

News Releases

Five Questions to Ask Before Choosing an Online University

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Tips from Western Governors University

SALT LAKE CITY — With the approach of the new year, you may be one of the many adults looking to improve your life through education. Choosing the right school, one that provides a respected, affordable, and flexible education, is an important step in your path to get ahead. To help make this decision a bit easier, [Western Governors University](#) (WGU), one of the nation's largest nonprofit online universities, has a list of five questions to ask to ensure that you choose the right university for your needs.

1. ***Is the university regionally accredited?*** Regional accreditation is the highest form of accreditation. The [U.S. Department of Education](#) publishes a list of regional accrediting agencies that are recognized as reliable authorities on the quality of education or training offered by institutions of higher learning. Accreditation ensures that employers and other academic institutions will respect and recognize your degree.

2. ***How much will it cost?*** Tuition at online universities varies widely, from approximately the same cost as a public university to more than twice as much. Be sure to understand all of the costs—tuition, books, and fees—before you make your decision, along with the possibility of receiving financial aid. If you are approved and decide to receive financial aid, make sure you only borrow what you need to graduate; this will help steer you away from incurring [unnecessary additional student debt](#). Another factor in your cost consideration should be the length of time you expect to take to complete your degree—the longer it takes, the more it is likely to cost.

3. ***How will you learn?*** Some aspects of your student experience at an online university will be similar to what you would expect in a more traditional environment. You will study, write papers, complete projects, and take tests. Other aspects, such as when and where you study and how you interact with faculty and other students, are quite different. You may want to consider a competency-based program, which will allow you to study and learn on your own schedule and advance as soon as you demonstrate mastery of the subject matter.

4. ***What kind of help and support will you get?*** Online should not mean alone. Support from faculty and administration is key to your success as a student. Be sure that the university you choose provides a high level of faculty support and opportunities to interact with other students.

5. ***Will your degree prepare you for career advancement or graduate work?*** Make sure that the degree program you choose offers relevant and up-to-date curriculum to ensure that, when you graduate, you will have the real-world skills employers need. Ask for information about alumni placements, employer surveys, and graduate rankings on national test scores.

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