GOVERNMENT NOTICE

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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POLICY FOR THE PROVISION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF AN INTEGRATED POST-SCHOOL SYSTEM

I, Dr Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimande, MP, Minister of Higher Education and Training, hereby publish the *Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities in the Context of an Integrated Post-school System* as set out in the Schedule as policy in terms of section 3 of the Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997.

The *Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities in the Context of an Integrated Post-school System* should be read in conjunction with other policy documents affecting public universities in South Africa and is part of a broader focus on building the capacity of the post schooling system. The policy however, focuses primarily on university education because of its unique features. Since the current infrastructure within the South African university sector cannot accommodate the needed expansion, distance education would make a significant contribution to the required growth in the sector.

The Policy provides a statement for the provisioning and expansion of quality distance education at higher education institutions. It includes an overview of the policy context, describes the distinctiveness and purpose of distance higher education, and identifies mechanisms for steering distance education and for creating an enabling environment for quality distance provisioning.

Dr Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimande, MP
Minister of Higher Education and Training
Date: 27/06/2014

Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities
in the context of an integrated post-school system

May 2014

Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities

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Preamble to policy

The development of this policy has taken place in the context of two important factors: the development and release of the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training with its imperative to expand the system dramatically; and increasing, but by no means ubiquitous, penetration and affordability of information and communication technologies (ICT) across South Africa. Both factors have a seminal impact on the provision of distance education in the public and private university sector.

This policy has benefitted from the engagement of many interested parties on the Draft Policy Framework published for public comment in the Government Gazette (nr. 35391) of 29 May 2012.

While the DHET recognises the growing impact of ICT on the provision of distance education, it is concerned that increasing use of terms such as 'blended', 'flexible' and 'mixed' provision covers too wide a range of possibilities and that in the use of such terms, the unique possibilities and challenges of distance education provision are often overlooked.

The DHETwishes to retain focus on distance education provision as a distinct subset of provision because of the potential of distance provision to:

1. Open access to post-schooling education opportunities for those who cannot or who chooses not to attend traditional campus-based provision.
2. Lower costs per student by amortising curriculum design, materials development and some teaching costs across larger numbers of students and by obviating the need for continuing investment in physical infrastructure.

However, access is not meaningful unless it offers a reasonable chance of success and therefore the quality assurance of distance education provision and attention to improving retention, pass rates and throughput remain critical.

Distance education provision needs to rise to the triple challenge of providing greater access (1) (in terms of both numbers and diversity), in ways that offer a reasonable expectation of turning access into success in courses or programmes of proven quality (2) that are also affordable (3).

The key provisions of this policy statement are:

1. Providing a system wide definition for what constitutes distance education provision
2. Supporting well-managed growth in quality distance education provision, including in institutions other than UNISA
3. Ensuring that distance education provides not only opportunities for access but also a reasonable chance of success
4. Ensuring that distance education provision is funded based on empirical evidence of relative costs of different modes of provision
5. Strengthening capacity to evaluate distance education provision and hence to regulate who can offer accredited distance programmes

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6.　Promoting the development and use of Open Educational Resources (OERs)
7.　Creating an enabling environment for appropriate integration of ICT to enhance distance education provision in both public and private universities as well as other post-schooling institutions. In particular, the DHET will work to ensure that every post schooling student has reasonable access to affordable connectivity

This policy statement replaces the stipulations regarding distance education provision included in the 2002 document: *Approved Academic Programmes for Universities and Technikons: 2003 – 2006*.

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1   Scope and purpose of this policy

1.1 This policy, seeks to resolve areas of uncertainty and provide strong support for the progressive development of South African university distance education as an indispensable and integral component of our national post-school education system.

1.2 It should thusbe read in conjunction with other policy documents affecting universities in South Africa including the following:

- The *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training: Building an expanded, effective and integrated post-school system* approved by Cabinet on 20 November 2013
- *Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework* (CHE 2013)
- *Ministerial Statement on the management and utilisation of Teaching Development Grants* (2013)
- Decisions that emanate from the *Report of the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Funding of Universities*
- Policy statements that will emanate from a *Policy on Partnerships and Collaborations*(in process)

1.3This policy is part of a broader focus on building the capacity of the post-school system but focuses primarily on **university education** because of its unique features.

