



Sacred Heart
UNIVERSITY

GOING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL IN A WORK-FROM-HOME WORLD: **A GUIDE FOR WORKING PROFESSIONALS**

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1

The Changing Landscape of the Workforce

Whether you're currently working from home or you're thinking about making the transition, it's clear that working remotely is becoming more common than ever. While remote work is convenient for many, it also presents a new world of challenges for people who want to advance in their careers.

Working from home is transforming the way business is done today. In a recent poll, more than 70 percent of employers surveyed plan to continue to [allow some or all of their employees to work remotely](#). The survey also found that 76 percent of company founders have discovered that the productivity of their employees has increased since making the transition to work from home.



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It's clear: the working world is changing and in the coming months, office work will look vastly different than it has in the past.

There are many reasons for these changes, and not all of them have to do with COVID-19. Some of the reasons that an increasing number of companies are making the transition to remote work include:



A larger number of positions can be handled remotely

Work from home positions are becoming more common due to the number of jobs that can be completed from anywhere. As companies pivot to more remote work, many executives are realizing that their employees are just as productive when they aren't in the office, which in turn creates a push for employers to allow more remote work.



Tech-centric jobs allow work to be done from anywhere

Advances in work-from-home technology have made it easy for employees to work from their living room, a coffee shop, or on the road. A rise in video conferencing and instant messaging makes it easy for employers to quickly check in with their employees.



Growing economic uncertainty drives companies to save money wherever possible

With the economic uncertainty in the United States today, many companies are working to cut costs. One of the simplest ways to save money (while also retaining top talent) is to allow employees to work from home. By doing so, companies can save on rent, operating costs, and more.



Companies are scaling back on in-office employees

As companies work to retain top talent while also cutting costs, lowering the number of in-office employees is a smart financial move. Since many companies have fewer in-office clients and customers than they did before the pandemic, there's not the same need for in-office personnel.



There is an increasingly competitive candidate pool

Jobs are competitive and, for companies, that's a good thing. Top companies work hard to attract the best talent, and putting together a competitive employment package is the best way for companies to hire and retain top performers. The flexibility that comes with a work-from-home position can be the cherry on top of an already attractive job offer.

SHOULD I GO TO GRAD SCHOOL?

If you're already working from home, you may be struggling to decide if you should add another responsibility to your plate. Graduate school is demanding, but earning your graduate degree now is a smart choice, especially if you're able to work from home.

Companies are searching for qualified employees with advanced skills who can work independently, with less guidance from supervisors. Employees with graduate degrees typically have the education and leadership experience that set them apart from other candidates.

The job pool is competitive, and it's important to do everything necessary to stand out from the crowd. While you likely have some work experience, earning your graduate degree shows potential employers that you're committed to growing your skill set.

In the end, it's up to you. However, keep in mind that while an online or hybrid learning environment may present some challenges, **a more flexible schedule could be exactly what you need to complete your graduate degree and boost your career.**



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*How A Graduate
Degree Will Impact
Your Career*



Many working professionals feel that they have enough on their plate already — why add graduate school to the mix?

Let's take a look at some of the reasons it makes sense to pursue your online or hybrid graduate degree:



You'll develop a new skill set

Earning a graduate degree can help you work your way to (or stay at) the top of your industry, and put you ahead of others competing for the same job openings. If you're not sure what skill set makes the most sense for your current position, talking to your employer about how you could use your education to benefit the company shows initiative and drive.

If you're an independent contractor or freelancer, your new skill set means your services are even more valuable. Don't be afraid to advertise your new degree or give clients a call to let them know what you've added to your repertoire!





You'll be closer to a promotion

Choosing to earn an online graduate degree while balancing a work-from-home situation, shows your employer that you're motivated and that you know how to prioritize your responsibilities. Online graduate programs are challenging, and when your employer sees that you're able to successfully manage both, they'll likely acknowledge that you're ready for a new challenge in your career.

Additionally, your new skill set and enhanced leadership capabilities will further prove that you're qualified to receive that promotion.



