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Catherine: Cautious Careerist

Key traits: Determined; Thorough; Critical

Most in need of: Course module & online delivery detail

I’ve a first degree in business where I specialised in financial services management. I’m currently working as a Senior Business Analyst for a leading insurance company. Over the past decade there has been a major increase in legislation and governance in the sector – fallout from the financial crash of 2007. I’ve been working on compliance projects for a while now.

I want to develop a career in compliance and so the area of commercial law is of interest to me. I really think that this will provide a lot of opportunities for me in the future.

I don’t want to lose all my existing experience though but use my work experience as well as the new degree to be able to move my career onwards. It will give me a fairly unique set of skills in my own company for instance.

I live and work in Edinburgh so it makes sense to study there if I can. I know it has got a good reputation overall and I assume the Law School has too, although I don’t know that. I’ll be able to use the library to get books out. If I have a problem with the course at any point it would be very easy to actually go in and see someone to sort things out. It would be much harder if I was studying somewhere else.

Motivations to study online:
• Need to remain in full-time employment
• Flexible method of study

Motivations to study at Edinburgh:
• Reputation of the University
• Quality of teaching and of other students on the course
• Course modules appear to meet needs
• Live in the city, so library resources and support easily available.

“I’ve not got a great idea of how the course will be delivered and I want to know details about the course modules. What exactly will I be studying?”
Catherine: Cautious Careerist

Characteristics

Concerns / fears:
- How are courses delivered online?
- How do prospective employers feel about online learning?
- Is this the most suitable course for me?
- Going back to academic study after several years in work
- How can I collaborate with other students?
- Are there fixed hours for study each week?

Information needs:

University level
- Fees
- How online learning works
- Heritage of University in delivering online learning

School/College level
- Tutor profiles
- Research topics as this gives an indication of the focus
- Reputation of the School

Programme level
- Programme structure
- Entry requirements
- Detailed information on the course modules
- How the degree can propel the student to the next stage of study / aid their career
- Alumni & employer testimonials around the value of studying the course online
- How the course and assignments are delivered online
- Hours of study required & peaks and troughs

Pain points on existing website / enquiry process:
- Lots of young faces that fail to inspire
- No information on reputation of the Law School
- Insufficient detail on course modules
- Limited information on how courses are delivered online
- General information on entry requirements
- No alumni or employer testimonials
- Unable to provide employer with final cost of Masters programme
- Difficulties working out how to begin the application
## Awareness
- Presented with headline data on number of students studying online & heritage in online learning
- Initial research to ensure offer course that meets requirements
- Confirm reputation of University and School
- Read entry requirements
- Read some student and alumni stories to understand that this will help career

## Engagement
- Detailed review of course modules, comparing with other Universities.
- Review course structure
- Find out the cost of study
- Explore how course is delivered online
- Read employer stories & testimonials of online learning and the course
- See data on alumni satisfaction with course and career outcomes
- Explore range of MOOCS offered by the University

## Action
- Email programme team to ask specific questions
- Subscribe to college / school / programme e-newsletter
- Register for online open day
- Sign up for a MOOC of interest
- Play a sample online lecture
- View a sample discussion forum
- Email details of course, fees and payment option to employer to agree funding
- Complete application

## Return
- Attend online open day
- Track status of application
- Accept offer of a place
- Research to select initial modules of study
- Follow interesting links in newsletter
- Visit a forum for new students to meet others and ask questions
Belinda: Beaming Beneficiary

I live in Sydney. I work for a company which provides pre- and after-school care for kids whose parents are working. I design activities for our teams who are on site with the kids. I travel for about a week each month to train our staff around the country. It costs the organisation a lot in travel expenses, so we’ve been thinking about how we can use technology to deliver the training online instead. The company will pay for me to do a Masters in e-learning so that I can design and deliver our courses online.

I found the course through Findamasters initially. It was a bit of trial and error but eventually I found the Digital Education programme listed.

I’d a lot of concerns, especially around entry requirements, but the programme website was really good, inspirational really. I read everything I could lay my hands on. The course pages were detailed and it was good to see what would be covered on a week by week basis. I loved reading the student stories and seeing examples of projects past students had worked on. I’d have love to have watched some videos or even read blogs by current or past students. Knowing Edinburgh had been offering online learning for a few years was reassuring.

