Online Graduate Certificate Program or Degree: WHICH IS RIGHT FOR YOU?
After you’ve completed your undergraduate experience and closed the door on your bachelor's degree, you may be asking yourself what’s next. For those looking to further their education beyond an undergraduate program, two clear options exist: a graduate certificate or a master’s program.

Both program structures offer unique benefits and the opportunity to keep honing your expertise and skill set. In fact, it’s not always a matter of which is the better decision – often, it’s more a question of which is the right decision for you.

While degrees and certificates both offer an opportunity to earn additional credentials, advance in your career, and evolve as a professional, it’s important to consider your field, career aspirations, time, and resources when making your decision.

### UTEP Graduate Education Offerings

#### ONLINE GRADUATE CERTIFICATES
- Online Graduate Certificate in Technical and Professional Writing
- Online Graduate Certificate in Systems Engineering
- Online Graduate Certificate in Construction Management
- Online Graduate Certificate in Early Intervention Studies
- Online Graduate Certificate in Urban and Regional Planning

#### ONLINE MASTER’S DEGREE PROGRAMS
- Online Master of Defense and Strategic Studies
- Online M. Ed. In Curriculum and Instruction (Bilingual Education concentration)
- Online M. Ed. In Curriculum and Instruction (Early Childhood Education concentration)
- Online Master of Science in Construction Management
- Online Master of Science in Systems Engineering
- Online Master of Science in Nursing - Nursing Education
- Online Master of Science in Nursing - Nurse Practitioner
- Online Master of Science in Nursing - Nursing Administration Management
The online graduate certificate programs available through UTEP Connect were created with working professionals in mind. Our online certificate programs help busy students focus their education while maintaining the flexible and approachable online format they need to succeed. Considering a graduate certificate?

Here are a few advantages:

**Time & Tuition**

Graduate certificates are a great option for students limited on time because they typically require fewer credits than a traditional degree program. At about 12-15 credit hours, these programs can take less than half the time of a graduate degree and can provide a great jumping-off point for students who may pursue a master's down the road, but are looking for a quicker, more specialized option to advance in their careers now.

As a result of their shorter program format, graduate certificates are typically much more affordable – especially for students who plan to pay for their graduate education out-of-pocket.

**Specialization**

For individuals looking to impress current or future employers, graduate certificates are an excellent way to prove their expertise and commitment to growing within their field. Pursuing a graduate certificate online demonstrates a commitment to a more specialized topic, whereas master's programs can often provide a broader, more in-depth look.

One of the most alluring parts of a certificate program, according to *Forbes*, is the quicker return on investment and shorter commitment. For those looking for a more immediate path to the specialization they want – and the subsequent increase in pay that could come with it – a graduate certificate is often the obvious choice.

**Networking**

Another advantage of enrolling in a certificate program is the opportunity to learn from and make connections with professors and professionals in your field. Through open communication in your online classes at UTEP, you’ll be able to gain an understanding of your professors’ and classmates’ unique backgrounds and expertise in a more professional setting, whereas a master's program often provides more academic networking opportunities.
What are the benefits of an Online Master’s Degree Program?

Individuals looking to significantly accelerate their career, shift industries, or grow to the next phase of management or specialization should consider graduate degree options. Online master’s degrees from UTEP are designed to help students gain a broad base of knowledge to climb the ladder in their current jobs or embark on a totally new path. Here are some unique perks of an online master’s program at UTEP.

**Career Advancement**

It’s important to know what the degree expectations are in your chosen field. In many, one of the most significant advantages you can gain is a master’s degree because it opens doors, especially to upper-level positions and management. With a broader base of knowledge and additional training at a master’s level, you’ll be able to more easily maneuver within and outside your role – making you a more versatile addition to any organization. An advanced degree can help expand your current knowledge, raise the ceiling at your current job, or help earn you a coveted corner office.

**New Employment Opportunities**

After a few years of putting your bachelor’s degree to use, you may decide that a career shift is in order to get you where you truly want to go. If you’re looking to step outside your current qualifications and advance in a new field, a master’s degree can usually help facilitate a career pivot of this nature. Although the ability to shift is often industry-dependent, many students use their master’s as an opportunity to bring a broad interdisciplinary, liberal arts, or business degree into focus with additional qualifications.

**Earnings Boost**

It’s true that a master’s degree often means a higher salary – how much usually depends on your field, though. Education and nursing are areas where an advanced degree can truly alter your standard of living – and both are options at UTEP. In addition to increased career happiness and salary, completing your master’s degree online has the added benefit of allowing you to keep your current job while working towards advancement or a new, better career fit for you.
Get to Know Our Programs

Graduate Certificate Programs

**Online Graduate Certificate in Construction Management**

The online Graduate Certificate in Construction Management offered by The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) is a convenient and flexible way for engineers, architects, and other construction industry professionals to gain knowledge and credentials they need to advance in their industry. Designed for working professionals and students who are interested in learning how to manage complex construction projects, this certificate teaches essential skills in construction management, scheduling, safety, methods, and more.

