

Fitting professional education into a busy schedule:

Tips for advancing your career.

EBOOK

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt over a white top and blue jeans, is sitting on a white chair at a white desk. She is looking down at a notebook and holding a purple pen. A laptop is open on the desk to her left. On the floor in front of her, a young child with long dark hair is sitting cross-legged, focused on a craft project. The room is bright and modern, with a white wall and a window in the background.

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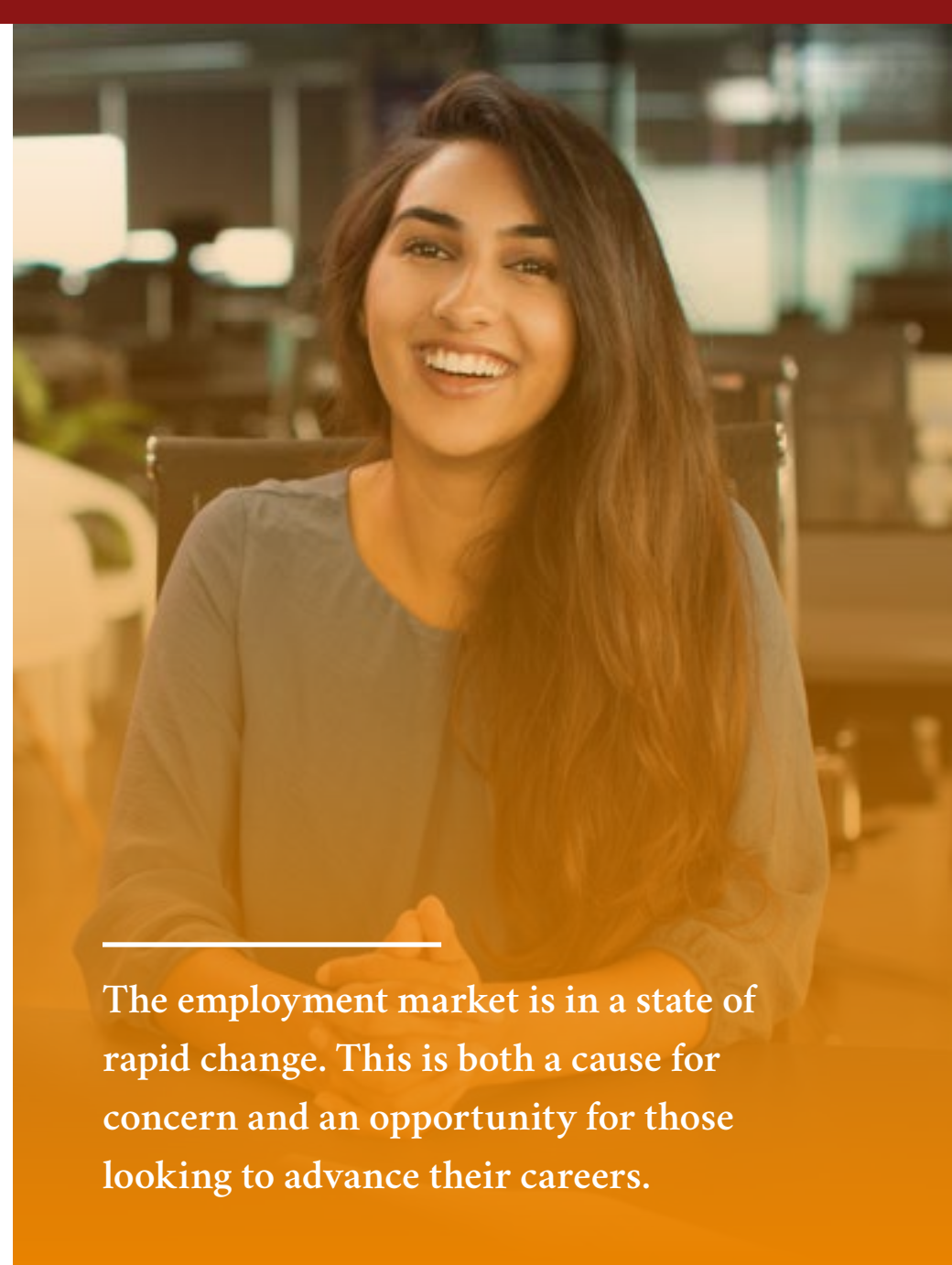
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Let professional education propel your career forward

