

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 Credentials and Reputation**
- 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 RANKINGS

2006 largest online graduate-level programs by enrollment



- #1 Education
- #3 Public Health
- #4 Business
- #5 Engineering

VERIFY CREDENTIALS AND REPUTATION



“Walden University provides its students with a cross-disciplinary set of skills and the critical thinking needed to lead their organizations and help address the ethical, social, and economic issues facing our communities today.”

Marion Angelica, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Public Policy and Administration

WHY IS ACCREDITATION IMPORTANT?

Accreditation is a voluntary process an institution enters into to ensure that it meets certain standards. Accreditation signifies that the courses and programs offered at the institution are of high quality and value. Accreditation also allows for that institution's students to have greater ease in transferring credit. When evaluating credentials, employers often look for job applicants who earned their degree from an accredited university.

Accreditation is performed by a recognized organization that has the sole purpose of accrediting institutions or programs. Although these organizations are not government agencies, they are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. An accrediting agency examines the university's academic programs, financial condition, governance and administration, admissions and student personnel services, resources, student academic achievement, and organizational effectiveness. Once an institution becomes accredited, it must maintain that status through an ongoing review process, which includes periodic reports to, and on-site visits by, the accrediting agency.

When you earn a degree from **Walden University**, you will gain the respected credentials of a U.S. degree from an accredited university. Since 1990, Walden University has been accredited by The Higher Learning Commission and has been a member of the North Central Association. The North Central Association is one of the six officially recognized regional bodies in the United States authorized to accredit colleges and universities. Walden University is listed in the U.S. Department of Education's comprehensive database of accredited postsecondary educational institutions. The database is searchable by institution name, accrediting body, and geographic region. For more information, visit www.ncahlc.org or call 312.263.0456.

The degree programs offered by Walden University are not authorized by the higher education authorities outside of the United States.

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 over 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 GRADUATE 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, focused solely on providing doctoral programs to adult learners at a distance. Today, Walden has an expert faculty delivering relevant doctoral, master's, and bachelor's degree programs that are designed with 37 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 alumni and 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 30 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.

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?

Although tuition and fees at online universities are often more expensive than their campus-based counterparts, online universities offer the added benefit of convenience. As an adult learner, you know how valuable your time is. If you are attending a traditional campus-based university, you need to modify your schedule around your classes and take the time to commute to class, park, and visit the campus library. If you choose an online university, you attend class just by logging on to your home or work computer. Plus, online universities often offer personalized support that is geared for the adult learner.

Walden University's tuition and fees are comparable to those at other online U.S.-based accredited universities. They vary by program and are listed online at www.WaldenU.edu/tuition. Walden partners with Sallie Mae TuitionPay to provide students with an alternative to paying full tuition at the beginning of each term. Through the Sallie Mae TuitionPay's monthly payment plan, you may spread the cost of your tuition over multiple months—interest-free. The Sallie Mae TuitionPay plan is not a loan, and there is an enrollment fee.

Keep in mind, you should also budget for course materials and graduation. If you are a doctoral student or student in the M.S. in Mental Health Counseling program, you need to include the cost of attending out-of-town residencies.

Walden's enrollment advisors and financial counselors will work with you to determine the best and most cost-effective payment options to fit your budget. Our commitment to excellent service means we'll take care of the details so you can focus on your studies. From your very first inquiry, you will have the dedicated resources you need to make important decisions and succeed as a student.

WHAT PAYMENT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

Inquire to see if the university you are interested in offers monthly payment options or other means to fund your education, such as fellowships for service and research.

Walden University partners with Sallie Mae TuitionPay to provide students with an alternative to paying full tuition at the beginning of each term. Through TuitionPay's monthly payment plan, you may spread the cost of your tuition over multiple months—interest-free. Also, 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.

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 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.

HOW WILL THE UNIVERSITY SUPPORT ME THROUGHOUT MY PROGRAM?

Although online learning 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. Walden provides student support through online concierges who 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 through 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 chats, email, and phone, 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. A writing center, mentors to guide you through your research, and placement assistance for required internships are also very helpful in an online environment.

Walden University partners with Indiana University Bloomington to provide personalized access to its library resources. Faculty mentors and librarians are available to help students identify, evaluate, and obtain resources. Walden has a Writing Center that includes online writing labs and tips for formatting scholarly work. For those programs that require internships, Walden offers full 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 install 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
Vice Provost for Faculty Development

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. Walden faculty members take part in a number of scholarly and university activities, including Walden's annual Conference on Social Change and its semiannual online refereed *Journal of Social Change*. Faculty members also 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 success in a Walden program, you should be proficient using email, the Internet, and common software such as word-processing programs. General technology requirements include

- Windows ME/2000/XP or Mac OS X
- 128MB of RAM
- 2GB hard drive
- DVD drive
- Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat Reader, and antivirus software
- Internet service provider
- Web browser (Internet Explorer 6.0, Netscape 8.1, or Firefox 1.5)
- Email

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, with 128MB of RAM and 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 they provide.

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 Online Concierge Team provides student support via phone, email, and live chat during regular business hours. Technical support is available 24/7. Newly admitted students are introduced to their online concierge by their enrollment advisor. Online concierges are assigned to every new student. Experts in the virtual classroom, they guide students through the online learning experience. They assist new students with a student-readiness orientation that explains how the virtual classroom works and how to be a successful online student. After students are comfortable in the online learning environment, the concierge 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 U.S.-based 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, but there are minimum grade point average requirements. Many of Walden's programs require two to three years of professional experience and some require professional references.

If you are applying from a country outside the U.S., you need the equivalent of an associate's degree (for bachelor's programs), bachelor's degree (for master's programs), or master's degree (for doctoral programs) from an institution accredited by your country's higher education authority. You may need a transcript evaluation from the Educational Credential Evaluators. International applications are due at least 8 weeks before the U.S. application deadline so be sure to plan accordingly.

International students should note that English is the language of instruction. Depending on where you earned your previous degree(s), you may need to submit test scores showing your level of English proficiency. Also, note that Walden is not authorized to grant student visas for study in the United States.

WALDEN UNIVERSITY FACTS

Founded: 1970

Number of Degree Programs Offered: 20+

Number of Students: 26,820*

States Represented: 50

Countries Represented: 47

Academic Offices: Minneapolis, MN

Administrative Offices: Baltimore, MD

Accreditation: Walden University is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission, one of six regional accrediting bodies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, and is a member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools of the United States of America, www.ncahlc.org; 312.263.0456.

The degree programs offered by Walden University are not authorized by the higher education authorities outside of the United States.

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.

Language of Instruction: English

*As of April 2007

[WWW.WALDENU.EDU](http://www.WALDENU.EDU)

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Academic Offices
155 Fifth Avenue South, Suite 100
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Administrative Offices
650 S. Exeter Street
Baltimore, MD 21202