officers surveyed believe students learn as well or better from online courses as they do from classroom-based courses.*
- Nearly 3.2 million students were enrolled in online courses in the fall of 2005.*
- At current growth rates, 1 out of 10 college students will be enrolled in an online distance-education program by 2008.†

*Source: *Making the Grade: Online Education in the United States*, 2006, the Sloan Consortium, an association of institutions and organizations committed to quality online education

†Source: Eduventures, a leading information services company for the education market

WHY IS REGIONAL ACCREDITATION IMPORTANT?

Regional accreditation is crucial because it communicates to the public that an institution has met accepted standards. It is a way of assuring prospective students that the courses and programs offered at the institution are of high quality and value. When evaluating credentials, employers and universities often look for applicants who earned their degree from an accredited university.

The U.S. Department of Education recognizes universities that are accredited by one of the six regional accrediting bodies:

- The Higher Learning Commission, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools: www.ncahlc.org
- Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools: www.msache.org
- Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, New England Association of Schools and Colleges: www.neasc.org
- Northwest Association of Accredited Schools: www.boisestate.edu/naas
- Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools: www.sacs.org
- Senior College Commission, Western Association of Schools and Colleges: www.wascweb.org

Students who attend regionally accredited universities are usually eligible for federal student loans, and their course credits generally transfer between regionally accredited institutions.

Since 1990, **Walden University** has been accredited by The Higher Learning Commission and has been a member of the North Central Association. For more information about regional accreditation, contact the NCA at 1-312-263-0456, www.ncahlc.org, or 30 N. LaSalle St., Suite 2400, Chicago, IL 60602-2504.

INVESTIGATE THE PROGRAM'S QUALITY AND RELEVANCE

HOW DO I DETERMINE IF A PROGRAM IS RELEVANT TO MY PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL INTERESTS?

Review the curriculum and course descriptions on university Web sites and in course catalogs. To better ascertain if a program is suited to your goals, ask about the faculty's industry experience and the focus of their scholarly work. How students apply what they learn to their fields of expertise and extend the benefits of their education to their communities are also strong indicators of the relevance of the program. Ask about the employers, organizations, and professional associations that partner with or support the university. Talk to a representative of the university and explain your educational goals. Whether your goal is to advance your career, change careers, make a contribution to society, or become more of an expert in your field, be sure that the program you choose meets your needs.

Walden University offers more than 60 specializations and concentrations in more than 20 degree programs. Several programs are unique in the distance-learning environment, and all of them empower a diverse community of students with knowledge they can use to advance their careers, become change agents in their chosen fields, and stand out as leaders.

Faculty members at Walden are recognized in their fields as well as for their contributions to scholarship, research, and service. Walden faculty members are experts in creating and delivering degree programs that produce graduates whose abilities and skills are in high demand by employers worldwide.

Leading corporations and organizations support their employees' decision to pursue degrees at Walden. Walden also works with several professional associations to reflect their standards in the curriculum and offer transfer credit for their professional certifications and coursework.

DOES THE UNIVERSITY HAVE A COMMITMENT TO PROVIDING DISTANCE-LEARNING PROGRAMS TO ADULT LEARNERS?

Make sure the university knows how to deliver and support online courses. Online education offers distinct advantages in creating collaborative learning environments and engaging classroom experiences, especially for adult learners with years of experience in their fields.

Walden University, founded in 1970, originally focused solely on providing doctoral programs to adult learners at a distance. Today, Walden has expert faculty delivering relevant doctoral, master's, and bachelor's degree programs that are designed with 38 years of distance-education experience as a foundation. Faculty guide the classroom experience to ensure all learning objectives are achieved. Adult learners' needs are at the center of Walden's challenging curricula, collaborative learning environment, and student support services. This focus enables students to gain knowledge and understanding from a wide variety of geographic, cultural, and professional perspectives.

INVESTIGATE THE PROGRAM'S QUALITY AND RELEVANCE



Walden Community Resources

Visit www.WaldenU.edu/alumni to learn more about our graduates and to see how they are using their knowledge and dedication to effect positive social change to advance the greater good. You can also get connected to the Walden community by reading or subscribing to our monthly e-newsletter, the *Walden Ponder*, at www.WaldenU.edu/ponder.

