



# **INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

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## **COURSE INSTRUCTORS' HANDBOOK**

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### List of Acronyms

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Full Meaning</b>
B.A	Bachelor of Arts
B.Com	Bachelor of Commerce
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
B.N.Sc	Bachelor of Nursing Science
BSc IT	Bachelor of Science in Information Technology
CA	Continuous Assessment
HC	Human Capital
HRD	Human Resource Development
IDE	Institute of Distance Education
LLB	Bachelor of Laws
LMS	Learning Management System
ODL	Open and Distance learning
ODeL	Open and Distance e-Learning
OERs	Open Educational Resources
UNESWA	University of Eswatini

## HANDBOOK OVERVIEW

The Course Instructors' Handbook has been prepared to guide and facilitate your operation as a lecturer, tutor or online learning facilitator at the Institute of Distance Education (IDE), University of Eswatini. For ease of reference, the handbook has been divided into fourteen (14) key areas:

- ❖ Part one covers IDE's Mandate and Structure;
- ❖ Part two contains an Introduction to Open and Distance e-Learning;
- ❖ Part three provides you with an understanding of the distance learner;
- ❖ Part four offers an overview of pedagogical developments in ODeL;
- ❖ Part five deals with the roles and responsibilities of a course lecturer;
- ❖ Part six sensitises you on the responsibilities of the programme coordinator and Tutor in ODeL;
- ❖ Part seven focuses on learning material design and development at IDE ;
- ❖ Part eight discusses the IDE mode of delivery;
- ❖ Part nine deals with assessment in ODeL;
- ❖ Part ten alerts you to some teaching and learning resources;
- ❖ Part eleven explains the student support services;
- ❖ Part twelve deals with technology in ODeL;
- ❖ Part thirteen focuses on quality assurance in ODeL;
- ❖ Part fourteen deals with course lecturer/tutor contractual obligations at IDE

After reading this handbook, you will have a better understanding of how IDE and the ODeL system operate, thereby assisting in clarifying your roles and responsibilities in order to operate effectively as a course instructor. Please, do not hesitate to call on IDE staff for assistance and for more information.

The Handbook may appear bulky to read, you are encouraged to read it using a section at a time because the information being shared will address many of the questions or concerns you may have about the different themes that are explained herein.

## **DIRECTOR'S REMARKS**

I welcome you to the Institute of Distance Education (IDE), University of Eswatini. Your role as a course instructor (lecturer or tutor) is very important in IDE's day-to-day functions. We, therefore, value you and appreciate your time, expertise and commitment as you serve the distance education students. In case you are coming from the full-time conventional delivery system, we would like to make it clear from the onset that the Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL) delivery system is a different and unique system. Hence you need to understand the system. As ODeL practitioners at IDE, we have considered it worthy to prepare some information that will assist you in your role as a course instructor dealing with distance education students. You are joining us at a time when we are making concerted efforts to strengthen our online learning system. As course instructors, you are the key drivers of successful online teaching and learning.

The ODeL delivery mode is a flexible way of learning which allows students to study without the limitations of space, distance and time. As IDE, we have a mandate of taking university education to the student's doorstep by offering high-quality academic training in different study programmes, one of which you will be facilitating as a course instructor/tutor. The use of available technologies such as the Moodle Learning Management System has made teaching and learning quite exciting by providing students with rich learning experiences from any place and at any time. On another note, ODeL students are unique in that they are generally working adults, though we now have a fair number of young students joining IDE directly from high school. The working adults multi-task as they have other commitments in addition to their academic work and the younger students also face several challenges as they navigate their studies through IDE.

This handbook is specifically designed to guide you as you perform your functions as a course instructor/tutor. All important issues related to the IDE structure and mandate, the concept of ODeL, nature of the ODeL students, pedagogical developments in ODeL, your role as lecturer/tutor, e-learning, material development and student support, among others, are explained to provide you with the requisite knowledge and guidance. It is my sincere hope that you will go through this handbook and keep it as important reference material. If you have any comments or questions, feel free to approach any of our Programme Coordinators for assistance. We also require your feedback as we seek to improve our delivery system. You should also be on the lookout for

some professional development workshops in the different facets of ODeL, which we offer throughout the year. Your knowledge and skills in ODeL delivery will be enhanced by attending such workshops.

I wish you all the best in your role as a course instructor at IDE. Let us work together to achieve a high-quality ODeL system in the University.

**PROF C. MAPHOSA**

**PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR - IDE**

# PART ONE

## 1. IDE Mandate and Structure

In this introductory section, we provide you with a general understanding of the Institute which you are part of as a Course Instructor/tutor. Below, you can see IDE's mission, vision, mandate and structure. Then you will get an overview of the programmes IDE offers.

### 1.1 Vision

The vision of the Institute of Distance Education is to be a distance education provider of choice in Africa and beyond.

### 1.2 Mission

The mission of the Institute of Distance Education is to create educational and training opportunities for people (employed, self-employed, unemployed and post-high school graduates) who wish to study programmes and courses offered through distance education.

### 1.3 Mandate

The mandate of the Institute of Distance Education is two-fold.

1.3.1 As part of a dual-mode university, the mandate of IDE is to:

- (a) initiate, plan, design, organise, offer, and coordinate academic and professional university programmes using the distance education delivery mode;
- (b) coordinate an organisational structure which has high quality academic and professional staff;
- (c) ensure, in collaboration with the other university departments, equivalence and parity of standards between conventional and distance education programmes;
- (d) establish regional teaching/learning centres;
- (e) recommend to Senate the award of university-level certificates, diplomas, and degrees through IDE.

**1.3.2.** IDE has a mandate to mount educational programmes autonomously or in collaboration with other institutions (within and outside Eswatini) to offer relevant and market-driven programmes through Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL).

## **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 Psychosocial Support
3. Post-Graduate Certificate in Education
4. Diploma in Law
5. Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Humanities
6. Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com)
7. Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) in Adult Education
8. Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) in Primary Education
9. Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) in Secondary Education
10. Bachelor of Laws (LLB)
11. Bachelor of Nursing Science (B.N.Sc.) (completion programme)
12. Bachelor of Science in Information Science
13. Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSc IT).
14. Bachelor of Science in Computer Science Education (BSc Comp Sc ED)

Many of these programmes are also offered to conventional students. However, the quality of the programme, its assessment and the value of the qualifications are the same for conventional and IDE students, regardless of the mode of study.

## **1.5 IDE structure**

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

1. Academic and Professional Studies Unit
2. Instructional Design and Materials Development Unit, which is also responsible for “Copy Editing Office”
3. Multimedia Unit
4. Research, Evaluation and Quality Assurance Unit
5. Student Support Services Unit
6. Printing and Digital Publishing Unit

Table 1 indicates the different programmes, the coordinator of a particular programme and their contact details. Table 2 informs you about the unit coordinators and their contact details, while Table 3 lists IDE staff who will give you support on administrative and technical questions.



**Table 1: Programmes, Coordinator and Contact Details**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Name of Coordinator/Acting Coordinator/Tutor/Acting Tutor</b>	<b>Contact details</b>
Psychosocial Support	Coordinator Dr. P.S. Dlamini	IDE Office 018b <a href="mailto:spdlamini@uneswa.ac.sz">spdlamini@uneswa.ac.sz</a>
Psychosocial support	Mentor Supervisor Dr. BB. Dlamini	<a href="mailto:bddlaminini7608@gmail.com">bddlaminini7608@gmail.com</a>
Education	Coordinator Dr N. Dlamini-Nxumalo	IDE Office 012 <a href="mailto:nkdlamini@uneswa.ac.sz">nkdlamini@uneswa.ac.sz</a>
Education	Assistant Tutor: Dr R. Mafumbate	<a href="mailto:rmafumbate@uniswa.sz">rmafumbate@uniswa.sz</a> Ph: 25170802
Linguistics and Modern Languages: Portuguese	Coordinator: Prof. K. Ferreira-Meyers	IDE Office 017; 25170262 karenferreirameyers@gmail.com kmeyers@uniswa.sz Ph: 25170262
Commerce	Coordinator: Mr. S.C. Shezi	sshezi@uniswa.sz Ph: 25170436
Commerce	Assistant Tutor: Mr. Z. Mndzebele	zwelim@uniswa.sz Ph: 25170192
Law	Coordinator Mr. T.C. Mavuso	IDE Office 09 <a href="mailto:tcavuso@uniswa.sz">tcavuso@uniswa.sz</a> Ph: 25170260
Law	Coordinator Dr S. Mavundla	IDE Office 9 <a href="mailto:sinmangelekb@gmail.com">sinmangelekb@gmail.com</a> Ph: 25170260
Humanities	Coordinator: Dr H.P. Dlamini	IDE Office 011 <a href="mailto:hpdlamini@uniswa.sz">hpdlamini@uniswa.sz</a> Ph: 25170878
Humanities	Assistant Tutor: Dr V.T. Dlamini-Akintola	vtdlamini@uniswa.sz Ph: 25170198
Science	Dr D. Nyembe	IDE Office No. 14 <a href="mailto:dnyembe@uneswa.ac.sz">dnyembe@uneswa.ac.sz</a>
Nursing Science	Assistant Tutor: Mr. W. M. Mamba	Office No. 05

		Health Education Building (Mbabane) <a href="mailto:wmamba@uneswa.ac.sz">wmamba@uneswa.ac.sz</a>
Information Technology & Computer Science Education	Assistant Tutor Dr. S. Sanni	<a href="mailto:ssanni@uneswa.ac.sz">ssanni@uneswa.ac.sz</a>

