

# UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA

## DISTANCE EDUCATION MAINSTREAMING POLICY

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**UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA**

**DISTANCE EDUCATION MAINSTREAMING POLICY**

<b>POLICY TITLE</b>	<b>Distance Education Mainstreaming Policy</b>
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**UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA**

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## **PART I - DISTANCE EDUCATION MAINSTREAMING POLICY: INTRODUCTION, RATIONALE, STRATEGY AND STRUCTURE**

### **1. PREAMBLE**

The University of Botswana responded to the national aspirations in *Vision 2016: Towards Prosperity for All*, especially building an educated, informed, prosperous, productive, and innovative nation, by producing several strategic documents including *UB Beyond 10 000: A Strategy for Growth* and *Shaping Our Future: A Strategic Plan to 2009 and Beyond*. Therefore, for the foreseeable future the University has identified and committed itself to expanding access to education and increasing opportunities and levels of participation in tertiary education as a priority area and will allocate appropriate resources in pursuit of this key performance area.

In developing a strategy for increasing opportunities for access to tertiary education the University has, for the first time, explicitly acknowledged the potential of distance education in providing unparalleled opportunities for Botswana to access educational courses, programmes, resources, and intellectual wealth of the University more cost efficiently and contribute to attainment of the ideals of Vision 2016, in particular producing an educated and informed nation. To promote widespread implementation of distance education across the University demands the development of a distance education strategy, which facilitates the integration of distance learning into the institutional culture, as a strategic tool and means to provide greater access to tertiary education. This document, thus, provides a distance education strategy, strategic goals, structure and policies for the University of Botswana, with a view to mainstreaming distance education throughout the University.

### **2. DEFINITIONS**

#### **2.1 Accountability**

This is used here to refer to clarification of roles and responsibilities of collaborating partners so that those given the responsibility to undertake specific duties can provide explanations for the success and/or failure in terms of performance.

#### **2.2 Collaboration**

Collaboration is used here to denote institutionally supported formal working arrangements and shared responsibilities (Appendix A) characterised by binding agreements, committees of representatives of CCE and collaborating partners (faculties, departments, etc.), and the pooling resources for optimal attainment of pre-specified goals.

#### **2.3 Content Reviewer/Editor**

This is a member of the course development team with expertise in the subject matter, whose responsibility is to review study materials to validate the content in terms of scope and depth in relation to programme level, learners' abilities and contemporariness.

#### **2.4 Course Development Team (CDT)**

This is a multidisciplinary team comprising course writers (subject specialists), instructional designer, editor, graphic artist, media producer, reviewer and other relevant personnel. The primary role of the team is to design interactive and user-friendly self-instructional distance learning materials, develop schedules, and meet assigned production deadlines.

#### **2.5 Course Writer**

This is member of a course development team with expertise in the subject matter in the given course and has appropriate training and skills to write interactive and user-friendly self-instructional materials which promote independent learning.

#### **2.6 Distance Education**

This refers to a process of using a wide spectrum of technologies to link learners with (human and non-human) remote resources for instructional purposes and certification of learning, without requiring students to be physically present in the same location as the instructor.

#### **2.7 Distance Learning**

It is used here to refer to learning that takes place at a distance from the instructor and usually supported by a wide range of instructional technologies, including pre-recorded and packaged learning materials which enhance the attainment of specific learning objectives. Despite being separated from their instructors in time and space, distance learners are still guided by them.

#### **2.8 Dual mode (bimodal) Institution**

An institution that offers learning opportunities in two modes :- traditional classroom-based methods and distance methods and where the same courses may be offered in both modes, with or without common examinations, while the two types of learners (on-campus and external) are treated distinctly different.

#### **2.9 Faculty Distance Education Coordinator**

This is a faculty-based member, falling under the Dean's office, with primary responsibility for promoting and coordinating departmental initiatives in distance education.

#### **2.10 Flexible Learning**

A term that emphasises the creation of environments for learning that have the following characteristics: convergence of open and distance learning methods, media and classroom strategies; learner-centred philosophy; recognition of diversity in learning styles and in learners' needs; recognition of the importance of equity in curriculum and pedagogy; use of a variety of learning resources and media; fostering of lifelong learning habits and skills in learners and staff.

#### **2.11 Mainstreaming of Open and Distance Education**

This refers to the incorporation of distance education into the institutional vision, mission, policies, and activities of the University of Botswana, which is a dual mode institution, so that it becomes a normal feature of mainstream thinking and practice. The mainstreaming of distance education into the UB policymaking process is achieved when there is systematic identification of consequences of

proposed policies on distance education and when these are routinely addressed during policy development.