HOW ARE THE UNIVERSITY'S ALUMNI CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR FIELDS?

Alumni are a reflection of the quality of a university and its programs. Ask for examples of how alumni are using the knowledge they gained at the university to make contributions to their personal and professional communities.

Walden University's alumni have been contributing to their fields and to positive social and professional change for more than 35 years. As ambassadors of the quality education offered by Walden, they serve as recognized experts, university faculty members and administrators, corporate executives, government officials, private counselors, dedicated teachers, and industry consultants in organizations large and small around the world. For more information about Walden alumni, read selected professional accomplishments at www.WaldenU.edu/alumni. You can also read Walden's award-winning alumni magazine at www.WaldenU.edu/magazine.

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY?

A university's mission guides the institution in developing programs, choosing faculty, and supporting students. The mission statement should be evident in everything the university does and should reflect your values.

Walden University's mission is to provide a diverse community of career professionals with the opportunity to transform themselves as scholar-practitioners so that they may transform society. Three values—quality, integrity, and student-centeredness—are at the core of the university. These values lead Walden to uncompromising standards of honesty and openness, high standards of excellence, and primary attention to the scholarly and professional development of its students.

CONSIDER THE COSTS

WHAT IS THE COST OF TUITION AND FEES, AND WHAT OTHER EXPENSES ARE THERE?

Although tuition and fees at online universities are often more expensive than their campus-based counterparts, online universities offer personalized support and a convenient and flexible format that is geared toward the adult learner. If a university's tuition and fees are significantly less expensive, make sure that the university is regionally accredited. You should also budget for course materials and graduation. If you are a Ph.D. student, include the cost of attending out-of-town residencies.

Walden University's tuition and fees are comparable to those at other online regionally accredited universities. They vary by program and are listed at www.WaldenU.edu/tuition.

CAN I TRANSFER CREDITS?

You should be able to transfer credits from one regionally accredited university to another. Most universities accept transfer credit for courses taken within the last 10 years. One test of a quality university is that transferred courses should be equivalent with those in your new program.

Walden University continually updates its courses so that course content is current and relevant. Each program has its own transfer of credit maximums to ensure that students get the credit—and education—they deserve.

WHAT FINANCIAL AID OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

Regionally accredited universities generally offer federal student loans, group reductions, and payment options. Some offer fellowships for service and research.

At Walden University, you'll find a full range of financial aid, including federal subsidized and unsubsidized student loans, payment plans, spousal and group tuition reductions,* and graduate fellowships. Doctoral and master's fellowships are awarded to selected students who demonstrate that they are pursuing a degree to enhance their personal development and to contribute to the advancement of their profession. Walden also offers scholarships. For more information, visit www.WaldenU.edu/scholarships.

*Not valid for Tennessee residents. Only one tuition-reduction benefit may be applied to tuition and fees.

DETERMINE THE QUALITY OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE



“Being student-centered is a core value at Walden. Everyone here—from the deans and faculty chairs, to faculty members and our extensive student-support staff—is passionate about ensuring your success.”

Chue Vang
Academic Advisor

WHAT DO STUDENTS EXPERIENCE IN THE ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT?

Most online universities use an e-learning platform such as eCollege, Blackboard, or WebCT. Assignments are posted online, and discussions take place as threaded postings. Most online courses require students to log in and contribute to discussions a specified number of times each week. Many courses are asynchronous, meaning you can log in at any time, from anywhere—as long as you follow the weekly course requirements.

At **Walden University**, courses are designed to support student success and involve engaging discussions, rigorous coursework, and supportive relationships with other students and with faculty.

Courses have specific weekly login requirements. Ph.D. students work closely with a faculty mentor to apply general theoretical foundations to areas of professional interest. Many Walden programs provide students with a Personal Start Page that offers central access to courses, student information, and support services.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Challenges at home or work can affect your learning experience. That's why Walden provides students, and everyone in their households, access to free and confidential support, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can use online resources or call anytime for counseling from experienced clinicians about everything from child care and elder care, to legal and financial concerns, to stress, grief, and major life changes.