**Table 2: Unit Coordinators and Contact Details**

Unit	Unit Coordinators	Contact Details
Academic and Professional Studies	Prof. I. Mhute	IDE Office: 013 <a href="mailto:imhute@uneswa.ac.sz">imhute@uneswa.ac.sz</a> Ph: 25170283
Acting Instructional Design and Development Coordinator	Mr. S.P. Maphanga	IDE Office: 016 <a href="mailto:spmaphanga@uneswa.ac.sz">spmaphanga@uneswa.ac.sz</a> Ph: 25170277
Research, Evaluation and Quality Assurance	Dr. K.E. Mthethwa-Kunene	IDE Office 018A <a href="mailto:kekunene@uneswa.ac.sz">kekunene@uneswa.ac.sz</a> Ph: 25170284
Multimedia	Dr. T. Rugube	IDE Audiovisual Room Office <a href="mailto:trugube@uneswa.ac.sz">trugube@uneswa.ac.sz</a> Ph: 78606220
Student Support Services	Ms. F. Gumede	IDE Office 010 <a href="mailto:nfaisigum@gmail.com">nfaisigum@gmail.com</a> Ph: 25170275

**Table 3: IDE Staff for Administrative and Technical support**

Support Services Offices	Name	IDE Office
Senior Assistant Registrar	Mr. S. Hlophe	IDE Office: 001 <a href="mailto:shlophe@uneswa.ac.sz">shlophe@uneswa.ac.sz</a>
Technologist	Ms. S.B. Msibi	IDE Computer Lab Office <a href="mailto:sbmsibi@uneswa.ac.zw">sbmsibi@uneswa.ac.zw</a>
Technician	Ms S. Dlamini	IDE Computer Lab Office <a href="mailto:spedlamini@uneswa.ac.sz">spedlamini@uneswa.ac.sz</a>

Acting Print Shop Manager	Mr. B. Nhlabatsi	IDE Print Shop <a href="mailto:babza@uneswa.ac.sz">babza@uneswa.ac.sz</a>
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## PART TWO

## 2. Introduction to Open Distance and eLearning (ODEL)

### 2.1 Introduction to ODeL

Open Distance and eLearning (ODEL) is a **flexible and convenient method** of teaching and learning using multi-media resources, such as:

- (i) Self-instructional course materials;
- (ii) Limited face-to-face classes;
- (iii) Online teaching-learning system.

The combined use of face-to-face and online learning is often **defined as “blended learning”**.

The ODeL structure provides students with great flexibility and control over time, so that they can study at their own pace, place and convenience during the weekends or whenever they find convenient time during the week. It also provides flexible educational opportunities in terms of **access** and multiple modes of knowledge acquisition, anytime from anywhere, **provided internet connectivity is available**. Learning materials and instruction can be obtained either in print or online at any time soon after they enroll into the programme.

Through distance education mode, learning opportunities are brought to learners at home or in a workplace, irrespective of whether they remain in one location or become mobile during their study. Further, the hallmark of distance education is the quality of course materials prepared by subject specialists. As such, the **quality of teaching and learning** in distance education is **the same** as the quality of teaching and learning in full-time, provided the students actively interact with peers, lecturers and study materials to excel in their studies.

### 2.2 Definition of Distance Education

Due to the advent and advancements in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), we see the emergence of new terms in Open Distance and eLearning (ODeL). These concepts include the following objectives: to **increase access** and quality education at all levels, through online learning, blended learning, hybrid learning, hyflex learning, which are often used interchangeably (Mishra, 2021).

To have clarity on ODeL, let us revisit the history of the definition of Distance Education in brief. In the beginning, distance education was referred to by different names such as correspondence education, independent learning and distance learning. According to Keegan (1980), the definition of **distance education has the following five key characteristics:**

Quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner in the learning process.

- ❖ Influence of an educational organisation in planning, designing, and delivering of learning resources and opportunities.
- ❖ Predominant use of technical media for delivery of learning content.
- ❖ Provision of two-way communication between student and teacher, and student and student.
- ❖ Quasi-permanent absence of learning groups.

To bridge the gap of quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner in the learning process and quasi-permanent absence of learning groups, limited face-to-face meeting sessions are arranged in a distance education system. This is done for didactic and socialisation purposes and to deepen students' understanding of conceptual course material. On the other hand, **online learning** gives more flexibility and control over the time for the students to manage their own study and achieve their goal. Thus, the new definition of **blended learning** is considered as a form of distance learning having all five **characteristics** of distance education.

When the word 'open education' is used along with distance education, it focuses on opening up' educational opportunities with the support of educational technology by reducing barriers to the conventional teaching-learning system. Thus, the social philosophy of an ODeL system is to create an egalitarian society by providing inclusive quality education and life-long learning.

## 2.3 Reasons for ODeL

The following are the reasons for promoting ODeL (Esampally, 2004):

- ❖ ODeL is cost-effective and a solution to accommodate the growing demand for higher education.
- ❖ It is to achieve “**Education for All**” with parity in standards between full-time and distance education systems.

- ❖ It offers a second chance for those who, for one reason or the other, missed the opportunity of higher education.
- ❖ It promotes gender equality and economic growth by contributing to Human Resource Development (HRD) or Human Capital (HC), through converting illiterate people into a literate workforce. As such, distance education has evolved from a felt societal need.

## **2.4 Components of ODeL**

The ODeL system involves teaching-learning with the support of the following multiple modes or components to ensure the quality of education:

- i. Interaction through limited face-to-face meeting sessions;
- ii. Interaction through printed/online course modules/materials;
- iii. Interactive, flexible learning model (Computer mediated interaction) online learning, Web-conferencing, OER based learning;
- iv. Radio lessons, and live radio broadcasting (audio conference);
- v. Tele-learning: TV lessons, Tele-conferencing.

IDE has reached the fourth (iv) stage of teaching-learning interaction as mentioned above in delivering the quality education through ODeL and is exploring the ‘Tele-learning model’ for use in the near future.

## PART THREE

### 3. Understanding distance learners

#### 3.1 Who is a Distance Learner?

##### a). In general:

Distance learners are students registered on courses which are delivered at a distance, remotely, in learning environments where you, the Course Lecturer or Tutor, are not necessarily physically with them when you teach, when they learn.

They include categories or groups of learners such as:

- ❖ Those who could not continue with education just after schooling, but want to take higher education at a later stage in life;
- ❖ Those who have had higher education for some years but would like to continue their education to improve their knowledge and skills or to advance in their career;
- ❖ Those who have discontinued their studies for one reason or the other and want to have a second chance;
- ❖ Those who are lifelong learners;
- ❖ Those living in various situations (geographical, social, economic, physical) which means they are not free or physically able to attend regular schools/colleges/universities.

Research shows that, in many cases, distance learners are intrinsically highly motivated, independent and active learners. Ideally, they should possess advanced organisational and time management skills, and they should be disciplined enough to study without having to receive external reminders (WhatsApp, email or SMS reminders telling them that their work is due, that they should continue to work through the various units, etc.). This often also includes the fact that they easily adapt to new learning environments.

Of note are the following characteristics of today's younger learners: (adapted from <https://www.mooc4dev.org/sites/default/files/ac4odl2/Module%20II-%2021st%20Century%20ODL%20Learners.pdf>):

- ❖ They spend less time watching TV and have turned towards the internet for their primary source of information and entertainment;
- ❖ They are fascinated by new technologies and are eager to apply these to make their life easier;

- ❖ They prefer group activities and are more productive in such environments. The young learners are more social in virtual spaces (thanks to their active involvement on social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, X, etc.) as compared to their previous generation;
- ❖ They are more goal-oriented and prefer experiential work structures and activities. They prefer learning from the experiences that they gain from the activities that they are involved in. Their targets are time-bound and more specific than their predecessors;
- ❖ They expect transparency at all levels. They take on the challenges that they face and make their way through them;
- ❖ They can undertake multiple activities simultaneously.;
- ❖ They possess a ‘Can-Do’ attitude and are not dependent on others. They do not require constant overseeing; they only need timely guidance. They demand freedom and prefer learning by themselves. They are innovative and are more practically able when compared to others.

However, there is a vast world between an “ideal” distance learner and the distance learners we encounter in our interactions with them.

## **b) Specific to IDE**

Those of us who have been teaching at the University and in the Institute of Distance Education know that we have diverse learners, with different skills and different needs. Our distant learners range from young (even very young) adults to more mature and experienced professionals. They include people who have “learned at a distance” before as well as novice distance learners. They constitute a heterogeneous group of adults with different educational levels, socio-economic backgrounds, marital status, gender, religious and spiritual belief systems, time constraints, family lives, and professional requirements. Some live in housing provided by their employer, some in rural, others in urban areas. Many might not own their own means of transport but rely on public transport. Some are sponsored by their employers for the programme for which they are registered. Some are motivated, others are not. Many will be studying after a day’s work and will be tired when they open their books or check in on the Moodle pages. If they are employed on a full-time basis, they might have to go for extended official work trips, within or outside Eswatini.

The list is long, but there might still be other aspects that make them different, they learn differently, understand distance learning differently.

It is, therefore, important to get to know your learners well, in particular those that take your course. At the design level, you can ensure that you have included various ways for them to learn and interact with you and with their peers. Then, once they are registered and you know how many learners you will have in a particular course in a specific semester, it is time to discover who they are, why they are there, what their learning objectives are and how they learn (learning styles).

