

## E-Learning Policy

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## 1. Introduction

E-Learning is becoming an increasingly prominent feature in the accredited training field. It refers to a web-based system and shifts from traditional training to a comprehensive, online learning management system which provides information and administers training, conducts assessments, and provides learners with an interactive mobile learning tool.

E-Learning is defined as a formal educational process in which learning takes place in its entirety or partially through computer-mediated communications, when the lecturer and learners are not in the same place at the same time.

E-Learning is a multi-purpose delivery methodology that opens up learning regardless of location. The interaction between lecturer and learners is mediated using digital text, audio, video, and/or other interactive computer technologies.

E-Learning in South Africa is to be encouraged as it allows for reaching into communities that might not otherwise have access to learning. This E-Learning Policy has been developed to meet the needs of SDPs and learners in the delivery of learning. INSETA believes that those closest to curriculum implementation best understand which modules /unit standards or skills programmes are suited for an e-Learning format.

The vision for E-Learning as set out in this E-Learning Policy:

- To integrate technology into the current curriculum and assessments thus increasing access to learning.
- To empower learners by enabling more interactive learning.
- To encourage and facilitate more creative and innovative teaching and learning.
- To provide the minimum requirements and standards for a learning management system which is more flexible and responsive to individual needs.
- To enhance quality in the education and assessments provided.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to consider the minimum requirements and standards for E- Learning and E-Assessment by Skills Development Providers (SDPs) within the Insurance sector.

In all qualifications and skills programmes delivered via e-Learning, modalities must satisfy current accreditation policy dealing with access to information resources and technologies by all students, including individuals with disabilities. E-Learning modalities must align with programme objectives specified in the learning programme application.

### 3. Best Practice

#### E-Learning best practice must incorporate the following features:

- 3.1 **Creation of a student-centered learning environment** by providing essential information that includes a detailed syllabus and learner support services, technical training, equipment needs, and explicit communication on course expectations as components of student-centered environment
- 3.2 **Creation of an active and engaging learning environment** with dynamic activities must be facilitated to promote interactions and engagement through what is identified as social, teaching, and content presence
- 3.3 **Active presence in the course** enhances online education through lecturer interactions with learners and the maintenance of a constant presence online. Active presence can be achieved by using text-based technologies like forums and instant messaging technologies or media applications like video conferencing.
- 3.4 **Prompt response to learner inquiries** is identified as especially important in online learning
- 3.5 **Promotion of learning success through course organization and feedback** requires online programmes that are well organised, easy for students to navigate, predictable, and provide ongoing learner support
- 3.6 **Communication that is clear, polite, and constructive** throughout online learning sessions
- 3.7 **Quality assurance** is a best practice that needs to be started prior to initiation of eLearning and maintained throughout the programme through the use of learner evaluations and comments regarding online experiences.
- 3.8 **Demonstration of learning delivery effectiveness** must be consistent with the INSETA Verification guidelines.

## **4. Definitions**

### **4.1 E-Portfolio**

E-Portfolio refers to assessments completed by a learner and then uploaded to a secure online platform to be assessed and moderated.

### **4.2 E-Assessment**

E-Assessment is the use of electronic systems for the development, operation and delivery of accredited qualification assessment or the collection of performance evidence, which contributes to the awarding of an INSETA Statement of Credits or Qualification Certificate.

E-assessment is any type of assessment that has an electronic component and incorporates one or more of E-testing, E-portfolios, E-Assessing and E-Moderating.

### **4.3 Face-to-Face, On-line**

Instruction occurs in real time (synchronously), with learner(s) and lecturer present via technology (e.g. television, tele-conference, video conference or chat).

### **4.4 Online**

Instruction occurs over the Internet (asynchronously). Scheduled face-to-face meetings may be required for orientation and learner evaluation.

### **4.5 Hybrid**

Learning offering that combines Face-to-face and on-line with 25%:75% ratio respectively.

