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UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION

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DISTANCE EDUCATION AND ALTERNATIVE LEARNING POLICY

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University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC)

DISTANCE EDUCATION AND ALTERNATIVE LEARNING POLICY

February, 2026

FOREWORD

As we navigate an increasingly digital and interconnected world, the landscape of higher education continues to evolve at an unprecedented pace. The University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC) recognizes that education must transcend the traditional boundaries of physical classrooms to reach learners wherever they are.

This Distance Education and Alternative Learning Policy represents UniMAC's commitment to democratizing access to quality education while maintaining the academic excellence for which our institution is known. It reflects our understanding that today's students - working professionals, parents, lifelong learners, and those in remote communities - require flexible pathways to achieve their educational aspirations without compromising on quality.

Distance and alternative learning are not merely responses to technological advancement or external pressures; they are strategic imperatives that align with our core mission to develop creative, skilled professionals in media, arts, and communication. These modes of delivery allow us to extend our reach beyond Accra, serving the nation and the continent more effectively.

This policy provides a comprehensive framework that addresses every aspect of distance education delivery - from program development and student support to quality assurance and assessment. It ensures that students who learn through distance mode receive the same rigorous education, comprehensive support, and valuable credentials as their on-campus counterparts.

I commend the Pro Vice Chancellor and faculty members who contributed their expertise and insights to developing this policy. Their collaborative effort has produced a document that is both visionary and practical, ambitious yet achievable.

As Vice Chancellor, I am confident that this policy will guide UniMAC toward greater inclusivity, innovation, and impact in higher education. It positions our university to meet the challenges of tomorrow while staying true to the values that have defined us since our establishment.

Professor Eric Opuku Mensah

Vice Chancellor

University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC)

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PREAMBLE

This policy establishes the framework for distance education and alternative learning at the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC). It sets out the principles, standards, and procedures that will guide the development, delivery, and management of programs offered through distance and alternative learning modes.

The University recognizes that the higher education landscape is changing rapidly. Students today need flexible learning options that fit their diverse circumstances and schedules. Distance education and alternative learning approaches provide opportunities for working professionals, students in remote areas, and others who cannot attend traditional face-to-face classes to access quality education in media, arts, and communication.

This policy aligns with UniMAC's mission to be a leading institution in media, arts, and communication education. It supports our strategic goal of expanding access to our offerings while maintaining the high academic standards and practical training that define a UniMAC education. By embracing distance and alternative learning, we aim to reach more students across Ghana and beyond, train more skilled professionals, and contribute to the development of the creative and media industries.

The policy operates within the regulatory framework established by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). All distance and alternative learning programs must meet GTEC requirements for quality assurance, accreditation, and standards. We are committed to ensuring that programs delivered through distance and alternative modes are equal in quality and rigour to our traditional on-campus offerings.

This policy covers all aspects of distance and alternative learning at UniMAC. It applies to undergraduate and graduate programs, short courses, professional

development offerings, and any other educational activities delivered wholly or partly through distance or alternative means. It guides decision-making by university leadership, faculty, administrators, and support staff involved in distance education.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, the following terms are defined as follows:

- i. **Distance Education:** A mode of teaching and learning where students and instructors are separated by physical distance for most or all of the instruction. Students learn primarily through online platforms, recorded materials, and remote communication tools rather than attending regular face-to-face classes on campus. Distance education may include occasional in-person sessions for orientations, examinations, or practical work, but the majority of learning happens remotely.
- ii. **Alternative Learning:** Educational approaches that differ from the traditional daytime, face-to-face classroom model. This includes blended learning (combining online and in-person instruction), hybrid programs (mixing distance and on-campus components), evening and weekend classes, and other flexible formats designed to accommodate different student needs and schedules.
- iii. **Blended Learning:** An approach that combines online learning with face-to-face instruction. Students complete some coursework online at their own pace and attend some classes in person. The balance between online and in-person components can vary, but both elements are intentionally integrated to enhance learning.
- iv. **Hybrid Programs:** Degree or certificate programs where students take some courses entirely online and other courses on campus. Students have flexibility in choosing how to complete their program requirements, mixing distance and traditional courses according to their needs.
- v. **Online Learning:** Learning that takes place over the internet. Students access course materials, participate in discussions, submit assignments, and take assessments through web-based platforms. Online learning can be synchronous or asynchronous.

