

## Landmark for Kaplan Open Learning: First online degree students graduate

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Online degree students meet for the first time at their graduation at the University of Essex

London – August 2010 – There have been celebrations at the online higher education college, the University of Essex as the first set of Foundation and Bachelor's degrees graduates from Kaplan Open Learning met for the first time at their graduation ceremony. The graduates studied their degrees entirely online through Kaplan Open Learning, which was launched in 2007 by the international education and training company Kaplan with the University of Essex.

Of the 24 students in the first graduating class, approximately 1/3 are employees in the public sector working for councils, schools, an ambulance service and the Home Office. Three quarters of the graduates are women.

The online degree format offers far greater flexibility than traditional full-time and part-time degrees which require attendance on a campus, so students can pursue an online degree without disrupting their work or family life. This creates an excellent opportunity for many of these working adults to gain higher education qualifications who otherwise would not be able to do so.

Scheduled online classes connect staff and students through both live audio and chat rooms to encourage active discussion and interactive learning in real time. Though building relationships online for three years, it wasn't until the graduation ceremony that the students met each other and their advisers and tutors in person.

Victoria Blahyj-Murfitt, Foundation degree, Business Studies, and winner of the Kaplan Inspiration Prize, said: "Juggling work, two small boys and voluntary commitments at times made the studying seem impossible...I knew that I had to finish the course both for myself and to prove to my children that if you really want something then no matter what barriers you are faced with you can achieve it. Since starting the degree I have gained promotion in my working life and have exceeded the expectations of my current employer...The best thing of all is that my children have been shouting my achievement from the rooftops and are openly so proud of me."

The courses offer multiple start dates throughout the year with a continuous 52-week academic calendar, and allow students to study wherever they have access to the internet. Students can contact their own dedicated academic adviser and tutors outside regular class hours.

Courses on offer include Business Studies, Financial Services and Criminal Justice. The Foundation degree is awarded by the University of Essex and a third year course can be taken that leads to the award of a BA (Hons) by the University.

For more information about online degree courses from Kaplan Open Learning, please visit [kaplanopenlearning.org.uk/](http://kaplanopenlearning.org.uk/).

About Kaplan, Inc.

Kaplan, Inc. is a leading international provider of educational and career services for individuals, schools and businesses. Kaplan is a subsidiary of The Washington Post Company (NYSE: WPO). For more information, please visit [www.kaplan.com](http://www.kaplan.com)

About the University of Essex

The University of Essex is one of the UK's leading academic institutions, consistently ranking among the top 12 universities in the country for the quality of its research and teaching. Founded in 1964, it has more than 9,000 students drawn from around 130 countries. For more information, please visit [www.essex.ac.uk](http://www.essex.ac.uk).

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