



UNIVERSITY
OF ESWATINI

INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

STUDENT INFORMATION HANDBOOK 2020/2021

Produced by IDE Team

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BL Blended Learning

CA Continuous Assessment

GP Grade Point

GPA Grade Point Average

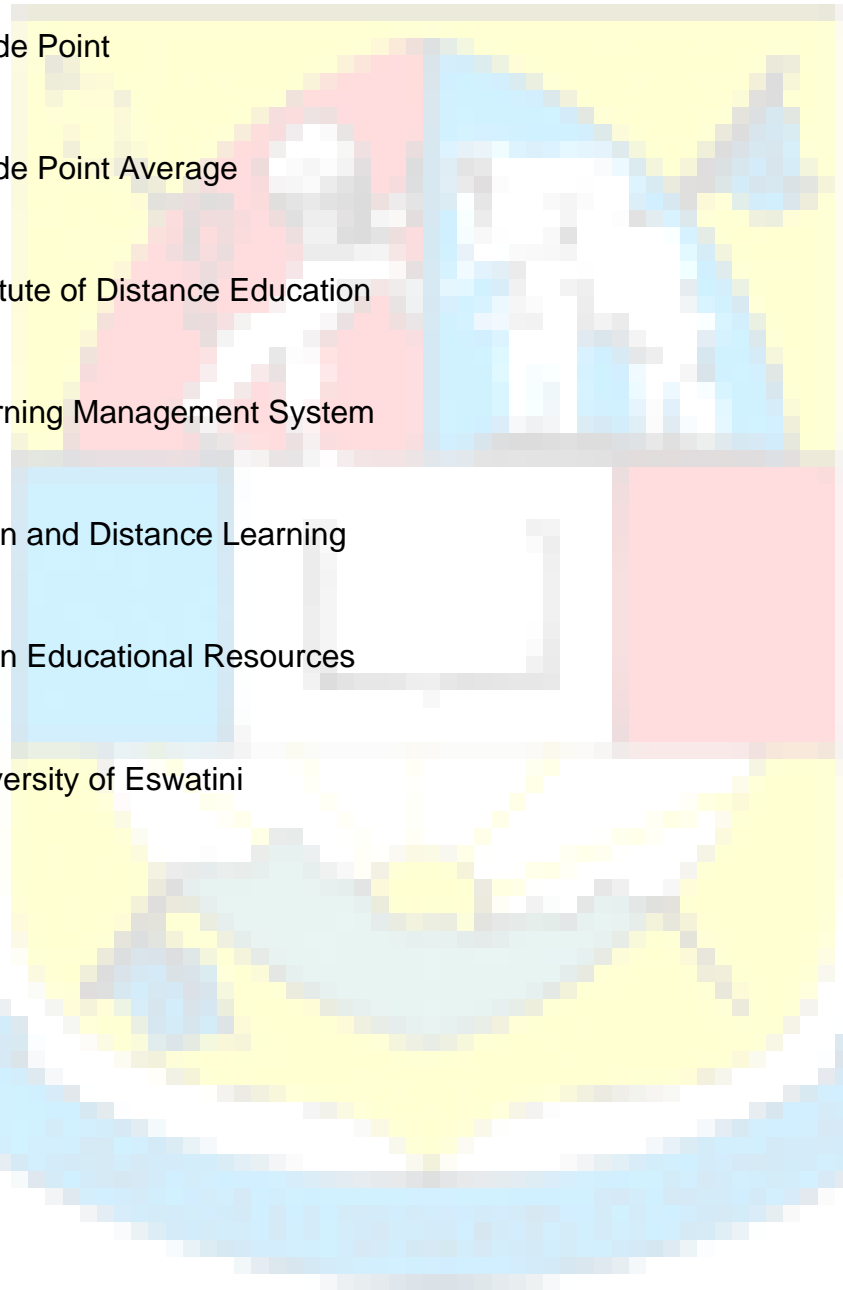
IDE Institute of Distance Education

LMS Learning Management System

ODL Open and Distance Learning

OER Open Educational Resources

UNESWA University of Eswatini



HANDBOOK OVERVIEW

The Student Information Handbook has been prepared to guide and facilitate your orientation as a student at the Institute of Distance Education (IDE), University of Eswatini. For ease of reference, the handbook has been divided into seven key areas.

- Part one covers IDE's Mandate and Structure;
- Part two contains an Introduction to Open and Distance Learning;
- Part three gives the steps to be taken after orientation;
- Part four covers IDE's expectations of you, as a student;
- Part five contains information on the IDE mode-of-delivery, and assessment;
- Part six sensitises you on the utilisation of effective learning sources to enhance your studies.
- Part seven details the study habits that will help you to succeed in your studies. In this section, you will also read about IDE's Students' Support Services in IDE and how grievances should be handled;

After reading this handbook, you will have a better understanding of how IDE operates and how you can study effectively through the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode of delivery. Please do not hesitate to call any IDE staff for assistance and for more information.

DIRECTOR'S REMARKS

I welcome you heartily to the Institute of Distance Education (IDE), University of Eswatini. Your choice to pursue your studies with IDE is a very wise one. The open and distance learning (ODL) delivery mode is a flexible way of learning which allows you to study without the limitations of space, distance and time. As IDE we have a mandate of taking university education to your doorstep by offering you high-quality academic training in different study programmes, one of which you have now enrolled in.

Such an approach assists in increasing access to higher education to all deserving students. The qualification that you will obtain through IDE is comparable to similar qualifications offered in conventional full-time programmes and to qualifications offered by other open and distance learning institutions internationally. Armed with your high-level qualifications, it is our sincere hope as IDE that you will have limitless career opportunities and growth.

This handbook is specifically designed to give you guidance as you navigate your way through your studies with UNESWA's IDE. It provides you with important information about the Institute, academic and Students' Support Services. Read the handbook carefully, internalise the information and keep referring to it throughout your academic journey.