- vi. **Synchronous Delivery:** Real-time instruction where students and instructors interact at the same time, even if they are in different locations. This includes live video lectures, real-time discussions, and virtual classrooms where everyone participates together at a scheduled time.
- vii. **Asynchronous Delivery:** Self-paced instruction where students access materials and complete activities on their own schedule within set deadlines. This includes recorded lectures, discussion forums where students post and respond over time, and assignments that students can work on whenever convenient. Students and instructors do not need to be online at the same time.
- viii. **Learning Management System (LMS):** A software platform used to deliver, track, and manage distance and online learning. The LMS hosts course content, facilitates communication between instructors and students, handles assignment submissions and grading, and provides tools for assessments, discussions, and collaboration. It serves as the central hub for online and distance courses.
- ix. **Micro-credentials:** Short, focused certifications that recognize specific skills or knowledge in a defined area. These are smaller than traditional degrees or diplomas and can often be completed in weeks or months. They provide learners with credentials that demonstrate competency in particular skills relevant to the media, arts, and communication fields.
- x. **Proctoring:** The supervision of examinations to ensure academic integrity. In distance education, proctoring may be done through online monitoring tools, approved testing centers, or other approved methods that verify student identity and prevent cheating.

1.1 SECTION 1: PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

The University believes that quality education in media, arts and communication should be accessible to all qualified learners, regardless of where they live or their personal circumstances. Distance and alternative learning are not lesser forms of education but legitimate pathways that can deliver the same rigorous training and professional preparation as traditional programs. Our approach is built on the principle that flexibility in how we teach should never mean compromise in what we teach or the standards we uphold.

We recognize that effective distance education requires more than simply moving classroom content online. It demands thoughtful course design, appropriate use of technology, strong student support systems, and faculty who are trained in online pedagogy. When effectively rendered, distance and alternative learning can promote increased interaction through discussion forums, access to diverse resources, opportunities for self-paced learning, and the development of digital literacy skills that are essential in modern media professions.

The specific objectives of this policy are:

- i. **Expanding Access to Quality Education:** UnniMAC recognizes the fact that not all prospective applicants can easily access our programs due to work commitments, family responsibilities, geographical distance, or physical challenges. By offering distance and alternative learning options, we will expand UniMAC's reach across Ghana and to international students, increasing opportunities for more people to gain media, arts, and communication education.
- ii. **Providing Flexibility and Inclusivity:** UniMAC through CAL seeks to create learning pathways that accommodate diverse student needs and circumstances. Working professionals should be able to advance their education without leaving their jobs. Parents and caregivers should be able to study while managing family responsibilities. Students with disabilities

should have equal access to learning opportunities. Our programs will offer flexible scheduling where teaching is not restricted to weekends; learning is continuous and flexible, multiple formats, and support services designed to help all students succeed.

- iii. **Maintaining Academic Rigour and Standards:** Distance and alternative learning programs must meet the same high academic standards as on-campus programs. Learning outcomes, assessment criteria, faculty qualifications, and quality measures will be equivalent across all delivery modes. Graduates of distance programs will earn the same credentials and be held to the same standards as graduates of traditional programs. In trying to achieve flexibility, quality will not be compromised, the duration of all distance and alternative learning programs shall be one-and-a-half ($1\frac{1}{2}$) times the duration of conventional face-to-face programs.
- iv. **Leveraging Technology for Enhanced Learning Outcomes:** Technology is critical in delivering effective distance education. Digital tools and platforms would be enhanced to improve teaching and learning. Technology enables interactive multimedia content, collaborative projects across distances, immediate feedback on assessments, access to global resources, and new forms of creative expression relevant to media and arts education. Technology would be deployed not just for convenience but to create richer, more engaging learning experiences that prepare students for technology-driven professional environments.
- v. **Building Institutional Capacity:** Investment in infrastructure, training, and resources needed to deliver excellent distance and alternative learning would be prioritized. This includes a robust Learning Management System, technical support teams, faculty development programs, digital library resources, and appropriate policies and procedures. Building this capacity will strengthen UniMAC as an institution and position it as a leader in innovative education delivery in Ghana.

- vi. **Supporting Lifelong Learning:** The media, arts, and communication fields evolve rapidly. Professionals need opportunities to update their skills and knowledge throughout their careers. Through short courses, micro-credentials, and flexible program options, facilitators would be support continuous professional development and lifelong learning. Distance and alternative formats make it easier for working professionals to engage in ongoing education.