**c) What should we, as Course Lecturers and Tutors, do to learn more about our distance learners and to ensure that they become successful in their studies?**

Ideally, as Course Lecturers and Tutors, we would undertake detailed needs' assessments to find out who our learners are, in a particular semester, for a specific course. Unfortunately, we do not often have the opportunity to do so. However, there are little activities (icebreakers, introductions) that can help us to get to know everyone in our learning environment, in addition to more formal questionnaires or surveys that we can set up in Moodle to get specific feedback on, for example, the following:

1. Where does your learner live/stay? Alone or in a family?
2. What type of electronic devices does your learner have/can s/he use for learning/research purposes?
3. Does your learner have easy access to the internet? Never, sometimes, most of the time, always?
4. How much time each day/week/month will your learner have to study or do research?
5. What is your learner's educational background? When did s/he last "learn" in a formal setting? What experience or professional expertise does s/he bring to the group?
6. What language(s) does the learner use?
7. What does the learner like to do in his/her free time?



## **PART FOUR**

### **4. Pedagogical Developments in Open Distance Learning (ODL)**

As a course instructor at IDE, you do need to understand and appreciate the pedagogical developments in Open Distance Learning (ODL) from the previous to the current ODL generations. Such an understanding and appreciation will assist you in locating your place in the ODL delivery system. There has been a significant development in the utilisation of technologies in ODL delivery to date. The classification of the ODL generations could be according to dominant technologies used in each one of the generations.

The first generation, commonly referred to as the correspondence model, relied heavily on written and printed texts as well as postal services. This was long before the advent of the digital technologies that are in use today. Kindly note that, upon request, we can still make some elements of the correspondence model available in our ODL delivery system today. The second generation is referred to as the industrial model and utilises radio and television for content delivery, complementing the print and text sources. The third generation of ODL utilises information and communication technologies (ICT). The use of information and communication technologies provide for interaction between students and fellow students and between students and Course Lecturers. This generation brings in the different technological tools and learning platforms to enhance communication, interaction and content delivery in distance learning. The section on Technology in ODL will provide more information on technology integration in teaching and learning.

The development and classification of ODL can also be looked at according to the dominant teaching and learning approaches (pedagogies).

#### **4.1 Cognitive-behaviourist pedagogies**

The first generation of ODL drew heavily on the cognitive-behaviourist pedagogy. The cognitivist-behavioural pedagogies draw from the classical behaviourist and cognitivist learning theories, which have dominated teaching and learning thinking for a long time. In behaviourism, the purpose of learning is to change external behaviour. Behaviour is learnt through interaction with the external environment. To this end, methods such as drill, question and answer, and other rote-learning approaches such as memorisation of facts are utilised in line with the behaviourist theory. Behaviourist principles in ODL are evident in teaching and learning approaches that are Course Lecturer-centred. Course materials which include self-

learning activities which require a low degree of processing, basic paired associations, discriminations and rote memorisation draw from behaviourism. Course Lecturers need to be aware that learning is more than basic stimulus-response associations. The purpose of learning is not for students to merely internalise and reproduce the content during assessment.

Cognitivist learning theories came as a reaction to behaviourism. Renowned cognitive theorists such as Piaget and Bruner are known for their contributions to pedagogy. The cognitive-behaviourist pedagogies in ODL are marked using pre-packaged print material delivered to students as the main source of content. Interaction between students and Course Lecturers as well as among students was minimal or non-existent. Students were made aware of the learning objectives and all learning, and student performances were meant to achieve the set objectives.

#### **4.2 Social-constructivist pedagogies**

The second generation of ODL is based on social-constructivist pedagogies. In this second generation, the social-constructivist theory informed ODL delivery. Emphasis was on active instead of passive learning. Learning was more of a social activity and available technologies assisted in bringing more of students' social presence in learning. Learning was more learner-centred, with the inclusion of social discussion and application of knowledge to genuine contexts (Honebein, 1996).

#### **4.3 Connectivist pedagogies**

The third generation is informed by the connectivist pedagogy of distance education. In this third generation, students learn by building connections with others and participating in online communities of inquiry. Mobile phone technology also promotes connectivist pedagogy as students can learn from anywhere and at any time, by interacting with each other in virtual spaces. In terms of the use of technology for learning, connectivism puts the learner at the centre of learning as the learner connects and constructs knowledge by making connections online.

The Table below summarises the learning theories and their contributions to the ODL pedagogies.

**Table 3: 4.4 Summary of the learning theories and their contributions to ODL pedagogies**

<b>Learning Theory</b>	<b>Main tenets</b>	<b>Contribution to ODL</b>
Behaviourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learning is external and leads to behavioural change</li> <li>- learning is a response to stimulus</li> <li>- learning is enhanced through practice, repetition, drill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- use of objectives in learning</li> <li>- pre-packaged self-instructional course materials</li> <li>- course Lecturer-led teaching</li> </ul>
Cognitivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learning is a mental activity</li> <li>- learning involves information processing</li> <li>- learning occurs differently at different levels of mental maturation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- structuring and sequencing of content</li> <li>- use of objectives in learning from lower to higher level one</li> <li>- use of pre-packaged self-instructional course materials</li> <li>- use of active learning strategies</li> </ul>
Social constructivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- knowledge is socially constructed</li> <li>- Learning involved construction of knowledge in social and genuine learning context</li> <li>- social, cultural, &amp; linguistic experience are pivotal in learning</li> <li>- learning should promote problem-solving abilities and critical thinking skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- students' experience importance in ODL</li> <li>- role of the Course Lecturer in ODL is to provide learning experiences and facilitate learning</li> <li>- ODL course materials should provide opportunities for students to learn collaboratively</li> <li>- problem solving and critical thinking to be at the fore of ODL teaching and learning</li> </ul>
Connectivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- assists in understanding learning in the digital age</li> <li>- learning should centre on the promotion of a diversity of opinions</li> <li>- students learn by forming connections with fellow students through available technologies</li> <li>- students learn by making connections in the ideas and concepts that they engage with.</li> <li>- learning may reside in non-human appliances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ODL should assist students with the effective use of technologies for learning</li> <li>- students should learn collaboratively with other learners online</li> <li>- importance of online learning communities</li> <li>- increased online interactivity is important in online learning</li> <li>- promotion of problem-solving and critical thinking in digital learning.</li> </ul>

It is, therefore, important for you as a Course Lecturer to be conversant with the development of ODL pedagogies. Knowledge of the learning theories and their influence on pedagogies allows the Course Lecturer to execute the following ODL functions:

- ❖ Designing ODL programmes
- ❖ Developing ODL course materials
- ❖ Facilitating learning in face-to-face contact environments
- ❖ Facilitating learning in online environments
- ❖ Understanding the role of the ODL learner in learning
- ❖ Utilising students' experiences in learning
- ❖ Considering problem solving abilities and critical thinking skills in ODL
- ❖ Understanding the assessment of and for learning in ODL
- ❖ Supporting students for effective teaching and learning

## **PART FIVE**

### **5. Course Lecturer Roles and Responsibilities**

Distance education revolves around a learner-centered system with teaching activity focused on facilitating learning. Beaudoin (1990) rightly points out that the Course lecturer/Instructor in this setting augments prepared study materials by providing explanations, references and reinforcements for the student. The mode of delivery dictates that independent study stresses learning, rather than teaching. It is based on the principle that the key to learning is what students do, not what teachers do. It is a highly personalised process that converts newly acquired information into new insights and ideas. The distance education institution's function, and the task of its instructional personnel is to facilitate and enhance that process - despite the distance - to achieve optimum learning outcomes.

Learning in this high technological global world presents many roles and responsibilities for both teacher and learner. In addition to this, there is a radical change in construction and delivery of course content. The use of interaction between and among learners, teachers, and content promises to increase opportunities and experience of deep and meaningful learning. There should be constructivist transactions between learning and teaching that makes the student-teacher roles critically important in distance education. Isman (1999) applauds the constructivist approach on learning for being interactive within teaching learning transactions.

Constructivist approaches also relate with self-development of students beside the learning and teaching activities. Students should search and design their activities according to their self-experience on the subject and construct all activities under the sense of evaluation (Isman, 1997). In the constructivist approach, the student is at the centre of the instruction and has an active role in learning by the support of technology. For making learning easy and making learning products permanent, technology has become very important. Technology requires increasing the attention of students to the information being learned and enhancing motivational cues, helping to remember that information. The constructivist approach that includes technology support requires learning by doing for students. The technology, self-development of students and learning by searching through technological implementation places the Constructivist approach at the heart of the distance education mode of learning.

In distance education, the constructivist approach suggests that the role of a course lecturer is to:

1. Be conscious of the learner's autonomy. Lecturers should be aware of the individual differences of the students and design course materials based on this consciousness;
2. Use contextual and current information to transmit knowledge. In other words, he/she should be able to adapt content knowledge to the context, and engage in

ongoing research to impart current and relevant information, giving relevant examples to enhance students' understanding of content being taught;

3. Strive to develop critical thinking skills of the students. An effort should be made to create a research environment for the students for them to search and evaluate their experiences on content to develop their self-regulation skills;
4. Reflect on the students' prerequisite skills on the content to build new knowledge;
5. Use technological communicational skills to implement distance education effectively;
6. Deliver content of their courses using the student-centred learning processes. Students should take the responsibility of learning and the lecturer should assume the facilitation role. Therefore, the lecturer should provide concrete time, place and opportunities of interaction between him/her and the learner(s);
7. Create a collaborative learning environment and interactive discussion groups for students to engage with related materials;
8. Give timely and proper feedback to the students and help them to relate the content to other subjects content;

In addition to these roles, the course lecturer is responsible for:

- a. Preparing learning tasks for learners;
- b. Immediately consulting with the students regarding their problems on tasks;
- c. Being aware of students' needs and wishes;
- d. Keeping students motivated to learn;
- e. Breaking communication barriers;
- f. Establishing an effective student-teacher interaction environment.

