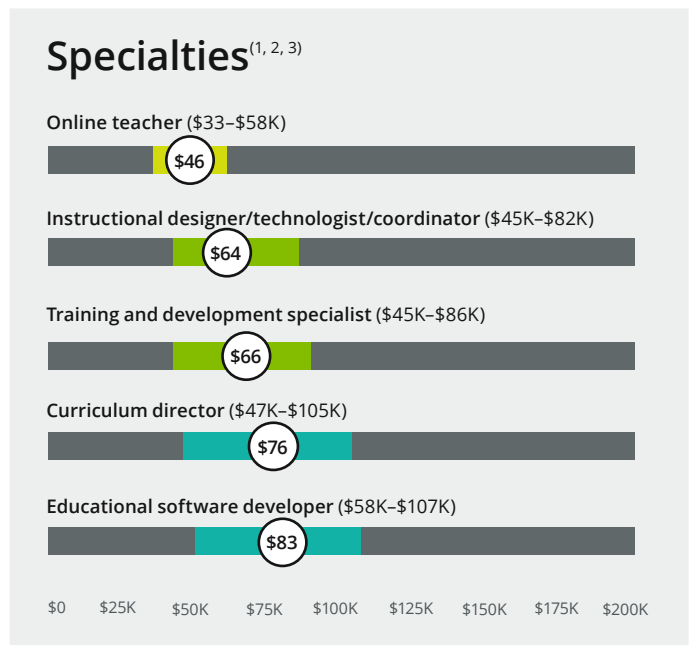## Emerging careers

Online education

While online learning was once seen as an inferior educational option, it's quickly evolved into a reputable alternative to traditional models of education, and possibly the primary model of the future. Virtual schooling and online professional training provide learners with flexible options in a near endless array of courses that can adapt to individuals' needs. As the industry continues to evolve, there's a high demand for job candidates with expertise in designing, teaching, and managing courses specifically for an online environment.

In the world of formal education, some educators specialize in online instruction, but many are traditional classroom teachers delivering a limited number of courses virtually. In this case, institutions employ instructional designers (titles vary) to support teachers in digital course design and implementation. In the corporate world, training specialists often take on multiple roles — both developing and implementing the instruction. And serving each of these online learning models are software developers who create the learning platforms, applications, and tools that are the backbone of online education.

Specialties [1, 2, 3]

Online teacher ($33–$58K)
$46

Instructional designer/technologist/coordinator ($45K–$82K)
$64

Training and development specialist ($45K–$86K)
$66

Curriculum director ($47K–$105K)
$76

Educational software developer ($58K–$107K)
$83

$0 $25K $50K $75K $100K $125K $150K $175K $200K
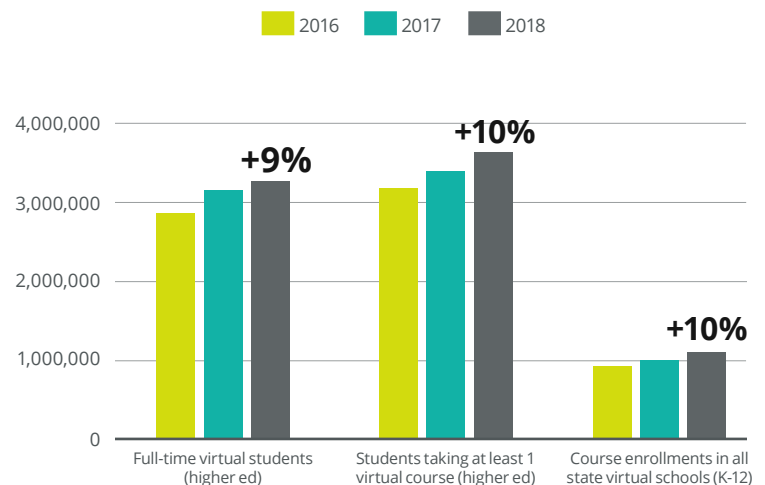
Skills of the field

Technical skills

- Multimedia development and content management software
- Teaching
- Project management
- Content and curriculum development
- Graphic design

Soft skills [3]