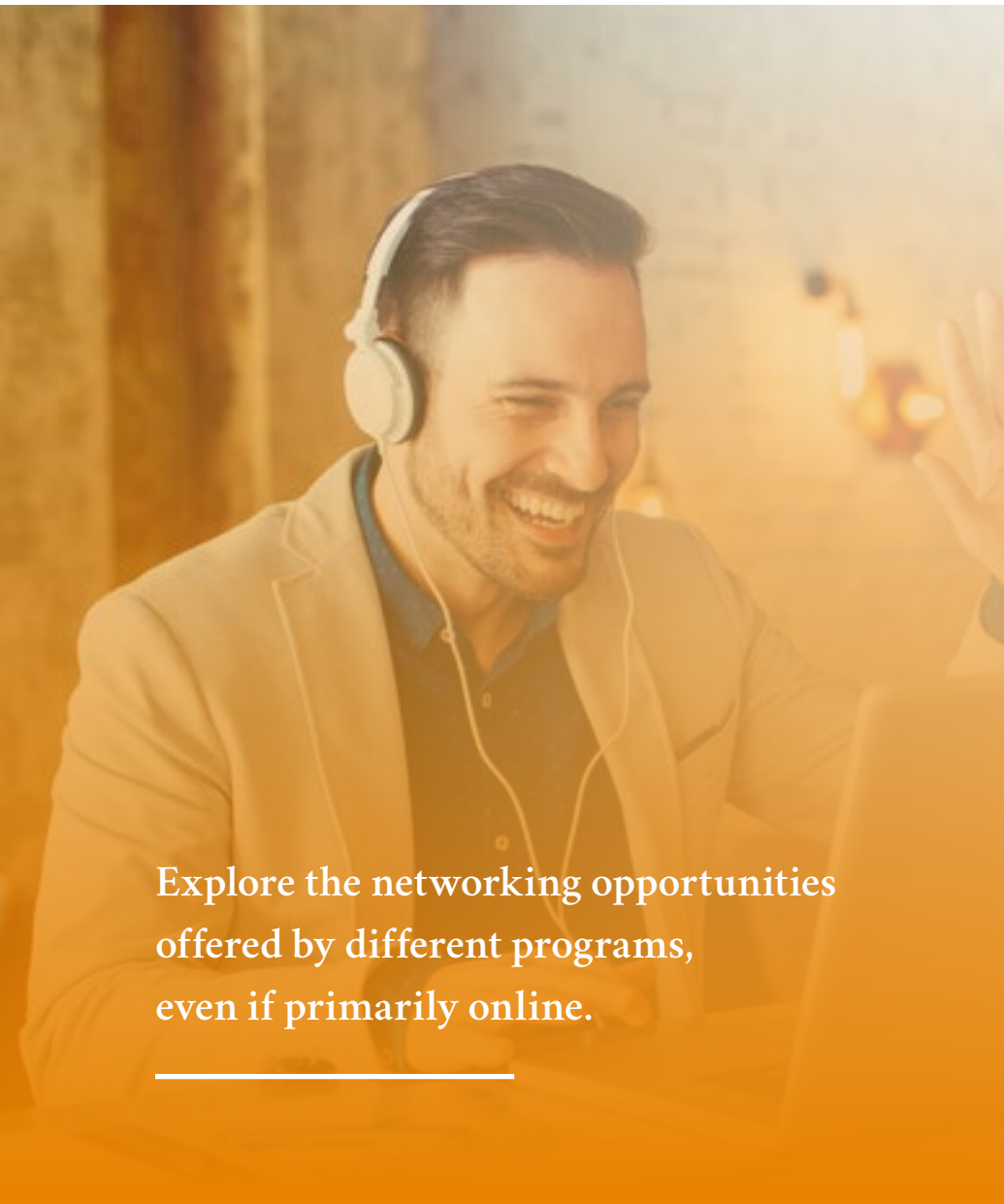
The employment market is in a state of rapid change. This is both a cause for concern and an opportunity for those looking to advance their careers.

Increasing automation and changing economies will eliminate some jobs, but other fields are expected to grow, creating new jobs and new opportunities. Keeping up with employment and industry trends is important if you want to avoid falling behind.

Professional education can help you gain skills, explore new fields, and advance career opportunities. It may seem difficult to find the time to further your education while working full-time and managing family and other responsibilities, but the right approach and program can make all the difference. Find a program designed for professionals like you.