I wish you all the best in your studies.

PROFESSOR C. MAPHOSA
PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR - IDE

PART ONE

1. INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION (IDE) MANDATE AND STRUCTURE

In this introductory section, we seek to provide you with a general understanding of the Institute, which will be your home for the entire duration of your studies. Below, you can familiarise yourself with IDE's Mission, Vision, Mandate and Structure. Then you will get an overview of the programmes that IDE offers.

1.1 Vision

The Vision of the Institute of Distance Education is: *to be an international centre of excellence in distance education access, delivery, practice, research and life-long learning.*

1.2 Mission

The mission of the Institute of Distance Education is: *to increase access to tertiary education by providing demand-driven educational and training opportunities to individuals (employed, self-employed, unemployed and school leavers) by offering them quality short and long-term credit and non-credit courses through the distance- education delivery mode.*

1.3 Mandate

Since the Institute is part of the conventional university, its mandate is, in collaboration with the conventional Departments of the University, to:

- i. *initiate, plan design, organise, offer and coordinate academic and professional university programmes using the distance education delivery mode;*
- ii. *establish an organisational structure which has high-quality academic and professional staff;*
- iii. *convert, coordinate and administer university programmes offered on-campus into distance education programmes;*
- iv. *ensure, in collaboration with the other university departments, equivalence and parity of standards between on-campus and off-campus university;*
- v. *establish regional teaching/learning centres;*
- vi. *establish an Academic Board and a Steering Planning Committee;*

vii. *recommend to the Senate the award of university-level certificates, diplomas and degrees.*

1.4 Programmes at IDE

In 1994 the then University of Swaziland established the Institute of Distance Education (IDE) to meet the increasing demand for higher education, and to provide programmes that will help grow and sustain the Kingdom of Eswatini.

Currently IDE offers the following programmes:

1. Certificate in Portuguese
2. Certificate in French
3. Certificate in Psychosocial Support (CPSS)
4. Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)
5. Diploma in Law (Dip Law)
6. Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Humanities
7. Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com)
8. Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) in Adult Education
9. Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) in Primary Education
10. Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) in Secondary Education
11. Bachelor of Laws (LLB)
12. Bachelor of Nursing Science (B.NSc) (completion programme)
13. Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSc. IT).

IDE programme quality, assessment and the value of the qualification are the same as those of the full-time programmes. IDE students are thus not receiving substandard or second-rate education.

1.5 IDE STRUCTURE

The Director heads the Institute of Distance of Education. IDE currently operates with four units, namely:

1. Academic and Professional Studies Unit
2. Instructional Design and Development Unit
 - a. Copy editing office
 - b. Print shop
3. Research and Evaluation Unit
4. Students Support Services Unit

Below you will find three Tables:

- Table 1 gives you the names and contact details of all the Programme Coordinators and Assistant Tutors (they fall under the Academic and Professional Studies Unit). You need to know your coordinator/assistant tutor and contact him or her whenever you encounter academic challenges.
- Table 2 contains the names of the Academic and Students' Support Services Coordinators, offices that you are likely to interact with the most. It also details the names of other important coordinators at IDE. Their role at IDE is equally important however you may probably not need them as their roles do not require direct interaction with you, as the student.
- Table 3 lists IDE staff which will help you with support, administrative and technical questions.

Table 1: Programme Coordinators and Tutors

Programmes	Name of Coordinator	Contact details
Adult Education, Psychosocial Support	Prof C. Esampally	IDE Office 013 25170283 esampally@uniswa.sz
Psychosocial support	Mentor Supervisor: Ms P. Mabuza	phindimalo@gmail.com
Education	Dr. M.N. Dlodlu	25170372 – Office 014 mndludlu@uniswa.sz
Assistant Tutor Education	Dr S. S. Shongwe	CELT Office shongwes@uniswa.sz
Assistant Tutor Education	Dr R. Mafumbate	rmafumbate@uniswa.sz
Linguistics and Modern Languages: Portuguese	Dr K. Ferreira-Meyers	IDE Office 017 karenferreirameyers@gmail.com kmeyers@uniswa.sz
Commerce	Mr S.C. Shezi	sshezi@uniswa.sz
Assistant Tutor Commerce	Mr. T. Lukhele	thulani@uniswa.sz
Law	Mr T.C. Mavuso	IDE Office 9 tcmavuso@uniswa.sz
Assistant Tutor Law	Dr. M. Shongwe	mnshongwe@uniswa.sz
Humanities	Dr H. P. Dlamini	IDE Office 11 hpdlamini@uniswa.sz
Assistant Tutor Humanities	Mrs. V.T. Dlamini-Akintola	vtdlamini@uniswa.sz
Assistant Tutor Nursing Science	Mrs J. V. Mdluli	jvmdluli@uniswa.sz
Assistant Tutor Information Technology	Mr E.L. Dube	eldube@uniswa.sz

Table 2 Unit Coordinators

Unit Coordinators	Name	Contact Details
Academic and Professional Studies	Prof C. Esampally	IDE Office 13 esampally@uniswa.sz
Students' Support Services	Ms N.C. Mabuza	IDE Office 10 nomabuza@uniswa.sz
Instructional Design and Development	Ms N. Vilakati (currently on study leave) Dr. P.S. Dlamini (Acting Coordinator) Ms S.T. Shongwe (Copy Editor)	IDE Office 16 thula@uniswa.sz IDE Office 018B spdlamini@uniswa.sz IDE Office 14 stshongwe@uniswa.sz
Research and Evaluation	Dr. K.E. Mthethwa-Kunene	IDE Office 018A kekunene@uniswa.sz
Multimedia	Mrs. T. Rugube	IDE Audio-visual Room Office trugube@uniswa.sz

Table 3: Administrative and Support Officers

Administrative and support services Officers	Name	Contact Details
Senior Assistant Registrar	Mr. J.S. Shongwe	IDE Office 001 jmshongwe@uniswa.sz
Technologist	Mrs. B.B. Dlamini	IDE Computer Lab Office bbdlamini@uniswa.sz
Print Shop Manager	Mr. P. Maphanga	IDE Print Shop maphanga@uniswa.sz