1.2 MODES OF DELIVERY

UniMAC will offer distance and alternative learning through various delivery modes. Each mode serves different student needs and learning contexts. Programs may use a single mode or combine multiple modes depending on the nature of the content, student population, and learning outcomes. The university will clearly communicate to students which delivery mode applies to each program or course.

1.2.1 Fully Online Programs

These programs are delivered entirely over the internet with no required campus attendance. Students complete all coursework, discussions, and assessments online through the Learning Management System and other digital platforms. Instruction may include recorded lectures, live video sessions, interactive modules, discussion forums, and virtual group work.

Fully online programs offer maximum flexibility for students who cannot come to campus at all. They are particularly suitable for working professionals, students in remote locations, and international learners. However, for media and arts programs that require hands-on technical training or studio work, fully online delivery may be limited to certain courses or programs. Where practical skills are essential, students may need to complete intensive practical components during short on-campus residencies or at approved facilities in their locations.

1.2.2 Blended/Hybrid Programs

Blended programs combine online and face-to-face instruction in intentional ways. Students might attend campus classes once a week while completing other coursework online, or they might take theory courses online and come to campus for practical sessions. The blend can vary by program and course, but both online and in-person components are essential parts of the learning design.

This mode works well for students who can come to campus periodically but need flexibility in their weekly schedules. It allows us to deliver theoretical content online while ensuring students get essential hands-on training in studios, labs, and production facilities. Blended approaches can offer the best of both worlds – the flexibility of online learning combined with the benefits of face-to-face interaction and practical training.

1.2.3 Evening and Weekend Programs

These programs schedule classes during evenings (typically after 4:00 PM) and on weekends to accommodate students who work during regular business hours. Classes are held on campus in traditional classroom and studio settings, but the timing makes them accessible to working professionals who cannot attend daytime classes.

Evening and weekend programs are not distance education in the strict sense, but they represent an alternative learning pathway that expands access. They are particularly valuable for media and arts education where hands-on training with equipment and facilities is important. Students in these programs benefit from direct interaction with instructors and peers while maintaining their employment.

1.2.4 Short Courses and Micro-credentials

These are focused learning programs that typically last from a few weeks to several months. They target specific skills or knowledge areas such as video editing, social media management, graphic design tools, podcast production, or media law. Short

courses can be delivered fully online, in blended formats, or through intensive workshops.

Micro-credentials earned through short courses provide stackable certifications that students can accumulate over time. They serve working professionals seeking to update skills, recent graduates wanting to add specialized competencies, and individuals looking to change careers or enter the media and creative industries. Short courses offer quick, practical training without the time and financial commitment of full degree programs.

1.2.5 Intensive Block/Modular Delivery

In this mode, courses are compressed into intensive periods such as two-week blocks, weekend workshops, or month-long modules. Students focus on one subject at a time rather than taking multiple courses simultaneously. Between intensive periods, students may work on assignments and projects independently with online support.

Block delivery works well for students who can take time away from work or other commitments periodically but cannot commit to regular weekly schedules. It allows deep immersion in subjects and intensive practical training. This mode is particularly effective for professional development programs and for students who travel to campus from distant locations.

1.2.5 Hybrid Residential Programs

These programs require students to come to campus for short residential periods (typically one to three weeks) while completing most of their coursework online. Residential periods are used for orientations, intensive practical training, collaborative projects, presentations, and examinations. The rest of the program is delivered through online learning.

This model balances the flexibility of distance learning with the importance of hands-on training and community building. It is especially suitable for graduate programs and for undergraduate programs in areas where practical skills are

essential. Students benefit from face-to-face mentorship and peer interaction during residential periods while maintaining the flexibility to study from home for most of the program.

UniMAC will regularly review and may introduce additional delivery modes as educational technology evolves and student needs change. Any new modes will be developed in accordance with this policy and approved through the appropriate academic governance processes.

2.1 SECTION 2: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL

All distance and alternative learning programs at UniMAC must be tailored to solve specific skills gap and go through already established structured development and approval processes prescribed by the University. This ensures that programs meet quality standards, align with institutional goals, have adequate resources, and comply with regulatory requirements. The process applies to new programs designed for distance delivery; existing programs being converted to distance or alternative formats with strong justification, and existing distance programs seeking reaccreditation.

