



Distance Learning Policy

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Policy authorised by Responsible Officer

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1.0 Introduction

The key role of OTHM is to secure standards for those qualifications we certificate. As part of our commitment to quality assuring standards we aim to provide guidance and support to help Centres and their learners to achieve learning and development goals. We also ensure that any regulatory requirements are met, and in turn we support Centres to meet those requirements.

We review all our policies annually or in response to regulatory changes to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

2.0 Scope of policy

This policy applies to the assessment of learners' work that leads to partial or full completion of OTHM qualifications regulated by Ofqual and that are variously assessed through distance means in the UK and overseas.

Learning made possible by, facilitated and supported using 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 OTHM expects must be met by approved centres when assessing OTHM qualifications through distance means. Centres must ensure that when using distance assessment, the method of assessment meets in full any specified requirements for the delivery and assessment of the qualifications and units being delivered.

3.0 Policy statement

Centre Approval Process

Centres seeking to gain approval for OTHM qualifications, assessed 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 OTHM website: www.othm.org.uk.

To gain approval centres must provide suitable physical and human resources and ensure that learners have access to these. Centres intending to use distance assessment and seeking to gain approval must ensure that the requirements of this Distance Assessment Policy are fully met.

Centres seeking approval to deliver qualifications with the intention of assessing these through distance means must ensure that the purpose and integrity of the qualifications are not compromised in any way using 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 assessment of learners' work
- Confirmation that the delivery of the distance learning package and associated resources and study materials meet the expectations of OTHM 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 qualification 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 OTHM 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 the way workplace-based and performance evidence will be assessed and how this will be facilitated
- Opportunities for 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 OTHM external quality assurers.

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
- Read-only rights provided to those with limited access
- 'isolation' of completed units following final 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 OTHM external quality assurers – 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, OTHM qualification documentation and other appropriate resources
- providing a full range of user support material such as user guides.

In pursuit of usability and accessibility the distance learning platform must provide learners, tutors, assessors, internal quality assurance personnel and OTHM external quality assurers with full technical support, where needed.

4.0 Regulatory references

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

This policy addresses the following regulatory criteria and conditions

GCR Reference	GCR Section title
C1	Arrangements with third parties
C2	Arrangements with centres
D2	Accessibility of qualifications

5.0 Policy review date

July 2018

6.0 Useful contacts

For more information on OTHM qualifications and services please visit the website: www.othm.org.uk. Alternatively, call at: +44(0)20 7118 4243 or email at: info@othm.org.uk

End of policy