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Determine your priorities

Are you interested in furthering your knowledge in your current field of work or exploring an entirely new field? Look for institutions that offer a range of options that meet your interests. Consider the provider – taking professional-level courses from a respected institution like Stanford University may help you stand out from the crowd.

Do you need a flexible program that you can complete while working full-time? Explore programs that have a proven record in online, professional education. Make sure they can provide you with the support and flexibility you need.

Are you interested in networking with fellow students? Do you want courses that are entirely online or are you open to programs that offer an on-campus component? Find out what different institutions offer and consider the reviews of other students. Explore the networking opportunities offered by different programs, even if primarily online. Find out to what degree Q&A and group work is offered and/or encouraged, and ask about the availability of instructors to engage with students online.



Pace yourself

Look for a professional education program that meets your criteria, and then take it slow. Once you decide to act, you may be eager to get started. But don't get in over your head by enrolling in too many courses at once.

Start with a single course to establish some foundational knowledge that can lead to more advanced subject matters down the road. This helps you focus on the material at hand so you can fully absorb each lesson and not feel overwhelmed.

Taking courses one at a time – at least at first – makes it easier to carve out a schedule for studying. Finding a good work/life/education balance is key to making professional education a positive experience, so don't risk taking on too much at once.

Enrolling in one class also keeps your initial investment low, while you determine if professional education is something you want to continue to pursue.

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Find subjects you care about

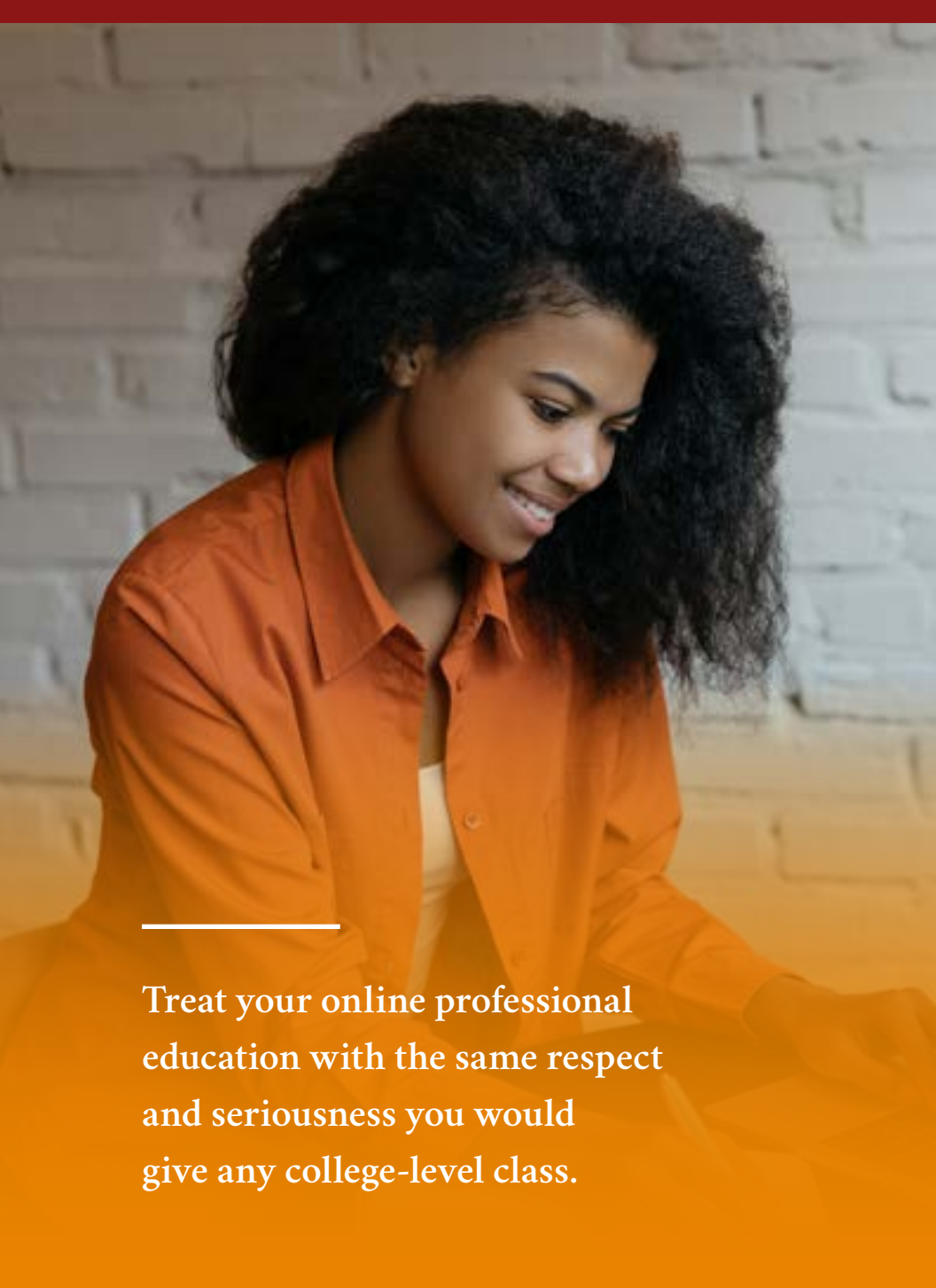
After a long day at work, time spent with family or friends, and managing personal to do's, it can be tough to find the bandwidth to sit down and watch a lecture, work on a project or study for an upcoming exam.

