

Research Exercise

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Principles of Distance Education

Nova Southeastern University
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Part I: The institution and its programs

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

Name:

Walden University

Addresses:

Academic Offices

155 Fifth Avenue South, Suite 100
 Minneapolis, MN 55401
 Phone: 1-612-338-7224

Administrative Offices

650 S. Exeter Street
 Baltimore, MD 21202
 Phone: 1-866-492-5336

Institutional Website

<http://www.waldenu.edu/>

Reference:

Student publications. (2011). *Walden University*. Retrieved from
<http://catalog.waldenu.edu/>

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

Masters Degree:

M.S. in Instructional Design and Technology with an Online Specialization

Reference:

Degree programs. (2011). *Walden University*. Retrieved from
<http://www.waldenu.edu/Degree-Programs/Masters/M.S.-in-Instructional-Design-and-Technology.htm>

3. For how long has the institution been offering the identified program at a distance?

Walden University began their M.S. in Instructional Design and Technology program in September 2009.

Reference:

S. Canipe, personal communication, June 14, 2011

4. What course delivery technologies are used?

Walden University uses a course management system called MobileLearn that allows students to work both off and online. Students have access to course lectures and materials in MobileLearn as podcasts, pre-recorded videos, video conferencing, chats, discussion groups and course emails. The video and audio components can be downloaded so that they are accessible on devices off line. Additionally, students can access support materials through iTunes. Walden University's page in iTunes U houses videos about the Writing Center, MobileLearn, the Library and other student support services. Students may also download a free app for the iPad, iPhone or iTouch called myWalden. The app is a condensed version of MobileLearn.

Reference:

iTunes U. (2010). Walden University [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://itunes.apple.com/us/institution/walden-university/id412867619>

5. Is there a face-to-face component of instruction? If so, where is it conducted, and for what duration?

Walden University requires students to participate in an academic residency program four times during the doctoral programs. The academic residencies are conducted in both the United States and overseas for international students. There is no face-to-face component for the M.S. in Instructional Design and Technology degree.

Reference:

Walden difference. (2011). *Walden University*. Retrieved from <http://www.waldenu.edu/Walden-Difference/38401.htm>

6. How long does it take to earn a degree in the identified program?

The Master of Science in Instructional Design and Technology with an Online Specialization has four requirements. The first requirement consists of taking nine Core Courses totaling 27 semester hours. The second requirement focuses on the completion of two specialization courses. The third requirement is the Capstone project which is a single three-credit project focusing on the applications of instructional design. The last requirement is an ePortfolio which is a both a working and showcase portfolio created by the student. Walden University estimates that it takes approximately 24 months to complete the program.

Reference:

Degree programs. (2011). *Walden University*. Retrieved from <http://www.waldenu.edu/Degree-Programs/Masters/31690.htm>

7. Is the institution accredited? If so, by what organization?

Walden University is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, which is a regional accreditation agency.

Reference:

About us. (2011). *Walden University*. Retrieved from <http://www.waldenu.edu/About-Us/18870.htm>

8. Is the institution public or private? If private, is it for-profit or not-for-profit?

Walden University is a private, for-profit institution.

Reference:

Walden University. (2011). *Guide to online schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.guidetoonlineschools.com/online-schools/walden-university>

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

According to The Higher Learning Commission, Walden University has 31,410 full-time students. Over 97% of the full-time students are in graduate studies. Additionally, Walden University has 16,046 part-time students. Of the part-time students, 47% are in graduate studies. The number of students enrolled in the M.S. in Instructional Design and Technology program is information not available outside of Walden University. Dr. Steve Canipe, Program Director at Walden University, wrote "I find that I am unable to provide the information you seek on MS-IDT enrollment figures. This information is treated as proprietary information and cannot be shared outside of the organization itself (S. Canipe, personal communication, June 14, 2011).

Reference:

Understanding accreditation. (2011, April 28). *The Higher Learning Commission*. Retrieved June 3, 2011, from http://www.ncahlc.org/component/option,com_directory/Action,ShowBasic/Itemid,184/institid,1574/lang,en/

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

Tuition for the Master of Science in Instructional Design and Technology degree program is \$460 per semester credit hour. Since each course is 3 credits, the tuition for a single course is \$1380. The tuition includes all course textbooks and materials.