### **2.12 Open and Distance Learning**

A way of providing learning opportunities that is characterised by the separation of teacher and learner in time or place, or both time and place; learning that is certified in some way by an institution or agency; the use of a variety of media, including print and electronic; two-way communications that allow learners and tutors to interact; the possibility of occasional face-to-face meetings; and a specialised division of labour in the production and delivery of courses.

### **2.13 Open Learning**

This refers to flexible learning that is characterised by a learning environment which allows the learner to learn at the time, place and pace of his/her choice. It is based on educational philosophy that emphasises giving learners choices about media, place of study, pace of study, support mechanisms and entry and exit points. Open learning is characterised by greater openness concerning the, i) **WHO?** - The ease with which someone can become a learner without restrictions of age, qualifications, wealth, job etc. ii) **WHAT?** - That is, the extent to which a learner is free to decide the content, objectives and assessment methods of the programme; and the iii) **HOW?** - The extent to which the learner is free to decide the pace of learning, the teaching and learning strategies used and the manner of collaboration with peers and experts.

### **2.14 Programme Coordinator (PC)**

A Programme Coordinator is a CCE staff with responsibility for carrying out administrative duties on behalf of the course development team by monitoring day-to-day progress of the course development process, including liaising with writers and editors, assuring copyright clearance, verifying accuracy of illustrations and ensuring that production schedules are met.

### **2.15 Programme Planning and Development Committee (PPDC)**

PPDC is an inter CCE-faculty/departmental programme planning and development committee whose primary role is to plan and design distance education programmes, ensuring that the nature, structure, and regulations of the programme are flexible and responsive to distance learners and that they promote access and recognize prior learning.

## **3. UNIVERSITY VISION FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION**

Within the context of the University of Botswana vision and mission statements, distance learning will be provided as an integral part of the overall strategy to make higher education and lifelong learning more accessible and more available to Batswana and others wherever they may live.

This implies a continued adoption of new “e-learning” technologies as they become available and their use more practical. In addition, this vision includes growing attention to the use of course and programme articulation, and credit transfer to further the aims of the University. Finally, this vision assumes that wider use of new technologies in on-campus teaching will eventually blur the current “hard” distinctions between “on-campus” and “distance” education. Undoubtedly, this may lead to the

future development of new coordinating policies and, in the long term, conceivably, to administrative reorganization.

#### **4. RATIONALE FOR MAINSTREAMING DISTANCE EDUCATION**

The rationale for mainstreaming of distance education is to exploit the potential of distance education in widening access to UB educational and training programmes and achieve its strategic growth targets in more cost-effective ways by;

- 4.1** Institutionalising distance education as integral to UB mission of extending access to higher education by utilising ICTs within the framework of life-long and open learning.
- 4.2** Migrating distance education programmes from marginal and separate status and make them integral to University vision, mission and values statement.
- 4.3** Facilitating access to University resources (intellectual, financial and material) and learning experiences appropriate for a university-level education without learners coming to or requiring residence at UB.

#### **5. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY**

The main purpose of this policy is to create an environment conducive for expanding the provision of high quality university-level distance education to Botswana and other learners, regardless of their location and time constraints. Specifically, it seeks to integrate distance education into the institutional culture and aligns University rules, regulations and bureaucracies, student services and budgetary and administrative decision-making processes with the needs of distance learners.

#### **6. STRATEGY FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION**

A strategy for the development and provision of distance education at UB includes

- 6.1** Undertaking a major and comprehensive national needs assessment of tertiary distance education demands in order to determine short- to long-term distance education needs and priorities of the country and extensively market and promote the provision of distance education in Botswana.
- 6.2** Establish a comprehensive nation-wide learner support system of administrative, academic and information services and a network of national, regional, and study centres that promote distributed learning.
- 6.3** Develop a complementary information and communications technology strategy that will enhance access to ICT resources and promote the delivery of educational services to distance learners across distributed study centres.
- 6.4** Provide distance education programmes through self-development initiatives and using study materials acquired under collaborative arrangements such as franchising and partnerships with universities and other academic and professional institutions.
- 6.5** Develop flexible and learner-friendly registration systems which allow learners to initiate and complete registration formalities from their nearest centres without coming to main campus.

## 7. STRATEGIC GOALS

- 7.1 Integrate distance education into institutional culture so that University rules, regulations and bureaucracies, budgetary, student services, and administrative decision-making processes are aligned with the needs of distance learners.
- 7.2 Extend the reach of University (intellectual, financial and material) resources to the rest of the country to enable learners to access learning experiences appropriate for a university-level education without coming to or requiring residence at the University.
- 7.3 Enhance opportunities for access to University programmes and courses, especially for workforce development, by offering certificate-level programmes and expanding the number of diploma, degree, and professional qualifications through distance education.