HOW WILL THE UNIVERSITY SUPPORT ME THROUGHOUT MY PROGRAM?

Although learning online requires a student to be self-directed, it should not be an isolated experience. The university should be committed to delivering services that allow you to focus on your program. You should expect quality academic advising, technical support, administrative assistance, and access to faculty. The level of service and support you receive from your enrollment advisor prior to applying is often an indicator of the university's commitment to students throughout the program.

Walden University is a student-centered institution. Enrollment advisors help guide prospective students through the decision-making and application process. Student Support Team members help familiarize new students with the online learning environment, guide new students through a user-friendly software orientation, provide technical and administrative assistance in courses, and help ensure that students stay on track throughout each course. Academic advisors monitor students' progress throughout the program and assist with course scheduling, policies, and procedures. Faculty members mentor students and help them apply their professional and personal interests to assignments. Students collaborate on assignments, readings, and discussions through online chats, emails, and phone calls, and often network with each other for support and encouragement.

DETERMINE THE QUALITY OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF INTERACTION AMONG STUDENTS AND FACULTY?

In a quality online learning environment, you'll benefit from students who share your dedication to lifelong learning and professional achievement. The most effective courses, especially among adult learners with years of professional experience, are those in which students gain the insights and perspectives of everyone in the class. Login requirements ensure that every student participates over a specified period of time. Faculty members are often also required to respond to questions within a specified period of time.

As a leader in distance learning, **Walden University** has mastered the use of technology to create learning communities. Students form bonds with their professors and classmates across the country and around the world as they exchange ideas via email, phone, and faculty-guided discussions. Doctoral students attend residencies to participate in seminars and colloquia and to meet directly with students, faculty, and staff. In online courses, Walden faculty members typically respond to questions within 24 hours.

WHAT RESEARCH RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP ME COMPLETE MY COURSEWORK?

At the very least, you'll need access to a research library.

Walden University partners with a national library system to provide personalized access to its library resources. Librarians are available to help students identify, evaluate, and obtain resources. For graduate students, Walden has a **Writing Center** that includes online writing labs and tips for formatting scholarly work. For undergraduate students, tutoring in writing, math, science, and other topics is available. For those programs that require internships, Walden offers support for proper placement.

WHAT IS A REALISTIC TIME COMMITMENT?

Online learning is neither fast nor easy. In a quality program, you will spend a significant amount of time reading, working on assignments, taking part in discussions, and conducting research projects. Without a serious time investment, you won't be successful.

At **Walden University**, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral students report that they spend 15 to 20 hours per week on each course they take. Academic advisors encourage students to schedule blocks of time dedicated to sustained critical thinking, reflection, and scholarly work.

Before students begin a program, enrollment advisors encourage them to discuss their commitment to their academic goals with the important people in their lives.

RESEARCH THE FACULTY



“Faculty help to instill and reinforce social change by making courses relevant to students. Our course content is almost always tied to the real world, with assignments that encourage students to think creatively, critically, and caringly.”

Marcia Moody
Director, Center for Teaching and Learning

WHAT DISTINGUISHES THE FACULTY?

Online universities employ a mix of full-time faculty and adjuncts. Many are professors at other universities or are practitioners within their fields. It’s important to know the academic and professional backgrounds of faculty as well as their research interests. Ask about the training they received to teach in the online environment.

At **Walden University**, the faculty is composed of highly esteemed scholars, researchers, and distinguished professionals from broad geographical, experiential, and cultural backgrounds. Faculty members are deans and tenured faculty at other universities as well as corporate executives, educators, clinicians, and military leaders. Most faculty have Ph.D.s or a terminal degree; all are credible experts with vast experience and a profound commitment to adult learners. Faculty are required to complete intensive training in online instruction.

WHAT ROLES DO FACULTY MEMBERS PLAY IN THE UNIVERSITY AND THEIR COMMUNITIES?