### **4.6 Flexible**

Programme allows for more than one modality where learners choose the modality (or modalities) that suit(s) their needs.

## **5. Minimum Criteria for a Learning Management System**

Technological readiness is extremely important to the success of any online learning. Inadequate technological readiness disrupts e-Learning efforts and generally manifests itself in learner programme evaluations or during verification of Learning.

INSETA therefore requires that SDPs who are interested in pursuing e-Learning become familiar with the standards and best practices associated with e-Learning and have the financial resources to implement it.

### 5.1 The E-Learning system must accommodate the following functions:

- Unique Usernames and Passwords
- Secure and authentic platform
- Tutoring/Facilitation Videos
- Formative and Summative Assessments
- Chatrooms
- Resources e.g. articles, additional reading material, etc.
- Document upload function
- E-Assessments that meet the same standards and requirements as the Hard Copy Assessments

5.2 SDP must have the skill required to convert from a conventional classroom learning delivery format to an e-Learning format, where change from lecturer-centered classroom activities to the genuinely learner-centered activities must be made possible through technology. SDPs are therefore encouraged to make appropriate resources available to achieve e-Learning-related goals.

5.3 A Declaration of Authenticity needs to be built into the Learning Management System that confirms that the learner has submitted his/her own work, whenever a submission is made.

## 6. Validity and Reliability of E-Learning and E-Portfolios

SDP must ensure that:

- Learners who pass the programme demonstrate the graduate competences indicated in the purpose and exit level outcomes of the Qualification or Part-Qualification.
- Where relevant, practical competences are adequately assessed
- Systems have been put in place to ensure reliability, rigour and security of the E-assessment system for remote Learners
- Assessment activities are sufficiently varied for the programme purpose and level and the diversity of the learners. Appropriate constructs as covered in the relevant courses are adequately covered in the assessment.
- Where Learners submit assessment individually by electronic means from homes or workplaces, and not from a recognized assessment centre, the programme has the necessary security systems for electronic assessment.

- Programmes delivered exclusively or mainly through electronic learning methods do not narrow the range of assessment to the assessment of factual knowledge (which is most easily assessed), rather than the full range of outcomes and depth of knowledge required for the particular programme of study.
- In technology supported distance education delivery, there is the danger of limiting assessment tasks to low level cognitive skills (e.g. simple multiple choice questions [MCQs] that can be computer-marked) at the expense of high level skills (usually requiring more open-ended written and practical assignments) that enhance deep and critical engagement with concepts. Higher order thinking skills like application, analyses, evaluation and creation should be covered in the assessment.
- There is evidence of staff development to familiarise academic staff with online assessment strategies that take high level cognitive skills into account thereby ensuring credible online assessment.

## **7. E-Assessment and Moderation Implementation**

The SDP must ensure that:

- The Assessor and Moderator must have their own Unique Username and Password to access their relevant function and Learner Portfolios on the System
- Portfolios may not be amended after assessment has taken place in other words, pages must be locked where assessment activity took place to disable changes to what was done in the previous function – Submission - Assessment – Moderation – Verification
- Assessor may assess on-line and give feedback directly to the learner
- System should enable assessor markings and mark allocations
- System should enable assessor Identifying Information, for example INSETA Registration Number, Name and Surname and Signature allocations
- System should enable moderation markings required
- System should enable moderator Identifying Information, for example INSETA Registration Number, Name and Surname and Signature allocations
- Learner, Assessor and Moderator signatures need to be uploaded in a secure and authentic manner

- Assessor function must enable red ticks at the relevant answer and a mark allocation at each answer as well as a grand total
- Moderator function must enable green ticks at the relevant answer and a mark allocation at each answer as well as a grand total
- Moderator may moderate on-line and give feedback to the learner and/or assessor
- Assessment and Moderation Decisions must be recorded on the cover sheets in the respective colours
- System must enable Learners to upload their ID documents
- System must have an Invigilation function via camera and microphone
- System must have a Activity/Event Log and Tracer Log for all activities that have occurred during the session as well as a Digital Certificate

## **8. Specific Requirements for E-Assessments**

This section provides an outline of the specific requirements that must be borne in mind when designing and administering E-Assessments in the INSETA space.