Reference:

Degree programs. (2011). *Walden University*. Retrieved from <http://www.waldenu.edu/Degree-Programs/Masters/31690.htm>

Tuition and financial aid. (2011). *Walden University*. Retrieved from <http://www.waldenu.edu/Tuition-and-Financial-Aid/The-Richard-W-Riley-College-of-Education-and-Leadership.htm#MSIDT2010>

Part II: The institution's web site**A. How would you rate the visual appeal of the site? What elements are visually appealing, and which aspects are less so?**

The website is visually appealing to the consumer of information. The color scheme is subtle and text is easy to read, as it is either white on a dark background or dark on a white background. There is a single animation across the top of the page that is a rotating banner relaying current information to the consumer. The information within the line of sight for the website provides the consumer an complete snapshot of the university without having to scroll down to the bottom of the website.

The screenshot shows the Walden University website. At the top, the logo reads "WALDEN UNIVERSITY" with the tagline "A higher degree. A higher purpose." Navigation links include "International", "myWalden", "Alumni", and "Contact". A search bar and an "Apply" button are also present. Below the header is a main navigation menu with categories like "Degree Programs", "Colleges & Schools", "Tuition & Financial Aid", "Admissions", "Walden Difference", "Support Services", and "About Us". The main content area features a large banner for "President Bill Clinton to Speak at Graduation" with a photo of Clinton and a "Read More" link. To the right is a "Request Information Now" form with fields for "First Name", "Last Name", and "Email Address", and a "CONTINUE" button. Below the banner is a "Programs by Career" sidebar listing "Education", "Health", "Management", "Psychology", "Counseling and Social Services", and "Nursing". To the right of the sidebar is a "Contact an Enrollment Advisor" section with phone numbers and a "Need Financial Aid?" section with a "Learn more about" link.

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

The website is easy to navigate for the consumer. The website has a menu bar at the top of the page that holds buttons which turn into dropdown menus. The drop down menus

contain further links to program information. Once you get to the next level of information, more hyperlinks take you to even more specific information. What truly keeps the information organized and easy to navigate are the breadcrumbs listed directly underneath the menu bar. Through the menu bar, the user can return to the home page or simply go back two levels to previous information.



C. Does the site contain sufficient information to answer questions 1-10 (above)? If not, provide details.

The Walden University website contained most of the information I needed to answer questions for the research exercise, but I had to look elsewhere for two pieces of information. I was not able to ascertain the number of students enrolled in at Walden University directly through the website. However, there was a link on the accreditation page to the website for The Higher Learning Commission and I was able to find enrollment

information through their website. The other piece of information I had trouble locating on the Walden University website was about the enrollment specifically in the Master of Science in Instructional Design and Technology degree program. I contacted an Enrollment Advisor through the contact numbers listed on the Walden University website to get the information.

D. What is the most positive aspect of the Web site?

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar with links for 'myWalden', 'Alumni', and 'Contact', along with the phone number '1-866-492-5336'. Below this is a search bar and an 'Apply' button. A secondary navigation bar includes 'ce', 'Support Services', and 'About Us'. The main content area features a 'Request Information Now' form with fields for 'First Name', 'Last Name', and 'Email Address', and a 'CONTINUE' button. Below the form are three promotional boxes: 'Contact an Enrollment Advisor' with phone numbers, 'CHAT LIVE' with a play button, and 'Need Financial Aid?' with a brief description.

The most positive aspect of the website is that it immediately gives you the impression they are there to help. The top right corner of the website has a phone number to contact immediately. Below the phone number, the website has an Apply button for the online application form. The user may also request a packet of information via mail. Finally, the website gives the user the option to chat live with an Enrollment Counselor.

E. What aspect of the site is most in need of improvement?

I believe the website is well organized and there is not much I would improve upon. However, when you go to the page for Support Services, I found that 3 logos did not load on the bar at the bottom right corner of the page. It is a social media bar that should take the user to the Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter and iTunes links for Walden. I tried to load the page on all three of my browsers (Safari, Firefox, Chrome) and in all three browsers, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter icons did not load. Errors like this lend itself to a bit of unprofessionalism in my view. The only good news for Walden is that the user must scroll down to see the errors.

Safari

Firefox

Chrome



Reference:

Support services. (2011). *Walden University*. Retrieved from <http://www.waldenu.edu/Support-Services.htm>