ABE Online & Blended Learning Policy

Introduction

Centres must ensure they have notified ABE of their intention to move to a blended/distance learning model prior to starting delivery. This can be done by contacting ABE Head Office directly or through the centres External Quality Assurer. Failure to do so may incur a sanction from ABE.

Where a centre is moving to 100% online delivery, they must be able to provide ABE with a remote login to the system. The centres External Quality Assurer will also want to observe a live delivery session as part of the centres monitoring activity.

For any new centres applying to become ABE Accredited, providing this information at the beginning of the process is crucial to the decision-making process. For existing accredited centres questions about delivery models will be asked during EQA monitoring activity and as part of the annual renewal process.

An ideal blended/distance learning programme will be one that balances:

- the freedom of remote access, with
- tried and tested quality assurance strategies used in traditional learning situations

Planning for blended/distance learning

Blended/distance learning will present more challenges than conventional delivery modes because centres need to provide/check:

- The learner has adequate resources, time, and communication channels
- appropriate, workable, and cost-effective arrangements
- adequate learner support – for example, additional consideration should be considered for those learners in geographically isolated locations
- effective quality assurance – to prove authenticity of a learner's work
- security of ICT support – which may be open to plagiarism or impersonation

A blended/distance learning programme should include

- initial assessment to ensure that the programme and mode of delivery is appropriate to the needs of the learner
- induction
- learning and assessment materials
- specialist tutor support
- technician support
- counselling and guidance
- access to additional learning support
- clear identification of delivery method in the programme literature and the learning agreement
- some pre-assessment contact time with a qualified assessor

Learners have the right to access

- regular support and guidance from a support contact (can include telephone/email/Video Technology
- guidance on staff availability/response times and expectations
- learning and assessment materials
- equipment and resources (where applicable)
- assessment opportunities
- opportunities for interaction with their peers

A centre must be confident that:

- learners have opportunities for assessment
- learners submit their own work for assessment
- all human resources working on blended/distance learning programmes should be appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their role

Guidelines for planning and programming

ABE Global Ltd suggest that centres consider all the following:

- individual learner situations and requirements for flexible delivery
- drawing up individual learning and assessment contracts
- specifying the time allowed to cover the programme content
- specifying the time allowed for any assessments
- defining rules which apply to extension of timescales indicated
- defining the provision of any eLearning which is available
- defining the resources and/or equipment available to the learner
- defining arrangements for any practical activities that may need to be carried out and the process by which evidence must be generated
- ensuring that all assessment tools and distance learning evidence are internally quality assured

Learner support and communication

The level of support required during a blended/distance learning programme will vary between learners. It is important to allocate sufficient time to support all learners whether self-sufficient or otherwise.

Communication

Centres should be in regular, scheduled contact with all learners undertaking a blended/distance learning course.

The following strategies offer general guidelines to blended/distance learning communication:

- allocate sufficient learner support contacts to guarantee appropriate support. The ratio of learner support contacts to learners will vary from programme to programme and will depend on support mechanisms
- establish the support mechanisms to be used – telephone, face to face tutorials, e-mail, Skype etc.
- establish the extent of the availability of all support mechanisms and whether there is specific time
- restrictions (for example, specific days of week)
- define how the support will be managed, who will do it and how communication will be facilitated by
- the centre to offer learner support

Guidance for direct contact hours

A centre must provide the relevant amount of live teaching sessions to ensure that learners have the best opportunity to succeed in the unit or qualification undertaken.

ABE External Quality Assurers will want to observe live delivery sessions as part of the centres monitoring activity. They will also need to see evidence of timetables, schemes of work, and conduct learner interviews to ensure sufficient direct contact hours are being delivered.

Assessment for blended/distance learning

ABE assessment model of Assignments and Timed Open Book Exams is the same regardless of whether method of learning is delivered face to face in person or through blended/distance learning. As with face-to-face delivery, the learning programme must prepare learners for the assessment, including sessions on the prevention of malpractice. Further information about ABE assessment can be found on the ABE website: https://www.abeuk.com/assessments.

If you disagree with the decision the first point of call is the ABE Responsible Officer. The Responsible Officer will re-investigate the complaint and deliver their verdict.

ABE will expect to see quality assurance systems adapted appropriately to encompass arrangements for units and qualifications offered by this learning route.

Quality assurance for blended/distance learning

A centre's approach to internal quality assurance should include the following:

- appointing a key individual to act as IQA for the blended/distance learning programme
- documenting the roles and responsibilities for all those involved in the blended/distance learning
- process
- recording and monitoring the support and communication offered to learners
- monitoring the consistency of any assessments carried out for blended/distance learning learners
- sampling learner evidence generated by blended/distance learning programmes
- evaluating arrangements for delivery of blended/distance learning programmes
- design and management of blended/distance learning programmes