1.4 The 2013 *White Paper for Post School Education and Training* envisages greater collaboration between the University sub-system and the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Community College sub-system, especially in the provision of programmes at the NQF Level 5 interface, at NQF level 6, hence utilising more flexible forms of provision to increase access and articulation.

1.5The DHET recognises that there is now *growing convergence* of the ways in which traditionally face-to-face and traditionally distance education institutions offer their programmes, largely on account of the increasing use of ICT.Earlier higher education policy documents have proposed a simple continuum of education provision with two imaginary poles, one representing provision purely at a distance and the other purely face-to-face. Where particular provision was placed on the continuum depended on various proportions of face-to-face contact and other types of learner support, including print and other learning material, telephone conferencing,and support via ICT.

1.6Due to the increasing use of ICT, however, the continuum has been refined and isnow more usefully portrayed as a two dimensional figure which illustrates the increasing variation possible in designing learning programmes. So, for example, point A represents a distance programme that is offered using a variety of media but which does not involve use of the internet whereas point D represents a distance programme that is offered fully online for learners remote from the campus. Institutions will need to make strategic decisions about the most appropriate mode of provision and degree of ICT integration appropriate for particular learning needs and student cohorts. This may well change over time as illustrated by B. The grid also recognises that it is possible also to offer a largely online course in campus-based computer labs (point E) for both full-time and part-time students. The size of the circles might also approximate the scale of provision. Thus point C

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represents a large scale programme in which economies of scale might be possible (requiring careful consideration of how large scale student support will be managed) whereas point A represents a small scale programme (in which costs per student for provision will likely be higher).
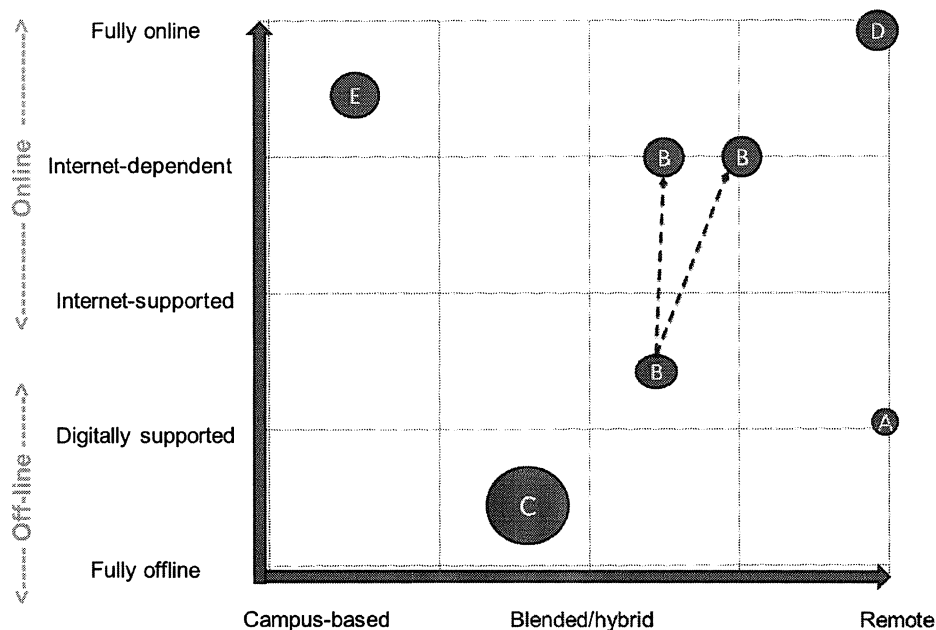

Figure 1: Provision grid

1.7The requirements in this policy refer to practices towards the right-hand side of Figure 1 in which it is assumed that students will rarely, if ever, be in the same physical location at the same time as their lecturer. This has profoundly different implications for student and staff roles and also for what facilities and resources need to be put in place and maintained.

1.8Notwithstanding the growing varieties of provision, the realities of funding in the short to medium term as well as a concern to differentiate provision in order to address quality issues, particularly for remote students,mean that the DHET will continue to distinguish between 'contact' and 'distance' provision for the foreseeable future.