2.1.1 Criteria for Converting Existing Programs to Distance/Alternative Formats

Not all programs are equally suited for distance or alternative delivery. Before converting an existing program, departments must demonstrate that:

- i. The program's learning outcomes can be achieved effectively through the proposed delivery mode. Theory-heavy programs may convert more easily than programs requiring extensive studio or laboratory work.
- ii. Practical and hands-on components can be delivered through alternative methods such as intensive on-campus sessions, approved partner facilities, simulation software, or portable equipment kits that students can use remotely.
- iii. There is sufficient student demand to make the program viable. Market research or enrollment projections should indicate that enough students would enroll to sustain the program.
- iv. The department has or can develop the necessary expertise in distance education pedagogy. Faculty must be willing and able to teach effectively in the distance format.
- v. Adequate resources are available or will be provided, including technology infrastructure, instructional design support, student services, and library resources suitable for distance learners.

2.1.2 Quality Assurance Standards

All distance and alternative learning programs must meet the following quality standards:

- i. Learning outcomes must be clearly defined and equivalent to those of on-campus programs. Students graduating from distance programs should have the same knowledge, skills, and competencies as students graduating from traditional programs.
- ii. Course content must be current, accurate, well-organized, and appropriate for the level of study. Materials should be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect changes in the field.
- iii. Instructional design must promote active learning and engagement. Courses should include varied activities such as discussions, group projects, case studies, and practical assignments, not just passive content consumption.
- iv. Assessment methods must be appropriate for distance learning while maintaining academic integrity. Multiple forms of assessment should be used to evaluate different aspects of student learning.
- v. Student support services must be accessible to distance learners. This includes academic advising, technical help, library access, and career services.
- vi. Faculty must be qualified and trained in distance education delivery. Teaching in distance formats requires different skills than traditional classroom teaching.

2.1.3 Curriculum Design for Online Delivery

Curriculum design for distance education requires careful planning and often differs from traditional course design. The following principles guide curriculum development for distance programs:

- i. Courses should be designed specifically for online or distance delivery, not simply transferred from classroom formats. This means rethinking how content is presented, how students interact, and how learning is assessed.
- ii. Content should be broken into manageable modules or units. Each module should have clear objectives, appropriate content, learning activities, and assessments. Students should be able to complete modules in reasonable timeframes.
- iii. Multiple media formats should be used to present content. This includes text, video, audio, interactive elements, and visual materials. Different students learn in different ways, and varied formats maintain engagement.
- iv. Opportunities for interaction must be built into the course design. This includes instructor-student interaction, student-student collaboration, and interaction with course content. Regular communication prevents students from feeling isolated.
- v. Practical skills development must be addressed creatively. For media and arts programs, this might include video tutorials, demonstration recordings, virtual critiques, portfolio development, or requirements to use specific software or equipment.
- vi. Accessibility should be considered from the start. Materials should be designed to be accessible to students with disabilities, including captioned videos, screen-reader compatible documents, and alternative text for images.

2.1.4 Approval Process and Timelines

The approval process for distance and alternative learning programs involves several stages:

- i. **Concept Proposal:** Departments submit a concept proposal to the Center for Alternative Learning outlining the program, proposed delivery mode, target audience, resource requirements, and preliminary market analysis.

- ii. **Full Proposal Development:** If the concept is approved, the department develops a full proposal by populating the GTEC required template for curriculum, course outlines, resource plans, quality assurance measures, and financial projections. The Centre for Alternative Learning provides support during this phase.
- iii. **Internal Review:** The full proposal is reviewed by the Board of CAL, Academic Planning and Review Committee, and the Academic Board. Reviewers assess academic quality, resource adequacy, compliance with this policy, and institutional fit.
- iv. **Revisions:** Departments or development committee may be required to make revisions based on reviewer feedback. This may involve multiple rounds of revision depending on the scope of changes needed.
- v. **Final Approval:** Once internal approval is secured, the program goes to the Directorate for Quality Assurance and Academic Planning to facilitate external accreditation process at GTEC.
- vi. **External Accreditation:** After institutional approval, the program is submitted to the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission for accreditation. GTEC review can take six months to one year depending on their schedule and any additional requirements they request.

2.15 Accreditation Requirements

All degree and diploma programs must be accredited by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission before students can be admitted. Distance and alternative learning programs follow GTEC's guidelines for distance education accreditation, which include requirements for:

- i. Technology infrastructure capable of supporting the proposed delivery mode
- ii. Qualified faculty with appropriate credentials and training in distance education

- iii. Adequate student support services accessible to distance learners
- iv. Quality assurance mechanisms including regular program review and evaluation
- v. Clear policies on assessment, academic integrity, and student rights and responsibilities
- vi. Financial sustainability of the program

Short courses and micro-credentials that do not lead to formal degrees or diplomas would not require GTEC accreditation but must still meet internal quality standards and be approved through Academic Planning and Review Committee.

