

Distance Learning for Working Professionals

How Acceptable is Distance Learning?

Who is this article for?

If you are considering starting a distance learning course, the information here will be helpful make that final decision to step into the world of distance learning.

If you are already studying by distance learning, this information will reassure you and give you added confidence that you have made the right decision.

If you have recently completed a distance course, then you too will be reassured, and you can move forward feeling positive about your achievement.

If you are an employer considering how best to further train and develop your key people, this information is valuable to you too.

Because distance learning is a valid, appropriate, internationally recognised, relatively low cost, convenient, effective, and enjoyable way for a working professional to study for and obtain new qualifications, and learn new tools and techniques.

Continuous Professional Development CPD

All professional sectors now demand that their internal managers and specialists, and their external consultants and advisors, are appropriately experienced and hold up to date qualifications.

This is the world of continuous professional development.

No-one is excused. No-one can escape.

If you are a manager, expert, specialist, working for an organisation, public, private, charity, ngo, family owned, small or large, this is expected of you.

If you are an entrepreneur, consultant, independent, freelance, you are expected to be able to demonstrate that you are keeping up to date, that you are continuously developing your background knowledge and your specialist skills.

Growth Internationally

Nor is the explosion of distance learning as an alternative, and often a first choice, method of learning, a surprise event of 2006.

For many years now the growth in this area has been exponential.

This Unesco report, from 2002, highlighted the role that distance learning was playing, and not only in the developing countries, but in the highly developed too.

Unesco 2002

“... as a force contributing to social and economic development, open and distance learning is fast becoming an accepted and indispensable part of the mainstream of educational systems in both developed and developing countries....”

....more and more traditional universities are rapidly transforming themselves from single mode to dual mode universities, recognizing the importance of distance education in providing students with the best and most up-to-date educational resources available”

In the USA, distance and open learning is now well established, not only for working, mature, students, but interestingly, for school students also.

In 2003 it was estimated that “...more than 30% of schools are offering courses over the internet ... and through video conferencing ..”

US Education Department analysts predict a doubling of this within 5 years, to over 60% of US schools offering courses by distance learning.

In Africa, across the continent, distance learning is rapidly overtaking classroom study, with predictions that by the year 2010 there will be over 10 million working professionals studying by distance learning.

In 2004, students enrolled on distance learning courses with the Indira Gandhi Open University, in India, totaled over 400,000.

in China, where the government is now liberalising educational pathways for mature workers, forecasts for the take up of distance courses predict that at least 1,000,000 working students will be studying by distance learning by 2012.

Acceptance Internationally

In addition to the evidence provided by the exponential, massive growth that is happening and is forecast to continue, employers around the world are accepting distance learning qualifications as equally credible with classroom ones.

In most of the professions, such as accountancy, engineering, teaching, distance learning is already firmly established.

In disciplines such as project management, quality management, supply chain management, marketing, distance learning is growing rapidly as a highly credible alternative to classroom delivery.

In fact, for professionals in project management, consultancy, quality management, and accountancy, study by distance learning now dominates and is the preferred choice of most professionals.

Examples of how well established the acceptance of employers has become is provided by the global giants, such as Microsoft, Dell, British Airways, General Motors, Reliance, HSBC, and Nissan, all of whom readily recruit those with distance learning qualifications.

In Education, most leading universities, on all continents, are now offering courses delivery by classroom and by distance learning.

Respected universities and business schools here in the UK, such as Manchester Business School, Warwick Business School, and the London School of Economics LSE, are all established players in this field.

And in turn, colleges, universities, business schools, in the private and public sectors, are all accepting distance learning qualifications as satisfying entry requirements for students to move on to higher levels of study (which can often be by distance learning!).

How acceptable is distance learning?

Totally acceptable.

For younger, working, developing managers, specialists, a carefully selected distance learning course is totally appropriate, and totally credible.

For older, working, mature, more experienced professionals, a distance learning course and-or qualification, is highly appropriate, often the only option, but totally acceptable.

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