# THE ONLINE PATH

## "It's spurred me onto land some really cool jobs"

**Paul Shaw was a serving solider and photography business owner when he decided to enrol on a nine-month web course with The Photography Institute in a bid to become a full-time photographer**



[Above] Paul Shaw went on to spend four months in Sierra Leone covering the Ebola crisis after completing an online course

"Work kept me very busy, so the course gave me the flexibility to study at my own pace, which attending a college would not have," says Paul Shaw on choosing an online course. But was it worth the nine months and £450? "Undoubtedly. After completing the course I went on to become an army photographer, one of only 37. The Photography Institute gave me the knowledge I needed to progress, and I've since spent six months as a video cameraman in Afghanistan as part of a Combat Camera Team, almost five months as the Prime Minister's official photographer, and four months in Sierra Leone covering the Ebola virus."

He was given experiences on the course which Shaw feels he wouldn't have gained elsewhere. "It was like a kickstart to understanding what can go well and what can go wrong, as well as how to use your camera correctly and efficiently, the right lenses to have, what equipment to use and why. I was impressed by how in-depth the technical side of the course goes, without it being confusing. It taught me a vast amount: so much so that I gained a commendation on my eight-month Defence Photographers course. I'm not sure I would have done so well without the course, as it has spurred me onto win some awards and land some really cool jobs."

**paulshawphotography.co.uk**

★ OVERVIEW

## LEARN ON THE WEB

Affordable, flexible, and accessible, online courses have been growing in popularity over the past five years. Most don't require any formal qualifications and link photographers with expert tutors from all over the world from the comfort and convenience of their living room.

Anthony Mondello, CEO of The Photography Institute explains how courses like its Diploma of Professional Photography work. "All the learning is done online. When you enrol you get a username and password, which enables you to log onto a secure student site. From there, you can download your first module, which you could liken to your text book as it contains all the information you will need to complete assignment one. Each module is around 60 pages and is full of detailed technical information delivered in a friendly, conversational manner. The concepts are further explained by way of diagrams, images and examples."

Assignments are usually a mix of theoretical and practical tasks, which are then uploaded for a tutor to mark. "You'll be given a grade out of 10 and a comprehensive evaluation of your work and ideas to help nurture and improve your skills each step of the way."

The self-paced Diploma of Professional Photography from the Photography Institute will currently set candidates back £649 and takes 24 weeks to complete, with students expected to invest an average of four to six hours a week. But there are options out there to suit everyone's budget and time frame. For example, the Open University is currently offering a £200 ten-week course in partnership with the RPS, the British Academy of Photography currently offers three home-based courses ranging from three to nine months, and £350 to £750 in cost, whereas the Institute of Photography delivers a variety of seven courses, priced between £29 and £950, with no set completion time. ✕