THE INDEPENDENT INSTITUTE OF IIE EDUCATION

POLICY NUMBER	IIE 029	
POLICY NAME	Distance Education Policy	
POLICY VERSION	02	
LEGEND	This Policy replaces the Distance Process Document	
	Date of approval	Implementation Date
DATE OF APPROVAL:	26 March 2020	26 March 2020
DATES AMENDED	07 September 2023[1]	January 2024
DATE FOR NEXT REVIEW	2028	
RELATED POLICIES	All IIE Policies	
RELATED PROCEDURES	PDIIE029: Distance Criteria Standards and Procedures	

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[1] S63: 2023/09/07 Item 8.2.7 (Full Review) Policy reviewed and re-organised to only reflect the fundamental principles associated with distance education at The IIE. Minimum standards and related procedures have been placed in the Distance Criteria, Standards and Procedures document.

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GLOSSARY AND ROLES

Best Practice	Refers to a set of guidelines or procedures, that are widely agreed upon and proven to lead to optimal outcomes.
Community of Practice	The academics who are responsible for the teaching and learning in modules, disciplines and qualifications. These academics are focused on building a shared and collective understanding of a particular problem and may provide possible solutions through critical inquiry and reflection.
Constructivism	At The IIE teaching-and-learning is informed by constructivist principles. This educational philosophy suggests that students actively construct their understanding of the world and knowledge through personal experiences.
Distance Education	Distance education[2] may be considered as both a collection of methods and a mode of provision. As a collection of methods, distance education is concerned with finding ways to communicate and mediate the curriculum without necessarily requiring academics and students to be in the same place at the same time. As a mode of provision, distance education is concerned with the design of programmes that presuppose the spatial and/or temporal separation of academics and students for the majority, and possibly the whole, of the learning experience.
Emerging Technology	Refers to the latest or developing innovations or the continuous improvement of already developed technology.
Examination Centres	Refers to the physical location where distance students write summative assessments/ examinations.
Learning Management System	A learning management system (LMS) is a digital learning environment or online platform that manages all aspects of teaching and learning, student engagement and support. Refers to a digital online system and environment that manages all aspects of teaching and learning, student

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[2] Distance Higher Education Programmes in a Digital Era: Good Practice Guide

	engagement and support. The IIE LMS is referred to as IIELearn.
Minimum Standard	The level of quality or attainment that is accepted as a minimum, below which is unacceptable.
Mode of Delivery	The method of instruction or the format through which an educational programme is delivered to students.
Online Lecturer	The academic who facilitates the learning for a group of distance/ online students in a module.
Online Student Support Centre	The centralised online centre of student support, present in all sites of delivery. The support centre enhances the overall student experience and promotes student success.
Principle	The fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for actions in the distance mode of offering.
Procedure	The official or established way of conducting actions in the distance mode of offering.
Programme Manager	The academic responsible for academic coherence and integrity of the programme. This person will manage and coordinate various aspects of the programme to ensure all conditions for delivery are met.
Responsible Academic	The individual who is accountable for the quality of the learning materials and assessments in a module
Support Centres	The centres serve as administrative and support hubs offering students academic support when needed.

It must be noted that academic leadership and programme coordination are functions that are part of the academic structure of the institution and details of these roles are in applicable policies. As many qualifications are offered in both the distance and contact mode, coordination for the programme as a whole is managed centrally.

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1   PREAMBLE

(1)   The Independent Institute of Education (Pty) Ltd ("The IIE") recognises the importance of distance learning in attaining its vision for transformation and excellence in learning and teaching and achieving the national imperative of increasing access to higher education. The IIE is committed to leveraging existing and future technologies to offer quality academic programmes and enhance the digital learning experience of its distance students.

(2)   By carefully considering the intersection of technology and pedagogy, we strive to be at the forefront of pedagogical approaches, teaching and learning activities and assessment in the distance mode of delivery. We are dedicated to remaining responsive and agile in this dynamic space and the needs of our distance students. To respond to these needs, The IIE commits to supporting student success through the appropriate use of technology, promoting active engagement, and the implementation of a curriculum that is aligned with best practice in distance education.

2   POLICY PURPOSE

(1)   The purpose of this Distance Education Policy (IIE029) is to explicate the principles that govern the distance mode offerings of The IIE. These guiding principles are premised on the need to provide diverse students with access to quality online education. These principles encompass our pursuit of innovative, technology-enhanced, student-centered, quality distance education.