3.1 SECTION 3: ADMISSION AND REGISTRATION

The University maintains the same admission standards for distance and alternative learning programs as for traditional on-campus programs. The mode of delivery does not change the entry requirements. However, the admission and registration processes are adapted to accommodate the needs of distance learners who may not be able to visit campus easily.

3.2 Eligibility Criteria

General eligibility criteria for distance and alternative learning programs are the same as for on-campus programs:

- i. For undergraduate programs, applicants must have the required senior high school qualifications or equivalent or be 25 years and above for matured applicants. Specific programs may have additional subject requirements or portfolio submissions.
- ii. For graduate programs, applicants must have a bachelor's degree from a recognized institution in a relevant field. Some programs may require work experience or specific undergraduate preparation.
- iii. For short courses and professional development programs, requirements vary by program but are clearly stated in program descriptions. Some may have no formal prerequisites beyond basic literacy and relevant interest.

In addition to academic qualifications, distance learners should have or be prepared to develop certain competencies for successful distance learning:

- i. Basic computer literacy including ability to use email, web browsers, word processing, and file management
- ii. Access to required technology including a computer or tablet with internet connection sufficient for online learning activities
- iii. Self-discipline and time management skills to keep up with coursework without the structure of regular class meetings

- iv. Strong communication skills for expressing ideas in writing and participating in online discussions

The university provides orientation and support to help students develop these competencies if needed. Lack of prior experience with online learning is not a barrier to admission, but students should be aware of what distance learning requires and be prepared to learn new skills.

3.3 Application Procedures for Distance Learners

UniMAC provides streamlined application procedures that allow distance learners to apply without visiting campus:

- i. **Online Application:** All applications are submitted through the university's online application portal. Applicants create an account, complete the application form, and upload required documents electronically. The system is accessible 24/7 from anywhere with internet access.
- ii. **Document Submission:** Applicants upload scanned copies of transcripts, certificates, identification documents, and other required materials. For certain programs requiring portfolios or creative work samples, applicants submit these electronically in specified formats. Original documents may need to be verified before final enrollment.
- iii. **Application Fee Payment:** Application fees can be paid via various modes and platforms as prescribed by the Directorate of Finance of the University.
- iv. **Application Review:** Admissions staff review applications according to the same criteria used for on-campus programs. Applicants can check their application status online. Review typically takes three to four weeks during regular admission periods.
- v. **Admission Decisions:** Applicants are notified of admission decisions via email or SMS and can view their admission letters through the online portal. Admitted students receive information about registration procedures, orientation schedules, and next steps from the CAL.

- vi. **Acceptance and Confirmation:** Students confirm their acceptance of admission and pay acceptance fees online. They may need to submit additional documentation or complete prerequisite tasks before full enrollment.

3.4 Registration Processes

Course registration for distance learners is conducted entirely online. The process includes:

- i. Access to the student portal where students can view available courses, check prerequisites, see course descriptions, and register for courses that fit their program requirements and schedules
- ii. Academic advising available through video conferencing, phone, or email to help students plan their course selections and stay on track for timely graduation
- iii. Online fee payment for tuition and other charges through various payment methods including mobile money, bank transfers, and installment payment plans where available
- iv. Automatic enrollment in the Learning Management System once registration would be enhanced, giving students immediate access to their courses and materials.
- v. Add/drop periods allowing students to adjust their course selections within specified deadlines if needed.

Registration periods are scheduled to allow adequate time for distance learners to complete the process. The CAL would communicate registration dates, deadlines, and requirements clearly through multiple channels including email, SMS, and the student portal.

3.5 Student Orientation Requirements

All new distance learners must complete an orientation program before starting their courses. Orientation prepares students for success in distance learning and

familiarizes them with university resources, policies, and expectations. Orientation can be completed online or through a combination of online and brief on-campus sessions depending on the program.