## **PART SIX**

### **6. Programme Coordinator and Tutor Responsibilities in Open Distance and eLearning (ODeL)**

#### **6.1 What does a Distance Learning Programme Coordinator do?**

A distance learning programme coordinator specialises in distance education which includes evaluating and implementing novel teaching and learning techniques. There are many responsibilities for Programme Coordinators, but their primary day-to-day duties involve administration. The day-to-day duties of a Programme Coordinator at IDE also involve working with faculties' full-time course lecturers, part-time course lecturers, course tutors and students to manage the teaching and learning process. The distance education programmes at IDE require that programme coordinators evaluate lecturers to ensure that they are adhering to the rules and regulations, for example when it comes to curricula and attending classes physically or virtually.

Coordinating the type of information that course lecturers can use effectively is another aspect of the job. One of the most important duties of distance education coordinators involves helping and encouraging course lecturers through the Multimedia Unit to explore new ways to expand the use of technology into their courses.

Designing and developing faculty workshops gives programme coordinators the flexibility to upskill course lecturers on expanding distance learning programs. Through such workshops, lecturers are instructed and guided in handling new technologies for effective enhancement of their teaching and learner engagement.

#### **6.2 Characteristics of a distance learning Programme Coordinator**

Distance learning coordinators have distinct personalities. They tend to be enterprising individuals, which means they are adventurous, ambitious, assertive, extroverted, energetic, enthusiastic, confident, and optimistic. They are dominant, persuasive, and motivational. Some of them are also conventional, meaning they are conscientious and conservative. One needs most of these traits to effectively attend and deal with the different personalities involved in the programme.

### **6.3 Tutor Responsibilities**

The Tutor plays an important role in assisting the Course Lecturer and the students in the teaching and learning in IDE. S/he should be someone who has completed at least a first degree or has a relevant qualification to facilitate teaching and learning for the given course(s) s/he has been assigned to take.

The Tutor assists the Course Lecturer and the students in the teaching and learning activities in IDE. It should be noted that most of the activities of the Tutor are more likely to be online. Therefore, the Course Tutors have the responsibility to avail themselves for workshops on using Moodle to effectively navigate the system when interacting online with the students. However, the Course Lecturer may engage the Tutor to participate in a face to face session for a number of reasons: to enable the teacher to sit in the class while being mentored on the delivery of the content – especially if the tutor is new or assisting the Course Lecturer in cases s/he is unable to attend to the class for reasons beyond course lecturer's control.

The Course Lecturer has the responsibility of designing the outline and activities for the course. The Tutor has to work under the directive of the Course Lecturer who shoulders the responsibility for all activities aimed at facilitating teaching and learning. The Course Lecturer **may** give the Tutor the following tasks:

- ❖ Marking - marking may be done online and offline. For online marking, the Tutor needs to learn how to mark content on uploaded assignments, journals, Tutor-marked tests, and to give positive feedback to the students in the Comments Sections. It is important that the course lecturer also marks some assessment and not give everything to the Tutor. The Tutor shall not grade the examination unless the Tutor has the appropriate qualification of a Master's or above;
- ❖ Engaging students in Online Discussion Forums;
- ❖ Responding to students' questions on the Ask Me Forum;
- ❖ Assisting the Course Lecturer wherever s/he needs help concerning the course;
- ❖ Consulting the Course Lecturer if s/he wishes to give more tasks than provided or whenever there are challenges as s/he carries out his/her tasks.

### **6.4 How does one become a Tutor in IDE?**

In general, the Department identifies possible Tutors and encourages such persons to apply. Qualified prospective Tutors may also apply to the Director (IDE), who then seeks the recommendation of the Head of Department since it is the department that identifies the need for Tutors and makes recommendations to IDE for appointment.



## **6.5 Working Hours for the Tutor**

- ❖ The Tutor shall be allocated 4 hours for all the activities that s/he may carry out on Moodle. This shall be paid at the given university rate (currently E374.00 per hour).
- ❖ Marking is remunerated according to the university current rate per script, which is E23.00 (2025-2026).

## **Who to consult when Tutors need information**

- ❖ Information relating to the course should be sought from the Course Lecturer. The Head of Department may be of help in case the Tutor cannot reach the Course Lecturer.
- ❖ The Programme Coordinator will assist the Tutor on issues pertaining to contracts, claiming payment and participation in workshops.
- ❖ The Student Representatives in each course are helpful in disseminating information to students through social media or by making announcements during face-to-face lectures. It is, therefore, advisable to have contact details for the Class Representative(s). However, these representatives are not supposed to collect or deliver students' assignments or guide students on problems they encounter in doing their work.

## PART SEVEN

### 7. Material Design and Development

The Material Design and Development Unit is an important component at IDE. Its mandate is to support course lecturers in the design and development of instructional material. There is an **Instructional Designer** and an **Assistant Instructional Designer** who work together to fulfill the mandate of the unit.

**The main functions of the Unit are to:**

- ❖ Identify course development team or experts in collaboration with cooperating departments and the programme coordinator at IDE; this team includes course writers, content reviewers and editors.
- ❖ Organise training programmes for the development of self-instructional learning materials.
- ❖ Work with the experts as they develop self-instructional learning materials by giving guidance and feedback on work that has been done.
- ❖ Supervise the development process to ensure progress.
- ❖ Coordinate the acquisition of recommended resources.
- ❖ Check all drafts for quality and accuracy.
- ❖ Check and approve the final product after it has gone through all quality assurance processes such as content review and editing.
- ❖ Process the payment of claims for all experts involved in the development of the learning materials (writers, reviewers, editors, typists, graphic artists and proofreaders).

The **Copy Editor** also forms part of the Material Design and Development Unit and

- ❖ is responsible for the editing of all course materials,
- ❖ supports freelance editors, and
- ❖ produces the IDE newsletter.

#### 7.1 Importance of learning materials for distance education learners

- ❖ The value of learning materials in a distance learning environment cannot be overemphasised. For any distance education programme to thrive, the design and development of high-quality learning materials should be a priority (Jayaram and Dorababu, 2015).
- ❖ Learning materials stand in the place of the teacher who is geographically separated from the student. The materials serve the role of instructors to the learners.
- ❖ Certain standards are essential for distance learning materials to be of high quality and offer optimal benefits to students.

- ❖ They need to be student-centred, put the needs and interest of the varied students at the centre of the design process for optimal benefits to the users (Zabidi, Woo, Kumar, Fadzil and Husain, 2017).

## **7.2 Development of learning materials for distance education**

- ❖ The development of learning materials for distance education requires a team of experts in different areas: subject experts, instructional designer, multimedia expert, graphic designer, and editor. All these experts play an important role in ensuring that materials developed in whatever format (print/electronic) is of high quality.
- ❖ The curriculum is a framework from which learning materials are developed. The course goal stated in the curriculum is critical in directing the materials designers on the path to follow in the design and development of learning materials (Manurung, 2017).
- ❖ From the goal, instructional designers and subject experts can craft instructional objectives which are then used as the basis to select instructional materials, identify suitable instruction strategies and select appropriate media elements to integrate for effective learning and teaching (Manurung, 2017; Aydin and Aytakin, 2018).
- ❖ Well-designed self-instructional learning materials should motivate students to learn more, critically reflect on the content they engage and be able to attend self-assessment activities.
- ❖ The learning materials should be designed in such a way that they arouse and sustain the interest of the students.
- ❖ Foundational theories of learning and communication come to the fore to guide the development process.
- ❖ The integration of multimedia is important in the development of learning materials for distance education. It helps students understand the content presented and recall previously acquired knowledge.

There are prospects of developing this Unit into a full-fledged printing house. This will depend on availability of funds. The current rates for learning material development at IDE are shown in Annexure 2.

## **7.3 Printing and Digital Publishing**

The Printing and Digital Publishing Unit was established based on the importance of the printing and digital publication of the learning materials. The main responsibilities of the Unit are to:

- ❖ procure and take stock of printing consumables and equipment
- ❖ print, digitize and distribute the course materials

**Note** that in alignment with the University's paperless policy, digital course materials are provided as standard. Students requiring printed materials may request them at an additional cost.

## PART EIGHT

### 8. IDE Mode of Delivery

Generally, learning at a distance is similar in many ways to learning in a full-time classroom environment. However, unlike the conventional system which is teacher-based, distance education is mostly learner-based. The teaching-learning system in the Institute of Distance Education (IDE) is organised through Blended Teaching-Learning system, which is the combination of face-to-face and online teaching-learning system. In this system, learners are independent and mostly learn by themselves with the help of **modules** which are self-instructional and self-learning. Course modules provide detailed subject content, while the distance education teacher helps learners to develop the skills needed to study, understand and assimilate the subject content to successfully complete the programme.

IDE provides a limited number of **face-to-face lectures** and tutorials. IDE also provides an online teaching-learning facility through the Moodle Learning Management System (LMS). (The details of the number of lecture/tutorial hours and online sessions are prepared by the Programme Coordinator on a separate timetable before classes commence).

