

Distance Learning Policy

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<p>Summary:</p> <p>This document defines the minimum requirements for delivering distance and/or flexible and blended learning for all programmes offered by the academy and its Collaborative Partners.</p> <p>Appendix 1 is updated annually by ITS staff and approved by Head of Training</p>	



SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Implementation date	Changes Approved by Senate

DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY

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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 Academy 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 Student and staff Handbooks and all other relevant Academy regulations, policies and guidelines.

This Policy, informed by good practice and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, is designed to safeguard and enhance the student experience.

2. DEFINITIONS

The term Distance Learning (DL) can be applied in situations where it is possible for a student to achieve all the outcomes and satisfy all the requirements of a programme, course, or module without attending the Academy. It would not apply in situations where teaching staff travel to a remote location to deliver a course and in DL contexts students and teachers/tutors are always in physically separate places. 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.

Flexible and blended learning (FBL) combines aspects of Distance Learning and synchronous educational practices and may involve a student spending a significant period of their studies away from the Academy undertaking a project, fieldwork or research either independently or under the auspices of another approved organisation, which may be based elsewhere in the UK or overseas.

3. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF DL PROGRAMMES AND PROVISION

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, wherever practicable and possible, comparable with other

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

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 Academy 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 applications;¹
- 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 Academy staff)

3. Student Engagement and Annual Monitoring

Where DL occurs as part of a programme that is credit bearing it shall be subject to the Academy's Annual Review and Evaluation processes.

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 Academy 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.

4. Expectations on the Academy, its staff, and its students

Learning is a partnership between staff across the Academy and individual students. There is a shared set of expectations between staff and students, which the Academy has encapsulated in the *Student Charter*. Specifically in relation to DL:

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 Academy 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;
 - f. a clear and realistic explanation of the expectations placed upon them for study of the programme or module, and for the nature and extent of autonomous, collaborative and

¹ Where delivery will require additional IT resources beyond the current IT learning platform and/or software applications, programmes must include a proposal for the purchase, licence and support in the Academic Resources Form.

supported aspects of learning plus details of the minimum technical requirements for the computer facilities required to access the online facilities;

- g. information about the Library Services, detailed on the Academy's Cloud- based Drop box Link:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/v15rfjnfbgzqz9a/AACKzNQRvnrgCyajfBE6fQ5ya?dl=0>
- g. where appropriate, regular opportunities for inter-learner discussions about the programme, both to facilitate collaborative learning and to provide a basis for facilitating their participation in the quality assurance and enhancement of the programme;
- g. appropriate opportunities to give formal feedback on their experience of the programme;
- g. access to all academic regulations and policies, including the *Distance Learning Policy*.

2. The Academy 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. relevant costs (FEC) for the proposed model of DL, including workload implications for staff involved are assessed at the New Programme Proposal stage and resources are allocated accordingly.
 - c. support for learners, when normally provided by Student Support Services, is made available remotely wherever possible and practicable.
 - d. the identity of applicants for distance learning courses are verified robustly and that staff receive the guidance, training and tools that promote reliable approaches to assessment and assist in the identification of contract cheating, plagiarism and related forms of academic misconduct.
3. Information Technology Services, * who have responsibility for software for which it holds the licenses, shall ensure that:
- a. the reliability of the delivery system within its remit is tested, and that contingency plans would come into operation in the event of the system/network failing;
 - b. they provide support as a minimum within normal working hours (currently Monday-Friday, 9- 5).

* ***Where the Academic Resources Form has confirmed that the delivery system will not be supported by ITS, the Programme shall be required to assume responsibility for the above.***

4. 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 Academy can only answer queries or provide support for Academy-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 Academy if materials are corrupted or fail to arrive;
 - f. they take responsibility for developing their IT skills, where appropriate; they regularly check their LMS integrated e-mail accounts to which essential information may be sent by the Academy.

4. ADMISSION, ENROLMENT AND INDUCTION

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 Academy, which may include having a local supervisor/academic adviser when studying away from Academy;
- c. provide evidence of access to the appropriate library, computing and other academic facilities required, e.g., letters from relevant libraries;
- d. provide evidence that they have sufficient funds available to meet the costs of the programme including travel to and from the UK and accommodation costs for attendance at the Academy relating to, where required, interview, induction, learning, assessment, viva voce examinations,

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

Applicants shall apply in the standard way for the programme.

Where an interview is required for entry, the Academy or Collaborative Partner may require the applicant to come to Lancing or the Collaborative Partner's base, with videoconferencing/Zoom being the preferred option for those who cannot attend a physical interview.