1.9There is therefore need for a single definition of 'distance education' that will apply across all statutory and regulatory bodies. Taking cognizance of the finding from the South African Survey of Student Engagement[1] that, on average, contact undergraduatestudents spend 40% of their time involved in scheduled campus-based activities, for the purposes of this discussion, the term 'distance education' therefore refers to provision in which students spend 30% or less of the stated Notional Learning hoursin undergraduate courses at NQF Levels 5 and 6, and 25% or less in courses at NQF Level 7and initial post-graduate courses at NQF Level 8, in staff-led, face-to-face, campus-based structured learning activities.

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[1]Strydom, J. F. &Mentz, M. 2010. *South African Survey of student Engagement – Focusing the Student Experience on Success through Student Engagement*. Pretoria: CHE.

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1.10While the DHET will require provision based on open learning principles (as reflected in Section 7 of the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training*), the focus of this policy is on distance education provision. Distance education provision is well-placed to give practical expression to open learning principles, but in and of itself is not synonymous with open provision.

2 The policy context

The need for a specific policy on distance education at this time is indicated by four contextual factors as discussed below.

2.1 Importance of distance education in the university sub-system

2.1.1 In recent years, distance education has formed a vital part of the university sub-system, contributingapproximately 40% of headcount students and approximately 30% of FTE students. It has provided extensive opportunity to those students who were unable, or wished not, to participate in campus-based and fixed time study, including provision of access for those who experience a range of barriers to learning.

2.1.2 Furthermore, distance education has played an important role in providing discrete modules which have allowed students at contact institutions to complete their studies without needing to register for a whole semester or year of additional campus-based study.

2.1.3 The further development of distance provision needs to be guided within the broad goals of policy – ongoing transformation of the universityeducation, and increasing access and success, particularly for non-traditional students.

2.2 Technological needs and opportunities

2.2.1 Recent years have seen extensive development in the availability and affordability of ICT in South Africa. There is now a massive opportunity to utilise the affordances of technology to improve the quality of distance provision, particularly with regard to increasing student engagement generally and forcommunication with and support of remote students in particular. In addition, it has become essential for universities to have prepared their graduates for meaningful participation in a digital world.

2.3 Need for further expansion

2.3.1 Given the growing demand for universityeducation and international evidence that distance education can, under certain conditions, provide high quality educational opportunity more cost-efficiently and cost-effectively than traditional face-to-face provision, it seems logical to expand distance education provision in an orderly manner in which access and quality issues are at the forefront.

2.3.2 The move into distance provision should be a strategic one with appropriate planning and resourcing and not a process of drifting into such provision due to pressures, such as the increasing use of ICTs, in ways that do not provide adequate attention to important quality issues enumerated below.

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2.4 Quality matters

2.4.1Student throughput rates in distance universityprovisionhave tended to be lower than desired, at the programme level in particular, and there have been examples in the past of large enrolments in programmes of low quality that do not develop the expected graduate competences and which do not address national needs.

2.4.2 The DHET recognises the following as key quality issues in the provision of distance education: the need for investment in programme design specifically for distance provision; appropriate learning resources to support more independent learning; development of staff to enable effective teaching and learning through distance provisioning; ongoing proactive decentralised communication and support for remote and widely distributed students; and decentralised assessment strategies with a strong emphasis on formative feedback to encourage active engagement and retention.

2.4.3Therefore distance provision,whilstan important instrument for expanding access to university study, must be complemented by improved national and institutional planning and programme design and increased support systems, especially for underprepared school-leavers who have no experience of learning at a distance.Institutions need to demonstrate that they have or will put in place support systems appropriate for the needs of the target audience. The quality assurance processes of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) will be essential to ensuring that these requirements are met.

2.4.4The need,assessment and quality assurance for experiential training also need to be clearly stipulated. The different curriculum models used by the professional councils, the Quality Committee for Trades and Occupations(QCTO) and the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), and the CHE will determine Work Integrated Learning (WIL) modalities for different qualification types. The implementation of these will need to be carefully articulated by providers to ensure that students are not only able to qualify, but that quality assurance systems ensure suitable learning occurs at the appropriate depth and level.