**Online Graduate Certificate in Early Intervention Studies**

In recent years, the need for highly qualified early intervention educators and agency professionals has been accompanied by impressive growth in employment opportunities within the field. A graduate certificate can help those with renewed purpose or interest in early intervention to begin or advance as a nursery or preschool educator. What sets this program apart? It's the first program of its kind in Texas and one of the few with an emphasis on culturally responsive practices.

**Online Graduate Certificate in Urban and Regional Planning**

The online Graduate Certificate in Urban and Regional Planning equips students with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to serve all areas of the career of urban planner – from policy to planning and development. With a focus on the public administration and economic development aspects associated with successful urban planning practices in developed countries, this certificate prepares students to work in any government, nonprofit or professional organization that requires the services of a planner.

**Online Graduate Certificate in Technical and Professional Writing**

UTEP is proud to offer a Graduate Certificate in Technical and Professional Writing designed for graduate students looking to strengthen their writing skills. Through coursework in various types of writing and editing, students will learn to work with new media, share information in a variety of different ways, convey technical concepts to a nontechnical audience, and more. In addition to teaching strong writing skills, the program also focuses on digital communication and community engagement in intercultural contexts.

**Online Graduate Certificate in Systems Engineering**

Without systems engineering, the world wouldn't look the way it does today. With a Graduate Certificate in Systems Engineering (GCSE), students can shape the way the world looks tomorrow. Success in this field is highly dependent on an in-depth understanding of people, facilities, policies, hardware, software and documents, and how to manage all of the above effectively. UTEP’s online GCSE is a convenient and flexible way for aspiring engineers to achieve the knowledge and credentials they need to succeed in the industry – and earn credits toward their master's degree if they choose to continue their education.
Get to Know Our Programs

Master’s Degree Programs

Online Master of Defense and Strategic Studies

National defense is a matter of extreme importance. It requires a diversity of viewpoints from knowledgeable professionals with differing skill sets and expertise – that's where The University of Texas at El Paso's (UTEP) online Master of Defense and Strategic Studies (MDSS) degree comes in handy. As a part of our Intelligence and National Security Studies Program, it's an ideal choice for military or civilian personnel currently working in (or planning to work in) national security and defense.

Online M.Ed. In Curriculum and Instruction

Bilingual Education Concentration

A master's in bilingual education gives teachers an advantage in today's increasingly multicultural classroom and offers increased employability. UTEP's College of Education is committed to helping you reach your goals for providing excellent service to schools and public agencies, especially those in multicultural communities. The flexibility and convenience of this master's in bilingual education online program is perfect for working teachers who juggle their many teaching responsibilities with personal commitments.

Early Childhood Education Concentration

Students of this program will learn to share the joys of reading, teach children the basics of language and communication, and make education relevant to them. The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) College of Education is committed to helping students reach their goals in the field of early childhood education, while providing a solid educational foundation to the next generation. The flexible, convenient online format is perfect for working teachers, especially new teachers who may have heavy demands on their time.

Online Master of Science in Construction Management

As the global construction industry expands, more and more companies are looking for experienced leaders to oversee their projects. Students seeking to obtain a higher level of construction knowledge can learn how to lead teams, manage complex projects and thrive in a global marketplace. Busy professionals who may already be working in engineering, architecture, management or related fields will appreciate the convenience and flexibility of this 100% online program.

Online Master of Science in Systems Engineering

The online Master of Science in Systems Engineering (MSSE) is an ideal choice for aspiring engineers and current engineering professionals who want to perfect their engineering skills while learning how to manage large projects. The program curriculum will also give engineers an advantage in earning their Associate/Certified Systems Engineering Professional (ASEP/CSEP) certification and prepares graduates to work in companies that utilize quality models such as the Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI).
Get to Know Our Programs

Master’s Degree Programs

Online Master of Science in Nursing
Offered by the School of Nursing

Nursing Education

Behind every nursing student are the educators that fed their passion. This program offers students the opportunity to become teachers for the next generation of nurses. Students learn to teach in both academic and clinical settings, gain best practices in curriculum design and development, and master teaching methods, educational needs assessment, and more.

Nurse Practitioner

The UTEP School of Nursing prepares advanced practice registered nurses to become nurse practitioners for primary or secondary (acute) care. Applicants may choose a concentration as a Family Nurse Practitioner with a primary care focus (FNP), Pediatric Nurse practitioner with a primary care focus (PNP-PC), or an adult/gerontologic Nurse Practitioner with an acute care focus (AGACNP).

Nursing Administration Management

This degree is designed to prepare nurses to advance in management and administration roles. Students grow into management-ready nurses through online courses with expert faculty and peer interaction, personalized advisement, and the option for full-time completion in 24 months.
MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION FOR YOU

Now that you’ve read up on all the ways that a graduate certificate program or a master’s degree can help get you on the path to the career you want, you’re more equipped to make the decision that will let you advance toward your goals. Just keep in mind: It’s less about which of these is the right decision and more about which is the right decision for you, your career, and your future.

Have questions or ready to take the next step?

Call 844-877-0379 to speak to an enrollment counselor.

Begin your application. Go to the Graduate School Website to get started.