## 8. STRUCTURE

The development, provision, and delivery of distance education require inter and intra University partnerships and collaboration arrangements and involve distributed support structures which comprise a series of operational loci that cascade from the national centre into regional centres, study centres and self-help study groups. The structure indicates that synergy will be created within and among players in order to achieve strategic goals.

- 8.1 The CCE will develop and implement an elaborate network of distributed support structures, comprising UB main campus-based national centre, which manages and oversees the development and delivery of distance education through the Department of Distance Education, regional, and study centres that evolve from existing centres, which are the principal operational centres for student registration, advisement, and administration of residential sessions and other forms of face-to-face contact.
- 8.2 The development and provision of distance education will be undertaken within the context of the CCE Advisory Board and several committees, including the CCE Board, Distance Education Departmental Board, Programme Planning and Development Committee and the Course Development Team.
- 8.3 Approval processes governing distance education programmes and courses shall be in accordance with the University of Botswana *Procedure for Programme or Course Approval* policy.

## **PART II - MAINSTREAMING POLICY STATEMENTS: ADMINISTRATION, OWNERSHIP, QUALITY, STUDENT AND STAFF SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

### 9. DISTANCE EDUCATION MAINSTREAMING POLICIES

Since the University of Botswana recognises distance education as an appropriate means of increasing access to university-level education, resources, and intellectual wealth and promoting lifelong learning without regard to geographic location or time

constraints, the following policies serve to create incentives, act as levers that guide behaviour, direct actions, and reorient institutional culture towards successful integration of distance education into the mainstream of the University academic culture and practices.

### **9.1 Ownership of Distance Education Programmes**

Distance education programmes of the University of Botswana are owned by academic departments and all distance learners are bona fide students of and graduate under their respective departments and faculties. Therefore, faculties and departments will actively seek and pursue opportunities for enhancing student access to programmes and courses through distance education and integrate them into their strategic and operational plans.

### **9.2 Administration of Distance Education**

The Centre for Continuing Education, through the Distance Education Unit, is the administrative unit for all distance education programmes of the University of Botswana and is accountable for all programme management and delivery processes and the provision of learner support services.

### **9.3 Participation in Distance Education**

Appropriate formal means of recognizing fulltime University staff for their participation and contribution in distance education shall be put in place and made integral to standard University reward systems.

### **9.4 Collaboration in Distance Education**

The University will promote various forms of intra- and inter-institutional collaboration, between faculties and departments and with other distance education providers and stakeholders, as a strategic means for promoting the provision of quality distance education cost-efficiently.

### **9.5 Programme Development**

During programme design and development processes the Programme Planning and Development Committee (PPDC) will normally give consideration to a) institutional mission, b) priorities, c) resources, d) student numbers, and e) course and programme costs in determining programmes to be offered through distance education.

### **9.6 Programme Approval**

The approval process of distance education courses and programmes shall be in accordance with the *Procedure for Programme or Course Approval Policy* of the University of Botswana.

### **9.7 Quality Assurance**

Quality control measures throughout the design, development, delivery, assessment, and management processes for each distance education initiative is essential to maintain and promote the University's vision as a centre for academic excellence and to ensure effective delivery of quality services to distance learners.

#### **9.7.1 Quality of Courses and Programmes**

All distance education programmes will be subject to the same standards of quality as all other programmes of the University. Quality control

measures for all courses and programmes delivered through distance education is the joint responsibility of both the Centre for Continuing Education and the academic units sponsoring the initiative.

### **9.7.2 Assessment**

Distance education courses and programmes will be consistent with on-campus equivalents in terms of curriculum, outcomes, resource availability and staff qualifications and, therefore, learners will undergo the same or comparable assessment procedures to ensure that quality is consistent with that for students who receive on-campus instruction.

### **9.7.3 Course Evaluation Procedures**

Course and instructor evaluation instruments for distance education programmes will be developed collaboratively by Distance Education Department and Academic Programme Review Unit and will be used in the same manner and for the same purposes as those used on on-campus courses.

### **9.7.4 Programme Review**

The processes and procedures for the review of distance education programmes will be subject to and consistent with the provisions of the University of Botswana *Academic Quality Management Policy*.

## **9.8 Learner Support Services**

The University acknowledges that learner support services are key ingredients to creating a successful distance learning experience and is, therefore, committed to providing consistent and efficient quality learner support services, including administrative, academic and infrastructural support systems which promote the quality of learning experiences.

