

# **DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This Policy covers educational provision leading to an award or part of an award which is delivered, supported and/or assessed through means which generally do not require the student to attend particular classes or events at scheduled times. Definitions are provided in Section 2.

The Policy outlines the minimum requirements that the University expects to be met by Programmes and Collaborative Partners when delivering provision as defined in Section 2. The requirements of this Policy should be read in conjunction with the online Quality and Standards Handbook and all other relevant University regulations, policies and guidelines.

## **2. DEFINITIONS**

Distance Learning (DL) takes place when the teacher and student, or supervisor and research student are in physically separate locations. Access to the teacher or supervisor and other learners is usually enabled through the use of technology. The interaction between the student and teacher or supervisor may be synchronous (in real time) or asynchronous (with a time delay) or a mixture of both. Distance learning may also be paper-based, in which case the interaction will be asynchronous.

## **3. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF DL PROGRAMMES AND PROVISION**

### **3.1 General principle**

Guiding the quality assurance and enhancement requirements of DL programmes is the general principle that students studying part, or all, of their programme by DL have an experience which is comparable with other

campus-based students, supported by a shared understanding of the expectations and responsibilities of all parties involved.

### **3.2 Approval of DL provision**

A taught programme or module, delivered by DL, is expected to be of equal quality to any other programme or module leading to a University award and, as part of the validation process, it must demonstrate that it shall meet students' needs effectively. Programmes and modules, which are delivered by DL, are validated in the same way as any other programme or module. In addition, the following key questions shall need consideration by the programme team and supported by adequate documentation:

- a) the management of the learning experience;
  - b) Relevance, life expectancy, security and reliability of the learning platform and software
  - b) applications;
  - c) staff skills and training;
  - d) student support arrangements; and
  - e) contingency plans in case of technological failure or inability to access the online platforms, due to trade embargoes in the country in which the student is based (to be discussed with appropriate University staff)
- Programmes not delivered by DL that wish to develop this mode of delivery shall be required to undergo an Interim Validation. Details can be found in the online Quality and Standards Handbook.

### **3.3 Student engagement and Annual Monitoring**

All DL shall be subject to the University's Annual Monitoring and Module and/or Programmatic Evaluation processes. Programmatic/Module evaluations shall include specific questions about students' experiences of

working remotely using technology and the results discussed with appropriate staff in the University with a view to enhancing provision. DL programmes shall normally conduct Programme Committee Meetings electronically.

Where an issue arises relating to the DL arrangements, this should be brought to the attention of staff and students concerned immediately and attempts to resolve the problem should be put in place at the earliest opportunity. If the issue cannot be resolved and the University deems that the student is unable to proceed with their studies as a result of this, the student(s) may be required to withdraw or transfer to another mode of delivery and/or programme.

### **3.4 Expectations on the University, its staff, and its students**

Learning is a partnership between staff across the University and individual students. There is a shared set of expectations between staff and students, which the University has encapsulated in the Student Charter.

Specifically in relation to DL:

#### **3.4.1 Programmes shall ensure that students are provided with:**

- a) a delivery system of the programme or module that is secure, reliable, fit for its purpose, and has an appropriate availability and life expectancy;
- b) study materials that meet the expectations of the University in respect of the quality of teaching and learning-support material for a programme or module leading to one of its awards;
- c) an appropriate contingency plan, which would come into operation in the event of failure of the designed mode of delivery;

d) from the outset of the student's study, at least one identified contact, either local or remote through email, telephone and post, who can give constructive feedback on academic performance;

e) information about when and how they may contact staff, a clear schedule for the delivery of their study materials and for assessment of their work;

#### **3.4.2 The University or Collaborative Partner shall ensure that:**

a) staff who provide support to learners on their programmes have appropriate skills, and opportunities to receive appropriate training and development;

b) the Programme Handbook (for taught programmes) details how the learner support that would normally be provided on site shall be delivered off-site (eg Student Services, personal tutor and library resources);

c) support for learners, when normally provided by Student Services, is made available remotely wherever possible and practicable;

d) staff with responsibility for assessment are capable of confirming that a student's assessed work is the original work of that student only, particularly in cases where the assessment is conducted through remote methods.

#### **3.4.3 Students shall ensure that:**

a) They have regular and reliable access to the internet with appropriate firewall protection and a computer that meets the minimum technical requirements set by the programme;

b) they make their own arrangements for IT support to resolve technical failures relating to their Internet Service Provider, firewall protection and their computer hardware and software as the University can only answer queries or provide support for University-owned equipment;

- c) They ensure that they understand the basic terms and descriptions used in computing so that they can follow instructions about how to use their computer to study and communicate;
- d) They engage with the learning materials and mode of delivery;
- e) They conform to the schedule for the programme delivery and assessment, monitor the receipt of materials and alert the University if materials are corrupted or fail to arrive;
- f) They take responsibility for developing their IT skills, where appropriate;

## **4. ADMISSION, ENROLMENT AND INDUCTION**

### **4.1 Admission requirements**

To qualify for consideration for admission to a DL programme or module applicants shall meet the normal entry requirements of the programme. In addition some programmes may require that applicants:

- a) Have reliable access to the appropriate technology to enable them to engage with the DL material;
- b) Accept the supervisory arrangements required by the University, which may include having a local supervisor/academic adviser when studying away from University;
- c) Provide evidence of access to the appropriate library, computing and other academic facilities required, eg letters from relevant libraries;

Where additional requirements for admission are operated by a programme this must be clearly defined in public-facing literature about the programme.

### **4.2 Enrolment**

Enrolment and re-enrolment shall be conducted by post and/or online for Distance Learning programmes, as required by the Academic Registrar. Registry shall provide bespoke letters for DL students.

### **4.3 Induction**

Induction may be conducted online or students may be required to attend a formal induction at Campus. DL students are guided to online resources that induct students into distance learning. These resources are provided by the University and monitored by the Distance and Blended Learning Advisory Group.