



Sydney College of Divinity

A federation of leaders in theological education

Distance Education Handbook 2009

A Supplement to the Sydney College of
Divinity Handbook 2009

Approved for use by Member Institutions by Academic Board 6 April 2009

AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF MINISTRIES

BROKEN BAY INSTITUTE

CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF SYDNEY

EMMAUS BIBLE COLLEGE

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

NSW COLLEGE OF CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION

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SOUTHERN CROSS COLLEGE

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1. Introduction to Distance Education

1.1. Context of Distance Education offered within Member Institutions of SCD

The various Member Institutions (MIs) of the Sydney College of Divinity (SCD) offer a range of accredited awards to equip people for effective professional and lay ministry in a rapidly changing environment. A significant proportion of these coursework units and awards are made available to students in “distance mode”. Within the term “distance” there is great variety and diversity among the MIs in the specific modes of delivery, technologies, learning resources and approaches used (see Section 1.7. “Definitions”).

The SCD is committed to ensuring that distance education should be characterized by the same concerns for quality, integrity and effectiveness that apply to more traditional modes of instruction. All coursework units and awards offered by the Member Institutions of the SCD, in whatever format or delivery mode, are governed by the [SCD Mission statement](#), the [Strategic Plan](#) and the [SCD Policy and Procedures Manual](#).

1.2. Purpose of Distance Education Handbook

The development of courses and coursework units of study, regardless of the mode of delivery, must take into consideration three relevant areas: curriculum, pedagogy and delivery. This handbook deals specifically with the last two areas: pedagogy and delivery. Within the SCD environment curriculum issues are dealt with by the Discipline Coordinators and the Academic Board.

This handbook is therefore to be used as a supplement to the [SCD Handbook](#). It is designed as a resource to help staff of SCD Member Institutions (MIs) who are involved in design, delivery, support and evaluation of distance education programs. It aims to outline how distance education can be designed and delivered to ensure quality and evaluated to assess its quality. It aims to assist both those MIs that are planning to provide distance education programs and also to provide a self-assessment framework for those MIs which are already offering distance education.

It includes:

- SCD core principles for the provision of high quality distance education.
- Guidelines designed for use by Member Institutions
- Checklists, forms and a list of resources for distance education.

1.3. Approval process for MIs commencing the offering of distance education coursework units and programs

Each MI that offers distance education coursework units and programs will need to be approved by the SCD Academic Board.

In order to be approved to offer distance education the MI will need to demonstrate that its offerings are consistent with the Guidelines set out in this section of the Handbook.

An application for approval to offer distance education should be completed by the MI. The application form (see Appendix) guides the MI through the details of the guidelines.

1.4. Requirements for MIs currently offering Distance Education:

MIs currently offering distance education are expected to **complete an internal review of their distance education offerings every two years**. The internal reviews should be undertaken during the second and fourth years of the accreditation cycle, which means that MIs will therefore be expected to review their distance education offerings during 2009 and then again in 2011. The review is to be based on guidelines in this handbook and the MI is requested to report on the outcome of the review, to the Distance Education Committee.

1.5. Implementation of these Guidelines

The Academic Dean (or an appointed delegate of the Academic Dean) of the Member Institution will be responsible for the oversight of the implementation of these Guidelines.

The Academic Dean will be responsible for any initial application for approval to offer distance education and also for the regular review of the MI's distance education offerings as described above.

1.6. Review of these Guidelines

This Handbook and Guidelines for Distance Education will be reviewed annually by the Distance Education Committee and revised as agreed by the committee. Any amendments will be submitted to the Academic Board for approval.

1.7. Definitions

In this handbook distance education and distance learning are defined as follows:

Distance education: is an educational process and system in which:

- a coursework unit or program of study is being undertaken involving both teaching and learning
- all or a significant proportion of the teaching is carried out by someone or something removed in space and/or time from the learner.
- communication and interaction between teachers and learners, between learners and other learners, and between learners and learning resources takes place through the use of one or more media or technology (e.g. communications technology such as television, computers, internet, email, mail, or interactive videoconferencing.). Communication and interaction can be synchronous or asynchronous.

Distance learning: is the desired outcome of distance education. The two terms are often used interchangeably.

Within the SCD a variety of terms are currently in use by the various Member Institutions which overlap in meaning, such as, “flexible”, “mixed mode”, “e-learning”, “online” and “distance”. SCD MIs are not required to use any particular terms in their publications and course materials. However, the SCD distance education handbook should be understood to apply to any coursework units or programs that fall under the above definition of distance education, regardless of the terms in use by each MI.