3　The contribution and purpose of distance university education

Distance education is a mode of provision based primarily on a set of teaching and learning strategies (or educational methods) that can be used to overcome spatial and/or transactional distance between educators and students. It avoids the need for students to discover the curriculum by attending classes frequently at a set venue and for long periods. Rather, it aims to create a quality learning environment using an appropriate combination of different media, tutorial support, peer group discussion, and practical sessions.

The roles of distance education in the South African university system arethus viewed as:

3.1 Providing access to students for whom – either because of work commitments, personal social circumstances, geographical distance, or poor quality or inadequate prior learning experiences, traditional, full-time contact education opportunities are either inappropriate or inaccessible. Distance education can increase the flexibility of provision in structure, duration and timing but programmes need to be designed appropriately for different purposes and target audiences.

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3.2 Seeking to expand access to educational provision to significantly larger numbers of students, through shifting patterns of expenditure to achieve economies of scale by amortizing identified costs (particularly investments in course design and development andin effective administrative systems) over time and large student numbers and even across providers.

3.3 Providing low enrolment niche programmes that have a high impact and are required by small numbers of students across the country, for example in nanotechnology. The rationale for offering such programmes, and the nature of the provision, will need to be carefully scrutinized and agreed to in enrolment planning and programme accreditation procedures as part of a national PQM planning strategy. Very stringent criteria in terms of the national interest should be formulated.

3.4 Offering outstanding modules for students at contact institutions who require one or two modules to complete the necessary requirements for proceeding to their next year of study,or to complete their qualifications.

3.5 Along with all other provision, distance education should find improved ways to recognise prior learning (RPL) as a part of this opening of access and to guide students into appropriate learning pathways without the necessity of always starting a new programme from the beginning.

4   Steering mechanisms

The existing steering mechanisms of institutional planning, funding arrangements and quality assurancewill be used to steer the university education sub-system in a way that will enable distance education to fulfil its wide-ranging roles, while simultaneously stimulating transformation and innovation of distance education practice to one in which students are properly engaged and supported in the learning process.

4.1 Planning

4.1.1 The DHET will provide guidelines for, and engage with institutions on, the development of appropriate Programme and Qualifications Mixes (PQMs) as well as enrolment planning processes that address national needs on the one hand and institutions' capacity to deliver on the other. These discussions, together with historical data on student success and throughput rates, will influence decisions about the desirability and hence recognition of programmes of particular types, particular designations and in particular modes of provision. Public providers' PQMs and enrolment plans must be approved by the DHET prior to applications for programme accreditation through the relevant quality assurer. Public universities would also need to demonstrate that they align with the priority roles identified in 3 above.

4.1.2 While this policy confirms UNISA as the dedicatedpublic provider of distance education in South Africa, it supports other institutions, both public and private, inoffering distance programmes provided they motivate such programmes in terms of their mission and profile, demonstrate their carrying capacity to offer such programmes and provided the programmes meet the required quality

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standards in relation to delivery, including academic development support for under-prepared students, stipulated by the quality assurer. These requirements also apply to UNISA.

4.1.3 Institutions may enter into partnerships to facilitate the provision of support for distance education students. The obligations of the partners must be clearly spelled out. The DHET will draft a policy on *Partnerships and Collaborations*. It is imperative that the institution that awards the qualification has met all the quality assurance requirements of the institution and that it thereby takes full responsibility for the quality of the learning programme leading to the qualification.

4.1.4This policy signals a firm intent to use the throughput rates of cohorts of students as a measure of the efficiency and effectiveness of distance education, as well as success rates. In future, all institutions will be required by the DHET to track and report on student performance at programme level by cohort in terms of number accepted, percentage who completed in minimum time (the key indicator for contact providers taking cognisance that this might be different for full- and part-time students);percentage who completed in two times minimum time (the key indicator for distance providers) and percentage who completed in three times minimum time (the preferred upper limit for distance education,beyond which the coherence of a 'programme' of study could be called into question). Mid-term reviewreports should include the percentage of student cohorts still in process. Institutions will continue to monitor success rates at module/course level. This data will be taken into account when institutions engage with the DHET in PQM and enrolment planning and when they submit programmes for accreditation or re-accreditation.