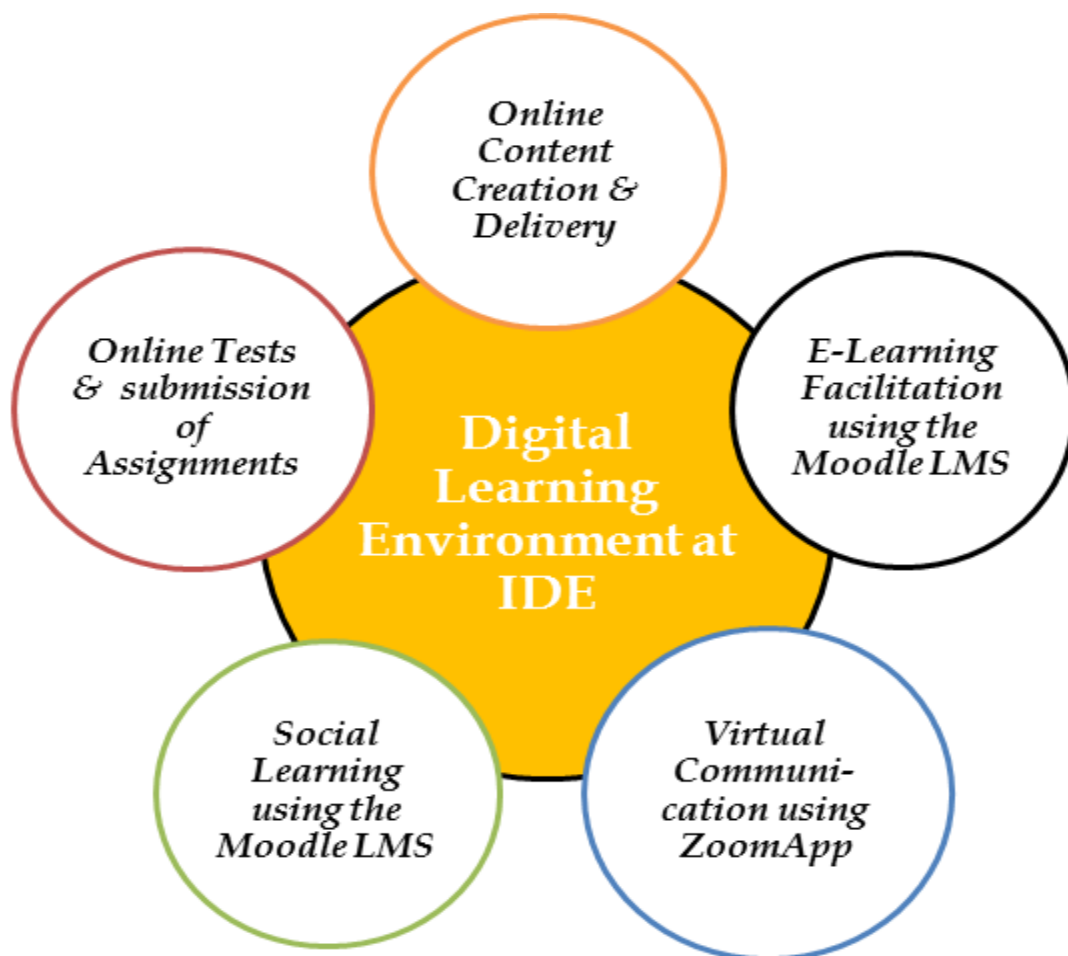
A lecturer's role is to present the conceptual material and scope of the content, explain key areas that students may find difficult, and provide students with guidance on assessment criteria. The tutorials exist to encourage students to enter discussions and debate about what they have read in modules or heard in the lectures. The expectation is on a student to ask questions where necessary, contribute to discussions so that the lecturer/tutor would clarify what is needed.

**Online learning** takes place over the Internet with the support of technology. For example, some content of a course could involve students attending a class taught by a teacher in limited face-to-face classroom setup, while other components of the course could involve participating in online teaching-learning system, where the students learn independently with the support of technology. It could also involve students-students, or students-teachers being connected digitally for online interaction.

Now you have the facility of three (3) modes of learning, namely: (i) module-based interaction; (ii) face-to-face interaction; and (iii) computer-based interaction using Moodle LMS. The combination of all these three modes of learning is called Blended Learning.

Broadly, the online activities take place in IDE through: (i) Online/virtual classes; (ii) Creation of online learning materials including open educational resources; (iii) Online submission of electronic assignments; (iv) Online tests and assessments; (v) Online discussions or discussion forums; (vi) Online instruction/chatting, etc. as shown in the chart below.

### **Online learning environment at IDE, UNESWA**



Thus, distance learning students must take responsibility for their own learning and manage their own time to complete the programme successfully as the distance education system provides a flexible arrangement of study.

## **PART NINE**

### **9. Assessment in Open Distance and eLearning (ODeL)**

#### **9.1 Understanding assessment in ODeL**

Assessment is an integral component of the teaching and learning process in distance education. Course instructors and tutors should understand assessment and its role in distance education teaching and learning. Such an understanding will help enhance the quality of teaching and learning experiences for students and overall student satisfaction. According to Stassen et al. (2001: 5) assessment is “the systematic collection and analysis of information to improve student learning”. Student assessment in the teaching and learning process enables instructors to measure teaching and learning effectiveness by linking student performance to specific learning outcomes.

Assessment is meant to ascertain the achievement of the set course or unit learning outcomes. Assessment is meant to establish the strengths and weaknesses of the learning process and of individual students. Proper assessment leads to course improvement as it also assists by providing students with feedback on how they progress in their learning. As noted by Brown and Knight (2004), assessment techniques work better when a course instructor indicates the set learning outcomes for the course or unit of the course. The outcomes should be spelt out in advance and shared with the students. Furthermore, the assessment criteria to be utilised in assessment should be clarified to the students before they work on any assessment task.

#### **9.2 Types of assessment**

##### **9.2.1 Formative assessment**

Formative assessment entails the evaluation of student learning as it progresses over time and during the learning process. Its central purpose is to assess students’ level of achievement to improve student learning during the learning process. As noted by Maki (2002: 11), by interpreting students’ performance through formative assessment and sharing the results with the students, the course instructors help students to “understand their strengths and weaknesses and to reflect on how they need to improve over the course of their remaining studies”. Formative assessment may take the form of reflection exercises, quizzes and tests, which may not necessarily be recorded for the attainment of a continuous assessment mark. The important issue in formative assessment is the quality of feedback provided to the students and the feedback should improve their learning.

### **9.2.2 Summative assessment**

Summative assessment is assessment which is conducted at the end of a course of study. Its main aim is to produce a measure that “sums up” student learning. It is meant to grade the student in terms of how the student would have performed in the course. The only challenge with summative assessment is that it does not allow students to learn from their learning inadequacies as it is a final judgment of performance. It also does not provide the course instructors with opportunities to adjust teaching strategies as it comes at the end of the teaching and learning process. Summative assessment may take the form of end-of-semester pen and paper examination under controlled conditions, practical examinations, term papers, journals, oral presentations and open book examinations.

### **9.3 Online assessment**

The current blended learning system, where a significant component of learning takes place online using the Moodle LMS, necessitates that some of the assessment should be conducted online. Online assessment may be defined as an evaluation of a person’s abilities, behaviours and/or characteristics and the assessment is conducted over the Internet by using available Web technologies. Students should be informed of the nature of online assessments in advance. Preparations should be made to minimise technical glitches as students take online assessments. Online assessments may take the form of quizzes, objective tests, subjective tests, open book tests, take home tests and practical tests.

### **9.4 Important assessment considerations for IDE course instructors**

There are important issues that course instructors should take note of for both continuous assessment and the examination process.

#### **9.4.1 Continuous assessment**

- ❖ All aspects of continuous assessment culminating in a Continuous Assessment (CA) mark should be clarified from onset in the course outline.
- ❖ The nature of the continuous assessment tasks, the expected total marks and weighting of the tasks should be explained clearly to students.
- ❖ Assessments should be varied and should include assignments, tests, practicals and any other forms depending on the discipline.
- ❖ Assessment tasks should be marked meaningfully, and students should be provided with timeous and detailed feedback from the assessed work.
- ❖ Comments from marked assessment tasks should assist students to improve learning, hence feedback should be provided well before commencement of the end-of-semester examination period.
- ❖ Proper records of marks for assessment tasks should be kept by the course instructor and proper calculations should be made in arriving at the final CA mark, which students should sign for to confirm.

- ❖ There are clear procedures of handling students who miss assessment tasks for genuine and proven reasons.

#### **9.4.2 Examinations**

- ❖ Course instructors are expected to set examination papers for their courses for examinations to be written at the end of a semester as main examination or re-sit papers.
- ❖ The nature and structure of the papers should be explained to the students at the beginning of the course.
- ❖ The Continuous Assessment (CA) and examination weighting should be clarified to students at the beginning of the course.
- ❖ As quality assurance measures, examination papers and marked scripts should be internally and externally moderated as indicated in the university regulations.
- ❖ In courses offered collaboratively with full-time departments, IDE students sit for the same paper with their full-time counterparts.
- ❖ Due care should be taken in marking examination scripts by standardising marking through a common marking guide (if different lecturers are involved), correct allocation of sections and overall marks as well as accounting for all the students who would have taken the examination. This is very important to avoid post-examination queries by students.



## **PART TEN**

### **10. Teaching and Learning Resources**

In addition to what course instructors post on Moodle (content and interactions) and what can be found in the course modules, it is essential to draw learners' attention to other teaching and learning resources. These additional resources can have different forms and formats. The library offers useful services to our learners. IDE continuously negotiates with UNESWA Library Management to have opening hours that also suit our IDE learners. Apart from the Library resources, which are plentiful and relevant to our learners' needs, there are Open Educational Resources available online.