Overview of terms used in the field of distance education/learning:

While the term *distance education/learning* is widely used among educational institutions, the rapid development of communications technologies in the late 1990s and early 2000s created many variations on the theme. To understand *distance education/learning*, it is helpful to examine other closely related terms and concepts.

Correspondence study: The original form of distance learning, correspondence study involves the exchange of the written word, on paper, between teacher and learner. Improvements in transportation technologies and the use of email and the internet to make documents available to students have contributed to this method still being a viable method of study.

Distributed education: As electronic technologies provided more assistance to overcome the barriers of time, instead of just distance, some felt that the focus on *distance* had outlived its usefulness. In distributed education, education is available (or “distributed”) to any location at any time.

E-learning: Gaining popularity in the early 2000s, the term *e-learning* refers to any electronically assisted instruction, but is most often associated with instruction offered via computer and the internet. Many courses that are primarily offered in “face to face” mode have an e-learning component. The definition of distance education is broader than and entails the definition of e-learning. E-learning is a broader concept than online learning, as it encompasses a wide set of applications and processes which use all available electronic media to deliver education more flexibly, e.g. mobile technology, email.

Flexible education/learning/delivery:

- refers to the availability of choices and options for what, when, where and how people learn. Different learning styles are supported.
- refers to the fact that coursework units, courses and programs may be offered using a variety and/or a mix of delivery modes. For example, a coursework unit may include a face-to-face

component as well as providing students with a package of materials, or requiring access to an online site.

Mixed or Hybrid classes: These courses use a mixture of distance learning and face-to-face techniques. They may be equivalent to, or a subset of courses/programs described as “flexible”. For example, a group of learners in a theology class may meet face-to-face for a residential or intensive component of the course, but the remainder of the instruction may be offered via television or computer or individual study packages.

Open learning: This is a term for distance learning commonly used in the British Commonwealth countries. The term derives from the Open University of the United Kingdom. To assist those not privileged to attend Britain's selective universities, the Open University began offering classes in the 1960s via a combination of written materials, televised programs, and local tutors. Open universities have spread throughout the Commonwealth countries including Australia, and serve millions of students throughout the world.

Online education/learning: Distance education/learning where the majority of instruction is offered via computer and the internet is often called online education/learning. It may encompass a range of technologies such as the world-wide-web, email, chat, newsgroups, and text, audio and video conferencing delivered over computer networks (local area networks, intranets or the public internet). Web-based systems range from simple publicly accessible web pages to complex online delivery platforms which manage student access to content, group interaction, online assessment and ancillary functions such as enrolments and student records.

Synchronous/Asynchronous: Synchronous refers to communication/interaction between people that happens at the same time, e.g. telephone conference. Asynchronous refers to communication interaction between people that not occurring at the same time, e.g. online discussion forum, email.

Some key distinctions

“Learning” versus “delivery”

These terms are often used almost interchangeably (as in *flexible delivery* or *flexible learning*). *Delivery* refers to the actual process of the interaction between students and the teacher, or a teaching resource. *Learning* is used to describe a broader context which also encompasses areas such as organisational policy, student support, and administrative systems. *Delivery* is often used when discussing the provision of education and training from the perspective of the training provider.

Learning is more commonly used when discussing the experience of the learner or student. Over the last few years there has also been a shift from talking about *delivery* to *learning* reflecting a move from an instrumental approach – teaching as something that teachers do to students – to a constructivist approach – learning is something that students do assisted by the education and training system..

Flexible, online and e-learning

In one sense there is a continuum between these terms, online is a subset of e-learning and e-learning is a subset of flexible learning. However there is also a distinction between technology and approach. Online and e-learning are about specific technologies. Flexible learning is a philosophy and an approach, of which the use of technology is one, albeit very important, component.

The above definitions, summaries and distinctions were adapted from the following sources:

www.unesco.org/education/educprog/lwf/doc/portfolio/definitions.htm

<http://flexiblelearning.net.au/guides/keyterms.pdf>

<http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1917/Distance-Learning-in-Higher-Education.html>

2. Principles for Teaching and Learning in Distance Education Environment

2.1. Pedagogy for Distance Education.

Much has been written about the pedagogy of distance education. The bibliography in the Appendix to this Handbook lists a sample of the material that is available. Teaching staff involved in distance education may find the following summary a helpful way of thinking about the design and delivery of distance education.

This is a summary of a resource that is freely available on the web: *Theory and Practice of Online Learning* edited by Terry Anderson and Fathi Elloumi (Athabasca University, 2004) (details in the appendix). Although the book refers to online learning much of it is equally applicable to any form of distance education. The following material draws from Chapter 1 of this online book.