Orientation may cover the following areas:

- i. Introduction to distance learning, including expectations for self-directed study, time management strategies, and tips for success in online courses
- ii. Technical orientation to the Learning Management System and other technology platforms used in the program. Students learn how to access courses, submit assignments, participate in discussions, and use communication tools.
- iii. Academic policies and expectations including assessment methods, academic integrity requirements, grading policies, and expectations for participation and engagement
- iv. Student support services available to distance learners including academic advising, library services, technical support, counseling, and career services, along with how to access each service
- v. Program-specific information including curriculum structure, progression requirements, practical components, and any residency or on-campus requirements
- vi. Financial information including fee payment schedules, financial aid options, refund policies, and where to get help with financial questions
- vii. Community building activities to help distance learners connect with classmates and feel part of the UniMAC community despite being physically distant.

Completion of orientation is mandatory before students can access their courses. Students who do not complete orientation may have their registration placed on hold. The university recognizes that thorough orientation is essential for student success and retention in distance programs.

4.1 SECTION 4: TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Reliable and robust technological infrastructure is the foundation of effective distance and alternative learning. UniMAC is committed to investing in and maintaining technology systems that support high-quality online education. This includes the platforms students and faculty use directly, the backend systems that keep everything running, and the support services that help users when problems arise.

The university recognizes that technology is not just a tool but an integral part of the learning environment in distance education. Poor technology experiences can undermine even the best-designed courses, while good technology can enhance learning and engagement. Therefore, technological infrastructure decisions are made with educational goals and user experience as primary considerations.

4.2 Learning Management System Requirements

The Learning Management System (LMS) is the central platform for delivering distance education at UniMAC. The LMS would provide the following core capabilities:

- i. Content delivery in multiple formats including text documents, presentations, videos,
 - a. audio files, and interactive multimedia. The system should support both streaming and downloadable content to accommodate students with varying internet connectivity.
- ii. Communication tools enabling both synchronous and asynchronous interaction. This includes discussion forums, messaging systems, announcement features, video conferencing integration, and email notifications. Students and instructors should be able to communicate easily within the platform.
- iii. Assignment submission and grading functions allowing students to submit work electronically and instructors to grade and provide feedback efficiently.

The system should support various file types and maintain organized records of submissions and grades.

- iv. Assessment tools for creating and administering quizzes, tests, and exams. This includes question banks, automatic grading for objective questions, timed assessments, and options for proctoring integration.
- v. Gradebook functionality that calculates grades, tracks student progress, and allows students to monitor their performance throughout the course. Grade calculations should be transparent and easy for students to understand.
- vi. Analytics and reporting capabilities that help instructors track student engagement, identify students who may be struggling, and evaluate course effectiveness. Reports should be meaningful and actionable.
- vii. Mobile accessibility allowing students to access courses through smartphones and tablets. While not all activities may be suitable for mobile devices, basic functions like viewing content, participating in discussions, and checking grades should work on mobile.
- viii. Integration capabilities with other systems including the student information system, library resources, video conferencing tools, and specialized software used in media and arts education.
- ix. Accessibility features complying with international standards for learners with disabilities. This includes screen reader compatibility, keyboard navigation, adjustable text sizes, and support for assistive technologies.

The university would regularly examine the LMS to ensure it meets evolving needs and explores upgrades or alternatives when necessary. Faculty and students are consulted in decisions about LMS changes as they are the primary users.

4.3 Minimum Technological Standards for Students

To participate successfully in distance learning programs, students need access to certain technology. The CAL in collaboration with the Directorate of IT establishes

minimum standards while recognizing that not all students have equal access to technology resources.

Minimum technology requirements for students include:

- i. A computer or tablet capable of running current web browsers and common productivity software are suitable. Smartphones alone are generally not sufficient for completing all coursework.
- ii. Reliable internet connection with sufficient bandwidth for video streaming and file uploads/downloads. While high-speed broadband is ideal, students should have at least a connection capable of streaming video at standard definition and uploading assignment files within reasonable timeframes.
- iii. Updated web browser (Chrome, Firefox, Safari, or Edge) with current security patches and necessary plugins enabled. The LMS and other online tools would specify which browsers they support.
- iv. Email account that students check regularly for university communications. Students receive a university email address upon enrollment and are expected to monitor it daily.
- v. Webcam and microphone for video conferencing in courses that include synchronous sessions. Built-in or external devices are acceptable as long as they provide adequate audio and video quality.
- vi. Basic productivity software including word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation applications. The university provides guidance on free alternatives to expensive commercial software where appropriate.
- vii. Program-specific software or equipment as required by particular courses. For media and arts programs, this might include video editing software, graphic design tools, audio recording equipment, or other specialized resources. Course descriptions specify any special requirements, and the university explores options for providing software licenses or equipment loans when possible.

