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## Guidance 3iv Validation and Review Guidance for Distance Education (DE)

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### 1. Scope

A programme is defined as Distance Education (DE) if there is no requirement for the students to be in attendance on campus or other physical site for learning or teaching activities, or to access resources. All teaching, materials, and support are delivered at a distance and most likely online.

A programme which requires irregular attendance during an academic year (for example once a month, a defined week within the year - e.g. summer school, to undertake assessment) would still be considered DE.

For programmes defined as DE, the programme team will need to provide one complete module (or samples of more than one module) in a format that demonstrates the pedagogical approach they are adopting and the support for distance education students (see Sections m, and n. below).

Where the programme is not defined as distance education but includes module(s) delivered in distance education mode, the modules must have been designed in accordance with the [Guidance for the Design of Distance Education \(Guidance 3xxi\)](#). Where distance education modules form part of the programme, the development team will need to provide a sample of the materials in DE format that demonstrate use of a pedagogical model. Teams should work with the Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement (CAPE), to determine specific requirements [CAPE@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:CAPE@mdx.ac.uk).

### 2. Procedure

#### Preparation & planning

Staff considering the creation of a DE programme, or the translation of University modules into DE mode, should contact [CAPE](#) for guidance, prior to submitting the programme to Faculty Quality Committee to enable the *assignment of appropriate development support to assist in the design, development, validation and delivery of the programme*.

The following information may help with the design of distance education programmes:

- [Guidance 3xxi – Guidance for the Design of Distance Education](#)

For programme teams and Validated programmes with partners planning DE programmes, CAPE can run workshops on request and/or provide staff development and support for planning and authoring DE materials and facilitating eLearning. Programme teams should contact their Faculty's CAPE business partner as early as possible in the planning process and they will link them with the DE team within CAPE and arrange support for the planning and validation process. It is strongly recommended that DE materials should be approved by the DE team within CAPE prior to being presented for validation.

#### Panel

All panel members receive appropriate training to ensure they are familiar with the requirements and expectations of DE programmes.

**Documentation**

In addition to the standard requirements, the Programme Leader Overview should:

- a. Highlight how the reference points and guidance above have been used in designing the programme.
- b. Show how materials and activities are designed to support student learning.
- c. Include information on updating and enhancing learning materials.
- d. Indicate how the reliability of the delivery system has been tested and indicate contingency plans which are in place in the event of the failure of the designed modes of delivery.
- e. Indicate how the delivery of any study materials is fit for purpose and has appropriate availability and life expectancy.
- f. State any particular roles and responsibilities in relation to the provision of e-resources especially with respect to license arrangements for access to said resources outside of the UK.
- g. State arrangements for any DE support centres specifically with requests for support from Library and Student Support and LET (via MyMDX)
- h. Provide details of any specific quality assurance mechanisms for distance education employed by the Faculty.
- i. Show how online resources and methods are used to support the student learning experience.
- j. Show how Information Literacy and Digital Literacy issues will be addressed in the design of the curriculum with respect to using e-resources.
- k. A structured outline of the whole programme should be provided to the panel in the documentation.
- l. For a DE programme, the programme team will work in collaboration with [CAPE](#) (Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement) to determine the requirements for validation. For all modules, outline plans, including the Module Narratives and assessment strategies, will be provided. A sample of the learning materials for a module, typical for the programme, will normally be provided. The sample will be discussed and agreed with [CAPE](#). For example, this may be one complete module, or a sample from more than one module to give a flavour of the programme, demonstrating the learning experience. A schedule of production will also be required, with [CAPE](#) signing-off the development of materials.
- m. If students are to be completely online for the purposes of their learning, then the Panel should have access to the online learning environment in advance of the validation in order to familiarise themselves with the materials. Where a hybrid of electronic and hard copy is provided it may be necessary to produce a guide leading the External Assessor through the material provided.
- n. A clear production schedule (calendar) for further modules should be provided with clearly stated deadline dates, responsibilities etc. Validation is subject to the schedule being approved.

**3. The event**

At the event particular consideration should be given to:

- The learning, teaching and assessment strategies within which learning materials are intended to be used.
- Clarity of content and presentation.
- Communications channels for delivery including administrative underpinning and student contact.
- Student feedback arrangements including Programme Voice Groups and student feedback forms (ensuring anonymity).

- Academic, pastoral and study skills support.
- Assessment arrangements: awareness of time zones; supervision, security of papers, arrangements for Vivas (where applicable); involvement of local agencies and staff in delivery of the programme; ensuring assessed work is attributed to students where IT-based or remote methods are used; ensuring that the assessment process can show that the student's assessed work is the original work of the student.
- Updating and enhancing materials (frequency, etc.).
- Staff training, both to those in the University and in local agencies; relevance of staff experience and expertise, sensitivity to regional and cultural context, etc.

In cases where a distance education support centre is to be used, a resource visit to the Centre by a member of the Panel (or nominee) with experience of distance education and knowledge of the subject matter would be required. The panel member should consider the areas outlined in [Guidance 3xxi](#).

**The validation may concentrate as much on issues of programme delivery and administration as on the academic content.**

#### **4. Post validation/review**

Programme Teams (including those at Validated partners) will be required (with the support of CAPE) to “sign off” each additional DE module developed post validation using the form provided in [Appendix 3y \(Programme Team DE module validation sign-off form\)](#) verifying that the structure, processes and materials are of an equivalent standard to those presented to the validation panel. CAPE, along with the programme team, will monitor the completion schedules presented at validation, as required.

For the most up to date guidance, please contact CAPE. Email: [CAPE@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:CAPE@mdx.ac.uk)