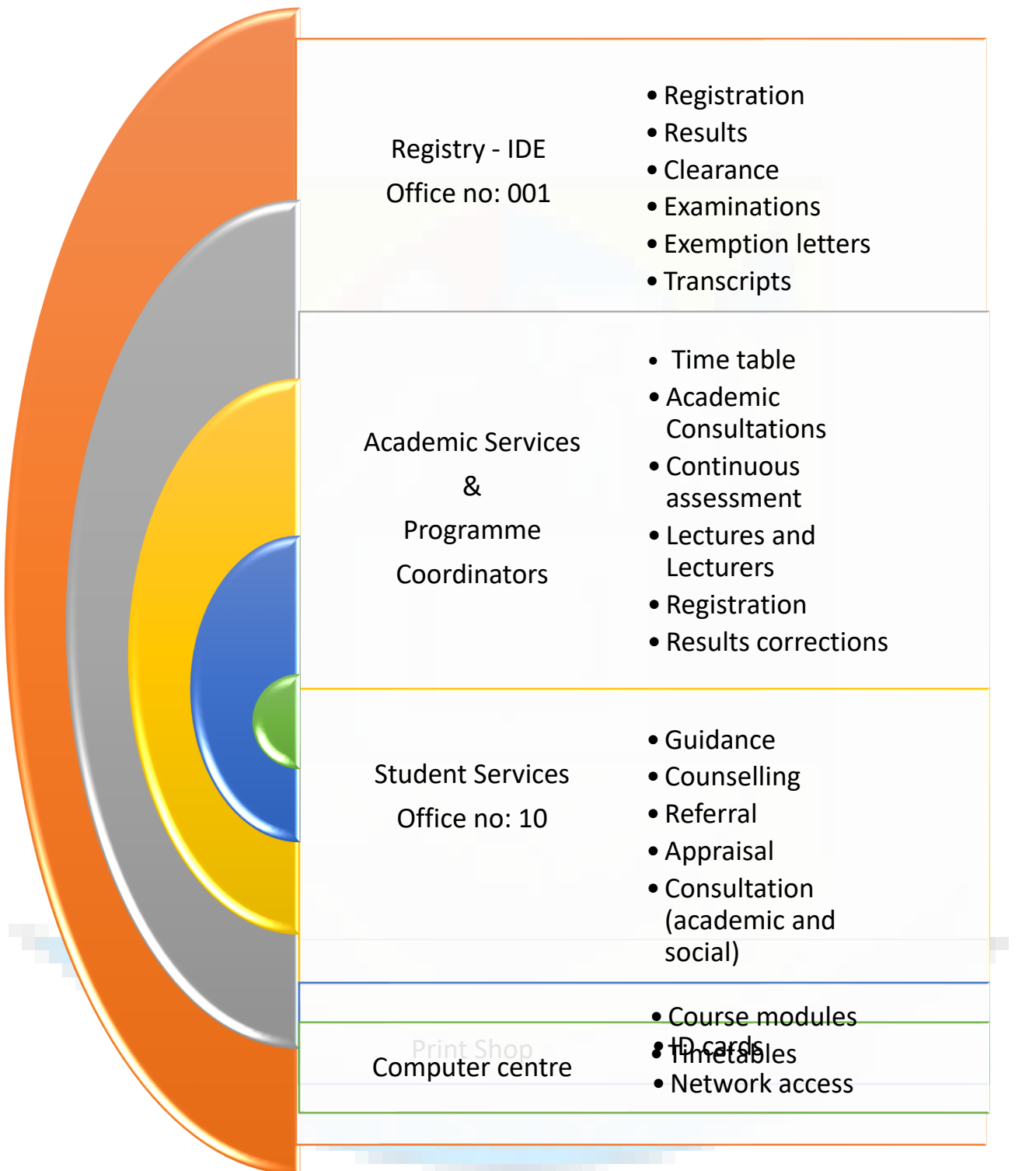
1.6 IMPORTANT SERVICE POINTS

As a distance education student, you will study away from IDE most of the time and rely on receiving regular information or assistance. It is important to know the right channels of communication that exist within UNESWA and particularly within IDE. In summary, your issues as a student are attended by the following offices in the manner as outlined in Figure 1.



Figure

1:



PART TWO

2. INTRODUCTION TO OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

You are now a "Distance Learner", to understand what that means, you can read the answers to the following questions below:

- What is Distance Education / Open and Distance Learning (ODL)?
- Why study through Distance Education?
- How do we organise Distance Education for you?

2.1 What is Distance Education?

The two terms: 'Open Learning' and 'Distance Education' are often combined as Open and Distance Learning (ODL). Compared to conventional teaching-learning systems, Open and Distance Learning is a more flexible and less restrictive mode. It is flexible in terms of: method of admission, method of delivery of education and method of study. ODL removes barriers to education and provides inclusive quality education and life-long learning. Broadly speaking, the ODL system is open as to people, open as to places, open as to methods and ideas. In open and distance education, the learning opportunities are brought to learners at home or in the workplace irrespective of whether they remain in one location or become mobile during their study.

Remember though that learning at a distance is similar in many ways to learning in a full-time classroom environment. There are, however, some significant differences, such as the following:

- In distance learning teacher and learner are separated in space and/or time.
- Distance education is a mostly learner-based system with a flexible arrangement of limited face-to-face classes.
- Learners in distance education primarily learn independently with the support of print and/or some of technology-based resources instead of depending mainly on the lecturer.
- The lecturer and tutor in distance education are facilitators and motivators.