It is easier, however, to find time to study and stay engaged with coursework if you are interested in the subject matter. It feels less like work, because you find the material interesting and genuinely want to learn more about it.

Seek out courses that interest you, not just those with perceived career benefits. If you find the material boring, this can make studying and coursework feel extra burdensome.

Self-directed learning is critical to making online professional education work, so make sure you are engaged with the material. You will likely find the lessons in many subjects can be applied to your daily work.

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Embrace a student mindset

Although you may have many responsibilities that take priority over your professional education – a full-time job, family, etc. – don’t make the mistake of treating your coursework as an afterthought.

The courses offered through university programs are typically based on – and often conducted alongside – on-campus undergraduate and graduate classes. Treat your online professional education with the same respect and seriousness you would give any college-level class.

When possible, keep up with the schedule of classes, collaborate with your fellow students, and take notes when watching recordings of lectures. Ask your instructor for assistance if you feel lost or confused. These steps will help you invest in the material, make time to study and feel engaged in the classroom.

Set a regular study time

Of course, discipline and dedication are both needed to keep up with coursework and assignments. One of the best aspects of online education is that you can fit it to your schedule. You have the flexibility to view lessons, watch lectures and work on assignments whenever it best suits you.

If you let one missed lecture turn into two or more, you may try to rush through coursework to catch up and not fully understand the material.

Carve out regular time to devote to your course and establish it as part of your routine. This will make it easier to stay on track and maintain a sustainable balance between your professional education, your work life and your private life.