4.1.5Related to the above, there should be a closer correlation between graduate output from contact and distance provision. The system as a whole should seek the means to increase the proportion of students successfully completing the programmes for which they have enrolled. However, in general, distance education students are expected to proceed more slowly through their studies. Therefore a success rate of less than 60% at the level of modules/courses, and a cohort throughput rate of less than 25% within three times the minimum time for completion of a qualification[2], tracked over a three year period, will be reasoned as cause for concern and indicative of the need either for a major re-design orwithdrawal of the programme from the PQM.

4.3 Funding arrangements

4.3.1 Given the pressures on the university sector budget, the DHET is committed to exploit the potential of large-scale provision to reduce per student costs. However, this must not be at the expense of quality. The DHET is therefore committed to the funding of quality distance provision in the public sector based on empirical evidence of costs in relation to that of contact provision.

4.3.2 Given the expected increasing use of ICTs, quality assurers responsible for the accreditation processes in an institution will need to demonstrate that the institution has an understanding of the costs involved, from an infrastructure as well as from the perspective of the use of appropriate ICTs

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[2]A target of 35% throughput (as distinct from a graduation rate) is suggested as achievable in distance education by studies commissioned by the CHE in 2004 and submissions for Nadeosa Excellence Awards. The target of 25% is set as a realistic next goal.

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for different purposes and target audiences, so that quality can be assured and programme offerings will be sustainable.

4.3.3 Specific funding arrangements for distance provision, including the possible utilisation of teaching development grants, will be articulated in any revised funding framework, emanating from the*Ministerial Review for University Funding*for education provision more generally.

4.4 Quality assurance

4.4.1 The DHET will liaise with therelevant quality councils as well as professionalcouncils to strengthen the quality of distance programmes.

4.4.2 This policy requires the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the CHE and the QCTO to ensure they become fully equipped to evaluate new distance programmes.This is particularly important given the priority applications of distance education. This policy reaffirms the current HEQC requirement that programmes moving to a new mode of delivery need to be re-accredited. In particular, it is believed that a move from contact-based forms of provision requiring regular participation in scheduled on-campus activities (typically involving 30% or more of notional learning time) to 'distance' forms of provision (as defined in Section 1) constitutes a new programme offering subject to re-accreditation.

4.4.3 This policy statement also reaffirms the minimum requirements for quality distance education provision as required by the National Association for Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa(NADEOSA), with emphasis on those areas identified in Section 2.4. Itsupports the current CHE process of reviewing the existing criteria and processes to align with the latest international trends in distance provision and in particular the increased use of ICTs.In particular, in order for programmes that are internet and technology dependent to be approved and accredited, the pedagogic assumptions underpinning the use of the technology and how the uneven readiness of staff and students will be addressed must be explained.

4.4.4 In order to turn access into a reasonable chance of success, continued research into the factors affecting drop-out, stop-out and failure rates needs to take place and be acted upon. Evidence of such investment in student tracking and reflexive practice must support applications for programme accreditation.It is required that institutions establish systems that make provision for student tracking, the identification and support of at-risk students and the monitoring of throughput cohort analyses differentiated by level, type and CESM category. This includes institutions reviewing large enrolment modules and tracking separately students registered for both whole programme and single module purposes. This could also be an important area of focus for the CHE.

4.4.5 It is required that institutions develop a sustained programme to ensure that students have appropriate expectations and are aware of their rights regarding distance education provision.Therefore, in submitting programmes for accreditation, institutions will be required to make a compelling case that the form of provision is fit for purpose, will be appropriately resourced, addresses developmental priorities, does not needlessly duplicate and is both affordable and sustainable.

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4.4.6 Institutions have an obligation to ensure provision of an appropriate learning environment for those students who have been accepted into university education programmes and must provide evidence they have implemented measures to ensure all students a reasonable chance to complete their studies successfully.

