

Distance Learning Policy

For internal and external use

September 2013

Issue 1.0

Quality, Standards and Research

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Authorised by Responsible Officer 30.10.13
September 2013 version 1.1

The key role of Pearson Education Ltd (Pearson) is to secure standards for those qualifications we certificate. As part of our commitment to quality assuring standards and therefore protecting learners, Pearson provides guidance and support to help centres and their learners achieve their learning and development goals. Pearson also ensures that any regulatory requirements our regulators impose on us are met, and that we support centres to meet those requirements.

Pearson regulatory policies are integral to our approach and articulate in a consistent way how we meet our regulatory requirements. They are reviewed annually to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

This policy provides the requirements for distance learning.

Scope of policy

This policy applies to the delivery of programmes of education, learning or training that lead to partial or full completion of Pearson Education Limited qualifications accredited within the Qualifications and Credit Framework, and in the National Qualifications Framework; National Vocational Qualifications; Pearson's Self-Regulated Qualifications framework; General Certificate of Education and General Certificate of Secondary Education qualifications; Functional Skills and other qualifications that are variously delivered, supported and assessed through means which generally do not require the learner to physically attend classes or sessions at given locations and times.

This policy applies to the qualifications described above being delivered in the UK and overseas.

Pearson Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are not included within the scope of this policy and should not be delivered through distance means.

Learning made possible by, facilitated and supported through the use of postal means, information and communication technologies such as e-learning, blended learning, flexible learning, instructor led training and the use of web-based materials to supplement classroom-based learning, is included in this policy.

The policy outlines the minimum requirements that Pearson expects must be met by centres when delivering Pearson qualifications through distance learning. Centres must ensure that when using distance learning, the method of delivery meets in full any particular, specified requirements for the delivery and assessment of the qualifications and units being delivered.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Pearson policy documents:

- Distance Assessment Policy,
- Policy for National Vocational Qualifications Delivered Overseas,
- Centres Operating Across International Borders to Offer BTEC and Other Pearson Vocational Qualifications,
- Policy for qualifications on Pearson's Self-Regulated Framework,
- Pearson Edexcel NVQs, SVQs and competence-based qualification – Delivery Requirements and Quality Assurance Guidance.

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Policy statement

Centre Approval Process

Centres seeking approval for Pearson accredited QCF BTEC & NQF BTEC qualifications, NVQs, Pearson's Self-regulated Framework qualifications, General and other qualifications delivered through distance means must comply fully with the approval requirements for these qualifications. The approvals processes vary according to qualification type and details of these may be found on the Pearson website: <http://www.edexcel.com>.

In order to gain approval centres must provide suitable physical and human resources and ensure that learners have access to these. Centres intending to deliver learning through distance means and seeking to gain approval must ensure that the requirements of this *Distance Learning Policy* are fully met.

Centres must recognise that various qualifications, subjects and sectors are not suitable for distance learning.

Centres seeking approval to offer qualifications that it is intended will be delivered through distance means must ensure that the purpose and integrity of the qualifications are not compromised in any way through the use of distance learning.

Delivery of the Learning Programme

Centres using distance learning must take full account of any restrictions placed on the collation and storage of data on learners and the collection and storage of learners' evidence of achievement both within and across the borders of countries in which they operate.

Centres must ensure learners are provided with:

- course information that clearly sets out the responsibilities of the centre for the delivery of the programme of study
- the qualification specification, to show the intended learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria
- an explanation of the intended teaching, learning and assessment methods for the programme
- a clear schedule for the delivery of the distance learning package and associated resources and study materials
- a clear schedule for the interim (formative) and final (summative) assessment of learners' work
- confirmation that the delivery of the distance learning package and associated resources and study materials meet the expectations of Pearson in respect of the quality of teaching and learning-support material for the programme of learning
- confirmation that the distance learning provision is subject to the normal, scheduled internal quality assurance processes and the quality improvement cycle.

Support for Learners

Learners must be provided with:

- a clear explanation of the requirements of the programme of learning and of the type and amount of independent and supported learning
- a timetable of any support available to them through scheduled activities, for example tutorial sessions or web-based conferences
- clear and up-to-date information about any local or distance learning support available to them for the programme of learning
- clarification of their own responsibilities as learners and that of the centre for the support of the programme of learning
- an identified contact, available either locally or remotely through email, telephone or other means, who can give them constructive feedback on their learning and progress towards their qualification aim
- the encouragement to engage fully with their learning, the assessment process and assessment planning
- equal opportunity to access our qualifications and assessment such that individual learners are not disadvantaged through these being delivered through distance learning
- tutors, trainers and assessors with appropriate and suitable contemporary knowledge and skills for the delivery of the programme of learning.

Assessment

Learners must be provided with:

- clear instructions on the way in which the centre will ensure that evidence submitted by each learner is authentic
- information on the ways in which their evidence of achievement will be assessed and, in particular, the manner in which workplace-based and performance evidence will be assessed and how this will be facilitated
- opportunities for interim (formative) assessment of their evidence of learning to enable individual constructive feedback and guidance towards final (summative) assessment.

Distance Learning Platform System Access and Security

Centres must have rigorous processes in place to secure authentication of learners' work and evidence submitted as evidence of learning for assessment purposes.

The distance learning platform should be securely, readily and easily accessible for learners, tutors, assessors, internal quality assurance personnel and – if required - for Pearson standards verifiers.

Centres must provide learners with confidence that their evidence of learning will not suffer interference and will be correctly attributed to them. Evidence must be maintained in a secure environment, access to which is limited through:

- a defined hierarchy of user access
- unique security passwords/IDs provided for each user

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- read-only rights provided to those with limited access
- 'isolation' of completed units following final (summative) assessment, when this applies.

The distance learning platform must provide for contingency to mitigate the risks associated with the loss of evidence of learners' learning through:

- the use of back-up facilities in the event of system failure
- facility to archive individual learner evidence on appropriate media e.g. CD ROM, Flash memory sticks
- (for centrally hosted services) full Disaster Recovery processes being in place at the hosting data centre.

Distance Learning Platform Usability and Accessibility

The distance learning platform must be easy and intuitive to use for all users – learners, tutors, assessors, internal quality assurance personnel and – if required - Pearson Standards Verifiers - and to be capable of:

- storing the full range of file types: text, sound, scanned images, digital pictures, video, templates and standard software applications, as required
- being customised for learners with special access requirements
- providing links to other documents/areas, such as centre policies and procedures, Pearson qualification documentation and the relevant Sector Skills Council, Professional Bodies' and other websites, as required
- providing a full range of user support material, including Frequently Asked Questions and user guides.

In pursuit of usability and accessibility the distance learning platform must provide learners, tutors, assessors, internal quality assurance personnel and – if required - Pearson standards verifiers with full technical support, where needed.

Regulatory references

Ofqual and SQA require all awarding organisations to establish and maintain their compliance with regulatory conditions and criteria. As part of this process, policies that relate to Pearson's status as an awarding organisation will reference the particular conditions and criteria that they address.

This policy addresses the following regulatory criteria and conditions:

Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
C1 Arrangements with third parties
C2 Arrangements with centres
D2 Accessibility of qualifications

Policy review date

September 2014

Useful contacts

For more information on Pearson qualifications and services please visit the website: www.edexcel.com