The essential features of effective distance learning involve strategies that

1. motivate learners,
2. facilitate deep processing,
3. build the whole person,
4. cater for individual differences and learning styles,
5. promote meaningful learning,
6. encourage interaction,
7. provide feedback,
8. facilitate contextual learning, and
9. provide support during the learning process.

Another way of thinking about this process is to consider the following overview of the levels of interaction that occur within distance learning. Planning for effective distance education should include each of these levels.

Figure 1-5 shows five levels of interaction. At Level 1 the learner interacts with the distance materials and any associated technology (book, CD, DVD, computer). At Level 2 the learner interacts with the content. At Level 3 the learner interacts with the support services that are available. At Level 4 the learner interacts with others learners and instructors. At Level 5 the learner interacts with the context in which they will apply their learning – they contextualize the information, develop personal knowledge, and construct personal meaning from the information.

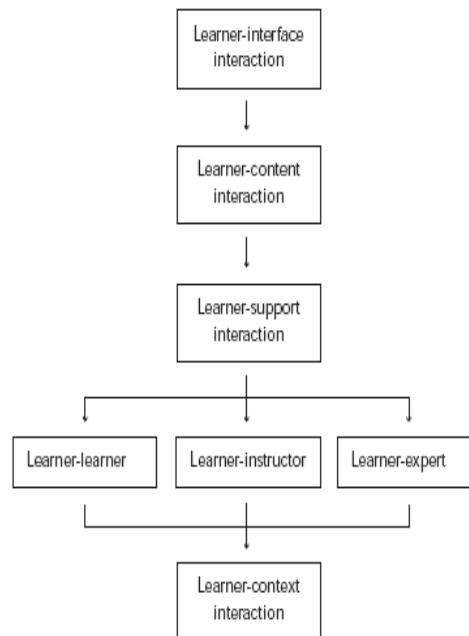


Figure 1-5.
Levels of interaction in
online learning.

When these levels of interaction are linked with the nine essential features of distance learning a more complex diagram of effective distance learning emerges. The *Learner Preparation* stage motivates and prepares the learner by ensuring that the learner knows (a) what to expect in the coursework unit, (b) where the coursework unit is heading, (c) what to do in order to succeed in the coursework unit, and (d) that they have satisfied all necessary prior learning. The *Learner Activities* stage includes learning activities that are designed to develop essential features 2-5 from the list above. The *Learner Interaction* stage also allows development of features 2-5 but also includes features 6-9.

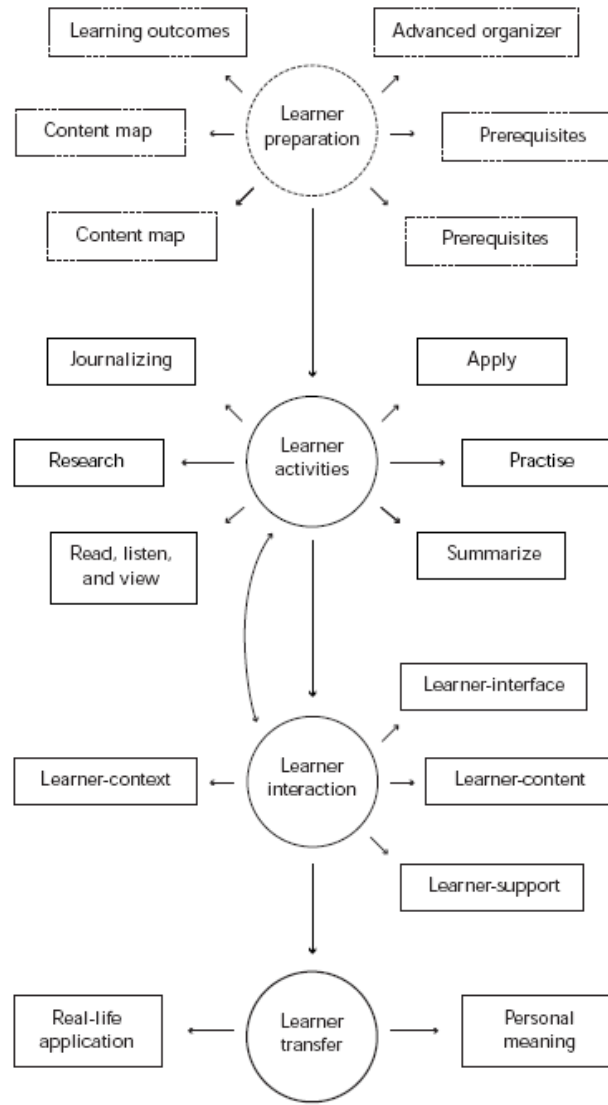


Figure 1-6. Components of effective online learning.