You'll be able to pursue a new career

If you're thinking about exploring new career options, you're probably wondering — "Should I go back to grad school?" As a working professional, it can be tough to decide when it's the right time to explore online master's programs. If you're thinking about making a career change, working full time and going to school can be well worth the effort.



» You'll be prepared for the next chapter in your career

You'll likely find that your graduate program is [very different from a standard undergraduate program](#). Most online graduate programs prioritize small class sizes, group discussions, and plenty of interaction with faculty, leaving you well prepared to excel in your chosen field. Many people who utilize online graduate degrees with the goal of making a mid-life career change find that they feel better prepared for their new career than they ever did in their former field.

Online graduate programs can also provide you with the networking opportunities you need to find a new job or start in a new field. In today's post-COVID-19 world, many companies are cutting down on staffing, so it's essential that you have connections in your field that will help you discover the right job opportunities.



THE BENEFITS OF A GRADUATE DEGREE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

While the process of simultaneously earning your degree and working can be a little stressful — it is well worth the effort. From increasing your salary to becoming better at your job (and more valuable to your company), the work that you put in while earning your graduate degree will pay off in dividends.





Salary Increase

While earning your graduate degree isn't a guarantee that you'll receive a promotion, it's a step in the right direction. In many cases, earning a graduate degree has a direct salary payoff. [For example](#), a general manager with a bachelor's degree typically makes \$79,818, **while the professionals with a master's in the same position make \$97,246 on average.**



Job Security

In today's competitive market, it's important for you to show your company that you're a valuable resource. Earning a master's degree demonstrates that you're willing to do what it takes to remain an expert in your field. Studies show that [earning a master's degree is directly correlated to job security](#) — **just 2.2 percent of people with a master's degree are unemployed.**

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Skill and Knowledge Acquisition

Whether you're a human services professional who is learning the latest in trauma-informed techniques or a business leader who is implementing new research to develop a strong team, graduate school can provide you with the skills you need to get ahead.



Pursuing Your Passions

Sometimes earning a graduate degree isn't about the money or the prestige at all (although those benefits definitely help). You may be considering an advanced degree simply because you are passionate about a certain subject and want to use a master's to break into the field. This passion not only translates into great students but great employees as well.



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*What Does it Really
Look Like to Go to
Graduate School
While Working
Full-Time?*



Nervous about balancing graduate school with full-time work? You're not alone. Many working professionals who decide to earn their graduate degrees experience some anxiety around how they'll make it work. Here are some of the most common concerns of full-time employees and future grad students — and how to address them head-on.

How will I manage both work and school?

There's no way around it— when you add a new responsibility to your plate, there will be an adjustment period. Many working professionals have successfully balanced both work and school at the same time, and there's no reason that you can't do the same.

When it comes to scheduling, talk with your program advisor. They'll help you decide how many classes to take at a time. You'll also discuss whether full or part-time programming makes the most sense for your schedule. While many online graduate programs allow students to work completely on their own time, others require that students are online at certain times for class discussions. Make sure you know what will be expected of you and what you can handle.

Remember, communication with your professors and your program advisor will be key ensuring that you're able to balance the delicate mix of work, school, and life.

Can I afford grad school?

For many, grad school is not as expensive as you may think. Between grants, loans, assistantships, and other forms of aid, grad school tuition can be manageable. Scholarship and grant programs are the best option, as you don't have to pay this money back. If you find that your out of pocket costs are more than you can or want to pay, low-interest student loans are a great option to help you get your education without breaking the bank.

Another option: talk with your employer about whether they offer tuition assistance or tuition reimbursement. Many employers agree to pay for part or all of grad school for employees. Get the details of your employer's grad school assistance program from your human resources office, and be sure to note if there are any caveats to receiving funds (such as maintaining a certain GPA or continuing to work for the company for a period of time after you finish your graduate degree).





I've been out of school for more than a few years. Can I do this?