2.2 Why Distance Education?

- You may have chosen distance education because you prefer to learn at your own pace, in your own space.
- As the full-time system is unable to meet the demand for higher education, ODL has been set up to ensure that more people are able to study.
- Distance education is a major cost-effective solution to the growing demand for higher education; it promotes gender equality and economic growth, and seeks to achieve the objectives of "*Education for All*" with parity in standards between conventional and distance education.
- Some students, for a variety of reasons which can be financial, family-, or work-related, are unable or unwilling to enrol in a full-time university course.

2.3 How is Distance Education organised?

In general, the distance education system involves teaching and learning at a distance with a package of printed and multimedia instructional materials and technology (audiovisual lessons, mobile and online learning, radio and TV, tele/web conferencing), as well as limited face-to-face instruction. As such it enables the learner to learn independently at a distance at his/her own pace and place. Below you will find some points on how IDE has organised its distance education delivery. You can also go to Part Five for further details.

2.4 Distance Education - Putting it into practice at IDE

IDE offers programmes through a blended learning (BL) approach, which is the combination of face-to-face and online teaching and learning. Here are some important points related to IDE:

- IDE provides you with printed course materials and other (online) resources.
- You have face-to-face sessions: lectures and tutorials.
- The face-to-face and online sessions are compulsory.

2.5 Parity of programmes

Programmes offered at IDE have their 'home' in the university's faculties and departments, hence they are of the same quality as those offered to full-time students. The only difference is the mode of delivery which is explained below in this handbook.

PART THREE

3. STEPS TO BE TAKEN AFTER ORIENTATION

During orientation you will learn many things about IDE. You will receive information that is important for your time at IDE.

In particular you will learn about the registration procedure. Below you will find a summary of the most important points relating to registration.

3.1 Registration procedures

In terms of the University Act and Statutes you only become a student of the University once you have paid your tuition fee for the semester and are properly registered with the University. Therefore, follow the procedures below for correct registration:

- First approach the IDE Academic Office for verification of your certificates. Bring all your original academic certificates and admission letter for verification.
- After verification of certificates, start at the bursary desk for payment of your tuition fee and follow the directives you will be given for registration.
- Proceed for online registration of your programme courses. You will be assisted with registration by the IDE Coordinators, Senior Assistant Registrar (IDE), Technologist (IDE) and the relevant Faculty Heads of Departments.

As a prospective student it is your duty to check that all these steps are followed, and all the information included in your registration forms is correct and relevant. Do not forget to take your copy of the registration form for safe-keeping.

PART FOUR

4. IDE'S EXPECTATIONS OF YOU, OUR STUDENT

While many of the expectations that IDE has of you will be found in other sections of this handbook (Study Habits, Assessment, etc.), you will also find the main ones in the UNESWA Calendar (General Regulations and IDE Special Regulations). Below are some reminders:

4.1. Your duties

As a student,

- ✓ You have to check your registration forms and notify IDE of missing or wrong information;
- ✓ You have to pay your tuition fees;
- ✓ You have to attend face-to-face sessions;
- ✓ You have to familiarise yourself with Moodle and log in regularly to find out about course content, announcements, the course syllabus, course assessment, online lectures, class discussions, assignments and grades;
- ✓ You have to submit all assignments on time;
- ✓ You have to write all tests and examinations;
- ✓ You have to check and sign for your Continuous Assessment (CA) marks for all the courses;
- ✓ You will request assistance from your Programme Coordinator, the Students' Support Services Unit, your lecturers, your tutors, your peers, whenever you feel the need;
- ✓ You will abide by the rules and regulations of the University and the Institute;
- ✓ You are responsible for understanding your results at the end of the semester (of course, assistance is available at IDE). Check 4.3 for further details.

4.2. Rules, regulations and grievance handling

As a student, you are expected to demonstrate the highest level of responsibility by consulting prior to taking an important decision and by closely following the rules and regulations as contained in the *UNESWA Calendar, Academic General Regulations*, particularly focusing on the following areas:

- Misconduct in tests and examinations – strict punitive/disciplinary measures are taken against those of you who are involved in misconduct during tests and examinations.
- Withdrawal – you will adhere to the appropriate regulations on withdrawal as stated in the *UNESWA Calendar* and proper procedure should be followed before you withdraw from a programme, otherwise you will be deemed to have absconded.
- Absence
 - If you are unable to attend a face-to-face session (bereavement, family-related matters), you must ask permission from your lecturers before the date on which you will be absent, through the Coordinator Students' Support Services.
 - If you are unable to attend classes due to illness, you should report to the Coordinator Students' Support Services and provide a medical certificate from your doctor as soon as possible.
 - Avoid being absent without consulting the Coordinator Students' Support Services. If the situation is such that you are unable to do so personally, then you can ask someone you trust to make the report on your behalf.
- Reporting – This should be presented in the form of a letter including
 - Your name, surname and UNESWA student ID
 - Programme and level
 - Course and lecturer to be contacted
 - Student contact information
- Examinations - Issues arising during examinations or those likely to disturb a student during examinations should be reported to the Examinations Officer. The Student Services Office must also be informed so that you can receive the necessary support.

Student issues may also be addressed through student representatives, who in turn may report to the relevant Programme Coordinator and/or the Students' Support Services Coordinator. Class representatives are elected each academic year.

4.3. Student expectations from the Research and Evaluation Unit

As an IDE student, you are expected to provide IDE with feedback on its activities, processes and service delivery. The feedback is essential to help IDE improve and increase customer satisfaction. Opportunities for you to provide feedback come in various forms including evaluation at the end of an activity/event, e.g. orientation, module evaluation, student satisfaction survey and research in learning and teaching. Such opportunities allow you to reflect on the education and services you are being offered and to contribute to the improvement of your learning experiences whilst an IDE student. Therefore, you are encouraged to participate and contribute honestly.