2.2. Core Principles for Distance Education and Learning:

The SCD Distance Education Committee has identified core principles, commitments and objectives which guide the standards for design, delivery and evaluation of high quality distance education offerings. The guiding principles in six key areas are listed below and are based on the [Flexible Delivery Policy](#) of 2007 and the “Pedagogy for Distance Education” section of this handbook.

These principles are developed into a set of easy to use Guidelines for Member Institutions of the SCD offering distance education coursework units and programs in Section 3 of this handbook.

2.2.1. Learning Design and Delivery

Principle

We expect that distance education coursework units and programs offered by MIs will exhibit quality, integrity, and consistency in both design and delivery. Our distance education coursework units and programs will be designed and delivered so as to motivate learners, promote meaningful learning, encourage interaction and build the whole person.

2.2.2. Learner Support

Principle

Students undertaking SCD distance education coursework units and programs will be provided with comprehensive support and with clear and accurate information in every aspect of their learning activities from initial enquiry, through to course completion.

2.2.3. Learning Outcomes

Principle

Our distance education coursework units and programs will be shaped by clear learning outcomes that are appropriate to the distance learning environment and that are based on demonstrable and assessable knowledge, attitudes and skills.

2.2.4. Evaluation & Review

Principle

We will regularly and systematically evaluate the effectiveness of distance education coursework units, programs and support services with the aim of improving the structure, content, delivery and resourcing of these programs and support services.

2.2.5. Resourcing of Distance Education

Principle

The design and delivery of distance education programs and coursework units will be sufficiently and appropriately resourced by each MI.

2.2.6. Providing for Professional Development and Training of Staff

Principle

Teaching and support staff who are involved in development and delivery of distance education programs require professional development specific to that form of teaching and learning.

3. Guidelines for Member Institutions Offering Distance Education

3.1. Application of Guidelines

These guidelines apply to:

MIIs that are currently offering distance education coursework units and programs and wish to expand upon or review these offerings.

MIIs that are seeking to develop distance education offerings for the first time.

These guidelines should be understood to apply to the adaptation or modification of existing coursework units within the SCD curriculum for delivery as distance coursework units. Should an MI wish to propose the development of an entirely new coursework unit, this should be undertaken in consultation with the relevant Discipline Coordinator and in accordance with the SCD Curriculum Policy.

Proposals for the first-time offering of a coursework unit in distance mode, (whether from MIIs that are already offering distance education, or from MIIs that are new to distance education), should be submitted to the Distance Education Committee at least one teaching period prior to its proposed delivery. Proposals should be based on the principles, objectives and actions listed in the guidelines in this section of the handbook. The Distance Education Committee, in its role of liaising with relevant committees of the SCD will review all proposals and report to the Academic Standards Committee.

Where an MI is conducting an internal review of its distance education coursework units and programs it should use these guidelines as the basis for the review. (Ref: Section 1.4 of this handbook)

3.2 Purpose and Motivation for Distance Education

In establishing or reviewing its distance education offerings it is important that the MI gives careful consideration to its particular circumstances and clearly identifies the reasons why it provides, or wishes to provide, distance education. The motivating forces for providing distance education may be varied; the potential of increasing enrolment, public or student pressure, a desire to reduce costs or improve accessibility, scheduling convenience, opportunities for faculty to be creative or to learn to use new technologies, or a recognition of changes in teaching and learning environments.

Once identified, these reasons will then inform the MI's understanding of the purpose of distance education within its own unique context. A clear understanding of the purpose of offering courses or coursework units in distance mode will then provide a framework for the successful design, implementation, delivery and evaluation of the distance education offerings of the MI.

3.3 Scope and Extent of Distance Education Offerings

In developing and delivering distance education, MIIs will need to consider which of its courses, programs or coursework units it wishes to make available in distance mode. MIIs may decide that particular coursework units or courses are not suited to distance mode, e.g. courses that include supervised practical sessions (note: the development of increasingly sophisticated and easy to use online video facilities may provide new opportunities to teach/supervise at a distance even in practical courses).

