



## Distance Learning and Assessment Policy

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Last Updated: N/A

This policy outlines the processes, technologies, assessment and support mechanisms that position Engineers Academy as a reliable and effective provider of distance learning programmes in engineering.

It includes the following sections:

1. Centre Governance
2. Technology and Infrastructure
3. Centre Support
4. Learner Support
5. Course Design and Development
6. Course / Programme Structure
7. Learner Engagement
8. Assessment
9. Course Evaluation

### **1. Centre Governance**

- 1.1. Engineers Academy maintains a governance structure suitable for the planning, delivery and continuous improvement of distance-learning programmes in Engineering, where:
  - 1.1.1. Senior leadership roles with defined responsibilities are appointed, including oversight of business development, curriculum and operations.
  - 1.1.2. Lead responsibilities for engineering subject areas and other academic processes are formally assigned and documented in the Organisation Chart, which is available on request.
- 1.2. Distance learning programmes are fully integrated into the centre's policies, processes, and operational structures.
  - 1.2.1. All policies, including assessment, internal verification, academic conduct, and learner engagement policies, reflect and explicitly accommodate distance and online delivery.
  - 1.2.2. Programme handbooks and the prospectus clearly communicate the distance learning format and structure for all programmes.
- 1.3. Engineers Academy's HNC and HND study programmes are designed and approved for delivery via distance learning, subject to periodic review from the awarding body, Pearson.

- 1.4. Engineers Academy staff have relevant teaching experience in higher education for the delivery of distance learning programmes in engineering.
- 1.5. Engineers Academy directorship meets regularly for the purposes of business development and planning processes, aspects of which include:
  - 1.5.1. The appropriate allocation of budget for relevant technologies and services that enable the functioning of a quality distance learning provision.
  - 1.5.2. The retention of IT support services for the ongoing functioning, upkeep and development of the distance learning platform.

## **2. Technology and Infrastructure**

- 2.1. Engineers Academy plans for, and invests in, relevant technologies, services and processes that enable the reliable and secure operation of a distance learning provision, including:
  - 2.1.1. The use of secure, dedicated cloud servers with a 99.99% uptime guarantee.
  - 2.1.2. Automatic notifications to staff of any downtime, so that prompt action can be taken to rectify any issues.
  - 2.1.3. The encryption of website and online study platform via SSL certificates.
  - 2.1.4. Daily backup of resources and data to a separate, secure server.
  - 2.1.5. Compliance and certification with *Cyber Essentials* standards, reviewed annually.
  - 2.1.6. The maintenance and annual review of a Contingency and Adverse Occurrences Policy.
- 2.2. Staff and learners are provided with the training, guidance, and support necessary to develop the knowledge and skills required to use all technologies effectively.
  - 2.2.1. New staff receive a structured induction covering the study platform and associated systems, with ongoing training provided in response to CPD requests and operational needs.
  - 2.2.2. Learners receive induction materials, a programme handbook, and access to 'Getting Started' video tutorials and additional support resources within the study platform.
- 2.3. Engineers Academy aims to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAGs) by:
  - 2.3.1. Taking WCAG AA accessibility guidelines into account in the design and layout of the website and study platform, including compatibility with accessibility tools. See 'Moodle Accessibility Guidance' below for details: <https://docs.moodle.org/502/en/Accessibility>
  - 2.3.2. Syndicating video content via YouTube, where an automatic closed-captioning and transcription service is available.
  - 2.3.3. The checking of assessment resources via an internal verification process, to correct errors or ambiguities.

### **3. Centre Support**

- 3.1. Engineers Academy staff receive ongoing professional development related to evolving and improving practice in distance learning and teaching, in addition to staff induction materials and ongoing access to policies.
- 3.2. Standards and expectations are established for centre staff, set out in the Academic Conduct Policy.
- 3.3. Centre staff are regularly updated with information on the ways in which learners' evidence of achievement is assessed on the programme, and such assessment is regularly reviewed as part of Internal and External Verification processes, per Assessment and Internal Verification Policy.

### **4. Learner Support**

- 4.1. Engineers Academy has controls in place to ensure that learners on HNC/D programmes are recruited with integrity, with learners confirming their identity, as detailed in the Learner Engagement Policy, with such information being held per the Data Management Policy and Privacy Policy.
- 4.2. Before enrolling on an HNC/D programme, Engineers Academy aims to pre-assess applicants for their suitability on such a programme, per the Learner Engagement Policy, by measures including:
  - 4.2.1. The requirement to complete relevant bridging courses to demonstrate knowledge and understanding at a given level, and an ability to engage effectively with a distance learning mode of delivery.
  - 4.2.2. Interviews / telephone interviews to ascertain details around prior education, experience, background and other suitability criteria, where required.
  - 4.2.3. Requirements for English language testing, where applicable.
  - 4.2.4. Making available the course syllabus via the Engineers Academy website in order that applicants can make an informed course selection.
- 4.3. Engineers Academy hosts a Learning Management System (LMS), referred to in policy as the 'Study Platform', through which all resources and course materials are made available. Additionally:
  - 4.3.1. The programme handbook provides relevant information, contact details and availability of tutors and other student services.
  - 4.3.2. A designated 'Common Room' section of the study platform includes additional non-subject specific information and guidance, such as study skills.
  - 4.3.3. Direct support for students is available via email, telephone, Microsoft Teams, or online messaging via the LMS.
  - 4.3.4. Each unit contains a forum for frequently asked questions (FAQs), to help learners find answers to the common questions relating to their study programme.
  - 4.3.5. 'Getting Started' tutorials are available to those students who are new to the study platform, as well as various tutorials throughout the course to support students in engaging with the study and assessment processes.

