

Correspondence Training: Defining Student and Instructor Expectations is Key for Success

Independent study programs, such as online courses and correspondence training programs, are becoming more and more popular due to their convenience, cost and level of professional accreditation. Nevertheless, before you sign up for a particular curriculum of study, be sure to cover a few key questions to guarantee your educational success.

1. Are all the materials for the study included in the cost of the program? Some courses do not include books, materials, and may charge extra fees for correcting of the exam, contact hours, etc.
2. Are the lesson plans well organized, easy to follow, and are the learning objectives clearly defined?
3. Does the program utilize hands-on practice as well as effective learning methods for independent study or is primarily book reading?
4. Does the course contain the most current information available on the subject? How often is the material updated?
5. Is the school or correspondence program properly accredited by related boards and credentialing centers? Ask what endorsements the school holds.
6. Is an orientation or review given of the program before you get started?
7. How will you communicate with your instructor or mentor?
8. Is there an expected time frame in completing the program? What is the number of hours per week recommended to complete the course in a timely manner? Is there a study outline or guide made available for the student?
9. Ask who will be responsible for keeping your student files updated, correcting your homework, answering questions and listening to concerns directly related to the program. Ideally, your instructor or mentor is the lead person and your personal contact for your correspondence training.
10. How is homework, case studies, research projects handed in and how is the student given feedback on their work?
11. Is there a final exam? How is it graded and is it open book or proctored?
12. Are there graduates available as references to talk about their experience with the program and a specific instructor?

Getting these questions answered ahead of time can assure your success, gain you the greatest support from your instructor, and in the end, the best learning experience. Know exactly what is expected of you prior to graduating and clearly define the exact nature of the instructor/student relationship. This will ensure a degree of respectfulness, optimal communication and promote a rewarding and beneficial connection between the mentor and mentee that could even extend beyond the study.

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