Each section of these guidelines is set out in the following manner:

Title of Core Principle

Summary of Principle

Key objectives for MIs – *a list of the objectives under each topic area that MIs are to work towards to ensure quality distance education offerings*

Actions – *a list of actions for MIs to complete in order to meet the objectives*

3.4 How do we design and deliver quality distance education?

Principle

We expect that distance education coursework units and programs offered by MIs will exhibit quality, integrity, and consistency in both design and delivery. Our distance education coursework units and programs will be designed and delivered so as to motivate learners, facilitate deep processing, promote meaningful learning and build the whole person

A. Design Standards

Key objectives for MIs:

- Specific & appropriate academically qualified persons are identified to be responsible for the initial design, and ongoing development of distance education programs. Ref: [Accreditation of Staff Policy](#)
- Where coursework units are being adapted or modified for delivery as distance units, academic staff will give careful consideration to how to best design the units to:
 - achieve approved learning outcomes and include adequate verification of learners' participation and effort
 - encourage and provide for appropriate and timely interaction between faculty and students and among students.
 - motivate learners
 - facilitate deep processing
 - build the whole person
 - promote meaningful learning
 - facilitate contextual learning
 - cater for individual differences and learning styles
 - ensure that that no students are disadvantaged by lack of access to facilities or remoteness of location, particularly in regard to provisions concerning attendance at any face to face components of distance education coursework units or programs.
- Where elements of a distance education coursework unit or program are provided by or outsourced to another organization or partner, the MI offering the coursework unit or program remains responsible for ensuring the quality of the materials or services provided (e.g. library related services, bookstore services, course elements acquired or licensed from other institutions, commercially produced course materials, course management and delivery systems, technical services, online payment arrangements etc.)

B. Delivery Standards

Key objectives for MIs:

- Specific & appropriate academically qualified persons are identified to be responsible for overseeing the delivery of distance education programs. Ref: [Accreditation of Staff Policy](#).
- The method of delivery of distance education coursework units and programs encourages and provides for appropriate and timely interaction between faculty and students and among students.
- Any technologies and delivery methods selected for specific distance education courses/units and experiences are appropriate for the intended learning outcomes, content, and relevant characteristics of the learning environment and the learner.
- The appropriate enrolment (i.e. minimum or maximum numbers of enrolled students) that can be supported in distance education programs, and in individual coursework units comprising these programs, is determined by the MI (based upon considerations regarding content and learning activities, the nature of the learners, the technologies employed, and the support available to and from faculty).
- Portions of courses or coursework units delivered in distance mode adhere to the same principles of academic quality and integrity as courses delivered entirely through these means.

Actions:

- For each teaching period MIs should provide details of academic qualifications of staff responsible for design, ongoing development and current delivery of distance education coursework units and programs. (This can be done via MI Activities forms.)
- Where a coursework unit is being developed for first-time delivery in distance mode (or where a coursework unit in distance mode is being substantially modified*) the MI should provide details of:
 - the work undertaken by academic staff and other relevant staff to prepare the unit for offering in distance mode (based on the key objectives in the design standards above)
 - the delivery method and technologies chosen for use by the MI and the reasons for these choices
 - how interaction between staff and students and among students is provided for in the design and delivery of the units and programs.
- MIs should monitor enrolment numbers in distance education coursework units and programs in each teaching period. Should agreed minimum or maximum numbers be exceeded in a coursework unit or program for that teaching period, the MI will need to decide whether the coursework unit offering is viable, or whether extra staffing or resources may need to be allocated.
- Where a distance education coursework unit includes **a requirement (i.e. compulsory) that students attend a face to face component** (e.g. intensive, residential, workshop, seminar or facilitation) MIs must:
 - a) clearly state in all coursework materials, including websites, promotional materials and course materials provided to enrolled students, that attendance at this component is compulsory.
 - b) in consultation with the Office of the Dean of the SCD, ensure that the site/s being used for the face to face component is approved by the relevant state government department that deals with tertiary education.
- Where a distance education coursework unit includes an **optional face to face component** (e.g. intensive, residential, workshop, seminar or facilitation) MIs must:

- a) ensure that students unable to attend the face to face component are not disadvantaged. This may involve the provision of alternative means of interaction (teleconference, video conference, recordings of sessions, online discussions etc) or the provision of alternative experiences, readings, or coursework.
- MIs should ensure that any aspects of distance education coursework units and programs that are outsourced to or shared with other institutions, companies or organisations give proper consideration to:
 - clear delineation of responsibilities and expectations of each party
 - clear financial arrangements
 - ensuring confidentiality and privacy in services involving personal information
 - ensuring quality of materials/resources/services provided by other party
 - appropriate system reliability and emergency backup guarantees in agreements concerning technology services
 - monitoring and evaluation of the agreement/contract

* “Substantial modification” of coursework units would include such changes as the transfer of coursework unit materials from a paper-based to an online format; or a major change of technology, systems, learning management system or other equipment relevant to teaching and learning.

3.5 How do we provide quality support for learners?

Principle

Students undertaking SCD distance education coursework units and programs will be provided with comprehensive support and with clear and accurate information in every aspect of their learning activities from initial enquiry, through to course completion.