Open Educational Resources (OERs) are free teaching and learning materials which are in the public domain or which have been distributed by their creators under open licenses—licenses which say the materials may be reused, revised, remixed, redistributed, and retained. The Library can assist in locating OER appropriate to the level of teaching and learning relevant to you.

# PART ELEVEN

## 11. Student Support Services

### Introduction

In general, learning institutions have support systems that help a learner to learn. Student Support Services consists of a broad range of services, and each institution tends to prioritise these according to their strategic positioning. The primary function of the learner support system in distance learning may be summarised as threefold (Tait, 2000). Tait (2000) further defines this comprehensive support system as one that is concerned with the **affective, cognitive** and **systematic domains**.

The affective elements are those concerned with supporting learning by creating an environment that promotes motivation in students. The cognitive elements are those concerned with supporting the learning of students through course material and other resources that may be used. The systematic domain is concerned with the administrative and management processes and systems that create an enabling environment for student learning. What is to be noted is that these three are interdependent. As a course lecturer, you need to find your spot in each domain and fully occupy it.

### 11.2 Where to start

In addition to being a course content expert, there is a need to develop additional skills that will make one a good instructor. The Open University (2012) puts emphasis on four qualities that must be demonstrated to be effective in giving students support by Distance learning instructors.

These are:

- a) **Empathy** – Ability to understand and comprehend students' issues from their internal frame of reference.
- b) **Flexibility** – Ability to be accommodating to students' point of view without disregarding your expertise.
- c) **Honesty** – Ability to communicate the truth with students in a manner that will make them appreciate it and be willing to take appropriate action if necessary.
- d) **Practicality** – Ability to remain realistic and practical in supporting students.

### 11.3 Role of a Course Lecturer in Student Support

1. **Motivation:** As an immediate contact person with the student, it is expected that you assist students to be motivated and stay motivated to learn.

2. **Accessibility of instructor:** There is need to develop a feasible plan on how students may access you as an instructor outside the planned contact sessions.
3. **Planning for tutorials:** In instances where the tutor is different from the lecturer, there should be a strong partnership between the two, so that there is no missing link in their interaction with the discussion.
4. **Planning for face-to-face sessions:** The personal contact has a bearing on coping with students' alienation. Therefore, there is a need for the provision of a variety of activities that promote student interaction. Some students have attributed face-to-face interactions as the ones that create enthusiasm (Nsamba et al., 2017).
5. **Academic counselling:** Lecturers need the ability to diagnose students' learning problems. Individual or group counselling in relation to needs must be provided. Academic counselling also extends to guiding students on the use of information technology tools, electronic devices and the institutional Learning Management System (LMS). The main areas that lecturers need to ensure are covered under academic counselling include:
  - a. **Introduction to the course**

At the beginning of each course, students have a range of questions and expectations. It is advisable to immediately attend to these in the initial sessions. Students also need to be advised on what to focus on first and what they need to master to regard themselves as people that have done the course. The course outline may have this section to give both the course description, course objectives and manner of assessments (Continuous Assessment and Examination).
  - b. **Academic support and learning skills development**

This is the point where, as an expert on the course, as a course instructor, you demonstrate your skills and expertise while delivering the content. Give students an opportunity to practice the skills and display comprehension of content.
  - c. **Measuring progress in the course**

It is important to closely monitor the progress of each student in a course early, to be able to identify indicators of need for more support. Depending on the issue uncovered, a student may immediately be referred to other support service providers in the institution.
  - d. **Specialisation or Subject Choice**

Programmes have different subjects or units of specialisation from which students need to make choices for their career trajectories. Students may at times wish to discuss their choices or plans with their lecturers to seek

discipline-specific guidance. Course lecturers are requested to create time for such guidance and if more information and time is required, they may be referred to the Student Support Services Office for their career planning and work life balance issues.

e. **Beyond IDE**

Thinking about the future is a motivator. It does not matter at which stage of the programme; in fact, the earlier the better so that they may select the correct electives. Discussing the usefulness of a course beyond studies creates an internal drive to work hard

6. **Feedback:** Timely feedback on student performance on assigned work is a support strategy as it enables students to work on issues timeously.
7. **Communication strategies:** Students need to be able to communicate with lecturers and vice versa outside the classroom. Utilisation of all available media allows even part time instructors to be able to stay in contact with learners.
8. **Preparation of study material:** As an instructor, prepare material bearing in mind that the student must spend more time working with the material than interacting with the lecturer. This means it must be self-explanatory and self-contained (Juran 2014). Students should also not at any point question the expertise of lecturers because of ill-prepared learning materials provided to them.

#### 11.4 **Boundaries of student support**

Setting boundaries for student support enables effectiveness and efficiency. The boundaries must be communicated to the students. It is best for one to understand the whole student support continuum to be able to make appropriate referrals. Be careful not to be caught up in role confusion as it may impede your key responsibilities. Clearly communicated boundaries allow for the development of a healthy instructor-student relationship.

## PART TWELVE

# 12. Technology in Open Distance and eLearning (ODEL)

With the advent of new technologies for learning and teaching, institutions have moved to online teaching and learning. Technology offers opportunities to promote interaction between learners and lecturers. However, learning and teaching technologies are always developing, it is important, when teaching online, to identify the positive effect integrating different tools can have on student learning outcomes.

Faced with technical constraints, such as very limited or no online access, as an institution we constantly evaluate those solutions that would allow instructors and students to work with a lack of connectivity and limited information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure.

Moodle is our Learning Management System (LMS) for all IDE courses. Course Lecturers can post course content, readings, assignments, assessments and grades on Moodle. Students can access course content, communicate with Course Lecturers and classmates, engage in discussions, submit assignments, take exams and access grades online. There are also additional tools available for developing content, and enriching students' learning experiences. The University encourages Course Lecturers to use Moodle for course and content delivery.

### 12.1 Obtaining a Moodle Account

Moodle courses are created at least two weeks before the start of a new academic year, and every course that students can register for is available in Moodle. To be assigned the role of Teacher (Lecturer) to a course, the Lecturer needs to first register using the Class List Marks Entry System (CLMES) application at the link CLMES and indicate the Course(s) they will be teaching and within 24 hours, the Lecturer will have the courses assigned to them in Moodle.

With an email address not ending in uneswa.ac.sz, send your email address, full name and the courses you teach to [ide@uneswa.ac.sz](mailto:ide@uneswa.ac.sz). If you would like further assistance, please send us an email to [ide@uneswa.ac.sz](mailto:ide@uneswa.ac.sz) with the course information.

### 12.2 Recommended browser versions

Moodle is compatible with most modern web browsers. For the best experience, we recommend you keep your browser up to date.

**Note:** Legacy browsers with known compatibility issues:

- Internet Explorer 10 and below
- Safari 7 and below

Course Lecturers are responsible for **backing up a local copy of each of their Moodle courses each semester**. The IDE technologist works with Course Lecturers to resolve technical issues related to Moodle courses.

### 12.3 Training

The Multimedia Unit works with the Materials Design and Development Unit to offer a variety of ways to learn how to integrate technology and pedagogy. Support is provided individually, via group training, self-guided instructions or instructional videos.

Course Lecturers are encouraged to attend scheduled workshops to enhance their proficiency in the use of Moodle tools and content delivery.

### 12.4 Staff Support

There are a lot of technologies that can be used to create great teaching and learning experiences. The Multimedia Unit provides information about a range of instructional technologies that instructors can incorporate into their courses to enhance the quality of the learners' experiences and promote better learning outcomes. The Unit offers assistance on how technology can be used, best practice recommendations, and information about how to get started.

### 12.5 Multimedia Equipment

The Multimedia Unit has various equipment that can be checked out by Course Lecturers. Please contact [ide@uneswa.ac.sz](mailto:ide@uneswa.ac.sz) to submit a request.

### 12.6 Best Practices of integrating technology in your course

Below you will find some tips on how to best integrate technology in the various parts of your course(s).

#### Course Overview and Introduction

- ❖ Create a welcome video, and make sure it is available online.
- ❖ Create Q&A and social forums.
- ❖ Create an online orientation video.

#### Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

- ❖ Describe the course learning outcomes in terms of what the student will be able to do upon completion.
- ❖ Establish clear expectations for your teaching presence.
- ❖ Students look for you to be involved in discussions, respond to questions, provide feedback and encouragement, and reach out when you notice they may need additional assistance.

### **Assessment**

- ❖ Provide opportunities for online self-assessment and practice.
- ❖ Create engaging assignments with accountability.

### **Course Materials**

Course materials are an important component of distance learning. Course Lecturers are encouraged to ensure that all relevant materials are made available to students in whatever format. At IDE, the module is the key learning material, it works as the teacher. It is the responsibility of the Course Lecturer to design, develop or review a module for the course(s) they teach. If someone develops it, the Course Lecturer has a right to review it or update the content as and when a need arises. The formal review (major or minor) of course materials (module) is done under the guidance of the Instructional Design and Materials Development Unit. In the development of the module, the Course Lecturer has a responsibility to:

- ❖ Ensure that copies of presentations or other learning materials made by the instructor in the face-to-face setting are made available on the LMS.
- ❖ Ensure that course materials are presented in a consistent and logical structure and layout, suitable to the delivery mode. It is recommended that templates provided by the instructional design unit be used.
- ❖ Organise the course content from a student's point of view.
- ❖ Provide a course roadmap to guide students
- ❖ Establish a weekly pace for online modules or units of study to help students manage their time to meet course expectations.
- ❖ Include in-text activities in each unit to keep the students engaged with the content they are learning. They also help them identify problematic areas and seek assistance from course lecturers and peers.
- ❖ Include a clear introduction in each unit to help students get direction on what to expect in the unit.
- ❖ Design SMART objectives as they are a critical component of learning materials; ensure that they are available in all learning materials you prepare whether print or online. They should be written from the point of view of the students, clearly stating, in measurable terms, what students should be able to do after engaging with the materials.

