

Jane Ricard Research Exercise (15 points)

Identify a specific graduate degree program in instructional technology, distance education, or both, that is offered *entirely or primarily via distance education*. Identify just one program at one university. Answer the following questions:

Part I: The institution and its programs (1 point each)

1. List the name, address, and URL of the institution.

George Washington University
Graduate School of Education and Human Development
Educational Technology Leadership Program
2134 G Street N.W., Washington D.C. 20052

<http://www.gwu.edu/~etl/applicants/index.htm>

2. What degrees and majors are offered in the program? For instance, NSU offers an Ed.D. in Instructional Technology and Distance Education. Florida State University offers an M.S. in instructional systems design.

MA in Educational Technology Leadership
(<http://www.gwu.edu/~etl/applicants/degree.htm>).

3. For how long has the institution been offering the identified program at a distance?
This program has operated since 1988. (<http://www.gwu.edu/~etl/applicants/usnews.htm>).
4. What course delivery technologies are used? (Be specific: general terms such as “Web-based” are insufficient.)
Blackboard is the CMS that is used. Lectures are online once a week, although most often they are available in print format. Some professors choose to provide streaming audio or video files, but all classes are asynchronous. Weekly discussions and reactions are expected following access to the lecture. (D. Koffenberger, personal communication, September 22, 2009).
5. Is there a face-to-face component of instruction? If so, where is it conducted, and for what duration?
No. (D. Koffenberger, personal communication, September 22, 2009).
6. How long does it take to earn a degree in the identified program? (Indicate either the briefest amount of time required or, preferably, the amount of time most students require.)
Least amount of time is 1.5 years if taking 2 classes per semester. Total of 36 credits with 3 credits per course. (D. Koffenberger, personal communication, September 22, 2009).
7. Is the institution accredited? If so, by what organization?
Yes, by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
(<http://www.gwu.edu/~etl/applicants/accreditation.htm>).
8. Is the institution public or private? If private, is it for-profit or not-for-profit?
According to the George Washington University public relations office, it is a private and non-profit organization.

9. What is the total enrollment of the institution? How many students are enrolled in the identified distance-delivered program?

The total enrollment is 25,000. (<http://www.gwu.edu/explore/aboutgw/facts>).

In the MA distance program, there are 89 students. (D. Koffenberger, personal communication, September 22, 2009).

9. What is the tuition (per course or per year)?

\$1293 per 3 credit course (<http://www.gwu.edu/~etl/applicants/tuition.htm>).

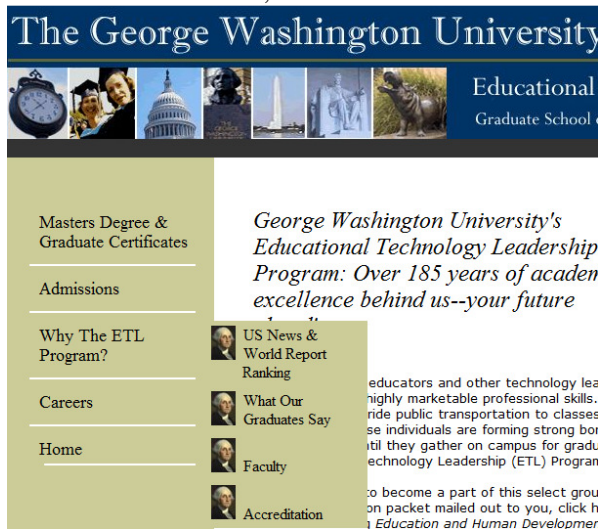
Be sure to cite your source for each answer.

Part II: The institution's Web site (1 point each)

Critique the institution's (or program's) Web site, answering the following questions:

A. How would you rate the visual appeal of the site? What elements are visually appealing, and which aspects are less so?

The web site is very attractive, clear, and well-organized. It seems uncluttered with extraneous information. There are 5 links on the left side of the page with 3 or 4 sub-selections as you scroll over the link. This column of links is grey and about 2.5 inches wide clearly separating it from the main page. Background color of the main text is white, while accent colors are Navy blue. The main font is sans-serif, while titles and links on the left are in Times New Roman.



You can reach any link from all pages on the site. There are links to all course descriptions directly on the degree program page. Other information is easy to find due to the well-designed links on the left. The font is large for clarity, and each sub-link has an image of George Washington for visual appeal. There is information about the program, tuition, how to apply, requirements, recorded comments from graduates about their online program strengths, US News and World Report ranking, accreditation, faculty members. Other links provide information about careers that the program prepares one for with other links to salaries that can be expected with those careers and job search sites for those careers.

B. Is the site easily navigable and well-organized? Provide examples.

As noted above, the web site is extremely easy to navigate, perhaps one of the best I have ever seen.

- C. Does the site contain sufficient information to answer questions 1-10 (above)? If not, provide details.
No, I had to call for information about how course material is delivered online. This was probably the worst omission on the website. There was no answer about how long it usually takes to finish the degree or how many hours one can expect to spend on course work per week. The fact that there was no face-to-face meeting amongst students and faculty was only available by inference from a mention of meeting classmates at graduation. I also had to call the University public relations office to get an official answer that the school is private and non-profit.
- D. What is the most positive aspect of the Web site?
As noted above, this website is one of the easiest websites that I have ever navigated. It was extremely easy to find all of the information that was posted. If they had added 1 more page about how course content is delivered online, it would be almost perfect.
- E. What aspect of the site is most in need of improvement?
I would like to see more information about how classes are actually delivered, and what the experience is like for a new student. I don't believe that I have seen that on any of the distance learning web sites that I looked at. It would be nice to see an example of class discussions so that a new student could have a better idea of what a class would require for work. Likewise, seeing a recorded Elluminate session would be a terrific tool to help students know more about the online learning experience.

References

The George Washington University. (n.d.). Educational technology leadership program.
Retrieved September 22, 2009, from The George Washington University:
<http://www.gwu.edu/~etl/applicants/index.htm>

Submit completed paper to the instructor via email. Please use a descriptive title in your email's title line, such as your name plus "research exercise."