As you inquire about your program of study, learn as much as you can about the background of the faculty and their professional activities. Find out if their professional endeavors extend beyond the online classroom and into the community.

In addition to designing curricula, teaching courses, and mentoring students, **Walden University** faculty, like the university’s alumni and students, are dedicated to improving the human condition by creating and applying ideas, strategies, and actions to promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and societies. Faculty members engage in a variety of community service projects—from being an advocate for people with hearing loss and disabilities, to creating counseling programs for schoolchildren devastated by Hurricane Katrina and by tsunamis in Sri Lanka.

CHECK THE TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS



To ensure your success in a Walden program, you should be proficient using email, the Internet, and common desktop productivity software. General minimum technology requirements include

- Windows ME/2000/XP/Vista or Mac OS X
- 512MB of RAM minimum (128MB for Windows ME/2000)
- 2GB hard drive
- CD/DVD drive installed or connected to your computer
- Microsoft Office
- Adobe Acrobat Reader (version 8 or higher)
- Adobe Flash Player (version 9 or higher)
- Apple QuickTime (version 7 or higher)
- Windows Media Player (version 7 or higher)
- Antivirus software (e.g., McAfee or Norton)*
- Internet access
- Web browser (Internet Explorer 6.0 or higher or Firefox 1.5 or higher)
- Inkjet or laser printer

*User must have a current version of antivirus software installed and running, and must keep its version current by promptly installing the upgrades, patches, etc., made available by the software manufacturer.

WHAT COMPUTER EQUIPMENT WILL I NEED?

Online universities typically require the basic computer equipment found in most workplaces and home offices.

At **Walden University**, you'll need a computer running at least Windows ME or Macintosh OS X, a CD/DVD drive, word processing software, email, a Web browser, virus protection software, and a reliable Internet service provider that offers technical support specific to the service it provides.

Doctoral students and students in the M.S. in Mental Health Counseling program are encouraged to use a laptop computer for their work because of their required attendance at academic residencies.

IS TECHNICAL SUPPORT RELIABLE AND AVAILABLE?

Online universities should have expert technical support representatives who respond quickly and knowledgeably 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Walden University's Student Support Team provides assistance via phone, email, and live chat during regular business hours. Technical support is available 24/7. Newly admitted students are introduced to the Student Support Team by their enrollment advisor. Experts in the virtual classroom, they guide students through the online learning experience. They assist new students with a student-readiness orientation, which explains how the virtual classroom works and how to be a successful online student. After students are comfortable in the online learning environment, the Student Support Team will proactively check in with students to ensure a smooth and trouble-free experience.

ASK ABOUT ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

WHAT ARE THE ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS? CAN ANYONE BE ADMITTED?

Admission should be based on more than your ability to pay. Most accredited universities post admission standards on their Web sites. These standards are indicative of the quality of students you will be collaborating with in the online learning environment.

Walden University's admission decisions are based on a careful review of a student's academic background and professional experience. Applicants must complete a goal statement, which Walden uses to assess their academic and professional preparation for the program, their capacity for self-directed work, and their long-range professional and personal goals. Walden selects diverse learners who will contribute to the depth of online discussions as well as to their personal and professional communities.

Walden does not require standardized tests such as the GRE or GMAT for graduate students, but there are minimum grade point average requirements. Many of Walden's graduate programs require two to three years of professional experience.

For more information, call a Walden University enrollment advisor at 1-866-492-5336 or visit www.WaldenU.edu.

WALDEN UNIVERSITY FACTS

Founded: 1970

Number of Degree Programs Offered: 20+

Number of Students: 28,073*

Number of Alumni: 25,000+

States Represented: 50

Countries Represented: 70

Academic Offices: Minneapolis, Minn.

Administrative Offices: Baltimore, Md.

Accreditation: Walden University is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission and a member of the North Central Association, www.ncahlc.org; 1-312-263-0456.

Mission: Walden University provides a diverse community of career professionals with the opportunity to transform themselves as scholar-practitioners so that they may transform society.

*As of June 2007

www.WALDENU.EDU

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