- ❖ Adopt Bloom's taxonomy or SOLO taxonomy as an important guide when developing learning objectives. They should be presented from lower order to higher order.
- ❖ Should present learning materials in such a way that they develop higher order thinking in their students.
- ❖ Ensure that conclusion is included as it is an important part that recapitulates all issues discussed in a topic and for a module. It also helps to link or connect students to the next topic.

### **12.7 Recording effective mini lectures**

Mini lectures are short (6 minutes or less), instructor-produced videos that are designed using a structured format to provide effective explanations of a single key concept or specific skill set.

### **12.8 Learner Engagement**

Discussion forums are designed to promote interaction (instructor-student, content-student, and student-student) that is appropriate to the course learning outcomes.

### **12.9 Planning and facilitating quality discussions**

- ❖ Provide a rubric on the skills / content expected.
- ❖ Assign a reflection activity on each.
- ❖ Provide strategic feedback on each.
- ❖ Set clear standards for instructor responsiveness and availability (e.g. turn-around time for email, assignment marking, etc).

### **12.10 Learner Support Resources**

The course instructions should make it clear how students can access technical support. The contact information for instructors and Tutors should be easy to find.

For general information regarding the learning management system, Moodle, please visit this website: <http://docs.moodle.org/25/en/>. For more information about instructional technology resources for online learning, please contact the IDE Multimedia Coordinator. Rates for developing learning materials are shown in Annexure 1.



## **PART THIRTEEN**

### **13. Quality Assurance in Open Distance and eLearning (ODEL)**

This section addresses the what, why, how and when questions about quality assurance in the context of the Institute of Distance Education.

#### **13.1 What is quality assurance?**

Before we explore what quality assurance in ODeL entails, let us try and understand what is meant by quality. Quality is a much debated and relative term used in various contexts. Quality can be viewed as excellence or value for money. Students pay for education and the type of education they receive should be worth what they pay. Quality can also be regarded as fitness for purpose, meaning something achieves what it is meant to achieve. Quality as fitness for purpose means the product or service meets the stated purpose, customer specifications and satisfaction (COL, 2006). Fitness for purpose could also be viewed as effectiveness in achieving institutional goals (Elassy, 2014). As an institute, we should know that students are our customers, we must understand their needs and how to satisfy them. Course instructors are expected to provide quality education whether online or face-face.

Quality Assurance can be defined as a systematic process for checking that the educational service being delivered meets specified standards or requirements of the University. Quality assurance in higher education is described as a structured process to ensure students receive effective and appropriate education (Kayyali, 2023). It is about maintaining standards or a desired level of quality in a service or product by means of paying attention to every stage of the process of delivery or production and preventing mistakes or defects in products. This involves delivery and assessment measures to ensure both high standard and equity in education. The Institute carries out quality assurance and quality enhancement. Quality enhancement is about taking deliberate steps to seek continuous improvements in the University's performance. IDE seeks both to maintain set standards and continuously improve its process, products and overall service delivery meeting the needs of clients.

#### **13.2 Why quality assurance**

Offering quality education is in line with international, national and institutional goals. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 “is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. The Ministry of Education and Training's (MOET) mission is “to ensure equitable access to inclusive, lifelong quality education and training for all Swazi citizens” (MOET Education Sector Policy, 2018).

Quality Assurance is a mandatory requirement of the Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC), the regulatory and accreditation agency for all registered Higher Education Institutions in Eswatini. ESHEC implores institutions of higher learning to offer quality educational programmes. Institutions can have internal Quality Assurance Systems to set up, maintain and improve the quality and standards of teaching, student learning experience, research and service to community. Institutions then continuously evaluate, monitor, promote and improve the quality of the programmes and courses and of the institution as a whole. This approach to quality assurance can be described as, top-down approach.

IDE also adopts a bottom-up approach which results in a process of continuous quality improvement achieved through stimulating internal quality processes in which institutions would evaluate themselves and set their own quality improvement agenda. This approach is motivated by the zeal for maintaining standards, remaining competitive, customer satisfaction, accountability, improving employee morale and motivation, credibility, prestige and status, as well as image and visibility.

### **13.3 How and when quality assurance is done at IDE**

Quality assurance activities involve reviews of IDE systems, processes, programmes, courses and course modules and collecting feedback from students and course instructors. IDE has developed quality assurance guidelines and several tools to assure quality.

#### **Available documents for use include:**

- ❖ UNESWA Quality Assurance Policy (in a draft version)
- ❖ IDE quality assurance guidelines
- ❖ Quality assurance authorship process
- ❖ Templates and Manual for developing course modules
- ❖ Content review of draft manuscripts [Blended learning and Gender responsiveness tools]
- ❖ IDE Blended Learning Course Quality Assurance Checklist (Annexure 2)
- ❖ Course module evaluation tool [available on Moodle and at the end of the course module]
- ❖ Satisfaction surveys [biennial]

Course instructors are requested from time to time to participate in these reviews and surveys. They may also use some of these documents to improve their day-to-day work. The Table below provides an illustration of the criteria for learner assessment and materials development from the IDE Blended Learning Course Quality Assurance checklist.

**Table 4: Checklist for the criteria for learner assessment and materials development from Blended Learning Course Quality Assurance**

<b>IDE Blended learning course checklist</b>	
<b>Course Learning Materials</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
1. Supplementary materials for face-to-face lectures are provided in the LMS.	1. The learning activities and assessments are consistent with the learning outcomes.
2. Copies of presentations made by the instructor in the face-to-face setting are made available in the LMS.	2. Opportunities for online self-assessment and practice are provided.
3. Learning activities are clearly integrated as pre-classroom and post-classroom activities with specific instructional materials and linked to learning objectives.	3. Learner assessment is conducted on an ongoing basis throughout the course.
4. Course materials are presented in a consistent and logical structure and layout, suitable for the delivery mode.	4. A structure exists to provide students with feedback throughout the course.
5. All course materials are presented without errors.	5. Clear instructions are provided on how to submit assignments.
6. Content uses relevant examples.	6. Assessment covers a wide range of cognitive domains/levels.
7. Content is accurate and up to date.	7. A variety of assessment strategies are used.
8. Media elements used within the course materials adopt formats and standards that are accessible to all learners.	
9. Relevant open educational resources are used in developing the course and are attributed clearly.	
10. Synchronous sessions are archived for learners' future use.	

## PART FOURTEEN

### 14. Course Lecturer/Tutor Contractual Obligations

The IDE Course Lecturer or Tutor should be formally contracted to IDE. For the programmes offered in collaboration with full-time departments of the University, the relevant HoD is responsible for the recommendation for appointment of Course Lecturers and Tutors. The Director, IDE endorses the recommendation and forwards the lists of appointments to the Registrar for appointment. A contract is then provided to individual Course Lecturers and Tutors who are expected to sign the contract before the commencement of teaching/tutoring for each semester. For the IDE-owned programmes, the relevant Programme Coordinators are responsible for recommendation for appointment of Course Lecturers and Tutors. The Director endorses the recommendation and forwards the lists for appointments to the Registrar for appointment. Course Lecturers and Tutors then receive their contract from the Registrar, which they must sign to acknowledge acceptance.

The appointed Course Lecturers and Tutors must fulfil the requirements of the contracts by facilitating online and face-to-face learning. If for any reason the course lecturer or tutor is unable to fulfil the contractual obligations of teaching/tutoring/teaching practice supervision/practicals supervision/research supervision/assessment, a report must be made to the relevant HoD and the Programme Coordinator so that alternative arrangement can be made, without disadvantaging the students.

Course Lecturers and Tutors are compensated by the University for the work done in the Institute and compensation is done using the prevailing university payment rates. Claims should be made for the compensation to be effected as shown in **Annexure-I Point 3 to 6**. All claims should be made **accurately** and **honestly**. Claims are checked and endorsed by the Programme Coordinators and the Director, before being forwarded to the Registrar's Office for checking and confirmation and then to the Bursar's department for payment. IDE strives to process all clear claims within reasonable time, and any claim with queries will be returned to the claimant for attention. Payment of the claims is made by the Bursar's department, and not by IDE. The University operates a centralised payment system (payments are effected twice a month).

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## ANNEXURE - I

### PREVAILING RATES FOR TEACHING AND RELATED SERVICES AT IDE

IDE arranges its classes through a Blended Learning System as mentioned hereunder.