Key Objectives for MIs:

A. Learner Context

- Take account of the different characteristics of students and their varying cultural and educational backgrounds (including those of Indigenous Australian students).
- Facilitate positive and co-operative teaching and learning environments (virtual or otherwise) where students have reasonable access to staff to discuss issues and problems and can expect fair, critical and helpful assessment and feedback on their academic work in a timely manner
- Ensure that each distance education offering is part of coherent plan enabling student access to all necessary components of program.
- Ensure that administrative processes and resources are readily accessible to prospective and enrolled distance students
- Work to develop a sense of community among distance students e.g. encouraging study groups, providing student directories, including off-campus students in publications and events.

B. Learner Resources & Information

- Provide students with teaching and learning materials and resources appropriate to the reasonable needs of students at specific levels of attainment (undergraduate, honours, postgraduate).
- Provide students with suitable teaching and learning materials, experiences and opportunities such that each student will be stimulated to reach their highest levels of intellectual attainment.
- Provide students with a clear statement of their responsibilities especially pertaining to the nature and unacceptability of academic dishonesty including cheating, plagiarism, the fabrication or falsification of data, and the proper use of copyright material.
- Ensure that any information and course materials that describe distance education coursework unit and program offerings, (whether electronic or hard copy), clearly and accurately represent the coursework units and programs on offer.
- Provide orientation opportunities and resources for distance learners that are appropriate to the technologies used, the coursework unit/course content, and the learners' needs and experiences.

Actions:

Prior to Enrolment:

- Ensure academic and/or support staff are prepared and able to provide clear and accurate advice to prospective and current students on current and future distance education offerings.
- Ensure that checks are carried out to verify that students have adequate qualifications for admission to program/coursework unit.
- Provide prospective students with detailed and accurate information on admission, progression and program graduation requirements including:

1. admission requirements
2. application procedures, any placement testing, enrolment/registration procedures
3. financial aid including fee help and scholarships, payment arrangements
4. regulations regarding student progress, and course completion
5. specific student background, knowledge, or technical skills required to undertake and successfully complete coursework units and courses, including information regarding independent learning expectations and the nature and challenges of the distance learning environment
6. technology and/or software required or recommended

Prior to Commencement of Teaching Period:

- Provide students enrolling in coursework units and programs with detailed and accurate information concerning:
 1. coursework unit/program completion requirements, including clear explanation of specific assessment requirements and expectations for student participation in learning
 2. details on availability of library and other learning resources
 3. the nature of teaching/learning experiences
 4. student and staff responsibilities
 5. the nature of staff-student and student-student interaction opportunities, techniques, and requirements
 6. expected costs, and information on payment and refund policies
 7. the procedure for resolving any complaints and grievances
 8. the student's responsibilities in learning, especially pertaining to the nature and unacceptability of academic dishonesty including cheating, plagiarism, the fabrication or falsification of data, and the proper use of copyright material.
- Where necessary, provide orientation or training for students in use of technology, learning management systems or any programs required to be used by students enrolling in distance education coursework units or programs.

During the teaching period:

- Provide students with quality academic support and advice, including clear information and advice on:
 1. library and other learning resources, bookstore and online services
 2. ongoing technical support, training in information literacy
 3. referrals for student learning difficulties, physical challenges & personal counselling, access to grievance procedures
 4. student academic progress and completion information
 5. tutoring, career counselling and placement
- Ensure that any published materials clearly describe how students may obtain these support services.

3.6 Developing Learning Outcomes & Assessment

Principle

Our distance education coursework units and programs will be shaped by clear learning outcomes that are appropriate to the distance learning environment and that are based on demonstrable and assessable knowledge, attitudes and skills.

Key Objectives for MIs:

- In developing or modifying a coursework unit to be offered in distance mode the MI needs to consider how the approved learning outcomes for that unit can be achieved in distance mode.
- MIs will assist distance learners to achieve these outcomes by assessing learner progress with specific reference to these outcomes.
- The MI will need to consider whether the assessment methods for each coursework unit are appropriate to:
 - the mode of delivery
 - the technologies in use
 - learner needs and characteristics (specific to students for whom distance coursework units and programs are intended)
- Teaching staff responsible for delivery of coursework units and programs are responsible to clearly communicate to students the learning outcomes and assessment methods for each coursework unit.

Actions:

- Ensure that consideration has been given to how learning outcomes for each coursework unit can be achieved in the specific learning environment for that unit.
- Ensure that consideration has been given to appropriate assessment methods for each coursework unit.
- Learning outcomes and assessment methods must be clearly set out in all course documentation.
- Teaching staff responsible for delivery of coursework units and programs should ensure that the learning outcomes and assessment methods for each coursework unit are clearly communicated to students.
- Security & identity issues:
 - Where non face to face examinations or tests occur, MIs need to be able to ensure firm identification of students.
 - Procedures to ensure the security of personal information in conduct of assessments, evaluations and dissemination of results must be established.

