

The world's best universities online

To take a course of sociology at Princeton University economic theory or in the presentation of Michigan professors, now do not have to walk out of his apartment. Unique knowledge has become available on the Internet absolutely free.

31-year-old programmer from Dnepropetrovsk Sergei Henkin familiar with the Coursera project from the moment of its appearance. In autumn 2011 he took an online course on artificial intelligence, which previously could only dream of. The lectures were conducted by professors from around the world: Peter Norvig — Director of research of Google, the author of the book "Artificial intelligence: a modern approach", and Sebastian Thrun; the former Director of the Stanford artificial intelligence lab. Sergei was daily watching video lectures, performing assignments and taking exams, the results of which received a certificate from Stanford University. "The educational process is almost the same as in American and European universities, only a year of training worth tens of thousands of dollars, and I was absolutely free, says Henkin. — You don't need to be rich or brilliant to hear the best world experts, it is enough to have access to the Internet and to know English".

The Coursera project is a set of free online courses top universities in the world. Educational materials include video lectures, literature reading, homework, tests and exam questions. In fact it is comparable to a master's program in education, only on the Internet. And at the end of the course, students are not issued a diploma, and a certificate of completion signed by the teacher. Last year the project involved only Stanford University offered three courses, but in July, Coursera joined by 16 of the largest universities with 111 programs.

To date, lectures on the website listened to more than half a million students, right now and learn more about one million people, eight thousand of whom are Ukrainians.

The plans of the project founder Daphne Koller — Coursera to attract the maximum number of universities and open access to all academic disciplines. The project initially invented by Stanford Professor and her students, were given access to IT-courses. "But when it became clear to its full potential, the team is actively engaged in extension programs," explains Koller Focus. Today, Coursera is turning into the world's largest knowledge base, the aim of which is to give a quality education to millions of people regardless of their material wealth.

Gnaw granite

To register for participation in the project is very easy — just choose the course and fill out the form on the website coursera.org. The number of places is unlimited, there are no national or profile quotas do not exist. Restrictions on the number of simultaneously studied courses also aside free time from an applicant. "I always pay attention to what teachers teach. It is also important to watch a video where they briefly describe what will be discussed and what level of training they expect," says Sergey Khenkin. All courses are in English, it is important to have them sufficiently, because teachers have different accents and teaching style. As a rule, the participant may choose whether to take the course in full with all the homework and exams, or limit viewing of lectures. The first option requires significantly more time — not less than 10 hours per week on each course. Henkin himself until the end has passed courses on machine learning, artificial intelligence and the design and analysis of algorithms. All the knowledge he actively uses in its work. "During the course machine learning I learned to work with the software package MATLAB (the application program for solving problems in technical computing; the eponymous programming language) and learned a few ideas that are going to use in their projects".

That Coursera is the phenomenon in the field of education, and the teachers say Ukrainian universities. The Director of the School of journalism and Dean of the National University "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" Yevhen Fedchenko calls the project unique: while the cost of formal University education worldwide is growing rapidly, and even there where it was traditionally free, getting paid, leading universities are ready to share knowledge freely. "One of the drawbacks of online courses is the lack of a diploma. Prestigious universities will not distribute them on the Internet.

This would devalue the prestige of the University and the efforts of students who have passed a serious selection and invested the time and effort to do," explains Mabuza.

But Sergei Markedonov importantly — available expertise. A certificate is just a nice addition. "The use of this document depends greatly on who you are. The accomplished professionals with extensive experience, this paper will have little effect, but students or young professionals certainly can use it to interest a potential employer," explains Sergey.

Eye to eye

According to Professor Ohio state University Eric Williams, Coursera has many serious shortcomings. Practice shows that shy students are often afraid to say "I don't understand", and a talented teacher can "read" this language of the body. Besides during class the lecturer uses gestures, intonation and eye contact to emphasize the importance of some point, the need to record or remember it. And finally, the Internet will not replace the communication of students among themselves. "Often the most important part of learning is not at the lectures and during breaks between them and after them, when the students vividly discuss the [essay writing services](#) information. Unplanned natural discussion to help you better assimilate the knowledge that it is impossible during visual images", explains Eric.

Yevhen Fedchenko also notes the importance of communication between students: communication, acquired during the years of joint training, will

be useful in the future. The man who passes the course on the Internet, deprived of the opportunity to maintain a dialogue, ask questions and debate.

24-year-old journalist from Kiev Katerina Kaplun July 23 passes the course "Introduction to Finance" at the University of Michigan. Communicate with classmates on the special forum, but to consult with a teacher is not possible. "I think it's more self-study than a full-fledged distance learning. This amount of material is not enough to understand the finances. You will need to read further, and if the motivation is not very high, it is easy to "score," admits Katherine. ¶ But, on the other hand, entry to the course is also a step. I would hardly began to buy books myself to read them. And so it is possible to regularly view video and at least learn something".

Daphne Koller agree that the Coursera team still has work to do, but today they receive many grateful comments. The Professor tells the student of the course machine structures, Stanford University young engineer nuclear physicist from Japan. He was involved in the risk assessment of Japanese nuclear power plants and used the knowledge to fix serious flaws in his research. According to Daphne, it is the main goal of the project is not a diploma, but specific knowledge that help young professionals in the work, make the labor market more competitive and the world more interesting.

Olga Shilenko