In a word: absolutely. You'll bring your professional working experience to the table, making you a resource for classmates who do not have the real-world knowledge you've accumulated. You won't be the only student in your class who is balancing both work and school, and you'll be surprised at how often your faculty members turn to you for your take on the latest developments in your field.

What does it actually look like to work full time and go to graduate school?

Your day to day life will depend on your graduate program and work schedule. You may choose to do most of your classwork on the weekends, or you may choose to finish your work in the evenings. If you work a job with non-traditional hours (such as in the medical or law enforcement field), you may be able to complete your classwork on a day off.

For many working professionals, their standard workday doesn't change as they get their education – but the way they structure their non-working hours does. Joining a video chat study group in the evening, listening to lectures while getting ready for work, and setting aside time to get work done on the weekends are all viable options for earning your education on your own time.

No matter what your schedule, know that it's normal for there to be an adjustment period. Taking it one week at a time, planning out when you'll work on your assignments, and reflecting on each week as you progress through the semester will help you thrive during this busy time.





GOING TO SCHOOL WHILE WORKING: UNIQUE BENEFITS

Going to grad school while continuing to work gives you a distinct advantage — you're able to **apply the information you learn in your classes to your work immediately**. This means that your employer benefits from the latest research and techniques in your field, so both you and your company have a competitive edge.

When you use your experiences at work to shape your ideas for class assignments and projects, your classmates (and grades) will benefit as well. You'll be able to share your hands-on expertise as you collaborate with other students in your class.

You'll also **grow your network** each time you meet a new classmate or faculty member. Even if you aren't looking for a new job right now, it's smart to get to know people in your field. In the event that your long-term career goals change, you'll be glad you made these connections.



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*First-Hand
Advice From a
Graduate Student
and Working
Professional*

HALEY HALIBOZEK, MBA STUDENT



Why did you decide to pursue a graduate degree?

I have always wanted to earn an MBA, since studying business in undergrad. I knew an MBA would help me advance in my career. This decision could not have been made without the encouragement of my family, friends, mentors, and professors.

What are your career goals and dreams? How has your graduate program helped you?

I am currently an operations and buying analyst in the wine industry. I am hoping to advance within my current company to a management or leadership role. My courses are designed to prepare me for such new responsibilities, especially with my concentration in management.

Were you hesitant to pursue a graduate degree while working? What was your biggest concern and how did you overcome that?

Initially, I was concerned about pursuing an MBA while working full time. I was worried about the commute and how it would affect my full-time job. COVID-19 changed everything! Working and taking classes remotely put the majority of my concerns to rest.

What has been the most rewarding part of your graduate school experience?

I am currently enrolled in two classes this semester and have completed three others thus far. The most rewarding part has been that I am already applying principles and concepts I have learned to my full-time job. I can see that I am producing higher quality work and my superiors are happy with my improvements.

What advice would you give to others considering going to graduate school while continuing to pursue their career? Any tips on how to juggle the additional responsibility of a graduate program?

I am so glad that I gained work experience before beginning my graduate degree. I feel that I am getting far more out of my education and a stronger sense of appreciation for the program. I would advise others to prepare extensively with their jobs, personal lives, health, etc. and make a plan for how they will integrate everything. Utilizing spreadsheets and calendars are a great way to keep everything organized during the semester. If you think you are over planning, you are doing it correctly!



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*How to Thrive in
Your Job, While
Learning From
Home*

In today's world, employers and educators understand that productivity and learning regularly happen remotely.

But, what does a work-from-home job look like for a graduate student? And how can you succeed at both?

While all jobs are different, many people find that it helps to schedule regular work-from-home hours. When you're not in the office, it can be tempting to check email and answer work-related texts at all hours of the day. Doing so, however, can be detrimental to both your productivity and mental health.



One of the largest benefits of working from home is the lack of a commute. This can add hours of productivity (or relaxation) to your day. Keep in mind, some professionals find it challenging to get into a workday groove. For people who typically use their commute to mentally prepare before walking into the office, creating a morning routine can be helpful. Going for a walk, exercising, dressing in a business casual outfit, or even running out for a cup of coffee before opening your laptop can go a long way towards helping you prepare for the day.

