

# Distance Learning for HEC

IN BRIEF



## The challenge

Offering participants in the Executive MBA unlimited access to more than seventy distance learning sessions with a view to perfecting their command of such academic fundamentals as finance, marketing, administration, project management, supply chain or strategy.

## HEC

For the second consecutive year, this “Grande Ecole”, with over 3,000 students, was ranked number one in Europe by the Financial Times. Its tenured lecturers publish in the most prestigious international reviews. It has signed 113 agreements for academic cooperation projects with over 39 countries and its MBA, as well as its executive courses, are ranked in the top 20 worldwide.



► Both client and teaching partner of CrossKnowledge, HEC has its students take advantage of the distance learning material developed in partnership with the publisher.

The majority of participants in HEC continuing education programs are working executives with extremely busy schedules. Based on this observation, HEC signed a partnership with CrossKnowledge in 2002 with a view to developing a flexible, top-notch training program adapted to their situation. The aim is to efficiently bring participants up to speed while preparing for and complementing their in-class learning.

Prior to 2001, for example, participants in the Executive MBA were offered two days pre-requisite training in finance so as to be able to keep up with in-class lessons and not lag behind. Since the partnership was signed, this training has been replaced by self-training sessions. A “blended” program, combining in-class and distance learning in the qualifying courses (Executive MBA, Masters, etc.), now enables registered executives and upper managers to take advantage of unlimited access to more than seventy CrossKnowledge distance learning sessions on such academic fundamentals as finance, marketing, administration, project management,

supply chain or even strategy. *“Fear of not meeting the grade is high. That is the challenge! To top things off, these are people who cannot stand to waste their time. This explains why they are so motivated to acquire the essentials in order to fully benefit from the in-class training”*, explains Nathalie Lugagne, Director of Studies for HEC Executive Education.

## Diverse levels

Every year, some two hundred people take part in the Executive MBA. The learning platform (Learning Management System) provided by CrossKnowledge gives them access to different sessions while keeping a record of their learning activity. While these participants boast, on average, fourteen years of experience in high-ranking positions of responsibility, they present very diverse backgrounds, not least in their past academic training - 32% hold diplomas from engineering schools, 14% come from business schools and 20% come from a postgraduate background. Aside from their experience, they have differing professional backgrounds too: for example, some

## TESTIMONIAL

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Nathalie Lugagne,  
Director of Studies for HEC Executive Education

have never had cause to look closely at a balance sheet. For this reason, 97% of participants in the Executive MBA follow a CrossKnowledge online training session every year.

Two main drivers are behind this extremely high participation rate.

### Demand for pre-requisites

The first lies in the fact that online resources are an integral part of the program. It is clearly specified that, out of 800 hours of Executive MBA Training, 500 take place in the classroom. The remaining 300 hours are partially spent in self-training: *“We indicate the prerequisites corresponding to the subject matter that is to be covered in class. Depending on their agendas, the trainees can then decide which training sessions best fit their requirements. The problem resulting from diverse backgrounds and levels mainly applies to continuing education. It is much less important with regard to initial training. And even if levels are more homogeneous, sessions are also available for the Specialised Masters programs. By giving them access to a catalogue of online training sessions, as a complement to their studies, we offer them an extraordinary advantage.”*

### Consistency in the teaching approach

The educational coherence of the approach is the second reason for the high participation rate. The content provided for learners online has been previously validated by academic directors who, depending on their field of specialisation, guarantee the quality and consistency of the content. This is true for the methods used in class as well as for those applying to the online material.

By placing users in a situation using practical case studies designed to help them grasp the basic concepts, the CrossKnowledge approach has won tremendous support. So has the shorter version of each session, particularly well-suited to people with little spare time. Consistency in the educational approach is almost a given since eminent professors from HEC are already involved in helping to develop CrossKnowledge training programs.

### The HEC label is an asset

The HEC authors help create a link between the sessions and the teaching methods of the professors' in-class approach. The experience is all the more enriching for the authors as CrossKnowledge has set up a

method to ensure that the knowledge transfer takes a minimum of time. For Nathalie Lugagne, *“We are constantly on the lookout for issues that our lecturers can transfer to the online courses. In fact, we have just finished a program on the supply chain. There are surely possibilities with regard to personal development and leadership as well. It is a way for HEC to showcase its added value in the academic field...”* There are still many topics to come! ●●●