“I had some key concerns around entry requirements. I didn’t get a Bachelors with Honours and it said you needed that. I nearly didn’t look any further”

Key traits:
Enthusiastic; Passionate; Engaged

Most in need of: Concerns being addressed

Motivations to study online:
• Need to remain in employment
• No local campus offering the course
• High comfort with online learning

Motivations to study at Edinburgh:
• Course content
• Student showcase
• Responsiveness of team to enquiry email
• Heritage in delivering online learning
Concerns / fears:

- Would I meet basic entry requirements?
- What will study mean for my family?
- Is the qualification recognised in Australia?
- Impact of time difference on study patterns / contact
- How access support services?
- Not knowing Edinburgh’s reputation as a university and as a provider of online learning.

Information needs:

University level

- Entry requirements for international students
- Fees
- Payment options
- University reputation
- How to access Library resources as an online student

School/College level

- School profile
- Tutor profiles
- Understand if the online course is the same as the on-campus offering

Programme level

- Detailed information on the course modules
- Programme structure
- How the course is assessed
- Whether course is recognised in home country
- Hours of study required & peaks and troughs
- Sample reading lists
- Student stories and examples of work
- Alumni stories

Pain points on existing website / enquiry process:

- Difficulty in navigating to entry requirements for international students
- Unsure that work experience might make up for lack of honours degree
- Little detailed content on the Degree Finder page
- Complex journey to the programme microsite
- Not clear how the university compares to other institutions in terms of reputation and performance

Belinda: Beaming Beneficiary

Characteristics

Study for leisure

- Low awareness of university
- Low comfort with online learning

Study for career

- High awareness of university
- High comfort with online learning
Belinda: Beaming Beneficiary

Journey

Awareness
- Directed to the University of Edinburgh site from a third-party listing site
- Presented with headline data on number of students studying online & heritage in online learning
- Initial research to ensure offer course that meets requirements
- Finding out entry requirements
- Understanding cost of the course

Engagement
- Understanding payment options to present to employer
- Review course detail, comparing with alternatives
- Researching answers to key questions
- Read student and alumni stories to understand more about the course
- Watch student vlogs
- Explore past student’s projects and dissertations
- See data on alumni satisfaction with course and career outcomes

Action
- Email programme team to ask specific questions
- Subscribe to college / school / programme e-newsletter
- Email details of course, fees and payment options to employer to agree funding
- Register for online open day
- Complete application

Return
- Attend online open day
- Track status of application
- Accept offer of a place
- Research to select initial modules of study
- Follow interesting links in newsletter
- Visit a forum for new students to meet others and ask questions
Afram: Apprehensive Aspirer

Key traits:
Hesitant; Aspirational; Independent

Most in need of:
Clarity around English language tests and acceptable academic qualifications

I am a physician in Ghana. There are huge challenges in healthcare in my country and so I want to gain qualifications to help me make a difference. I want to learn more about public health and leadership challenges in delivering quality healthcare. I want to study at a good University so the reputation is important and the qualification must be recognised here in Ghana. I want to study in the UK but I can’t afford to live there for a year, so studying online seems like a good idea.

One of the key issues for me is the cost. It is very expensive. It was good to find out that there is funding available for the course. I don’t know what is equivalent to a UK 2:1 level. Given the course is targeted at those from outside the UK I thought this would be much easier to find out. The English language requirements are clearer but I wasn’t certain what I would need to provide.

The other thing I need to know is what are the technical requirements? Especially here in Ghana where data connection isn’t that good. Can I log on and study? What system do I need? Will my data connection be good enough?

There is just so much I don’t know. All these things are holding me back from making an application. I’m just not confident enough to submit an application.

Motivations to study online:
• Improve career prospects
• Need to remain in employment
• Can’t afford to study and live abroad
• Study with students with very varied range of experiences

Motivations to study at Edinburgh:
• Relevance of course
• Reputation of University
• Reputation of programme that will impress my peers and my future employers

“I would like to have read about the experiences of other students and find out what they gained from studying the course. Other Universities had these reviews”
Concerns / fears:
- Qualification recognised in my country
- How much will the course cost? How can I pay for it?
- Do I need to take any further entry requirement tests to prove my ability in English?
- Are my academic qualifications sufficient?
- Is my data connection strong enough to study online?

Information needs:

University level
- Fees and payment structure
- Postgraduate study experience – what makes Edinburgh University unique and strong?
- Funding opportunities
- English language requirements
- Entry requirements for international students
- Technical requirements for online learning

School/College level
- What programmes are delivered online?
- What is the college well known for / what is it strong in?