Students would be informed of technology requirements where necessary admitted so they can prepare accordingly.

4.4 IT Support Services

Technical problems can seriously disrupt learning in distance education. The IT Directorate would provide comprehensive IT support services to help students and faculty resolve technical issues quickly. Support services are designed to be accessible to distance learners who cannot easily visit campus.

IT support services include:

- i. Help desk available through multiple channels including phone, email, live chat, and a ticketing system. Students can choose the contact method most convenient for them and expect timely responses.
- ii. Extended support hours recognizing that distance learners often study outside traditional business hours. Support is available evenings and weekends with at least basic assistance available 24/7 for critical issues.
- iii. Self-service resources including knowledge base articles, video tutorials, FAQs, and troubleshooting guides. These resources help students solve common problems independently without waiting for assistance.
- iv. Technical orientation sessions at the beginning of each semester introducing students to the technology platforms, demonstrating key functions, and addressing common questions. Both live and recorded sessions are offered.
- v. Rapid response to critical issues that prevent students from accessing courses or submitting assignments. Priority is given to problems affecting multiple users or time-sensitive situations like exam access.
- vi. Proactive system monitoring to identify and resolve potential problems before they affect users. Technical staff monitor system performance and conduct regular maintenance during scheduled windows announced in advance.

The university maintains service level agreements for IT support defining expected response times for different types of issues. Students are informed about how to contact support, what information to provide when reporting problems, and what response times to expect.

4.5 Digital Library and Learning Resources

Distance learners need the same access to library and learning resources as on-campus students. The Library would ensure that distance students can access research materials, academic journals, books, and other resources necessary for their studies without visiting the physical library.

Digital library services for distance learners include:

- i. Electronic databases providing access to academic journals, articles, conference papers, and research publications in media, arts, communication, and related fields. Students can search and download materials from anywhere with internet access.
- ii. E-books and digital textbooks covering required and recommended readings for courses. The library expands its e-book collection prioritizing titles used in distance programs.
- iii. Streaming media collections including films, documentaries, recorded performances, and other audiovisual materials relevant to media and arts education. These materials are essential for teaching and cannot be accessed only through physical media.
- iv. Online research guides and tutorials helping students develop information literacy skills, understand citation practices, use library databases effectively, and conduct research in their fields.
- v. Virtual reference services where librarians provide research assistance via email, chat, or video conferencing. Distance students can consult with librarians about research strategies, finding sources, and using library resources.

- vi. Document delivery services for materials not available digitally. If a student needs a physical book or article, the library can scan and send it electronically or mail physical copies within reasonable limits.
- vii. Integration of library resources into the LMS making it easy for students to access relevant materials directly from their courses. Instructors can embed links to readings, create course-specific resource lists, and ensure students find what they need.

The university would continue to expand digital library resources and negotiate licenses that permit off-campus access. Library staff should receive training in supporting distance learners and understand the unique challenges they face in accessing resources.

4.6 Data Security and Privacy

Distance education systems handle large amounts of sensitive data including student personal information, academic records, financial information, and intellectual property. UniMAC through CAL would implement comprehensive measures to protect this information.

Data security and privacy measures include:

- i. Secure authentication systems requiring strong passwords and, where appropriate, multi-factor authentication to prevent unauthorized access to student accounts and course materials.
- ii. Encrypted data transmission ensuring that information sent between users and university systems cannot be intercepted. All systems handling sensitive data use industry-standard encryption protocols.
- iii. Regular security audits and vulnerability assessments identifying potential weaknesses in systems before they can be exploited. Technical staff apply security patches and updates promptly.
- iv. Access controls limiting who can view or modify different types of information. Students can only access their own records, instructors can only

access information for their courses, and administrators have role-appropriate access levels.

- v. Data backup and recovery systems ensuring that course materials, grades, and other critical information are protected against loss due to system failures, disasters, or cyberattacks. Regular backups are stored securely and tested periodically.
- vi. Privacy policies clearly explaining what data is collected, how it is used, who has access, and how long it is retained. Students are informed about their privacy rights and how to exercise them.
- vii. Compliance with applicable data protection laws and regulations including Ghana's Data Protection Act and, where relevant, international standards. The university takes legal obligations regarding student data seriously.
- viii. Training for faculty and staff on data security practices, recognizing and avoiding phishing attempts, handling sensitive information appropriately, and responding to security incidents.