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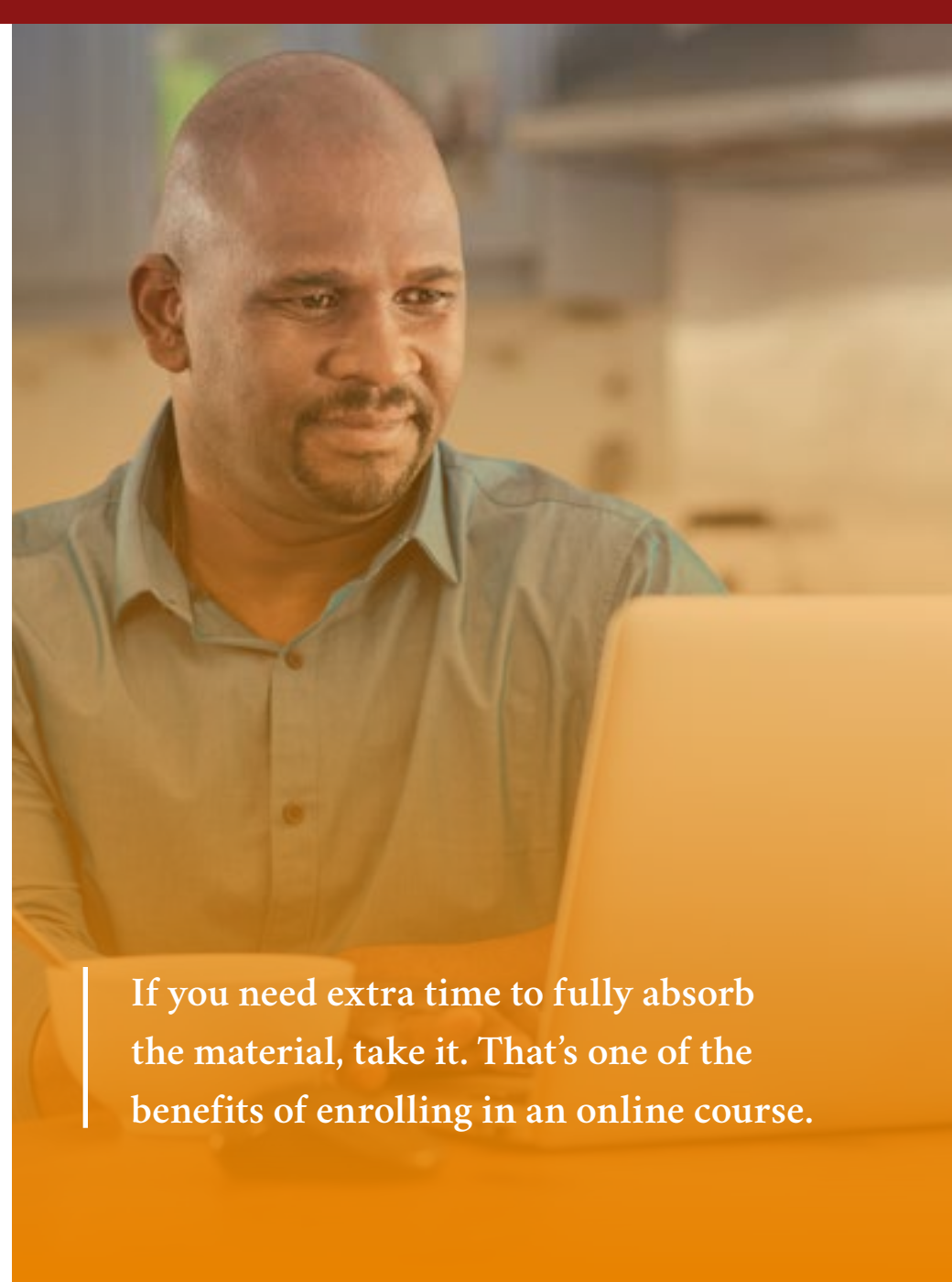


Take time going through class materials

Traditional college classes move quickly, and if you don't attend a single lesson or lecture, you can miss out on foundational knowledge that sets up later assignments and coursework.

Online courses give students the flexibility to view them at any time, so you can go back and revisit material. There's no pressure to take notes on every single part of a lecture, because you can always review it online as many times as you wish. If you need extra time to fully absorb the material, take it. That's one of the benefits of enrolling in an online course.

Watch lectures and view lessons at your own pace, even revisiting recordings and material as needed. As long as you have a regular routine, you don't have to feel pressure to push through coursework. Take a break if you can't focus on the material, as it is easy to step away and come back later. Allow yourself the time to understand the subject matter fully before moving on to another lesson.



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Do not hesitate to connect with your fellow students – they are a wonderful resource for support as well as networking.

Reach out for help

Taking classes online can make remote students feel like they are on their own, with no one to answer questions or clarify confusing concepts. But, the truth is, you are not alone.

Other students, whether they are remote or on campus, are undoubtedly going through the same struggles as you. Do not hesitate to connect with your fellow students – they are a wonderful resource for support as well as networking. Find a program that is inclusive, with an active student community eager to answer questions and collaborate on projects.

Look for instructors who are responsive and available to discuss your questions about a subject or help remediate any challenges you might be experiencing as a remote student. If anything in your coursework is confusing or you want to discuss a project with your instructor, reach out and contact them. They are available to help.

Enrolling in an online professional education program can open the doors to a welcoming academic community. Be an active member of that environment and speak up.



Find the right program for you

Taking that first step toward a professional development certificate may seem overwhelming, especially with life's competing priorities. With the right professional education program, you can fit ongoing academics into your schedule alongside work and personal commitments.

Stanford Online is committed to providing extended education opportunities to professionals worldwide. Whether you are interested in advancing your career, improving job prospects or transitioning to a different industry, we are here for you.

Stanford Online courses are flexible, allowing your online education to adapt to your life, not the other way around. You can fit online professional education into your schedule with a bit of planning.

Don't let other obligations hold you back from advancing your career. Explore our offerings today at Stanford Online.

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