3.7 Evaluation and Review

Principle

We will regularly and systematically evaluate the effectiveness of distance education coursework units, programs and support services with the aim of improving the structure, content, delivery and resourcing of these programs and support services.

Key Objectives for MIs:

- The evaluation of distance coursework units and programs takes place in context of regular evaluation of all SCD coursework units and programs.
- Regular evaluation and review at the following levels are currently undertaken across the SCD:
 - 1. Institutional evaluation**
Regular institutional moderations evaluate and review the institution as a whole including consideration of resourcing issues.
 - 2. Teaching & Content evaluation**
Regular discipline moderations and coursework unit coordinator evaluations review the content and teaching and learning environment of coursework units and programs
 - 3. Learner Evaluation**
Students are provided with regular opportunities to provide feedback on the content, delivery, structure and resourcing of teaching and learning activities (through SFUS and SFTS forms and via informal means during course delivery).
- Evaluation results at all levels will be appropriately collated, analysed and directed towards continuous program improvement.

Actions:

- In addition to the above SCD evaluation and review processes, each MI will undertake an internal review of its distance education programs and support services every two years (in the 2nd and 4th years of the accreditation cycle) with the aim of improving the structure, content, delivery and resourcing of these programs and support services.
- The evaluation of distance education coursework units and programs and student support services will take the following into consideration (and any other areas that the MI may decide to review):
 - extent to which student intent/expectations are met
 - extent to which learning outcomes are met
 - student retention rates
 - student & faculty satisfaction levels
 - access provided to students not previously served
 - extent to which library and learning resources are used effectively
 - cost-effectiveness and resourcing issues for the MI
- Teaching and support staff involved in design and delivery of distance education units and programs should undertake a regular process of self-evaluation and peer-evaluation. This evaluation process can then be used to plan appropriate staff professional development activities.

3.8 Resourcing for Distance Education

Principle

The design and delivery of distance education programs and coursework units will be sufficiently and appropriately resourced by each MI.

A. Institutional Resourcing Requirements

Key Objectives for MIs:

- Resourcing required for distance education will vary depending on the modes of delivery and technologies used and may involve the following:
 - Provision of adequate technical and physical plant facilities.
 - Provision of reasonable technical support and training for staff and students which is adequate to the variety of technologies used, and allows for a diverse range of needs e.g. online support for students; help for teaching staff to put learning materials into different forms.
 - Provision of production facilities to produce booklets, format learning materials, photocopy and produce readers and to produce the advertising materials.
 - Provision of or access to library or learning resource centre, adequately staffed, with active collection and acquisitions policy, and such features as remote access to electronic full text databases, e-books, e-reference, e-reserves, a distance education librarian contact, full text journals online and online tutorials.
- Commitment to provide the resources and structure needed to achieve learning outcomes in distance education coursework units and programs.
- Commitment to continuation of program for period sufficient for admitted students to complete program requirements.
- Ensure that budgets and policy statements reflect these commitments.
- Ensure that in outsourcing any elements of program, the MI remains responsible for the quality of the program.
- Ensure that all copyright, intellectual property and licensing requirements are met in the provision of educational materials for distance learning.

Actions:

- Indicate details of how resourcing is planned for and provided including facilities, staffing, equipment, technology and other resources required to effectively deliver distance education.
- Provide details (via regular reports to Library Committee) of current Library holdings. Report on how distance students are given access to library and learning resources (e.g. mailing arrangements, provision of readings, access to online resources and so on).
- Copyright Issues:
 - Ensure MI has appropriate Educational Copyright licensing arrangements in place, both for Hardcopy and Electronic reproduction.
 - Ensure that all persons involved in the development, writing, compilation, production, editing or distribution of learning materials for distance education have signed an appropriate declaration to observe all copyright and intellectual property obligations, noting that there are differing copyright obligations for different media (e.g. print and digital).
 - Ensure that where any third party materials are used or quoted in learning materials supplied to students that there is a licence for reproduction and that the statutory requirements for educational copying are met.

B. Resourcing Requirements for Teaching Staff

Key Objectives for MIs:

Teaching staff involved in design and delivery of distance education coursework units and programs are expected:

- to keep abreast of changes within the educational environment, including the distance education environment.
- to track the progress of students and to advise them on their pathways, to follow up on their progress, to mark and advise by distance, and to engage in online logs that may or may not be part of assessment (where relevant), to be available to students by appropriate means (email, online, phone, fax, mail) in order to provide advice, answer queries etc.