## **5. Course Design and Development**

- 5.1. A course development process is followed that ensures courses are effectively designed for distance delivery, whereby:
  - 5.1.1. Appropriate course units are selected that are achievable via a distance learning approach.
  - 5.1.2. A flexible approach to course timings and expected progress is adopted, in order to accommodate the various circumstances of students on programme.
  - 5.1.3. Details on assessment strategies, types and feedback are outlined in the Assessment and Internal Verification Policy.
- 5.2. HNC/D courses are developed in line with Pearson RQF specifications, and make use of the most current and up-to-date version of the specification when developing a particular course or assessment.
- 5.3. Courses and assessments are reviewed on an annual basis, supported by:
  - 5.3.1. Annual External Examiner quality review and subsequent report.
  - 5.3.2. Student feedback as part of end-of-unit evaluations.
  - 5.3.3. Updates and revised specifications from the awarding body.

## **6. Course / Programme Structure**

- 6.1. Students are provided with induction information and a programme handbook outlining the structure of the course, and processes to be followed as part of the course.
- 6.2. Course resources are made available online, via the study platform, with the intention that they be accessible to students regardless of their location, without limitation or restriction.
- 6.3. Opportunities are available for collaboration between learners via forums that are present in each unit. Expectations for such are set out in the Academic Conduct Policy and are communicated through the staff and programme handbooks.
- 6.4. Students are provided with a guideline assessment schedule upon enrolment, enabling timely completion, along with a corresponding recommendation for weekly study commitment in hours.

## **7. Learner Engagement**

- 7.1. Learners are able to contact assessors / centre staff:
  - 7.1.1. via LMS messaging and email in the first instance for help or support.
  - 7.1.2. via phone calls / MS Teams calls, which can be scheduled with staff where required.
  - 7.1.3. to report bugs or IT issues, the contact details for which are provided on the website and in the student handbook.
- 7.2. Students and assessors receive weekly progress reports by email for each unit, outlining weekly and overall progress towards unit completion.
  - 7.2.1. Assessors use weekly reports to identify at risk learners and to make contact where needed.

- 7.2.2. Additional facilities are in place to identify at risk learners, identifying students who have missed expected assessment submission targets, etc.
- 7.3. Students receive automatic 're-engagement' emails when falling too far behind the expected schedule of assessment progress.

## **8. Assessment**

- 8.1. Engineers Academy aims to provide a flexible approach to distance learning and assessment, whilst enabling fairness for all students, and to this extent:
  - 8.1.1. Students receive a recommended assessment schedule upon enrolment.
  - 8.1.2. Assessors track student progress effectively, and contact those students who have fallen behind the minimum expected rate of progress.
  - 8.1.3. Further detail regarding expectations around progress is detailed in the Fees Policy for Higher Education.
- 8.2. Students are made familiar with the centre's assessment processes via introductory tutorials, as well as tutorials around effective referencing, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools.
- 8.3. Measures are in place to evidence the authentication of assessed work, including:
  - 8.3.1. Individual logins and passwords to access the study platform and submit work.
  - 8.3.2. The use of TurnItIn to detect similarity of students' written work with other sources, and detection of the use of AI for the direct generation of assessed work.
  - 8.3.3. Further details given in the Assessment and Internal Verification Policy.

## **9. Course Evaluation**

- 9.1. Programme effectiveness is evaluated through a combination of student progress, retention and achievement data, as well as student feedback, via end-of-unit questionnaires which gather feedback on the effectiveness of:
  - 9.1.1. course content and resources.
  - 9.1.2. assessments and assessment material.
  - 9.1.3. tutor support.
- 9.2. Data and feedback gathered per the above feeds into an annual review process, intended to improve the quality of course materials and service provided.

## **Further Information**

Any existing Engineers Academy Terms and Conditions, Policies and Procedures referenced within this document can be accessed on the Engineers Academy website below:

<https://engineers.academy/about-engineers-academy/policies-and-procedures/>

Related policies include:

- EA - Assessment and IV Policy
- EA - Academic Conduct Policy
- EA - Learner Engagement Policy
- EA - Contingency and Adverse Occurrences Policy
- EA - Data Management Policy
- EA - Password Policy
- EA - Privacy Policy
- EA - Fees Policy for Higher Education