



4 Best Online Universities for Life Experience Degrees

Question:

A friend earned his college degree—a life experience degree—by “testing out of” courses and putting together a portfolio of his work and military training. Do real universities ever offer life experience degrees? Aren't universities that offer these types of degrees flat-out scams?

Answer:

Input “life experience degrees from accredited universities” into any search engine and you’ll be swamped with thousands of websites that promise to convert your resume experience into a fast college diploma.

Real Accredited Universities or Scams?

Most “life experience degree” colleges are scams, and the diplomas they issue are, in fact, fake. Most of these universities are “accredited,” but by fake agencies.

(Hey, anyone can create a fake accreditation agency overnight. All you need is a blog and an impressive fake name, like the World Association of Academic Accreditation WAAC. WAAC sounds quite impressive, doesn't it? I just made it up and it would take me about one hour to make it look real with a cool website.)

However, a few of life experience specialty schools are the real deal. A few accredited universities in the U.S. do indeed offer a type of life experience degree. These online colleges represent solid opportunities for professionals to jump-start a degree by applying credits from training and expertise gained through licensing and other credentialing options

Four colleges in particular excel in helping adult online learners turn their professional knowledge into college life experience credentials. Non-traditional students should definitely explore these four colleges and what they have to offer.

Best 4 Real Universities for Accredited Life Experience Degrees

Is it possible to earn an entire degree online based solely on credit for life or work experience?

The answer is yes—but rarely.

Most regionally accredited universities limit the number of life experience credits they will accept to 30 credits maximum (this equals one year of a 4-year bachelor degree).

Typically, the last 30 semester credits (senior year) of any regionally accredited 4-year bachelor's must be taken as formal courses directly from your degree-granting college. Thus, if your online college is offering you an entire life experience degree based solely off a resume review, it is probably a scam.

However, two regionally accredited online universities, Thomas Edison State College (NJ) and Excelsior College (NY), operate primarily as assessment colleges.

These two special colleges were founded in the 1970's to help nontraditional adult students earn undergraduate degrees through credit-for-experience options. It is possible at these two colleges to earn an entire undergraduate level college degree without taking a single formal course.

(However, most who attend these two universities do complete some formal college courses as a part of their education.)

Adults who've had years of specialized military training or corporate training should explore both these colleges carefully. Both are great schools to consider if you've had a lot of technical training—such as aviation mechanics, nursing or electronics technology—and need a solid way to have these non-collegiate training programs “translated” into college credit and applied toward an associate's or bachelor's degree plan.

Competency Exams & College Degree Credit

If you're a natural learner, both these online schools will also let you take “competency exams” to earn college course credit in liberal arts areas such as American history, foreign languages, psychology and literature. They also have special experience exams in core business areas like business law, accounting, finance, marketing and management.

Charter Oak State College

Connecticut-based Charter Oak State College also offers a wealth of opportunity for adult students who want to accelerate their degree plans by using challenge exams, documented military training programs and specialized business training certifications.

Charter Oak, run by the State of Connecticut, was also founded in the 1970s to help adult students with considerable career experience to accelerate bachelor degree completion.

Western Governor's University

A fourth, and much newer, option is Western Governors University Online of Utah. Founded by the governors of the 19 western states, WGU offers an outstanding online education programs under the guidance of dedicated mentors.

WGU is a competency-based university. You earn college credits by demonstrating your knowledge or “competency” in specific subject areas. WGU students work with “online mentors” to develop personal academic action plans in nursing business, teaching and computer technologies.

Rather than being required to study a subject for a 16-week semester, you're only required to study a subject for as long as it takes you to acquire the knowledge needed to pass a final competency exam. The competency exam method allows adult students who enter with advanced knowledge to move more rapidly through a degree plan than they would be able to using traditional course-based education.

Affordable Online Degree Options

More good news—all these “competency colleges” are ranked among the most affordable online colleges in the U.S. by GetEducated.com's national research team. If you're a professional who seeks an online education that's both fast and affordable, these innovative online schools are well worth exploring.

Competency-based degrees, especially bachelor's degrees, are becoming popular. Following the lead of the above four schools, more state universities are designing competency-based degrees to help professional with hands-on experience "test out" of formal courses and accelerate their degree progress. The University of Wisconsin is launching a new system wide competency-based bachelor's for older students as this piece goes to press.

Master's Degree for Life Experience

You didn't say what kind of degree your friend earned. Most valid credit-for-experience programs offer only undergraduate degrees—associate's or bachelor's. It is rare for an accredited online master's program in the U.S. to award ANY credit for experience.

If your friend has earned a master's or doctorate degree online based on life experience credits, check his credentials with a magnifying glass. He has almost certainly been the victim of a degree scam. His “experience degree” has almost certainly been issued by a “diploma mill.”

Degree mills are fake online colleges that “mill” or crank out worthless paper diplomas and transcripts to thousands of unsuspecting students each year. My pug dog, Chester Ludlow, earned his MBA degree online based on a review of his resume and the life experience listed thereon. My little pug earned his master’s degree with honors in finance. (While pugs are very-very smart I assure you Chester Ludlow has never read a business textbook.)

You can see Chester in full cap and gown trying to get a job in the very funny YouTube video I made for him, “Dog Earns Online MBA.” <http://www.geteducated.com/diploma-mills-police/life-experience-college-degree/289-dog-gets-life-experience-online-mba-degree>

Think you’ve found a degree mill online? Consult the free online service which I run, the Diploma Mill Police® <http://www.geteducated.com/diploma-mill-police>, to determine if any online university is the real deal or a scam.



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