4.4. Interpretation of end-of-semester results

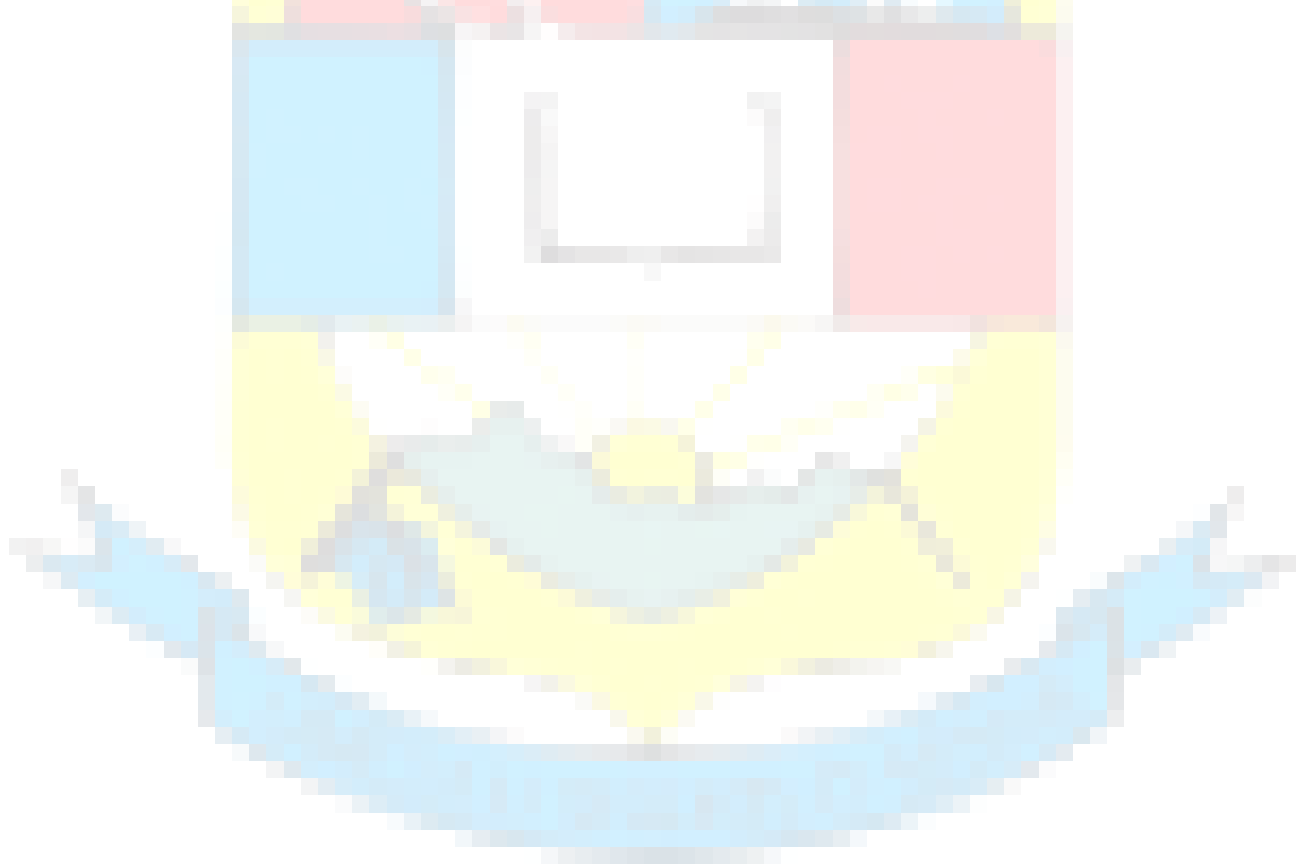
When you receive your results at the end of each semester, take note of the following:

- Each course for which you are registered and wrote an examination will appear in the list of subjects for each semester;
- Raw scores (%) for each course will also be indicated with corresponding symbols. The number of credits for each raw score is indicated;
- All your obtained credits from examined courses are then added together to give you the final Grade Point Average (GPA). The minimum GPA for you to proceed is 2.0 (equivalent to 50% pass);
- Based on your GPA, your academic status is determined, for example:
 - Proceed unconditionally - means you have passed all courses and you are proceeding to the next semester.
 - Proceed conditionally – means your GPA is 2.0 or above and you can proceed to the next semester but you have courses to clear/pass from the previous semester.
 - Proceed conditionally with academic warning – means your GPA is less than 2.0; you will have to take less courses (courses must not exceed 15 credits) in the next semester to allow you to clear the ones you did not yet pass.
 - Proceed conditionally with probation – means your GPA did not improve (is not 2.0 or above). You will have to take even less courses than a person with an academic warning

(courses must not exceed 12 credits) in the next semester to allow you to clear the ones you did not pass. Take note that if you fail to clear failed courses after receiving a “proceed conditionally with probation”, you will get a “fail and discontinue” which means you have to stop your studies in the programme you were pursuing. You can however apply to be admitted in another programme provided you qualify.

- A re-sit – means re-writing a course which you did not clear with a minimum pass of 50%. Re-sit examinations are written before registration for the next semester. Note that if your GPA is less than 2.0, all courses not passed become automatic repeats, inclusive of those that would otherwise have been re-sits.

Refer to your *UNESWA Calendar* for more details on results’ interpretation. Always consult with your Tutor, Programme Coordinator or Students’ Support Services Coordinator before registration for new semester if your results have issues.



PART FIVE

5. IDE MODE OF DELIVERY

IDE offers programmes through a blended learning (BL) approach. Blended learning as the name suggests is a combination of face-to-face and online teaching and learning.

5.1 Face-to-face sessions

IDE provides a limited number of face-to-face lecture and tutorial sessions. Each course module has a total of 14 compulsory lecture/tutorial hours per semester during which you meet your lecturers and tutors. The purpose of lecture sessions is to introduce you to your modules and to help you interpret and deepen your understanding of the concepts involved. The lecturers clarify areas you might find difficult and provide you with insights and guidance on what is likely to be assessed. They give you information on how to carry out the activities, assignments and general study of the course content.