- Oral/written expression
- Learning strategies
- Systems evaluation
- Fluency of ideas
- Active listening

Industry growth

Virtual school and online course enrollment 2016–2018. [4, 5, 6]

■ 2016　■ 2017　■ 2018

+9% — Full-time virtual students (higher ed)

+10% — Students taking at least 1 virtual course (higher ed)

+10% — Course enrollments in all state virtual schools (K-12)
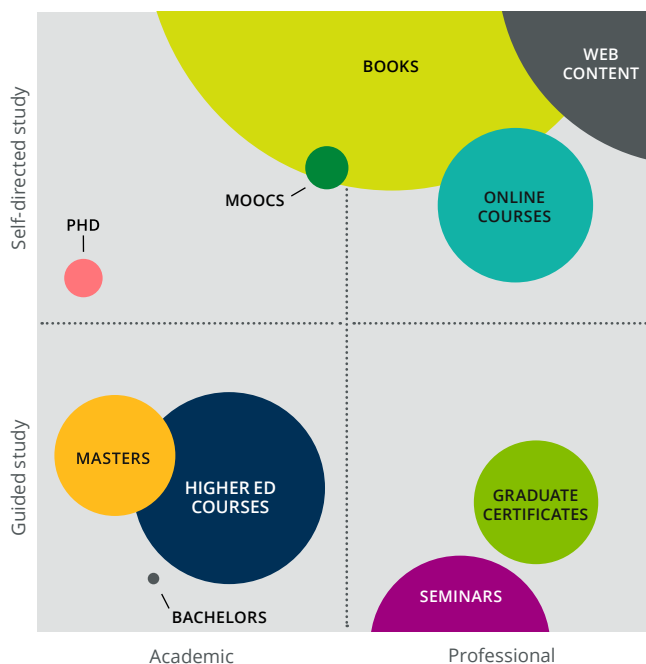
Study options available

For teachers, the undergraduate path and credentialing requirements that apply to educators in a brick and mortar institution also apply to those who exclusively teach in an online environment. Very few edtech bachelors degrees exist (though education majors may choose a technology concentration). Edtech study is largely at the graduate and professional level, and many teacher, technologist, and trainer positions require a master's degree or PhD. To get started in the field while pursuing an advanced degree, online tutoring and adult education roles can give relevant, entry-level experience.

This is not to say there aren't paths for career-changers with applicable on-the-job experience, particularly at the corporate level. Those who've acquired the necessary foundations in design thinking and learning theory, and who also have strong project management skills and vast technical knowledge, will be strong candidates.

Explore additional fast-growing professions that offer new opportunities for rewarding careers—with the right education and skills.

See the careers >

EdTech Education options

Self-directed study / Guided study vs. Academic / Professional quadrant chart showing: BOOKS, WEB CONTENT, MOOCS, PHD, ONLINE COURSES, MASTERS, HIGHER ED COURSES, BACHELORS, GRADUATE CERTIFICATES, SEMINARS

Insider advice

"Be leery of a graduate degree program that teaches you how to use certain tools. I don't think software training belongs in a graduate program, especially when people in the real world learn the software on their own for free. Your education should equip you to diagnose performance problems and help people change what they do; you shouldn't pay thousands of dollars to have an instructor tell you which buttons to click unless you're in a certificate program specifically designed to teach you a tool."[7]

- Cathy Moore, eLearning and training consultant

Sources

[1] "What Jobs Can I Get with an Educational Technology Degree?", learn.org
[2] "Educational Software Developer Salaries", Glassdoor.com
[3] "25-9031.01 - Instructional Designers and Technologists", the National Center for O*NET Development
[4] "Full-Time Virtual and Blended Schools: Enrollment, Student Characteristics, and Performance", National Education Policy Center
[5] "Keeping Pace with Digital Learning Report – SNAPSHOT 2019: A review of K–12 online, blended, and digital learning", "Keeping Pace with Digital Learning Report – SNAPSHOT 2020: A review of K–12 online, blended, and digital learning", Digital Learning Collaborative
[6] "Online Enrollments Grow, but Pace Slows", Doug Lederman
[7] "How to become an instructional designer", Cathy Moore

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