

# A Pathway to Post-Secondary Online Instructing

## Resources for the Job Search

### Ashford University's Career and Alumni Services



#### What credentials do I need?

##### Education & Experience Needed

While credential and experience requirements vary from one academic institution to another, applicants typically need a minimum of a Master's degree with at least 18 hours of core concentration within the discipline that the applicant intends to teach. Teaching at the graduate level typically requires a Doctorate in the area of expertise. Some teaching positions may also require an occupational certification (e.g. to teach nursing, a valid nursing license will likely be required) as well as degrees from a regionally accredited institution.

A common pathway to teaching online is to begin as an "adjunct instructor" on a part-time probationary basis. With time, and depending on your degree and experience, a promotion to adjunct or full-time "assistant professor" or "professor" may be possible. Since many people are attracted to the flexibility of working from home, competition for online teaching contracts can be significant. Gaining teaching experience in traditional classroom settings first may improve your candidacy considerably.

##### Competencies

###### Professional:

- Ability to navigate learning management systems
- High level of technological ability
- Knowledge and expertise in the area of facilitation
- Evidence of written scholarship
- Ability to foster critical thinking
- Ability to set clear instructions, expectations, and deadlines
- Ability to provide thorough and meaningful instructive feedback to students
- Ability to be highly organized

###### Interpersonal:

- Critical thinking (problem solving) skills
- Communication (writing and speaking) skills
- Ability to collect, organize, analyze, and interpret data
- An understanding of human behavior
- An understanding of social/organizational issues
- Creative thinking

###### Intrapersonal:

- Be a good role model for students by demonstrating proper communication
- Be a mentor for students in the classroom
- Recognize and encourage at-risk students
- Identify and handle behavioral issues
- Inspire students to think creatively and reach goals

##### Advice

For students looking to enter this industry, it is recommended that you:

- 1) Complete your Bachelor's and Master's (or Doctorate) degrees in the field in which you wish to teach
- 2) Do academic research on your own or participate in a published research project
- 3) Get experience publishing scholarly papers in your field of expertise
- 4) Join professional associations to network with industry experts

- 5) Attend and present at professional seminars and conferences in your field of expertise
- 6) Network with instructors and higher education professionals
- 7) Conduct an informational interview with an online instructor
- 8) Learn as much as you can about online facilitation and adult learning theory
- 9) Familiarize yourself with a variety of learning management systems
- 10) Subscribe to higher education news platforms, blogs, and career boards to stay abreast of industry trends
- 11) Consider your personal financial situation and whether you are able and willing to work as an adjunct instructor

#### What does an entry level instructor job look like?

##### Adjunct Instructors

In recent years it has become more common for universities and colleges to hire part time instructors who are not on the full time tenure track. Adjuncts are exempt from many of the additional administrative, committee, and research responsibilities of tenure-track professors, and their primary responsibility is teaching introductory general education courses.

##### What do I need to know about being an adjunct instructor?

- Adjuncts are usually hired on a part time, non-permanent basis, and are not eligible for benefits
- Most adjunct contracts are offered on a contingent basis (low student enrollment may cause a class to be cancelled and an instructor will not receive a wage for that course, even if preparatory work has already been undertaken)
- Online adjuncts must provide their own internet and will not receive physical office space or office supplies from the university
- Pay is lower for adjuncts than for tenure-track professors
- Pay typically increases with experience and the number of credit hours taught
- Pay is usually greater for those with a Doctorate than for those with a Master's
- Adjuncts may need additional sources of income
- Many universities and colleges prefer to hire online instructors that have demonstrated their teaching proficiencies in traditional classroom settings first

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#### What resources are available?

##### Self-branding, networking, and advice:

**Vitae** is an online community for professorate and administrative higher educational professionals. Create a professional dossier, showcase your work, and read the blog to benefit from honest industry advice from peers.  
<https://chroniclevitae.com/>

##### Niche Job Boards:

**Adjunct Nation** advertises full- and part-time faculty positions and allows you to post your resume or curriculum vitae.  
<http://www.adjunctnation.com/>

**Vitae Jobs** advertises teaching, research, and administrative positions inside and outside academia.  
[https://chroniclevitae.com/job\\_search/new](https://chroniclevitae.com/job_search/new)

**Higher Ed Jobs** allows you to set useful search criteria. Set up job alerts for community college, university, online, and adjunct positions.  
<https://www.higheredjobs.com/>

##### Industry News:

**The Chronicle of Higher Education** is a popular source of news and information for faculty and university administrators.  
<http://www.chronicle.com/>

##### Professional Associations:

**United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA)** is a non-profit established to support distance learning research, development, and praxis.  
<http://www.usdla.org/>

**Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT)** is an association directed toward improving instruction through technology.  
<http://www.aect.org/newsite/>

**Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC)** is an institutional accreditor of distance education institutions.  
<http://www.detc.org/>

*This resource was created by Dr. Mari Schuldt, PhD, a Career Services Specialist for Ashford University and University of the Rockies. She has worked as an online Adjunct Instructor and Assistant Adjunct Professor for six years.*