What about work-from-home parents?

Going to school as a working parent can be a challenge, especially if the children are also learning from home. It's essential to have a schedule for the entire family — and that schedule needs to include “do not disturb” hours. These hours can look different from family to family. For most, “do not disturb” hours are times when either children entertain themselves (if they're old enough to do so) or are looked after by a family member or babysitter. During these times, it's important to set boundaries, letting your family know that you're not to be disturbed unless there's an absolute emergency.

The Dangers of Multitasking (and a few solutions)

It can be tempting to multitask throughout the day, switching between school and professional work. However, research shows that for the vast majority of people, [multitasking doesn't work well](#). "Mono-tasking," or doing one thing at a time, has been proven time and again to be most effective. If you're working from home and learning from home, set up a schedule that will help you keep your focus throughout the day.

Time chunking is another great time management option. Setting up your schedule with "blocks" dedicated to different tasks can help you manage your day. Blocking off time for specific work tasks (such as meetings or special projects) and blocking off time for school tasks can help you to organize your day in a way that makes sense. If your work schedule has busy and not-so-busy times, time chunking is a good way to accommodate your varying schedule.

Pro-tip: Making to-do lists sorted by priority level can be another smart way to figure out what needs to be done each day. Breaking your tasks (for work, school, and life) into "must do" and "want to do" sections can help you stay focused and sane when the list gets overwhelming.

READY TO GET STARTED?

HERE ARE YOUR BACK TO SCHOOL OPTIONS

As you research graduate degree programs, you'll find that you have several options: online, hybrid, and in-person. Here are some of the pros, cons, and things to consider in your decision:



Online

A fully online program can be an ideal option for those who are already working from home. Often, an online program requires no visits to campus. Before you sign up, talk with a program advisor about whether you'll need to be online during scheduled times. While many online programs allow you to work on your own time (asynchronous learning), others require you to be online at set times (synchronous learning) to participate in class discussions or to take exams.



Hybrid

For students who enjoy the convenience of an online program but also want the traditional classroom experience, a hybrid program can be the perfect solution. A hybrid program offers a mix of online and in-classroom courses. You may be able to choose which courses you take online, or your graduate program might have predetermined options available. Often, in-person classes for hybrid programs are scheduled on nights or weekends, allowing you to complete your degree without interrupting a traditional 9-5 work schedule.



In-person

If you prefer a traditional classroom experience, an in-person graduate program may be a good fit for you. If you're working full-time, an in-person program could be difficult, as you'll need to factor in time to commute to and from campus and you won't be able to pick and choose when you engage in class discussions. Many in-person programs try to accommodate working professionals by blocking classes on nights or weekends.

Is online learning right for you?

Many people thrive in online learning programs, but that doesn't mean it's a good fit for everyone. There are many advantages to working and learning from home. You have the flexibility you need to thrive in all areas of your life, can set your own schedule, and cut out commuting time. Without water cooler or after class discussions, you'll be able to fully focus on your work and your classes, getting more done in less time.

Balancing working and learning from home requires good time management skills, the ability to prioritize tasks, self-motivation, and knowing when you need to ask for help from your employer or professors. There's no doubt that online learning is convenient, but it's important to determine if you have the self-discipline required to succeed at both.





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*Meeting Your
Career Goals:
Flexible Degree
Opportunities
at Sacred Heart
University*



As part of our Sacred Heart community, you'll work closely with faculty members and you'll be a part of a group that understands your busy schedule. At SHU, we respect the work you're putting into your professional growth and we'll be with you every step of the way as you pursue your degree.

Our Graduate Student Affairs office is here to [support and encourage you as you make the transition to graduate work](#). The GSA provides an orientation to new students and acts as a liaison between you and the school. We know that going back to school can present some challenges and the GSA is here to make your transition as seamless as possible.