The tutorials encourage you to participate in discussions and debate about what you have read in course modules or heard in the lectures. They assist you with challenging content or difficulties met while studying. It is your duty to raise questions during the tutorial sessions. You should contribute and the tutor will guide or facilitate the interactions. The tutorials should not be a repetition of what occurs during lectures.

5.2 Online learning through the Moodle LMS

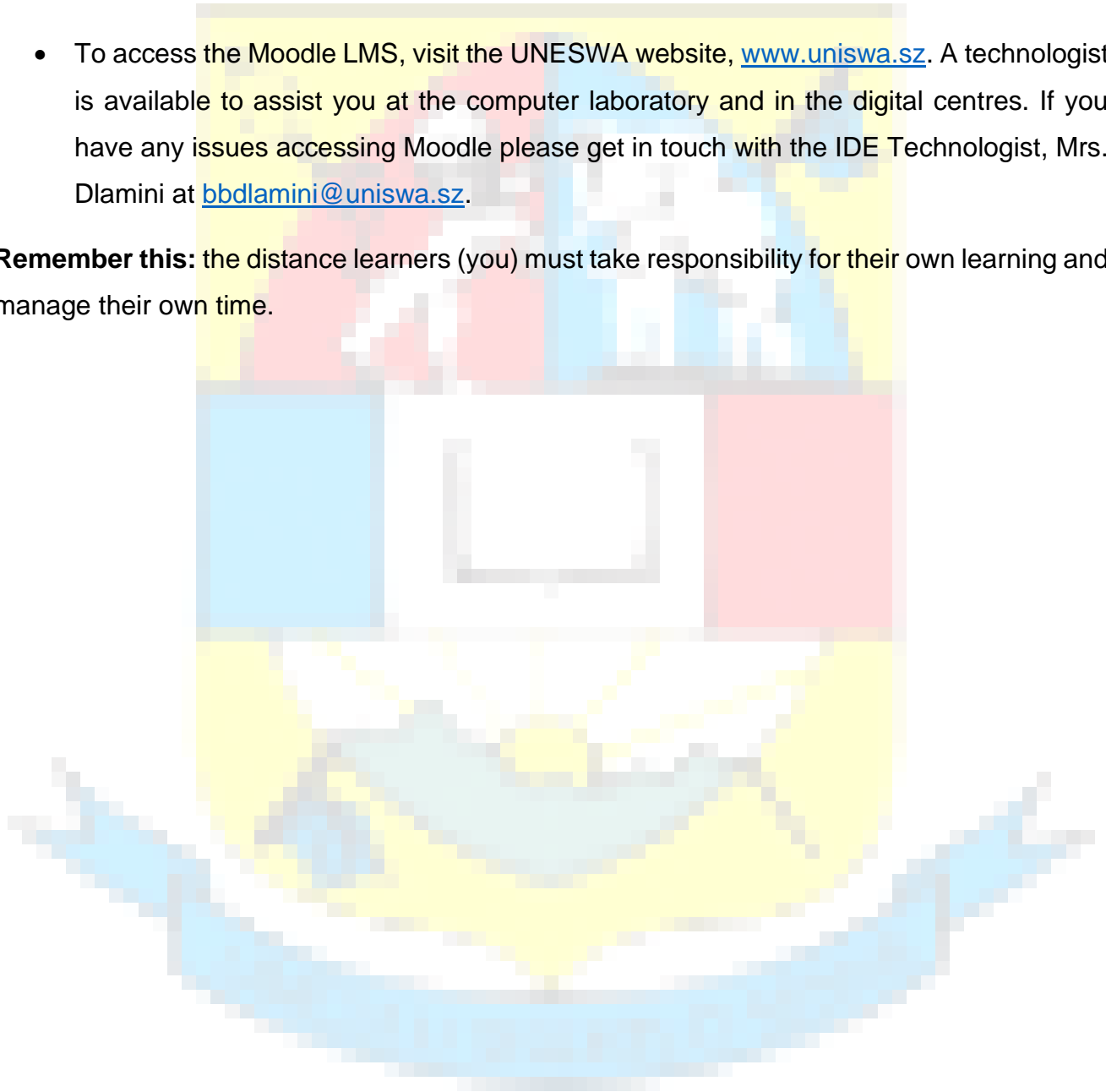
IDE also provides online teaching-learning opportunities through technology using the Moodle Learning Management System (LMS).

- Moodle can be accessed through desktop computers or mobile devices (e.g. cellphones, tablets and laptops). In addition, several digital centres exist where you can also access Moodle:
- On campus, you can access computers in the Library (on any of the three university campuses – Kwaluseni, Luyengo and Mbabane).
- At Kwaluseni campus, there are the main computer centre at the ICT building and the IDE computer laboratory for you to use.
- IDE also has digital centres across the country in the following places: Ngwane Teachers' Training College in Nhlangano, Mhlatane High School in Pigg's Peak and

SANU in Siteki. At these centres, you can also access the internet to do research, submit assignments online and access the Moodle LMS.

- You will, however, need to bring your student ID whenever you go to the digital centres for identification. It is also your responsibility to find out about the opening hours for these centres.
- To access the Moodle LMS, visit the UNESWA website, www.uniswa.sz. A technologist is available to assist you at the computer laboratory and in the digital centres. If you have any issues accessing Moodle please get in touch with the IDE Technologist, Mrs. Dlamini at bbdlamini@uniswa.sz.

Remember this: the distance learners (you) must take responsibility for their own learning and manage their own time.



PART SIX

6. UTILISATION OF LEARNING RESOURCES

In this section, we provide you with information on the use of different learning resources in the form of print or online learning materials. Your effectiveness as an ODL student largely depends on how you use available learning resources.

6.1 Print material

Self-instructional print material in the form of a course module developed by a team of experts is the most important learning material at IDE. The print material design and development team (one of more content area specialists, an instructional designer, a multimedia expert, a language editor) expects you to give feedback on the quality of these print materials to help improve certain areas during the module review process.