Where additional computer hardware and/software is required, a formal offer of a place may not be issued until Academy is satisfied that the appropriate equipment is in place.

Aviation Diploma students only:

Most Aviation Diploma students are likely to be studying at a distance from the Academy for some part of their registration period, whether or not they are formally registered as a Distance Learning Student. Supervision sessions can be conducted using LMS, email, Zoom and other forms of technology.

At interview the following matters concerning the student's learning environment will be assessed:

- a. Students must have regular and reliable access to the internet and a computer/Tablet that meets any technical requirements of their project;
- b. Students must make their own arrangements for IT support;
- c. Students must make their own arrangements for library access and data gathering.

2. Enrolment

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

3. Induction

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

5. COSTS AND TUITION FEES

Tuition fees are set annually. For details, please refer to the Academy website.

Where programmes require students to attend interview, specific learning and/or assessments (including viva voces) at the Academy, students shall bear all costs of travel to Academy, a Student Visitor visa (if required), accommodation and other associated costs.

APPENDIX 1 PERSONAL COMPUTING REQUIREMENTS

Note – these requirements are reviewed annually by ITS and the Head of Technology Enhanced Learning. They were last updated in May 2017. Any currently enrolled student who has concerns should contact their Programme Leader in the first instance.

Computer Hardware Requirements

Any computer or mobile device purchased within the last 5 years should be sufficient. If in doubt, or for older devices, the following minimum specifications will ensure that a workstation performs to a reasonable standard:

Operating System	Windows 7, 8.1 ,10,11	Mac OS X 10.7.x ²
Processor	2 gigahertz (GHz) or faster	2 gigahertz (GHz) or faster
Memory (RAM)	4GB	4GB
Hard Disk ³	250GB	250GB
Optical Drive (DVD/CD-ROM or Writer) ⁴	Optional	Optional
Sound ⁵	Yes	Yes

Computer Hardware Explained

a) Processor

This is the main component which will determine the speed of the computer. Intel processors are currently labelled Core i3, i5 and i7 with the latter being the most powerful and most expensive. Other brands such as AMD have equivalent models.

b) Memory (RAM)

This component is also very important to the overall performance of a PC. RAM stores files related to the operating system and programs which are running while the computer is turned on. Every program requires a certain amount of memory to run, so if too many programs or large files are run at the same time, the computer may run out of memory and begin running very slowly.

c) Hard Disk

Hard disk is the permanent means of storage and is where all the files such as Docs, Music, Pictures and the Operating System files are stored. It is important to have enough hard disk space to serve your storage needs. If a hard disk becomes very full it can negatively impact the overall computer performance.

For further advice on specification when purchasing a new computer, seek guidance from your preferred reseller.

d. Screen

When buying a new computer a screen size of at least 17" is recommended but sizes these days are routinely far larger and in wide screen format. Screen size for mobile devices such as laptops and tablets will generally be smaller than 17" but should be selected at a sufficient size for comfortable use.

- Latest version may be required for some software
- Considerably more disk space will be needed to store large amounts of personal files
- May be required to install additional software if supplied on DVD/CD-ROM and can be an externally attachable one, e.g., USB
- 5 Required if the programme requires media which has sound. Most modern computers and mobile devices have integrated sound

e. Printer

There are currently no printer specific requirements for Distance Learning programmes.

Mobile Devices and Tablets

This heading covers the increasingly popular Smart Phone and Tablet devices such as the iPhone/iPad, Android, or Windows-based phone/tablet devices. Most of the Academy online systems work on these mobile devices. However, we do not guarantee that all systems will be problem free. There is also a dedicated and fully supported Academy app available, which contains useful information and services and is available on Apple App Store, Google Play as well as a browser-based version.

Workstation Health & Safety

From a health and safety point of view, staff and students are advised to use a conventional workstation for long periods of study rather than laptops and mobile communication devices. As these more portable devices have become more popular there has been a corresponding increase in the number of people suffering from upper limb disorders and back problems. Please refer to the Health & Safety pages on the Intranet of Setup Help Guides and Workstation Exercises.

Computer Software requirements

a) Operating System

Microsoft Windows 7, 8.1 or 10, or Mac OS X 10.7 onwards are recommended and supported by our services. We are unable to support Linux or other less mainstream operating systems.

b. Other Software

The following software will be required for distance learning:

- i. Microsoft Word or an equivalent word processor which can save documents in the format .doc or .docx.