5 Creating an enabling environment for expanded distance education

In line with the vision expressed in the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training*, a strategic priority is to break down functional silos thereby enabling individuals to traverse from learning to work and from work to learning throughout their lives. Another key priority is to expand and diversify education and training provision in the post-schoolsystem. An important component of such an expansion and diversification would involve access to alternative programmes that are offered through more flexible forms of delivery, including distance education and technology-supported learning. The formation of the DHET in 2009 facilitates a structured interface between University Education, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges, the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), Community Colleges and other education and training institutions, including private providers, so that they may interact with one another in producing the knowledge and skills on which our society depends. Thus any investment in establishing an enabling environment for the implementation of distance education programmes in university education will be maximised bytheir use in strengthening other post-school provision as well.

Creating an enabling environment puts the emphasis on national infrastructure, approaches and system requirements that will support the expansion of quality distance education across the board – in university education, in national post-schoolinterventionsand foundational programmes and also for possible non-formal uses. In this respect, the following issues are of strategic importance:

- Collaborative development of shared high quality learning programmes and resources and use of OER
- Improved access to and use of appropriate technology
- Supporting a wider range of post-school study options
- Technological infrastructure for post schoolprovision
- Shared learning and support centres.

5.1 Improved access to and use of appropriate technology

5.1.1 In a developing context like South Africa, where internet penetration is still only significant in urban areas, the use of technologies appropriate for learning purpose, target audience and context becomes imperative. Universities should be careful to link the use of supporting ICT,if relevant, to improving quality and the realities of students' contexts of learning, taking particular cognisance of the readiness of and access for remote students.

5.1.2 The DHET is committed to ensuring equitable access to appropriate technology and this policy affirms the stipulations and processes outlined in section 7.4 of the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training*(2013).

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5.2 Collaborative development of high quality learning programmes and resources and use of OER

5.2.1 High quality learning resources are integral to high quality distance education and a growing reliance on resource-based learning among universities generally is noted.

5.2.2To avoid unnecessary duplication and to encourage increased quality by opening learning resources to public scrutiny, the DHET will pursue the adoption or adaptation, in accordance with national needs, of an appropriate Open Licensing Framework, such as the Creative Commons, for use by all university stakeholders, within an overarching policy framework on intellectual property rights and copyright in university education. In particular, in line with the Unesco Paris Declaration on OER of 2012, learning resources developed partly or wholly using public funds administered by the DHET will be published under an open licence that encourages their use and adaptation for re-use. The DHET will advocate similar practices in other Government Departments.

5.2.3 Teaching Development Grants will be utilised to encourage collaborative development and use of OERs.

5.3 Supporting a wider range of post school study options

5.3.1 There is need for greater collaboration between government ministries, universities and other role-players in the post school system to pro-actively identify and address current and future needs and to encourage appropriate collaborative curriculum and learning resource development in areas which have a large and sustained need for newly qualified participants. All programmes will need to incorporate foundational competence in appropriate literacy, numeracy and ICT skills that offer students a reasonable chance of success.

5.3.2 In particular, there is a need for collaborative development of a national set of vocational and generally formative programmes targeted at South Africa's burgeoning unemployed/not-in-education and training youth, designed to enable them to become financially productive and socially invested members of society. This initiative would be most appropriately located at the TVET/Community College/HET interface and indicates the need for collaboration across these sectors.

5.3.3 National task teams will be established to identify and develop programmes and resources collaboratively that will address specific national development needs, and make available the resources under an appropriate open licence. These task teams will involve university and further public education institutions, other government initiatives such as the e-skills institute and willing representatives of civil society,

5.4 Shared learning and support centres

5.4.1 The government remains committed to the development of Multi-Purpose Community Centres (MPCC) and in the past eight years have established some 35 such centres that can and should be used also as sites of learning support for university education students. In addition, existing schools, colleges and university campuses, as well as the decentralised support centres established by

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institutions such as UNISA and North West University, are and should continue to be used as centres for the support of universitydistance students and others as appropriate.

5.4.2 A comprehensive network of such centres has the potential to be a shared resource for the post-school/university education sector and cooperation between institutions in establishing, staffing, equipping and running such centres is encouraged.