As a student, you use the print material on your own as they stand in the place of the lecturers with whom you interact during minimal face-to-face contact hours. As a distance student, you are expected to maximise the use of your modules and other relevant material as advised by your lecturer or tutor.

6.2 Structure of the print modules

Each module is divided into units that cover specific topics in your course. Each unit has specific objectives and these tell you clearly what you should be able to do after careful study of that topic. You are expected to familiarise yourselves with those objectives and constantly check if you are able to do what is stated in the unit objectives.

6.3 Activities

There are also activities that are integrated within the unit subtopics. You should pay particular attention to each activity as it enhances your understanding of the topics discussed. The activities also help you prepare for assignments, tests and examinations. You should work with your peers to tackle some of the activities and also contact your lecturers and tutors if you need clarification where you face challenges with any activity in the module.

6.4 The use of the Moodle Learning Management System

As an IDE student, you will use Moodle as your LMS. Your lecturer/tutor creates and manages course content on Moodle, assesses your performance and communicates with you, the students. Each course has a distinct webpage on Moodle which you will be able to access once you are registered.

6.5 UNESWA Library

IDE students are free to use all UNESWA library resources. However, although most distance learning students like yourselves do not visit the campus regularly, you do have access to a wide range of library resources wherever you are studying. You can find more information about the library resources on <http://www.library.uniswa.sz/>.

6.6 Use of computer laboratories

You are free to make use of all computer laboratories in all the university campuses and learning centres. In the computer laboratories, you are free to search for information on the internet and type your work. You can print material at a cost. You need to produce your student ID to access the computer laboratories.

6.7 Open Educational Resources (OER)

OERs are free and openly licensed educational materials that can be used for teaching, learning, research and other purposes. You are lucky, as a student, to have these supplementary learning materials to strengthen what you learn. As a student, you can also refer staff to relevant OERs to supplement existing resources.

6.8 Assessment

For general information on assessment, you are advised to consult the university calendar. In cases where there are differences, the university calendar information is the most important one.

IDE uses both formative (assignments, activities, exercises, quizzes and other types of assessment designed to assess you during the learning process) and summative assessment (group work, tests, written assignments, final examinations).

As a student, you should pay attention to the comments and feedback from your course lecturers on your assessment tasks so that you learn from them and improve in-coming assignments.

For each module, you will write two assessment tasks which contribute to your final continuous assessment (CA) mark. These could be administered either on print or online.

At the end of each semester, normally you will write a final examination for each course that you registered for. There are however some courses that are assessed by continuous assessment only. In some programmes, you will be required to carry out a research project. Other programmes have an attachment or internship component where you will be required to undergo a real-life experience in organisations or places of work.

6.8.1 Weighting of assessment

The weighting for assessments and examinations may vary from one faculty to another. Some faculties may use a 50:50 ratio, some 40% CA and 60% examination, and some 60% CA and 40% examination for their courses. Check the university calendar for the weighting in your programme of study.

6.8.2 Credit system

In a credit system each course/module has a total number of credits according to the number of hours allocated to it. As an IDE student, you register for a minimum of 2 credits. The total number of credits for each semester should not exceed 24.

Passing a course means that you reached an overall pass mark of 50% Grade Point (GP) for that course. To proceed to the next semester, there are several conditions that are determined by your Grade Point Average (GPA).

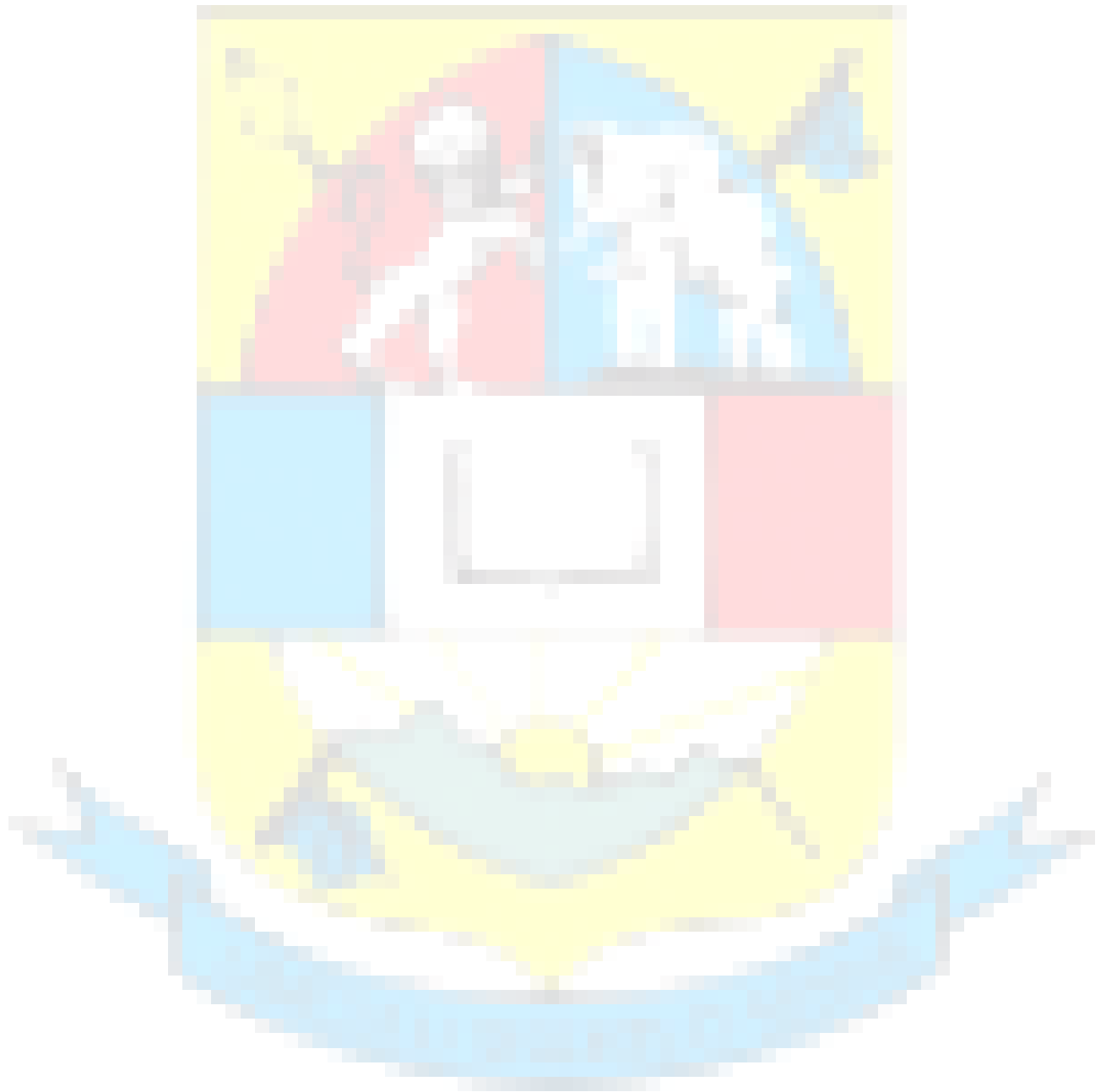
6.8.3 How do you know about your results?