Actions:

- Ensure clarity of policy and practice for teaching staff on matters such as faculty workload, faculty compensation, ownership of intellectual property, ownership of materials, copyright issues, use of revenue derived from creation/production of software or other products.
- Arrange for the provision of appropriate orientation and training to enable technical proficiency of teaching staff.
- Ensure that faculty evaluation process provides means to regularly evaluate level of technical, design and other necessary skills for faculty involved in design and delivery of distance education.
- Arrange for ongoing program of professional development for teaching staff according to evaluated needs. (See Section 3.9)

C. Administration & Support Resourcing Requirements

Key Objectives for MIs:

- Recognise and make allowance in budget and resource planning for sufficient administrative support for any distance education offerings taking into account the following:
 - The need for orientation and training in use of technologies for those administrative/support staff in contact with students.
 - The need to provide sufficient administrative student support resources which may include: provision of course materials (written, CDs etc); handling of incoming and outgoing assignments; dealing with enquiries; provision of accurate information to staff and students, etc.
 - The requirement for accurate records management to meet individual MI, SCD and external reporting requirements for moderation, census dates, FEE-HELP, and for Government record keeping requirements at the various levels, State and Federal
 - A regular evaluation process to ensure that administrative staff involved in distance education have the technical, design and other necessary skills for the provision of high quality administrative support to distance education programs.

Actions:

- Arrange for the provision of appropriate orientation and training to enable technical proficiency of administrative and support staff.
- Carry out regular evaluations of administrative staff involved in distance education to ensure they have the technical, design and other necessary skills for the provision of high quality administrative support to distance education programs.
- Arrange for ongoing program of professional development for teaching staff according to evaluated needs (see Section 3.9).

3.9 Providing for Professional Development and Training of Staff

Principle

Teaching and support staff who are involved in development and delivery of distance education programs require professional development specific to that form of teaching and learning.

Key Objectives for MIs:

- Ensure teaching and support staffs are provided with relevant training and development in order to provide high quality learning environment and experience for students.
- Expected competencies for teaching staff:
 - educational philosophy specific to distance education
 - communication skills suitable to distance education
 - in-depth knowledge of the discipline
 - knowledge of current trends and facilities in distance education
 - specific instructional design relevant to technologies/learning methods in use
 - ability to engage students not physically present in a classroom
 - technological capacity appropriate to technologies in use
- Expected competencies for support staff:
 - administrative capacity
 - technological capacity appropriate to technologies in use
 - knowledge of relevant learner related policies, procedures, legislative requirements, etc.

Actions:

- Teaching and support staff involved in design, delivery and support of distance education coursework units and programs are encouraged to participate in two professional development events relevant to distance education per year.
- Where appropriate, professional development of staff in “distance mode” should be encouraged, e.g. participation in an online distance education program
- The SCD Distance Education Officer will provide resources and information on available professional development.
- The Distance Education Committee, in consultation with the SCD Professional Development Committee may offer, on occasion, Professional Development opportunities events for all MIs.

4. Resources

4.1. Bibliography of Distance Education Resources

This bibliography has been prepared to provide a summary of articles relevant to various aspects of theological distance education. A regularly updated version of the bibliography is available online at the SCD website.

Please send suggestions for articles to be included in this bibliography to the SCD Distance Education Officer, Diane Hockridge at: dianeh@scd.edu.au.

Design

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Developing community and interaction in distance education environment

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Rovai, Alfred P., Baker, Jason D. and Cox Jr., William F., 'How Christianly is Christian Distance Higher Education?', *Christian Higher Education*, vol.7, no.1, (2008), pp.1-22

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Educational Theory & Pedagogy

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Online Learning

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4.2. List of Distance Education Organisations & Networks

A summary list of [organisations and networks](#) involved in distance education, online or e-learning is available on the SCD website.

4.3. Relevant Policies

Flexible Delivery Policy

Policy on Evaluation of Teaching & Learning

Accreditation of Academic Staff: Policies and Procedures

Registered Teaching Site Policy

Risk Management Policy

International Programs Delivery Policy

Relevant Regulations

- HESA 2003 (policies to be advised to students)
 - Academic Grievance Policy
 - Non-Academic Grievance Policy
 - Re-crediting FEE-HELP Balance
 - Cross-Institutional Enrolment

5. Appendices

Forms

Download forms by clicking on the links below:

Application for Approval to offer Distance Education: [Part A: Institutional Readiness](#)

Application for Approval to offer Distance Education: [Part B: Coursework Unit/s Details](#)