5.4.3 With increasing access to wireless connectivity and mobile technology, it islikely that in the medium to long term the emphasis of student support will shift from centreand contact-based approaches to on-line web-based approaches. The relative balance of investment in new centres and the upgrading of existing centres and investment in ensuring access of all university education students to mobile, connected technology needs to be carefully planned at a systemic level. This includes the development of technological infrastructure for the post school system.Building an enabling ICT infrastructure (for example extending the South African National Research Network - SANReN -to ensure that all universities, TVET colleges and community colleges are connected and then extending initiatives like education roaming (Eduroam) so that registered students can access the internet for learning purposes wherever they happen to be) will require significant initial investment. However, its maintenance costs could well be covered in part by savings from the current expensive and cumbersome distribution and communication systems.

6 Cross-border distance university education

6.1 The need for regulation

6.1.1 The DHET has taken the view that university education is a public good whose provision in South Africa by foreign institutions or companies must be regulated in accordance with South African law to ensure that acceptable standards are maintained, students are protected and the democratic transformation of South African university education is sustained. Inter-governmental agreements designed to curb fraudulent or inferior distance university education at source are the best available safeguard since they commit signatory states to ensure that providers of cross-border education meet acceptable criteria and are subjected to suitable quality assurance supervision in their home countries.

6.2 Code of conduct for South African providers

6.2.1 South African providers offering cross-border services must uphold standards at least as rigorous as they are required to observe at home. This includes making adequate provision for practicals and work integrated learning where appropriate. This does not preclude the value of sharing South African developed OERs with other countries – especially where these are released under an open licence that permits adaptation.

6.2.2The DHETis in a processof developing an agreed framework of principles and guidelines for action by all bodies and institutions in South Africa concerned with offering and receiving cross-border university education, and offering joint degrees within a range of diverse partnership models.

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7 Conclusion

7.1 Distance education is an appealing and flexible option particularly for mature and mid-career students, and not least for students with disabilities which make access to contact education difficult or impossible.

7.2 As the pressure on full-time undergraduate places increases, many first-time students also choose distance education because admission requirements are not always so strict, tuition fees are usually lowerand they can avoid the costs of travel and living away from home. However, if access for these students is to result in a reasonable chance of success, there must be adequate investment in appropriate levels and kinds of student support. The DHET will expect accreditation bodies to pay particular attention to the provision of adequate student support in programmes targeted at new school leavers.

7.3 The development of this policy has benefited from the combined expertise and advice of the university education community. As the policy is implemented the DHET looks forward to continuing this challenging and productive collaboration.

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List of acronyms

CHE	Council on Higher Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
HE(T)	Higher Education (and Training)
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
DHET	Ministry of Higher Education and Training
NADEOSA	National Association for Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
ODL	Open (and) Distance Learning
OER	Open Educational Resource/s
PQM	Programme and Qualification Mix
QCTO	Quality Committee for Trades and Occupations
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETAs	Sector Education and Training Authorities
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNISA	University of South Africa
WIL	Work Integrated Learning

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Glossary

Blended learning refers to the provision of structured learning opportunities using a combination of contact, distance, and/or ICT supported opportunities to suit different purposes, audiences, and contexts.

Distance education is a mode of provision based primarily on a set of teaching and learning strategies (or educational methods) that can be used to overcome spatial and/or transactional distance between educators and students. It avoids the need for students to discover the curriculum by attending classes frequently and for long periods. Rather, it aims to create a quality learning environment using an appropriate combination of different media, tutorial support, peer group discussion, and practical sessions.

Institutions opting for distance education as a mode of delivery need to establish systems and processes for *decentralised* distribution of learning resources, communications, learner and learning support, as well as formative and summative assessment.

The term 'distance education' as a mode of provision therefore refers to provision in which students spend 30% or less of the stated Notional Learning hours in undergraduate courses at NQF Levels 5 and 6, and 25% or less in courses at NQF Level 7 and initial post-graduate courses at NQF Level 8, in staff-led, face-to-face, campus-based structured learning activities.