- (1) Five face-to-face study sessions (10 hours) per course for the whole semester on weekends as indicated in the Year Planner for each semester.
- (2) Eighteen (18) hours online facilitation. This is justified by the fact that the online quality instruction through different multimedia tools and resources requires more time and effort. This is to enhance the quality of teaching-learning through the Open Distance Learning mode.
- (3) The remuneration for face-to-face study sessions will be paid as per the current study sessions prevailing rates according to the rank (Professor/Lecturer) for ten (10) hours, whereas the remuneration for **online instruction will be paid as per the current Tutorial sessions prevailing rate irrespective of the rank (Professor/Lecturer), (i.e. at the rate of E374 per hour)** for eighteen (18) hours for the whole semester.
- (4) The application of remuneration comes with the assurance that all full-time and part-time teaching staff are continuously trained on online instruction. A maximum of eighteen (18) hours online instruction will be paid even if the staff engaged more than eighteen (18) hours.
- (5) The online teaching-learning takes the form of:
  - (i) Preparing and uploading lecture notes, power-point slides, recorded video lectures, related articles on the Moodle LMS.
  - (ii) Conducting tests, quizzes and assignments.
  - (iii) Synchronous and asynchronous instruction, etc.
- (6) The details of remuneration for online instruction are as follows:

## Blended teaching/learning arrangements

Activity	Description	Time Allocation	No. of Hours
<b>Lecture Videos</b>	Minimum of six lecture videos (each covering a module unit or part of it)	1 recorded video (10-15 minutes) = 2 Hrs × A minimum of 6 lecture videos	12 hours
<b>Assessments &amp; Feedback</b>	Conducting assessments & feedback	1 Hr, subject to a maximum of 2 Assessment Tasks	2 hours
<b>Online Discussion Forum</b>	Discussion Forum	2 Hrs, subject to a maximum of	2 hours
<b>Virtual Classes</b>	Virtual classes (e.g., Zoom classes)	1 Hr, subject to a maximum of 2 classes	2 hours
<b>Total number of online hours</b>			<b>18 hours</b>

Total Study Days (F2F instruction): 5 × 2 hours = **10 hours**

### Note:

- (a) A Course Lecturer is responsible for all online instruction activities mentioned above; however, the Lecturer can request the assistance of a Tutor pertaining to: (i) online discussion and (ii) marking of tests and assignments (not examinations unless s/he has appropriate qualification). For these activities, a Tutor is entitled to a total remuneration of four (4) hours for instruction and the marking according to the number of scripts and assessments. The number of assessments shall be guided by the provision of the regulations.
- (b) For accounting purposes, the face-to-face claims may be made periodically within the semester for face-to-face sessions and the online instruction be claimed at the end of the teaching period of each semester, but before the beginning of the following semester. If a claim is done after the Semester Activities have been completed (at least a month later) the officer claiming will be requested to write a letter to accompany his/her claim.
- (c) The payment of remuneration for online instruction is in line with the details mentioned in point 6 above.

### Other prevailing payment rates

- a) **Marking Rates** – E23.00 per script. For CA (assignments and tests) full-time lecturers do not claim for the first 40 marked scripts, however for examinations claims are made for all the scripts. Lecturers who are not full-time UNESWA employees are paid for all the scripts marked for Continuous Assessment and Examinations at the rate of E23.00 per script.
- b) **Setting Examination papers** - E273.00 per exam paper set
- c) **Research Supervision** - E850.00 after completion and submission of the research project.
- d) **Practicals** - a tutorial rate of E326.00 per hour.
- e) **Certificate in Psychosocial Support Programme** - Module Guide Development – E2,500.

### LEARNING MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT RATES

(a)	Course Module writing	=	E22,990.00
(b)	Manual development	=	E17,242.50
(c)	Content Review (Course Module)	=	E9,196.00
(d)	Major Module Review	=	E11,495.00
(e)	Minor Module Review	=	E5,518.00



## ANNEXURE - II

### IDE Blended Learning Course Quality Assurance Checklist

This checklist is for use by content reviewers for Blended Learning Course Materials for the Institute of Distance Education (IDE) at the University of Eswatini. The Content Reviewer, an expert in the subject matter, should review all course learning materials, including the course syllabus (outline), print module, and Moodle Learning Management System page.

Course \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ title: \_\_\_\_\_

Review \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria (Score [✓] the following statements as applicable to the blended course under review)	Yes	To a large extent	To some extent	No	Not Applicable
<b>Section I: Course Overview &amp; Introduction</b>					
1. A short and clear description and/or video about the blended course is available online.	3	2	1	0	N/A
2. The various components of the blended course are explained.	3	2	1	0	N/A
3. Prerequisite knowledge and skills are clearly stated.	3	2	1	0	N/A
4. Minimum technical skills expected of the student are clearly stated.	3	2	1	0	N/A
5. A link is provided to the official current course outline.	3	2	1	0	N/A

6. A clear course schedule with topics, assignments and due dates is posted.	3	2	1	0	N/A
7. Expectations about assignments and other assessments to be used in the blended courses are clearly explained.	3	2	1	0	N/A
8. Purpose and etiquette expectations (netiquette) for online discussions, chat, email, and other forms of communication are stated clearly.	3	2	1	0	N/A
9. A link to course and/or institutional policies the student is expected to comply with is provided (or policies are clearly stated).	3	2	1	0	N/A
10. There is an online introduction or icebreaker activity for students and the instructor to develop an online community.	3	2	1	0	N/A
<b>Comments</b>					
<b>Section 2: Course Goals and Learning Outcomes</b>					
1. There is clear alignment between course goals and learning objectives.	3	2	1	0	N/A
2. The course learning outcomes are described in terms of what the student will be able to do upon completion.	3	2	1	0	N/A

3. The various blends of the course are aligned to the learning objectives (follow Bloom's taxonomy levels)	3	2	1	0	N/A
<b>Comments</b>					
<b>Section 3: Assessment</b>					
1. The learning activities and assessments are consistent with the learning outcomes.	3	2	1	0	N/A
2. Opportunities for online self-assessment and practice are provided.	3	2	1	0	N/A
3. Learner assessment is conducted on an ongoing basis throughout the course.	3	2	1	0	N/A
4. A structure exists to provide students with feedback throughout the course.	3	2	1	0	N/A
5. Clear instructions are provided on how to submit assignments.	3	2	1	0	N/A
6. Assessment covers a wide range of cognitive domains/levels.	3	2	1	0	N/A
7. A variety of assessment strategies are used.	3	2	1	0	N/A
<b>Comments</b>					
<b>Section 4: Course Learning Materials</b>					
1. Supplementary materials for face-to-face lectures are provided in the LMS.	3	2	1	0	N/A

2. Copies of presentations made by the instructor in the face-to-face setting are made available in the LMS.	3	2	1	0	N/A
3. Learning activities are clearly integrated as pre-classroom and post-classroom activities with specific instructional materials and linked to learning objectives.	3	2	1	0	N/A
4. Course materials are presented in a consistent and logical structure and layout, suitable for the delivery mode.	3	2	1	0	N/A
5. All course materials are presented without errors.	3	2	1	0	N/A
6. Content uses relevant examples.	3	2	1	0	N/A
7. Content is accurate and up-to-date.	3	2	1	0	N/A
8. Media elements used within the course materials adopt formats and standards that are accessible to all learners.	3	2	1	0	N/A
9. Relevant open educational resources are used in developing the course and are attributed clearly.	3	2	1	0	N/A
10. Synchronous sessions are archived for later use by the learners.	3	2	1	0	N/A
<b>Comments</b>					
<b>Section 5: Learner Engagement</b>					

1. Discussion forums are designed to promote interaction (instructor-student, content-student, student-student) that is appropriate to the course learning outcomes.	3	2	1	0	N/A
2. Clear standards are set for instructor responsiveness and availability (e.g., turn-around time for email, assignment marking).	3	2	1	0	N/A
3. The requirements for student interaction and progression through the course are clearly articulated.	3	2	1	0	N/A
4. Synchronous sessions, if any, are clearly indicated (especially when external experts are brought in to teach).	3	2	1	0	N/A
5. Online and classroom activities are clearly distinguished.	3	2	1	0	N/A
6. Communication/activity tools (forums, wikis, blogs, etc.) are easy to locate.	3	2	1	0	N/A
<b>Comments</b>					
<b>Section 6: Learner Support Resources</b>					
1. The course instructions make it clear how students can access technical support.	3	2	1	0	N/A

2. The course instructions make it clear how the institution's or programme's academic support systems can be accessed (e.g. library services, peer tutoring).	3	2	1	0	N/A
3. The course instructions make it clear how the institution's student support services can be accessed.	3	2	1	0	N/A
4. The course instructions answer basic questions related to research, writing, technology, etc., or give links to tutorials or other resources that provide this type of information.	3	2	1	0	N/A
5. The course provides guidelines or links to resources on how to succeed as a student in online or blended environments.	3	2	1	0	N/A
6. Contact information for instructors and tutors is easy to find.	3	2	1	0	N/A
<b>Comments</b>					
<b>Section 7: Employability skills integration</b>					
1. Creative and Innovative Problem-Solving	3	2	1	0	N/A
2. Teamwork	3	2	1	0	N/A
3. Communication skills	3	2	1	0	N/A
4. Self-management skills	3	2	1	0	N/A
5. Entrepreneurship skills	3	2	1	0	N/A
6. Technology skills	3	2	1	0	N/A
7. Creating networking skills	3	2	1	0	N/A
8. Integrated career guidance & counselling.	3	2	1	0	N/A
9. Graduate attributes	3	2	1	0	N/A
10. Internationalisation	3	2	1	0	N/A

<b>Comments</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL:</b>

**General Comments:**

**Notes:** Sum the scores for all the items. 'Not applicable' is used, if a course has not planned the specific aspect of the course in the blueprint. The percentage score is calculated based on the number of items used. The total score may be used as an indicator for blended course quality, and for improving the quality of the course in the subsequent offer of the course.

**Source:** Adapted largely from Commonwealth of Learning "Blended Course Learnability Evaluation Checklist"; "The Regional Community of Practice (CoP) QA guidelines in Open and Distance Learning (ODL)" (2019) and minimally from Afsaneh Sharif @ UBC "Online/Blended Learning Course Quality Checklist".

**Checklist developed August 2019; Revised February 2026.**