- ii. Other Microsoft Office products such as Excel or PowerPoint may be required by some courses. Microsoft Office (including Word) is available as a free download for all students via portal.office.com.
 - iii. Access to an email service – the LMS email system is provided by the Academy.
 - iv. A supported web browser – Apple Safari, Chrome and Firefox are recommended. Microsoft Internet Explorer (version 11 or above) is supported, but issues have been reported and it is not recommended.
 - v. Free downloads such as Adobe Reader may be required to open online material vi) A form of Malware/Virus Protection vii) Adobe Flash Player
- From time-to-time Microsoft offer deals to Academy staff and students. Details of any currently available deals will be posted on the Intranet by ITS.

Internet Connection

Distance learning programmes all require extensive access to online resources. As such, a broadband connection of at least 1Mbps is recommended. Higher speed services would be advantageous due to the reduced load times for online resources. A dial up connection is not recommended.

Electronic submissions for assessment

These should be word-processed documents in Microsoft Word format (either .doc or .docx). Students can submit assignments prepared using a Mac, running their preferred word processor and a standard web browser, as long as they submit work in one of these formats. The Assignments are uploaded via the LMS.

Computer Security and Disaster Recovery

Keeping the PC secure and ensuring coursework can be recovered in the event of a disaster is extremely important.

Computer and printer failure cannot be used as a reason to be granted an extended deadline for an assignment.

To try and ensure the PC is kept as secure as possible staff and students should:

- a) Use strong virus protection:

- i. Microsoft offer Security Essentials for Windows 7, which is free for home use, if there is no other protection in place. Windows 8 and 10 come with Windows Defender already installed but you may wish to choose a different solution for your protection.
- ii. Ensure the virus protection is kept up to date iii) Run scans for viruses at least once per month

- b. Use strong passwords:

- i. Use numbers
- ii. Upper- and lower-case letters

iii. Do not use common words or names

iv. Do not use the same password for everything

c. Be aware when using the computer that most threats can be eliminated by taking the following precautions:

i. Take care what links you click on in emails and online ii) Be careful what email attachments you open iii) Be careful where you browse on the internet

iv. Be careful what you say yes to when a dialogue box appears

iv. McAfee Site Advisor is a free download which can help you to determine where it is safe to browse

d. Make sure the operating system and software is kept up to date using services such as Windows Update

d. Use a Firewall: Windows has a firewall built in which is more than adequate in most cases.

It is very important that work can be recovered in the event of a PC based disaster, the following can help:

a. Save your work regularly

b. Save your work in versions, especially large assignments to minimise loss of work in the event of a file corruption

c. Backup your work regularly to CD, Memory Stick or using an online service such as Dropbox, Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive which is part of your Office 365 services as a student. You could also email assignment backups to yourself

d. Make sure you have your computer's recovery disk available in case it needs reinstalling because of failure

APPENDIX 2: IT SKILLS GUIDANCE FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

Entrants may be expected to be computer literate, have access to a laptop, PC or mac and the Internet. If students are unsure of their technological ability and how this relates to study, they may be required to complete the following IT Audit and return it to their Programme Leader who will ascertain if they have the required level of digital skills to study via this route.

1	USING WINDOWS	Yes	No
1.1	Login and understand the password procedures (if applicable)		
1.2	Run an application using Desktop or Start menu shortcuts or the programs Menu		
1.3	Run several programs simultaneously and switch between them (multi-tasking)		
1.4	Minimise, maximise, restore, move, resize and close windows		

2	WINDOWS APPLICATIONS - GENERAL	Yes	No
2.1	Create a new file		
2.2	Save, Save as, and open a file		
2.3	Save a file in different folders or different drives (e.g. F :)		
2.4	Print a file		
2.5	Cut, copy and paste within a file, between files and applications		
2.6	Use the online help menu		

3	WORD PROCESSING (using Word)	Yes	No
3.1	Open a new blank document		
3.2	Save and edit documents		
3.3	Save in different formats, and earlier versions of word		
3.4	Use formatting techniques including headings, bold, underline, font sizes etc.		
3.5	Insert graphics (copy/paste/clip arts)		
3.6	Add headers and footers		
3.7	Use spell checker		

3.8	Insert tables		
3.9	Create publications using text boxes, Word Art		
3.10	Insert images/photographs		
3.11	Format text and using columns		

4	Internet	Yes	No
4.1 a	Do you know what a URL is?		
4.1 b	Do you know what a hyperlink is?		
4.1	Enter web addresses (URLs) to access sites directly		
4.2	Follow hyperlinks to access other pages and sites		
4.3	Copy text and graphics from the web		
4.4	Use one search engines e.g., Google		

4.5	Download multimedia files (music, video, images)
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5	POWERPOINT	Yes	No
5.1	Create and use a PowerPoint presentation		
5.2	Edit a PowerPoint presentation		
5.3	Save a PowerPoint presentation		