

**REPUBLIC OF RWANDA**



**HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL  
P.O.BOX 6311 KIGALI**

**CODE OF PRACTICE FOR DISTANCE LEARNING PROVISION**

## **CODE OF PRACTICE FOR DISTANCE LEARNING PROVISION**

### **1. Objective**

To ensure that the quality and standards of programmes and other awards taught and supported on a distance learning basis conform to the requirements of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework for Rwanda and the associated Code of Practice and are comparable with programmes delivered on-campus of a similar nature.

### **2. Definitions**

#### **2.1. Materials-based learning**

This dimension of distance learning refers to all the learning materials made available by the Institute to students studying off campus. The range and diversity of materials can include printed, audio or audio-visual materials, experimental materials, materials delivered via the World Wide Web and other electronic or computer-based resources. The methods for delivering materials to form the basis of study include personal delivery to students by travelling teachers, personal collection by students from distribution points and through electronic communication.

#### **2.2. Programme Components Delivered by Institute Academic Staff**

This component refers to staff of the Institute travelling to the location of the students to deliver components of the programme (or students attending the main campus). The delivery may be concentrated into a period of intense class-room based delivery for a group of students. Institute academic staff may be responsible for initial orientation sessions, intensive teaching of the programme, tutorial support and/or assessment.

#### **2.3. Learning Supported Locally**

This involves the Institute employing part time staff to specifically under take defined functions locally to support students following a distance learning programme. This can include administrative as well as teaching functions.

## **2.4. Learning supported by the Institute Remotely from the Student**

This dimension refers to support and teaching provided by the Institute remotely for students. The form of communication may include audio cassette, telephone, email and/or the internet.

## **2.5. Work based Learning**

*Work-based learning* refers specifically to the achievement of planned learning outcomes derived from the experience of performing a work role or function. In addition, it is normal practice to complement the experiential learning with directed reading, research or group work to ensure that the learning is placed in the context of current theory. Such experiential learning must be capable of being evidenced and assessed before it can be recognised by the Institute. It is a fundamental principle of Work-based Learning that credit is allocated for *learning from experience and not for the experience itself*.

## **3. Responsibilities**

Responsibilities, as relevant are exercised by

- a) Senate
- b) Academic Policy and Planning Committee
- c) Academic Quality Committee
- d) Programme Leaders
- e) Dean/Deputy Deans/Heads of Departments
- f) Faculty Councils
- g) Academic Registrar
- h) Director of Academic Quality.

## **4. Quality**

- 4.1. The establishment of distance learning programmes must be in line with the Institute's Mission and Strategic Plan.

- 4.2. Responsibility for the academic standards and quality of all programmes leading to an award of the Institute lies with Senate.
- 4.3. All programmes are subject to the requirements of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework and the Code of Practice as required by the Higher Education Council.
- 4.4. A programme development team must be established which is responsible for considering all the learning materials produced and taking, where necessary, external advice on their suitability;
- 4.5. All programmes of study/learning are subject to the prevailing Institute requirements on annual monitoring and enhancement and, periodic review.
- 4.6. Any major changes to the programmes are subject to approval through the normal Institute procedures before they can be implemented.
- 4.7. The appointment of all staff employed to teach on distance learning programmes must be approved through the normal Institute procedures.
- 4.8. All students must be issued with a student handbook which provides them with details of the Programme, including assessment requirements and their entitlements and expectations with regard to learning resources.
- 4.9. Students must receive information on the support mechanisms available to them including information on the personal tutoring system, appropriate feedback mechanisms, access to tutors and appropriate communication methods.
- 4.10. Procedures for and interactions with students registered on the programme must conform to the Institute's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- 4.11. Assessment must be undertaken in line with the Institute's regulations and guidelines. When marking is undertaken at a distance, mechanisms must be in place for the effective moderation of work within the Institute to ensure comparability of standards with on-campus provision.
- 4.12. All external examiners must be appointed in accordance with the Institute's procedures. Where possible the same External Examiners should be appointed for programmes which are offered on a distance learning basis and on campus.

4.13. Appropriate mechanisms must be in place for obtaining student feedback.

4.14. Staff development should be provided in the development and delivery of distance learning.

## **5. The Development of Distance Learning Programmes**

5.1. Distance programmes should be developed and validated under the Institute's procedures. Programme approval documents and programme specifications must provide sufficient information to enable the validation panels to satisfy themselves that appropriate academic standards can be maintained and a satisfactory learning environment be achieved within the distance learning infrastructure. The information provided should include as a minimum:

- Details of the logistical and administrative arrangements to ensure effective co-ordination of the programme including any residential element taking full account of considerations specific to teaching and supporting students at a distance;
- Details of the proposed learning materials and delivery mechanisms;
- Confirmation that all learning materials are comparable to those for on-campus programmes and have undergone testing to ensure suitability of the mode of delivery;
- Details and an assessment of the adequacy of the administrative support system for the course;
- Consideration in detail of the support to be provided for students;
- Details of examination arrangements where examinations are held at locations outside of the Institute;
- Details of how the student experience will be evaluated;
- Full and proper costing of the programme – programme planning approval will not normally be given until these have been approved by both Finance Committee and Academic Policy and Planning Committee.

## **6. Approval and Review Procedures**

- 6.1. The programme planning team proposing a new distance learning programme must ensure that the learning outcomes of the proposed programme are achievable through distance learning and must evidence this in the programme proposal proforma and the programme specification. The procedures for approving a programme will be identical to those for all Institute programmes save that programme approval panels will be required to satisfy themselves that the learning outcomes of the programme can be achieved through distance learning;
- 6.2. The programme approval panel must include at least one member with expertise in distance learning;
- 6.3. Examples of distance learning materials to be used on the programme must be available to the validation panel. The units made available for the panel should have been tested and details of the testing provided to the panel. The panel should consider their fitness for purpose;
- 6.4. At a minimum, distance learning materials must include elements of interactivity and formative assessment processes designed to encourage students to monitor their own progress.

## **7. Management of Programme Delivery**

- 7.1. Care should be taken to ensure that the workload of programme leaders for distance programmes is not excessive. Managing a distance programme with a large number of learners is a significant task.
- 7.2. The necessary resources, physical, academic and administrative must be adequate to deliver the programme to the required standards. The adequacy of the resources available should be addressed in the programme specification.
- 7.3. Students must be supplied with all necessary information including the academic calendar for the programme well in advance and notified of any changes at the earliest possible opportunity;
- 7.4. Learning materials must be made available to students in good time.

## **8. Student Development and Support**

- 8.1 All elements of the student experience must be subject to regular review;

8.2 The programme specification should give details of the student support mechanisms to be provided. Details should also be provided in the student handbook.

8.3 Students must be provided with full and clear information about:

- The nature and expectations of their programme of study;
- The relationship between achievements and assessment, academic progress and accumulation of credit.

## **9. Student Communication and Representation**

9.1 The programme specification must provide details of how student representation is to be managed. The information must include:

- How student representatives are to be elected;
- The payment of travel for students attending the Institute for meetings.

9.2 The student handbook must provide information on the election of student representative.

## **10. Student Assessment**

10.1 The Institute assessment regulations will apply except where the programme specification explicitly justifies a variation.

10.2 The programme specification must set out how the integrity of the examination process will be assured when examinations are conducted off campus.