The SDPs must ensure that:

- E-Assessment is fit for purpose and does not compromise the assessment methodology and the integrity of what is being assessed.
- Completion of an INSETA qualification requires Closed-Book, Invigilated Summative Assessments.
- Summative E-Assessments must meet exactly the same requirements albeit by different means. For example, the system might have a facility to accommodate invigilation software that serves to validate the learner's identity, monitor activity in the venue and on the system during the 'exam.' process.
- Before implementing E-Learning/E-Assessment, an SDP must apply to INSETA for extension of scope for this platform

## 9. Management of E-assessment

The SDP must ensure that:

- There is evidence that the SDP understands the importance of feedback on formative assessment in E-Learning.
- There is evidence of an assessment management system to ensure that feedback on assessment is confidential and reaches the right learners timeously. Systems are in place to communicate feedback and results quickly, efficiently and securely to a distributed learner body.
- Adequate systems to guarantee the integrity and security of the assessment system and the authenticity of learner submissions (including means to discourage plagiarism from online sources) are in place.
- E-Assessment systems are tested to ensure proper functionality and any shortcomings identified are fully addressed prior to full implementation.
- There is regular monitoring and checking of the smooth functioning of E-Assessment systems to make sure that the assessment system is not compromised in any way.
- The SDP has enough competent staff to address any technical problems learners face with the assessment system to ensure the assessment process runs smoothly and does not in any way disadvantage any learner.
- Moderation reports are used to improve the various aspects of the E-Assessment process, such as the validity of the assessment instruments, the quality of learner performance, and the reliability of the marking process.
- SDP must have effective quality assurance measures in place to ensure the integrity of the assessment data.
- E-Assessment systems must have the capacity to generate key information like system error reports and data that demonstrate regulatory compliance.
- Where SDPs enter into partnership arrangements with any other provider, formal service level agreements with clearly stated roles and responsibilities must be signed.

## **10. Ensuring the credibility of Formative E-Assessment**

The SDP must ensure that:

- The central role of formative assessment and feedback in online learning is formally recognised and there is evidence of an appropriate number and variety of formative assessment tasks, and mechanisms for the monitoring and quality assurance of feedback and minimum turn-around times are in place.
- Accurate and reliable records of learners' E-Assessment are kept and can easily be retrieved as when required.
- The potential of the electronic environment for the use of ongoing formative assessment of different kinds is exploited appropriately.

## **11. User-friendliness of the E-assessment System**

The SDP must ensure that:

- The rules and regulations governing assessment are clearly communicated to Learners and relevant stakeholders.
- Evidence is provided to demonstrate that these rules are widely adhered to.
- Breaches of assessment regulations are dealt with effectively and timeously.
- Learners are provided with information and guidance on their rights and responsibilities regarding E-Assessment processes (for example, definitions and regulations on plagiarism, penalties, terms of appeal, supplementary examinations).
- Learner appeals procedures are explicit, fair and effective.
- As much as possible, E-Assessment systems should operate on inclusive principles and therefore also accommodate learners with various forms of physical challenges.
- E-Assessment systems are designed in such a way that they are easy for learners to navigate. SDPs should ensure that learners do not spend much time grappling with system issues instead of with the content of the assessment.
- Mechanisms are in place to support learners who are less competent in working with technologies so they can gain the necessary skills as well as sufficient confidence in working with the technology.

- There is fair and equal treatment of all undertaking E-Assessment, irrespective of geographical location, time of assessment and learning programme.

## **12. Use of E-portfolios for Assessment**

In addition to regulatory principles, E-portfolio systems should store and maintain performance evidence securely and meet the evidence needs for a range of qualification types.