SHU'S FULLY ONLINE GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Our graduate programs are created to meet the needs of busy working professionals who are ready to take the next step in their career. We offer many online graduate programs including (but not limited to):



Ph.D. in Social Work

This part-time, [online program allows social workers to further their education](#), setting themselves up to create lasting change that positively affects their communities. Students participate in a week-long summer immersion, allowing them to enjoy time with classmates and faculty while still maintaining the convenience of an online program. Many students complete this program in 3-4 years, but up to seven years of study are permitted.



Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Whether you're a teacher who is ready to step into administration or an administrator who wants to take your career to the next level, this online, practice-focused, three-year [program gives you the skills that you need to help your students and faculty thrive under your leadership](#). Students develop their academic, social, and emotional leadership skills, empowering them to be an example in their educational institutions.



Master of Public Administration

Ready to make a difference by ensuring that public policies are implemented in ways that help your community? [Earning your Master of Public Administration degree online](#) will help you understand how public policy is enacted, and how you can work to create lasting change at the local, state, and federal government levels. Students can complete the MPA program in one year (full-time) or two years (part-time). In this program, students get to choose their focus: non-profit management, emergency management, or a self-designed concentration.

Pro-tip: Interested in public administration? [Check out our resource — What Is a Master's in Public Administration?](#)



Master of Science in Healthcare Informatics

When you earn your graduate degree in healthcare informatics, you'll [learn how to use data to inform hospital procedures and policies](#), improving patient outcomes. This 36-credit course of study can be completed fully online or on campus.





SHU'S HYBRID AND LOW RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

In addition to our many fully online programs, Sacred Heart University offers many hybrid and low residency programs. These flexible learning options include:



Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) in Finance

Often seen as the final stage in business education, [earning your DBA](#) in finance at Sacred Heart will set you up for leadership roles and high-level projects in any business environment. This three-year, low-residency program allows students to continue working full-time in their careers while earning an advanced degree.



Doctor of Nursing Practice: Family Nurse Practitioner

Ready to take your nursing career to the next level? [Earning your FNP-DNP will prepare you to open your own practice](#), or meet other long-term career goals, such as managing other nurses, working as a nurse educator, or working as a lead practitioner on patient treatment teams. This program's hybrid format, with both part and full-time options, allows students to work on their own time, only coming to campus for an average of six days each semester.

Pro-tip: Ready to become a leader in the field of nursing? [Check out our resource — Do You Want to Advance Your Nursing Career? A Guide to Understanding the DNP Degree and FNP Specialization.](#)



Master of Science in Accounting

Today's global economy, changing regulations, and tighter integration across key business functions have created an unprecedented demand for skilled accountants with advanced degrees. Students in this program get to choose from one of two in-demand concentrations: forensic accounting or accounting analytics. [This hybrid program blends online coursework with monthly Saturday seminars](#), allowing students to continue working full-time jobs. This program can be completed in as little as one year.



Master of Public Health

If you want to shape public policy or work to ensure that public health initiatives are carried out in a way that benefits your community, this degree may be perfect for you. [Students in this program study several facets of health that affect the public](#), including epidemiology, social-ecological determinants of health, health promotion, public health administration, and research methods. This degree can be completed through full or part-time learning tracks.

Pro-tip: If you're ready to make a tangible difference in your community, [check out our resource: Exploring the Master of Public Health at Sacred Heart University.](#)



Master of Social Work

Earning your master of social work will allow you to work for both public and private agencies, providing families with the counseling and resources they need to thrive. Students will choose between a direct clinical practice and a direct community practice concentration. This [program is offered in a part-time, hybrid format](#). Classes are held on alternating Saturdays. Students can complete this hybrid program in 3 years.



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*Elevate Your Career
at Sacred Heart*

If you're ready to take steps toward your graduate education, we're here to help you. You can begin by requesting more information or scheduling a call with one of our admissions professionals. We're excited to help you find the program that's the best fit for you.

We're looking forward to getting to know you better and wish you the best of luck in your future academic endeavors!

**Request More
Information**

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Hidden Gems**

Schedule A Call

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