



The beauty of distance learning is that it is designed to help you earn a degree no matter where you are stationed. Essentially, you learn as you go, at your own pace. You pick and choose what courses or degree programs you want to take and you use a variety of educational tools to complete the classes necessary.

But what happens when you get deployed? Can you continue to work toward your degree while stationed overseas.

Yes. It's just a matter of changing how you approach your studies.

"Just because you're deployed doesn't mean you can't make progress in a degree program," said Suzzette Chapman, director of distance education for Central Texas College.

Distance learning programs can vary from class to class, program to program, and school to school. While many schools use regular "snail" mail or e-mail to submit and receive course lessons and papers or to communicate directly with instructors or admission offices, some schools use the Internet to deliver instruction. Others employ satellite or cable delivery methods.

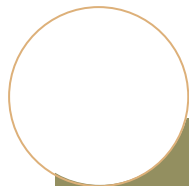
Your local education center will help you determine the best way to receive your courseware while deployed.

Specifically, students can access their courseware through satellite-, video-, CD-ROM-, paper-based or other learning environments.

For example, Marines of the 11th MEU out of MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., are participating in a pilot program with the United States Marine Corps College of Continuing Education to access military and civilian education programs while deployed aboard ships.

And since these Marines don't have access to MarineNet, the Marine Corps' online learning environment, they are using self-contained fielded deployable learning resource centers to complete their studies.

These self-contained units include laptops, a switch and a computer server, printers, the necessary paperwork, books and anything else that is necessary to complete the Marine training programs and Microsoft-based courseware.



"Just because you're deployed doesn't mean you can't progress in a degree program," said Suzzette Chapman, director of distance education, Central Texas College.

Furthermore, Central Texas College is currently working with the USMC College of Continuing Education to offer additional government and fine arts courseware through MarineNet's.

"We are delivering instruction regardless of where they are or for how long," Chapman added. "We help service members continue their education while they are serving their country and us."

Dr. Larry Blevins, deputy director, College of Continuing Education for the Marine Corps, agrees. "Our courses offer all sort of competencies from planning to management to leadership to land navigation," he added. "Education and training can be plugged into the Marine to enhance readiness so they are as well prepared as we can make them."

"Our centers of excellence are roadmaps for Marines from day one through a 20-year career," Blevins added.

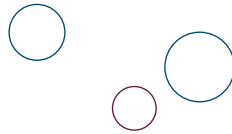
University of Oklahoma has also been offering satellite courses to Marines, as well as other active duty military, reservists and military family members.

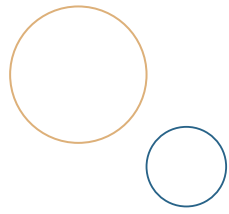
"For the past two years, our students have been constantly deployed," said Davida Mahoney, director, University of Oklahoma, Advanced Programs. "(Students) should not by any means think they cannot continue a program.

The university offers independent directed studies and readings. It also enables a military student to design individual learning projects in which he or she selects a project or course of study for the semester. The student then works independently with the help of a professor to complete it. He or she must first receive permission from the educator to receive credit for the project.

To assist a student with his or her educational goals, the university provides a site manager on many military installations. The site manager works as a liaison because the students and the university.

"If you are remotely considering education, you should go into it and benefit from the 100% tuition assistance," Mahoney added. "We can find something for you to do or a way for you to continue your education. Persist and (don't) see the deployment as an obstacle."



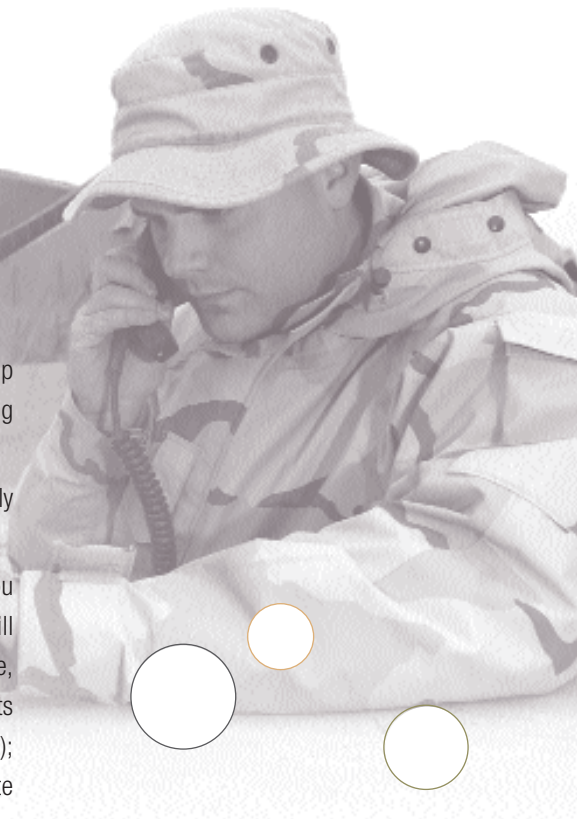


Where Do You Get Started If You Want to Sign Up For a Program?

If you haven't signed up for a distance learning program yet, but are interested in signing up before you deploy, your first stop is your local education center (also called the Lifelong Learning Center or Navy College Office).

The reason for the stop is simple: if you want Tuition Assistance (TA), then you have to apply for it through your education center.

It's also to your advantage to consult an education counselor at the center before you choose a program. Not only will the education counselor help you with TA, but they will provide college admission testing (if necessary); outline sources of college funding available, including scholarships and loans; help you prepare and take DANTES Subject Standard Tests (DSST), College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests, or Regents College Exams (RCE); administer course interest surveys and aptitude testing, and provide a list of appropriate schools to fit your academic interests.



The Necessary Tools

Since distance learning classes are often offered online, you may need the following to complete one of these courses:

- Access to a Pentium-class PC running Windows 95 or 98 with at least 16 MGs of RAM and at least 30 MGs free on the hard drive, or a PowerPC Macintosh running system 7.5 or higher with at least 16 MGs of RAM and 30 MGs on the hard drive. The computer should feature a CD-ROM drive.
- A printer.
- Connection to the Internet. This will be required for online courses, but won't be necessary for CD-based courses. If Internet connectivity is required, students should have access to a fast modem, a reliable Internet Service Provider with e-mail, such as AOL or Earthlink, and a browser, such as Internet Explorer or Netscape, installed on their machine. 