### **9.8.1 Administrative Support Services**

- a.) The University shall provide distance education students with quality administrative, advising, and instructional support comparable to on-campus students.
- b.) The Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) will undertake national marketing and promotion of distance education programmes and provide pre-registration guidance and advice through a network of regional and study centres.
- c.) Academic Services will be responsible for instituting and managing responsive and efficient undergraduate student services systems for distance learners, encompassing recruitment, applications, admissions, registration, scheduling, information services, grades and records, certification and graduations, and ensure consistence with standards for on-campus student admissions procedures.
- d.) The School of Graduate Studies will be responsible for handling admissions to all graduate programmes in accordance with procedures for graduate admissions.

### **9.8.2 Academic Support Services**

- a.) CCE will prepare comprehensive student handbooks, guidelines, regulations, and brochures for distance education programmes and shall avail them to learners through regional and study centres.
- b.) CCE will put in place mechanisms for regular monitoring of student progress and ensure that students are provided with helpful and timely pedagogical comments on all assignments.
- c.) The University Library Services will implement flexible strategies and procedures which provide distance learners with convenient access to library resources by realigning acquisition, supply, and loan policies with needs and circumstances of distance learners.
- d.) Opportunities for academic advisement, guidance and counselling services through the national, regional and study centres will be available to all distance learners who shall also access services at the main campus.

### **9.8.3 Infrastructure for Distance Learning**

UB will develop facilities and technological infrastructure for the provision of an effective and efficient national distance learning system, initiate regular assessments of infrastructure requirements, formulate plans for development and improvement of national, regional, and study centre facilities and involve external organisations to promote and strengthen the delivery of distance education programmes.

## **9.9 Staff Support**

Best practices in distance education acknowledge that training prepares staff for new challenges and the acquisition of new skills, methodologies and practices, while incentives encourage staff participation, and rewards provide formal means of recognising staff for their contributions to distance education, hence effective staff support measures should include training, incentives, and rewards systems.

### **9.9.1 Staff Training**

CCE will develop and run systematic induction programmes which create and promote staff awareness and participation in distance education and provide ongoing continuing professional development programmes, emphasising distance education best practices, including technical and pedagogical training in the design, preparation, and delivery of distance learning materials and programmes.

## **9.10 Accountability**

The implementation of this distance education mainstreaming policy would not succeed without clear articulation of the scope of accountability at the institutional, faculty, departmental, and individual levels and the overall support provided in implementing the policy at each accountability level.

### **9.10.1 Institutional Accountability**

- a.) The University will integrate distance education into the institutional mission and strategic plan and incorporate it into the mainstream of institutional activities.

- b.) The University will promote and monitor faculty, departmental, and individual accountability in the development and delivery of distance education.
- c.) The University will ensure that distance learners are given the same quality of administrative, advisement, and instructional support given to on-campus students.
- d.) The University will implement a programme of continuous improvement of distance education programmes and processes and shall utilise systematic needs assessments to assure the provision of sustainable demand-driven courses and programmes.
- e.) The University will provide various forms of institutional incentives and rewards to encourage staff working on distance education programmes to invest more time and effort and promote the development of distance education across the University.

#### **9.10.2 Faculty Level Accountability**

- a.) Each faculty will integrate distance education into faculty mission and strategic plans.
- b.) Faculties will demonstrate commitment to distance education by encouraging academic departments to initiate distance education programmes and by monitoring the infusion of distance education into departmental strategic and operational plans.

#### **9.10.3 Departmental Level Accountability**

- a.) Academic departments will endeavour to utilise distance education as a strategic tool and means for providing greater access to their programmes and courses.
- b.) The subject content and academic quality of all distance education courses and programmes is a responsibility of academic departments ('home'), which shall apply quality control measures which are consistent with the academic standards of the department.
- c.) Academic departments will recognise and incorporate staff contribution to distance education (including course development, tutoring, etc.) into standard staff performance assessments, including tenure, contract renewal, promotion, annual appraisal, etc.

#### **9.10.4 CCE Level Accountability**

- a.) As the administrative unit for all distance education programmes the CCE is accountable for programme management and delivery processes and the provision of learner support services.
- b.) The CCE will provide systematic ongoing distance education professional development training programmes and support to all staff participating in the delivery of distance education.
- c.) The CCE will provide adequate training and technical support in pedagogical strategies used in the development of distance learning materials for all staff who are involved in the design and development of self-study materials.

- d.) The CCE will administer and supervise the provision of all distance education programmes of the University and monitor the quality of face-to-face tutorials.
- e.) The CCE will guarantee the production of high quality distance learning materials that are available to learners in a variety of instructional media.