Programme level
- Understand how learnings from the course can be applied to career
- Where has the course led other people
- How career will benefit following studying the course
- How is the course delivered?
- How the degree can propel the student to the next stage of study / aid their career
- How other students on the course found it

Pain points on existing website / enquiry process:
- Imagery promotes the city, but I’m unlikely to ever visit
- Lack of alumni / student success story profiles to inspire me
- Unsure what to provide to prove English language proficiency
- Difficult to find out what academic qualifications are acceptable
- Link to the UK NARIC website which just seemed to promote expensive services without any context
- Unable to test different mechanisms for delivering the course to ensure data connection is sufficiently robust

Afram: Apprehensive Aspirer

Characteristics

Study for leisure
- Low awareness of university
- Low comfort with online learning

Study for career
- High awareness of university
- High comfort with online learning

University focus
- Lower awareness of university
- Lower comfort with online learning

Course focus
- Lower awareness of university
- Lower comfort with online learning

Study for leisure
- Higher awareness of university
- Higher comfort with online learning

Study for career
- Higher awareness of university
- Higher comfort with online learning

Universities focus
- Lower awareness of university
- Lower comfort with online learning

School/College focus
- Lower awareness of university
- Lower comfort with online learning

Universities focus
- Higher awareness of university
- Higher comfort with online learning

School/College focus
- Higher awareness of university
- Higher comfort with online learning
Afram: Apprehensive Aspirer

Journey

Awareness
- Gathers a summary of Edinburgh and its university
- Presented with data on number of overseas students studying online
- Understands what courses are delivered through online learning
- Reads more about the mode of online learning and to understand if there are any face-to-face, visa or residency requirements.
- Review course modules to assess interest and short-list or otherwise
- Find out the cost of study

Engagement
- Read about alumni and what they are doing now
- See data on alumni satisfaction with course and career outcomes
- Read from employers about what they think graduates have gained from studying
- Read student stories
- Watch student vlogs
- Read about scholarships offered by the university
- Explore study commitments
- Explore range of MOOCS offered by the University

Action
- Email programme team with specific questions about language & academic entry requirements
- Register for online open day
- Play a sample online lecture
- View a sample discussion forum
- Complete application
- Sign up for a MOOC of interest
- Try out the Virtual Learning Environment

Return
- Attend online open day
- Track application
- Accept offer of a place
- Apply for funding from university
- Study another MOOC if unsuccessful in funding application
Howard: Hopeful Hobbyist

Key traits: Concerned; Methodical; Inspiration Seeking

Most in need of: Reassurance around collaborative study

I've always enjoyed learning. I did my BA in History at the University of Sheffield and really enjoyed it. I'd always promised myself I'd do a Masters course when I had an opportunity to do so. I've been working for a few years now and feel the time is right. I might use it as a stepping stone to work in academia by going on to do a PhD but if not I'll be happy to have done it for myself and learned some great transferable skills.

I looked at some on-campus options. I'd applied and been accepted to do a Masters in Manchester but they cancelled the course as there weren't enough students to run it.

Then someone recommended distance learning as an option. I'd never thought about that before but I did some internet research and it seems ideal. I hope that the course is thought of in the same way as an on-campus course. That I'm learning the same thing. I hope to use it as a stepping stone to academia I need it to be well recognised. I'm also worried that it will be a very isolated way to study. Very impersonal. Me, working by myself, learning from textbooks and watching videos of lectures delivered by people I've never met or people who are all studying to pursue their career.

Motivations to study online:
- To build on undergraduate degree
- To build on an existing interest
- To feel intellectually fulfilled
- No need to re-locate
- Potentially to surface a move into academic research
- Learn some transferable skills

Motivations to study at Edinburgh:
- Offered an online history degree
- Interesting course content
- Unique specialisms
- Well ranked University
- Well known department within the University
- Heritage in online learning

“A degree like history, even online, there are so many places to choose to do it. It’s hard to narrow down. It takes a long time”
**Concerns / fears:**
- Isolated learning method
- Time required may be more than estimated
- That online course differs from on-campus course
- Costs might increase significantly while studying
- Course will not run if there are insufficient students
- How flexible is the structure?
- Is the course for people studying for interest not a career?
- How does personal tuition work?