The University has introduced an online system that processes and disseminates student results.

CONCLUSION

It is our sincere hope that this handbook has provided you with important information, which you require as a UNESWA IDE student. Such information will enable you to navigate through your journey as an open distance learner. Keep the handbook in file and refer to it constantly.

Kindly contact staff at IDE should you require further clarification on any of the issues raised in the handbook or any other issues.



PART SEVEN

7. STUDY HABITS

In this section we provide you with tips on how you can study effectively. Different elements contributing to your success as a student are examined below.

7.1 Self-Discipline and Motivation

An important characteristic shared by successful distance learners is **self-discipline**. This characteristic is usually seen when you do your assignments in time, participate on a regular basis in online discussions, and develop and adhere to a schedule for class activities. To promote self-discipline you need your own space where you can shut the door, leave papers everywhere and work in peace. An appropriate place to study should have:

- Adequate lighting
- Good ventilation
- Tolerable temperatures
- Non distractive sounds

It should be tidy and pleasant to work in.

As a distance learner, you must also have **self-motivation**. Unlike traditional courses in which students and lecturer meet face-to-face once or several times a week, most learning activities and communication in distance courses are asynchronous, meaning that class members participate and complete their assignments at different times throughout the day or week. So you can do class work when it is most convenient for you. However, with this increased freedom and flexibility comes responsibility. It will be up to you to motivate yourself to keep up with assignments.

7.2 Time Management and Commitment

Being isolated from class and other students requires you to be efficient in your **time management** strategies. Setting aside a significant amount of time each week for class work is the way to go. Distance education classes require as much time and effort as traditional instructor-led classes, if not more. Develop a schedule (work, study, rest, recreation, sleep, social life) and stick to it. You may review it from time to time according to your activities. Below is an example of a weekly schedule:

DAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
MORNING							
AFTERNOON							
EVENING							

- Without the structure of weekly class meetings, you may be tempted to put off classwork until the last minute. Instead you should give yourself extra time to do your work, because technological difficulties and asynchronous communication can slow down the process.
- To be prepared, read your module carefully to understand the class requirements and to know assignment due dates. Plan ahead; allow time for downloading, installing and trying out new software (such as plug-ins) that you need for class. Back up your work on your computer. Your lecturer will often list these in your course syllabus.
- Along with time management goes time **commitment**. Completing course assignments and other learning activities can take from five to fifteen hours or more per week. You may find that you need to be online almost every day. So before enrolling, be sure you can set aside enough time to keep up with your daily or weekly assignments.

7.3 Reading effectively

Reading university texts requires a more strategic approach from that used when you read for pleasure. When you read for university you need to know why you are reading something and how to actively extract information.

Making notes is an essential part of the reading process. If you read lots of material without making notes, you will only forget what you have read and waste your time. In addition, make sure you are comfortable. Finding the right space and time to read in is important:

- Find a comfortable and quiet place to read, where you will not be disturbed or interrupted;

- Most people can only concentrate for about 15-20 minutes in one go. So read for short periods and complete other study tasks in between;
- Pause for thought occasionally. You need to check that you understand what you are studying and revisit any parts you have found difficult;
- Discuss what you read with other students in tutorials and in small groups (on WhatsApp, for example).

7.4 Coping with difficult content

Try the following strategies to help you make sense of this material:

- Set some time aside when you can work without interruptions;
- Take a step back and look through headings and sub-headings that might signpost the direction the content is taking. Also look for summaries and conclusions that could restate the material in a way you find understandable;
- Use a dictionary or subject-specific glossary to look up any unknown words;
- Photocopy the text or print out the article so you can scribble on it;
- If you have a question to answer, note it down and keep asking yourself how it relates to what you have just read;
- Try to write a few points in your own words about what you do understand;
- Look online to see if the article or book has been reviewed by other people, Or look for overview books on the same subject - they might summarise the author's point of view;
- Try saying the words in your head or aloud as a way of unravelling the meaning. Try to explain it to someone else. You can also demonstrate by drawing or making diagrams.

7.5. Communication

Distance classes require a great deal of communication with the lecturer/tutor and fellow students for assignments and class activities. Without regular face-to-face meetings, it is hard to develop personal relationships and easy to get isolated and feel lonely. Get to know your lecturer/tutor and classmates by sending emails, participating in discussions and joining chat rooms. You will have a richer, more rewarding learning experience if you reach out.

Good communication skills for distance course participation include:

- Clearly expressing yourself in writing
- Thinking ideas through before responding
- Observing “netiquette,” remaining polite and respectful in your communications
- Asking for help when you need it