(2)   This Policy should be read in conjunction with the minimum standards and procedures document to resolve any uncertainties and to further support The IIE's strategic intent to develop a distance offering portfolio that is responsive to the needs of society, monitors student retention and promotes student success.

3   THE SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

(1)   This Policy applies to all distance mode offerings of The IIE

(2)   Only qualifications that are accredited for being offered in the distance mode of delivery may be offered in this mode.

(3)   Distance offerings are included in The IIE's template for new programme development and separate applications are made to the CHE for offering a qualification in the distance mode.

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4 THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DISTANCE LEARNING AT THE IIE

4.1 Student Succes in Distance Learning: Admission Requirements

(1) Distance education presents students with a unique teaching and learning experience characterised by the geographical separation of students and academics. Although distance programmes are equivalent (same SAQA number) to traditional contact programmes in respect of learning outcomes and workload, the path to success is different for distance students. Consequently, the suitability of the applicant wanting to pursue a distance qualification needs careful consideration.

(2) Comprehensive student support should commence upon registration and extend throughout the entirety of their academic journey, culminating at the point of graduation.

4.2 Student Succes in Distance Learning: Teaching and Learning

(1) The design of all curricula needs to be founded on best practice in distance learning. Programme design should make provisions for the distance mode of offering, which includes appropriate learning resources and the promotion of independent learning.

(2) The teaching and learning approach and the delivery model should be based on sound pedagogical principles that leverage the potential of technologies.

(3) The teaching and learning approach promoted in the distance learning mode needs to address the spatial distance between academics and students.

(4) Distance students should have access to suitably qualified academics.

(5) The IIE is committed to providing a student-centred learning experience in the distance learning environment.

(6) It is the responsibility of all relevant academic stakeholders to promote student learning and to strive towards achieving the institutional module success and throughput targets.

4.3 Student Success in Distance Learning: Student Participation

(1) The IIE recognises that student participation in decision-making and governance is crucial in the distance learning environment. Participation promotes ownership in the learning experience and a sense of community amongst students and academics to overcome the transactional distance present in this environment.

(2) Student feedback on assessment and the effectiveness of delivery is integral for quality assurance in the distance mode of delivery.

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4.4 Student Success in Distance Learning: Assessment

(1) Assessments should be designed in accordance with the principles outlined in The IIE Assessment Strategy and Policy (IIE009), taking into account the requirements of the distance environment.

(2) Assessment strategies should be appropriate for the distance environment, which include formative and summative assessments that enable student learning and success.

(3) Any assessment platform and/or system should be user-centric and intuitive for both students and academics.

4.5 Utilising Emerging Technology

(1) The IIE will continue to champion the use of emerging technologies to provide both students and academics with an effective and progressive online experience.

(2) These emerging technologies should be accessible to students and staff.

(3) The use of emerging technologies should support a constructivist environment that will meet the needs of a 21st century student.

4.6 Student Support

(1) Student support should be ongoing, proactive, and specifically tailored to the needs of a distance student. This includes providing adequate teaching and learning, library and information centre services, and technical support to students. All student support initiatives must reflect evidenced-based decision-making.

(2) The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)[3] underlines that institutions should ensure that access is complemented by adequate institutional planning, programme design and deliberate support systems, especially for students experiencing this mode of delivery for the first time.

(3) Student performance is to be monitored regularly to provide adequate support to at-risk students and to allow for intervention where necessary.

(4) Provisions should be made to provide human support to students that reduces feelings of isolation.

(5) Students must receive effective orientation.

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[3] Policy for provision of distance education in South African universities in the context of an integrated post- school system, DHET, July 2014

4.7 Staff Development

(1) Academic and administrative staff should be qualified and well-trained to support distance students. To teach any programme utilising online platforms, lecturing staff members must have completed sufficient training and must be involved in continuous development.

(2) Ongoing staff support is paramount for the promotion of best practice and effective distance delivery.

4.8 Technological Support

(1) Students and staff need to be adequately supported to effectively utilise the online platform for delivery. This platform needs to be reliable and meet the standards required to provide a quality distance offering.

4.9 Online Conduct in the Distance Mode of Offering

(1) The IIE's core values of respect, diversity and inclusivity are to be upheld by all distance students and staff.

(2) Students' online conduct should be in accordance with The IIE's Student Conduct and Discipline Policy (IIE015) and The IIE's Intellectual Integrity Policy (IIE023).

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