**Information needs:**

**University level**
- Fees
- Commitment to running a course once students accepted
- How online learning works
- Heritage of University in delivering online learning
- How to access support services

**School/College level**
- How to access research materials
- Reputation of the school
- Academic staff reputation
- Academic staff interests

**Programme level**
- How tutor and peer interaction takes place
- How many students take the course
- The proportion of self study versus group study
- Detailed information on the course modules
- Programme structure
- Whether online course differs from the on-campus one
- How the course and assignments are delivered online
- Hours of study required & peaks and troughs
- How long the course has been running
- Entry requirements
- Student stories

**Pain points on existing website / enquiry process:**
- Understand if the online course is the same as the on-campus offering
- Unable to fix a cost for Masters programme delivered over several years
- Some on-campus course modules not available online
- Insufficient detail on course modules
- Online open day taking place during working day
- Limited information on how courses are delivered online
- Content not engaging
- Unclear how collaborative online learning is

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**Howard: Hopeful Hobbyist**

**Characteristics**

- **Study for leisure**
  - Low awareness of university
  - Low comfort with online learning

- **Study for career**
  - High awareness of university
  - High comfort with online learning

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Howard: Hopeful Hobbyist

Journey

Awareness
- Identifying if University offers a relevant course
- Presented with key data on heritage in online learning
- Review course modules to assess interest and short-list or otherwise
- Find out how long course has been running
- Understand reputation of the University and School
- Find out the cost of study

Engagement
- Understand whether course differs from on-campus one
- Detailed exploration of course modules
- Explore how course is delivered online
- Look at past dissertation titles and synopsis
- Play a sample online lecture
- Participate in a sample discussion forum
- Explore staff areas of interest
- Read student stories to understand how work collaboratively
- See data on alumni satisfaction with course

Action
- Email programme team with specific questions
- Subscribe to programme e-newsletter
- Register for online open day
- Sign up for a MOOC of interest
- Complete application

Return
- Attend online open day
- Track status of application
- Accept offer of a place
- Research to select initial modules of study
- Follow interesting links in newsletter
- Visit a forum for new students to meet others and ask questions
As a GP I have a requirement to keep my professional knowledge up to date. Each year I have a formal appraisal and out of that comes the Personal Development Plan which I’ll write. I work in a busy practice though and so it is difficult to take time off to attend courses. A day away has a real impact on the number of patients we can see and just puts added pressure on all of us. So online courses are excellent. In my PDP this year I wanted to develop my understanding about how to treat migraines. I’ve several patients who really suffer from this and they keep coming back to see me.

I started to look for possible online courses. It wasn’t easy at all. I couldn’t find anything relevant at all. I was talking to a colleague one day and she mentioned that Edinburgh University offered short courses and I should take a look.

I went onto their website and started to try and find these short courses. It was almost impossible. I got so lost. In the end I just typed something into the search.

“The main thing missing and it is quite important is the number of credits I’d gain from studying. We need to achieve 250 credits over five years and I wasn’t sure how many this course would be worth”
Susie: Skilled Sampler

Characteristics

Concerns / fears:
- Whether the course requires fixed study seminars – the structure of which will not fit with the work day
- Whether seminars are recorded and can therefore be accessed at a different time
- Length of time required
- Amount of time required during each week

Information needs:

University level
- Fees

School/College level
- Reputation of the school in this area of practice

Programme level
- Course content
- Length of course
- How much time to commit
- How many credits earned
- Whether credits can count towards a greater qualification/certificate or if the course is a standalone offering only – i.e.: next step
- Entry requirements
- Course start date

Pain points on existing website / enquiry process:
- Hard to navigate to course
- No information on credits earned
- Difficult to understand the precise mode of delivery / logistics
Susie: Skilled Sampler

Journey

**Awareness**
- Identifying if University offers a relevant course
- Understand reputation of the School for this area of focus

**Engagement**
- Reviewing course detail
- Understanding how much study involved
- Reviewing college reputation and name-checking those who will deliver the course
- Check ratings and read course reviews from previous delegates

**Action**
- Purchase course
- Subscribe to e-newsletter
- Register interest in topics that could be offered in future
- Provide feedback on course topics that could be offered in future

**Return**
- Complete course
- Provide short rating & review of the course
- Follow interesting links in newsletter
- Register interest in topics that could be offered in future
- Sign-up for additional short courses that are related to area of interest
- Consider a more comprehensive course – a Diploma – after the positive experience associated with this one
- Provide feedback on course topics that could be offered in future