

Quality Characteristics

A Guide to Evaluating Online & Blended Learning Providers

Not all online learning programs are created equal. When looking at the quality of an online program, it is important to consider educator training, student/teacher ratios, support services, and learning models to determine if a program is right for a particular school or student. This document is designed to help you find the best online learning provider to fit your needs.

Accreditation

What are the provider's accreditations?

Check if the accreditations are national or regional, and check for specific criteria that your students may need. For instance, if a student wants to play college sports the courses may need to be NCAA approved.

Learning Model

How are the courses conducted?

Do the students learn synchronously or complete their coursework independently of each other? Students who are self-motivated and disciplined may succeed at their own pace, but many students benefit from classmate interactions and personalized teacher attention.

Student/Teacher Ratios

Is the student/teacher ratio small enough for teachers to provide personalized feedback, engage students in discussions, and proactively address individual students' challenges?

Effective online teachers should be spending more of their time on high-value interactions with students and less of their time on rote lectures and classroom management.

Teacher Training

Have the teachers studied online teaching and learning best practices?

Online teaching requires different skills than face-to-face teaching. In addition to their discipline, new online teachers need professional development training to learn to teach effectively in an online environment.

Local Support

Is there an adult locally available to monitor student progress and help identify and troubleshoot any problems?

The most successful online programs involve a dedicated teacher, counselor, parent, or mentor who is physically present with the student on a regular basis to help monitor progress and address any issues.

New Opportunities

Do the available courses cover a wide range of subjects, allowing students to explore potential college majors or careers and courses of study not otherwise offered by their schools?

Budget cuts and lack of resources often limit which courses a school can offer in its face-to-face classrooms. Online courses can expand opportunities for students to study languages like Chinese; take additional Advanced Placement® courses like Physics or Art History; or explore college or career interests in areas such as law, engineering, or veterinary medicine. Students who are interested in their courses will be more engaged in their studies and are more likely to be successful and stay in school.

Global Classroom

Are students exposed to different points of view through collaboration with their peers from diverse social, economic, and geographic backgrounds?

When students and teachers from different backgrounds come together in an online course they share and develop their own perspectives on the world. Participating in a global online classroom helps students develop respect for different ideas, cultures, and opinions; an open mind to accept critique; and critical thinking to develop their own world-views, preparing them to live and work in a diverse, global economy.

Time Management

Are courses scheduled in a way that allows students to manage their time effectively and keep up with their course work?

Scheduled online learning with allotted time during the school day, weekly assignments, and a fixed semester or year-long schedule can help students keep up with their course work and manage their time effectively. Students who have successfully completed an online course can show colleges and employers that they have mastered time management and independent learning skills.

Technology Skills

Are students learning valuable computer and technology skills that they will be able to apply in college and in the workplace?

Well-designed online courses give students practical, hands on experience using online resources effectively and safely.

Evaluating Online & Blended Learning Providers:



VHS Learning (VHS, Inc.) is a nonprofit leader providing world-class online programs to students and schools everywhere. VHS Learning was the first in the nation to provide supplemental online classes for high school students and connect them to teachers and other students around the world. VHS Learning partners with all types of schools to expand their catalogs and offer classes for which there may be limited demand. Students choose from more than 200 unique courses including Advanced Placement®, core courses, engaging electives, credit recovery, and other formal and informal learning opportunities. VHS Learning has more than 20 years of experience supporting schools, teachers, and students.

Accreditations

VHS Learning is fully accredited by both Middle States Association Commission on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CESS) and ACS Western Association of Schools and Colleges and courses are approved for NCAA initial eligibility. Visit VHSLearning.org for details.

Learning Model

VHS Learning believes in student-centered classes which encourage collaboration among students. Therefore, our asynchronous courses run on a weekly-scheduled basis. Students have the flexibility to access their class 24/7, but there are scheduled deadlines to keep students together and allow group interaction. VHS Learning also offers FLEX courses for self-paced credit recovery.

Student/Teacher Ratios

VHS Learning classes have an average ratio of 21 students to 1 teacher to ensure personalized feedback, engaging discussions, and high-value interactions.

Teacher Training

To teach for VHS Learning, teachers must successfully complete a graduate-level training course in online teaching methodologies.

Local Support

VHS Learning requires schools to have a trained Site Coordinator to manage technical and administrative aspects of the program related to their schools and to serve as the primary contact between their students, their school, and VHS Learning faculty and staff.

New Opportunities

VHS Learning offers over 200 courses, including unique subjects that may not be offered in face-to-face classrooms. VHS Learning has one of the largest catalogs of College Board certified AP® courses of any online provider.

Global Classroom

VHS Learning's award-winning model unites students and teachers from 30+ countries around the world, creating an inclusive environment where students learn with, and from, each other as well as from their teacher.

Time Management

While some students have a designated VHS Learning class period during the school day and others complete work on their own time, VHS Learning courses teach everyone to proactively manage their workload. Site Coordinators help identify their students who may be struggling and intervene before they fall too far behind.

Technology Skills

VHS Learning courses teach students how to navigate digital classrooms, think critically about internet sources, understand ethical and safety concerns, and participate responsibly in online environments, just as they will throughout college and their future career.

Questions? Ready to enroll?

Message us at VHSLearning.org/Contact or call 978.897.1900.