

Distance or E-Learning

Definition

'Distance learning' or 'e-learning' is a flexible form of learning where a student can study at locations remote from the point of instruction e.g. from home, work or wherever else is convenient.

The term '*blended learning*' is being used increasingly for programmes that may be partly taught at a distance but which also involve use of some other approaches.

'Distance learning' or 'e-learning' is not a formal collaboration but rather a medium of delivery that can be used as an element of the forms of collaboration outlined. In some cases an arrangement is made with an international partner or agent through which student recruitment and or support services is provided locally (usually for an extra fee).

Common features

In a 'distance' or 'e-learning' arrangement students are registered as UoG students and are subject to the University's rules and regulations. They are entitled to the same support and feedback mechanisms as other students. The underlying principle is that the experience of the students should be, as far as possible, equivalent to that of a student undertaking the same degree on campus.

'Distance learning' may be delivered via the Internet, Moodle - the University's web based e-learning system or virtual learning environment (VLE) - and other web-based resources, software applications, CD/DVD, printed materials, etc. Formal learning activity is supported by robust communication technology such as television, videotape, computers or interactive videoconferencing.

Access to the lecturer is gained through email, Moodle or videoconferencing.

Students generally study on their own and to their own schedule, although there may be times when all students participate at the same time using synchronous technology, such as web or video conferencing.

What do you need to do?

Firstly, you need to address the [key principles for collaborative arrangements](#). If you are confident that the proposal will satisfy the key principles then you proceed with following steps.

The programme to be delivered by 'distance learning' should be approved via the normal [programme approval procedures](#).

Where a partner institution, agent or employer is to have a supporting role, it will be important to determine what that role will be and that they have the necessary resources available to support this form of delivery. There can be scale of involvement/ support provided by the partner institution or agent; the level of involvement will influence what is required for approval. Some examples are:

- Partner (typically agent) markets programme on behalf of UoG;
- Partner (typically agent or employer) provides administrative/logistical support for student in their communication with UoG staff;
- Partner (typically agent or employer) provides general facilities (e.g. room, IT equipment) for student to optionally undertake private study on a 'distance learning' programme. This is not defined as necessary to undertake the programme;

- Partner provides study skills tuition and support for student, e.g. taught sessions and/or tutorials on writing skills, numeracy skills, IT skills. Support is clearly defined as optional for the student and not marketed as UoG required or endorsed;
- Partner provides English Language tuition and support for student. Programme is clearly defined as optional for the student and not marketed as UoG required or endorsed;
- Partner provides pastoral support for student;
- Partner provides specialist facilities (equipment, rooms, IT) necessary to undertake programme, or general facilities defined as necessary to undertake the programme;
- Partner provides support for academic content of courses including additional tuition, academic tutorial guidance, project supervision etc;

Stage and Level of approval

The level of approval will be dependent on whether or not the arrangement involves a partner institution/ agent and if so, on the nature and scale of their involvement. The Academic Collaborations Office (ACO) will advise on the approval route.

What is needed for approval?

If there is no external involvement in the arrangement, then only approval of the programme is required, if it is not already approved.

If a partner institution/ agent is involved, then a **Collaboration Proposal Form** should be completed.

In-country Governmental approval to deliver UK programmes at the level proposed will be required;

The following documents also need to be submitted:

- the **business case** for the proposal;
- a completed **risk assessment form**.

Type of Agreement

If a partner institution/agent is involved in a 'distance learning' arrangement then it will be covered by a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) which requires the signature of the Principal and Vice-Chancellor or his nominee.

Implementation

A specific individual should be identified as a point of contact to support the implementation of the collaboration.

If not already available, materials to support the delivery of the programme should be developed.

Monitoring and Review

The University's standard requirements for the monitoring and review of the student experience and the programme will apply.

Any additional requirements for monitoring and review will depend on the nature of the arrangement.

The programme will be included in the relevant Periodic Subject Review.

The monitoring of financial arrangements is also vital to determine performance against the business plan and ensure that the partnership remains viable and cost-effective.

Issues to be considered

The issues to be considered will vary according to the nature of the arrangement. However, key to a successful distance learning arrangement is the quality of the support materials and arrangements for students and the facilities and resources of the partner institution.

Delivery systems convey course content, and enable participant interaction and learner support. While they need to be tailored to the environment in which students are expected to work, they also need to take account of the lowest levels of technology available to students and students' special educational

needs. The piloting or testing of a delivery system before its operational launch will help the presenter to gain a better understanding of the risks involved, and how to manage those risks. In an e-learning environment, it is the responsibility of the programme presenter to ensure that the system is free from contamination by viruses at the point of delivery, and has password-protected access where appropriate.

Consideration should be given to how alternative forms of delivery would come into action in the event of failure of the principal delivery system, or where students are unable to meet scheduled events - students should be able to expect that the system would be fail safe. A schedule in advance of the course will, at least, enable students to identify the non-arrival of anticipated materials or events, and access to contact details will enable students to respond quickly to any failure of the principal delivery system.

Students should be able to expect that their distance or e-learning study materials are subject to the same rigour of quality assurance as the awarding institution would use for any of its programmes of study.

Key Contacts

School/RI	College	University Services
Head of School/Director of RI Head of School/RI Administration	International Lead Relevant functional Dean (Graduate Studies, Learning and Teaching) Head of Academic and Student Administration College Head of Finance Business Development Manager (where applicable)	The Academic Collaborations Office (ACO) Planning Services Registry Marketing, Recruitment and International Office Head of Learning and Technology Unit Postgraduate Research Service, VP (R&E) Office (if applicable) Director of Student Services

Examples

For current examples for these types of collaborations please contact the [Academic Collaborations Office](#)