Therefore, E-portfolio systems must have the capabilities to store and maintain a variety of forms of performance evidence or coursework for secure access by the learner, assessors, moderators and verifiers based on a robust authentication process.

## **13. Administration of E-Assessments and Technical Support**

The SDP must ensure that:

- All SDP staff administering E-Assessment processes must be familiar with the on-line environment and have undergone appropriate training prior to gaining access to the system.
- Accredited SDPs should have plans in place to manage every aspect of the E-Assessment procedure, ensuring that the process is robust, reliable, fair and efficient and that contingency plans are in place to mitigate against technical failure.
- In the case of technical failure occurring within the first 80% of the scheduled time of the Assessment, it is recommended that the Assessment be rescheduled.
- If a technical failure occurs within the last 20% of the scheduled time, the Assessment may be concluded (provided the previous 80% has been saved), and the marks gained may, at the discretion of the SDP be standardised accordingly.
- In cases of serious technical failure which affects the whole group, Assessments may be rescheduled or where appropriate learners may be offered the Assessment in paper form. In either case, INSETA should be informed of the new arrangements in writing within the required reporting documentation as part of Verification.
- Learners must be given access to and be familiar with the Assessment format, question types and the technology prior to the Summative Examination.

## **14. Security**

Security arrangements for E-Assessments and the assessment data must comply, where relevant, with current legislation and industry standards.

- Summative Assessments must meet the Invigilation Requirements, either Physical or Remote Invigilation. The SDP's Policy must have security measures and controls for both these processes.
- Summative assessments must still have a process for the invigilator to have a unique username and password to enable him/her to unlock the summative assessment after the identity of the learner has been verified.
- E-learning system must have a reliable anti-virus programme that protects the system from viruses, spy-ware and hackers.
- No summative assessment may be conducted at a Public Area, e.g. Internet Café.
- SDP to have daily backups and off-site storage of backups.
- SDP to have User Access Maintenance Plan in place.

## **15. Data Integrity – Input/Output and Operation and Integrity of E-Assessment Systems**

- SDP must be confident that there is sufficient capacity to hold all necessary data and that the systems will operate successfully.
- SDP must ensure that effective testing of system capacity has taken place, and where applicable, that such data can be provided to the INSETA for quality assurance purposes.
- E-assessment systems must be stable and work reliably to generate valid and reliable assessments and/or results. They must be demonstrably consistent with relevant recognised standards of good practice and be easy to navigate.
- Systems must allow for flexibility in the light of technological development.
- System testing must be thorough and be reviewed at regular intervals once the system is operational.

- SDP must ensure that suitable support facilities are in place for all venues and that there is a comprehensive contingency plan should any part of the system fail.

## **16. Access to E-assessment and Avoidance of Barriers to New Technology**

- All enrolled Learners must have similar access to E-Assessment.
- Learners with disabilities must be considered in the design of the E-Assessments, and all learners enrolled must have equal opportunities to demonstrate their abilities in an E-environment.
- SDP must ensure that the use of technology does not create barriers for learners by providing user-friendly interfaces and enabling familiarisation and/or training sessions appropriate to the mode of delivery.
- The above also requires significant documentation freely available to E-Learners so that their questions are answered up-front and in black-and-white, given their more limited access to facilitators and other support structures at the SDP.

## **17. Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery**

Suitable measures must be in place to ensure the effective management of business continuity to address business interruption and the need for disaster recovery for E-Assessment services and systems, in the event of a system's failure.

## **19. Learners with Special Needs and/or Disabilities**

The E-Learning Policy must be able to be read with the Policy for Learners with Special Needs and/or Disabilities in terms of technical and pedagogical accessibility.

## **20. Storage of Learning documents**

All E-Learning documents and online assessments must be kept for five years and then destroyed or given back to the learners.

## **21. Conclusion**

The Policy provides SDPs with the minimum requirements, standards and procedures that are required in an E-Learning and E-Assessment environment.

Details will be outlined in the Guidelines that will support the implementation of this policy.

## **References**

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