#### 9.10.5 Individual Level Accountability

- a.) Teaching staff shall make adequate preparations for classes in an effort to maintain the academic rigour of traditional course work.
- b.) Since distance learners take responsibility for much of their learning, distance education teaching staff will demonstrate willingness to adapt to a new role as a resource and facilitator
- c.) Teaching staff shall support distance learners and attend professional development training sessions, prepare adequate tutorial plans, give learners academic advisement, provide prompt feedback to students' work and respond to queries timely.

### 10. APPENDIX A: Summary of Shared Responsibilities and Operational Modalities Guiding Collaborating Partners within the Framework of Distance Education Mainstreaming Policy

Operational Activity/Service	Scope of Operational Responsibilities	
	Centre for Continuing Education	Teaching Department
Programme Initiation	CCE proactively initiates programmes when there is evidence of relevance, viability and demand-driven.	Departments should routinely approach CCE with requests to offer new or convert existing programmes.
Materials development	Recruitment of external writers and selection through Programme Planning and Development Committee	Determine selection criteria and generate commitment to course writing from lecturers
	Train writers and administer writers' contracts	Quality control: approval of course outlines.
	Quality control: pedagogue, copy editing & copyrights	Quality control: content review
	Overall monitoring and managing writing process	Encouraging all department based writers
	Training script writers and presenting audio and video	Quality control: quality of script content
Material production and distribution	N/A	

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<b>Material adaptation</b>	Identify distance-teaching institutions and obtain inspection copies	Examination of inspection copies and determine appropriateness
	Materials acquisition	Determine gaps, contextualise and value-added incorporations
	Manage and monitor materials adaptation process	Verify quality of adaptations
<b>Delivery of instruction</b>	Recruit external part-time tutors and selection through Programme Planning and Development Committee	Determine selection criteria and generate commitment for part-time tutoring from lecturers
	Train part-time tutors	N/A
	Scheduling and supervision of residential sessions, tutorials, etc.	N/A
<b>Assessment</b>	Run item setting workshops and train assignment markers	Participate in and provide leadership in item setting
	Administer assignments, tests and examinations and manage marking and turn-around time	Moderation of the assessment process (question items and student marks)
<b>Student records</b>	Generate and keep accurate records (admissions, tests, assignments, transfers, etc.)	Maintain corresponding departmental records for their part-time and ODL students
<b>Programme review</b>	Collect data on programmes	Continuous and major reviews

## 11. **APPENDIX B: IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURES**

Pursuant to a commitment to develop requisite administrative policies, procedures, and structures which facilitate the provision of distance education, it is desirable to constitute several committees; specifically the following committees are instrumental to University-wide implementation of distance education.

### 11.1 **Programme Planning and Development Committee (PPDC)**

This is a CCE-faculty/departmental committee, chaired by the director and comprises deputy director (programming), faculty distance education coordinator, academic department representative(s), library and IT representatives, programme coordinator and HoD (DEU) who also services this committee. The primary role of the (PPDC) is to plan and design distance education programmes and ensures that the nature, structure, and regulations are flexible and responsive to distance learners and that they promote access.

#### 11.1.1 **Terms of Reference**

- a.) To ensure that programmes are developed on the basis of sound needs analysis and market demand.

- b.) To ensure that entry programme requirements are made as open as possible and that they include recognition of the learner prior learning and experience.
- c.) To ensure that various courses of the programme are integrated and that, where possible, courses are used in more than one programme.
- d.) To design programmes taking into account best practices which allow credit transfer and banking and promote flexible entry and exit points.
- e.) Establish clearly articulated processes and procedures for regular evaluation and updating of programmes in liaison with relevant stakeholders.

## **11.2 Course Development Team**

This is a multidisciplinary team chaired by a Programme Coordinator and comprises course writers (subject specialists), instructional designer, editor, graphic artist, media producer, reviewer and other relevant personnel such as finance officer. The primary role of the CDT is to design interactive and user-friendly self-instructional distance learning materials, develop schedules, and meet assigned deadlines.

### **11.2.1 Terms of Reference**

- a.) Develop a plan of action and framework for systematic designing, developing and/or adapting of self-instructional materials based on identified learner needs and content requirements.
- b.) Determine the adequacy, suitability and appropriateness of pre-existing distance learning materials in terms of best practice, relevance, technology, content, pedagogy, level and scope.
- c.) Determine and develop all course modifications, wrap-around materials and adaptations deemed necessary.
- d.) Apply sound instructional design and development principles that produce effective self-instructional distance learning materials.
- e.) Develop course outlines and determine course delivery, assessment, and other learner support mechanisms.
- f.) Develop standards of good practice for course design and development of self-instructional distance learning material