Mode of provision refers to the dominant mix of methods by which institutions mediate their curricula. In a *single mode* institution, all courses and programmes are mediated either by distance- or contact-based methodologies; in a *dual mode* institution courses and programmes may be mediated by either distance- or contact-based methods and often equivalent forms of the same course or programme may be offered in either mode; in a *mixed mode* institution, all courses and programmes involve a mix of methods associated traditionally with distance- and contact-based provision with the blend of methods varying from context to context. However, individual programmes will be accredited either as content or distance provision.

Open (and) distance learning (ODL) refers to the use of distance education methods to support the realisation of open learning purposes and principles. Omission of the "and" as in Open Distance Learning implies that ALL distance programmes offered are based on open learning principles.

Open learning typically involves making provision to support a wider range of student choices regarding access, curriculum, pacing, sequencing, learning modes and methods, assessment and articulation. Students studying through ODL approaches typically take longer to complete their studies as they need to balance study and other commitments. Guiding students towards making informed choices based on workload, and the assumption that completion of a course or programme of study will typically take twice as long to complete is an important feature of responsible ODL practice; as is trying to assist students not to take longer than three times minimum time to complete for the sake of coherence and the complications arising from curriculum renewal processes.

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Open Content is content that is licensed in a manner that provides users with the right to use the content in more ways than those normally permitted under the law and at no cost to the user. This is of particular importance at the post-graduate level where the "learning" materials are mostly primary sources and journal articles. This term, which is more encompassing than OER (see below), allows for other resources such as open data and open access journals to be considered as Open Content to which students and lecturers ideally will have access.

Open Educational Resources (OER) are educational resources (including curriculum maps, course materials, textbooks, streaming videos, multimedia applications, podcasts, and any other materials that have been designed for use in teaching and learning) that are freely available for use by educators and students without an accompanying need to pay royalties or licence fees. OER is not synonymous with online learning or technology-supported learning. Openly licensed content can be produced in any medium: text, video, audio, or computer-based multimedia.

Provider means a registered institution which offers learning programmes that culminate in specified National Qualifications Framework (NQF) standards and/or qualifications and manages the assessment thereof.

Post-school, in the South African context, refers to provision of educational opportunities to all people who have left school as well as for those who have never been to school. It includes education and training for out-of-school youth and includes institutions offering second chance learning, TVET Colleges, Community Colleges and education and training offered by the SETAs, Universities of Technology and Universities, private providers as well as other training colleges and institutes.

Qualification means a planned combination of learning outcomes which has a defined purpose or purposes, and which is intended to provide qualifying students with specified applied competence and a basis for further learning; it also means the formal recognition of the achievement of the required number and type of credits and such other requirements as may be determined by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

Quality, according to the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), refers to the interrelated demonstration of fitness of and for purpose, value for money and contribution to social transformation in line with the intent and values of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Quality management entails a number of elements of institutional planning and action to address issues of quality. These include institutional arrangements for quality assurance, support, development and monitoring.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) involves formal identification, assessment and acknowledgement of the full range of a person's knowledge, skills and capabilities acquired through formal, informal or non-formal training, on-the-job or life experience.

Standard means registered statements of desired education and training outcomes and their associated assessment criteria.

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Technology-supported learning refers to structured learning opportunities mediated through software applications using digital resources (usually combinations of text, audio and visual/video files) and communication, and accessed through a range of fixed or mobile hardware devices. Such learning provision may be on-line and synchronous (e.g. real-time conferencing), on-line and asynchronous (e.g. text-based discussion forum) or off-line (e.g. interactive or resource based CD/DVD/flash drive). ICT can support learning in contact, blended and distance programmes.

Work-based education/work-integrated learning (WBE/WIL) is a component of a learning programme that focuses on the application of theory in an authentic, work-based context. It addresses specific competences identified for the acquisition of a qualification which relate to the development of skills that will make the learner employable and will assist in developing his/her personal skills. Employer and professional bodies are involved in the assessment of experiential learning, together with academic staff. Distance methods may usefully be used in providing a structured WBE/WIL experience within a larger learning programme; the provision of WBE/WIL, and the need for placement, mentoring, support, supervision and assessment present particular challenges for large scale distributed distance education provision and require special attention in the planning, resourcing and monitoring of programmes offered in distance mode.