Students also have responsibilities for security including protecting their login credentials, not sharing accounts, using secure networks when accessing courses, and reporting suspicious activities. The university provides guidance on security best practices for students.

SECTION 5: PEDAGOGY AND INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Effective distance education requires thoughtful pedagogy and intentional instructional design. Simply transferring traditional classroom content to an online format rarely produces good results. Instead, distance courses must be designed from the ground up with consideration for how people learn online, how to keep students engaged without face-to-face interaction, and how to assess learning in remote environments.

The CAL is committed to pedagogically sound distance education that reflects current best practices in online learning. The Centre would provide resources and support to help faculty design courses that are engaging, interactive, and effective. Instructional design is viewed as a collaborative process involving faculty expertise in content and instructional designers with expertise in online pedagogy.

5.1 Course Design Principles for Distance Education

All distance courses would be designed according to the following principles:

- i. **Clear Learning Outcomes:** Every course begins with clearly stated learning outcomes describing what students should know, understand or be able to do by the end of the program and each course. These outcomes guide all other design decisions including content selection, learning activities, and assessments. Students should understand from the beginning what they are expected to learn and how they will demonstrate that learning.
- ii. **Logical Structure and Organization:** Courses are organized in logical sequences that build knowledge progressively. Content is divided into modules or units of manageable size, typically representing one to two weeks of work. Each module has clear objectives, required and optional readings or resources, learning activities, and assessments. Students should always know where they are in the course and what comes next.
- iii. **Multiple Forms of Content Presentation:** Content is presented through varied media including text, video, audio, graphics, interactive elements, and

demonstrations. This variety accommodates different learning preferences, maintains interest, and reinforces concepts through multiple channels. Not every module needs every type of media, but courses should include meaningful variety rather than relying on a single format.

- iv. **Active Learning Strategies:** Students learn by doing, not just by consuming content. Courses include activities that require students to apply concepts, solve problems, create products, analyze cases, and engage with the material actively. Even in online environments, students should be doing more than passively reading or watching.
- v. **Regular and Meaningful Interaction:** Distance courses build in opportunities for interaction between students and instructors, among students, and between students and content. This includes discussion forums, group projects, peer review activities, virtual office hours, and feedback on work. Interaction prevents isolation and enriches learning through multiple perspectives.
- vi. **Timely and Constructive Feedback:** Students receive regular feedback on their progress, not just final grades. Instructors provide comments on assignments explaining strengths and areas for improvement. Feedback is given within reasonable timeframes (typically one week for routine assignments) so students can use it to improve subsequent work.
- vii. **Consistent Instructor Presence:** While students work independently, they should feel that the instructor is actively present in the course. Instructors post announcements, participate in discussions, respond to questions promptly, and check in with students regularly. This presence provides guidance, motivation, and reassurance.
- viii. **Accessibility and Universal Design:** Courses are designed from the start to be accessible to students with diverse abilities and learning needs. This includes providing captions for videos, descriptive text for images, screen-reader compatible documents, keyboard navigation, and multiple ways to engage with

content. Universal design benefits all students, not just those with identified disabilities.

5.2 Interactive and Engaging Content Requirements

Content in distance courses must do more than convey information – it must engage students and sustain their attention in environments full of distractions. Engaging content is particularly important in distance learning where students do not have the social dynamics and structured time of a classroom to maintain focus.

Strategies for creating engaging content include:

- i. Breaking content into short segments rather than long lectures or dense text. Videos should typically be 10-15 minutes or less. Readings should be interspersed with activities. Students maintain attention better with shorter, focused segments.
- ii. Using storytelling, examples, and real-world applications to illustrate abstract concepts. Stories and examples make content memorable and help students see relevance to their lives and careers.
- iii. Including interactive elements such as knowledge checks, clickable graphics, simulations, scenario-based activities, and decision-making exercises. Interactivity transforms passive consumption into active engagement.
- iv. Incorporating multimedia that serves pedagogical purposes, not just decoration. Graphics should clarify concepts, videos should demonstrate processes, audio should add perspective. Each media element should contribute to learning.
- v. Varying the pace and tone of presentation. Courses should have moments of intensity and moments for reflection, serious content and lighter engagement, individual work and collaborative activities.
- vi. Providing choices where appropriate, such as allowing students to select topics for projects, choose between different types of assignments, or explore

optional enrichment materials. Choice increases motivation and engagement.

- vii. Creating opportunities for student creativity and expression, especially important in media and arts programs. Students should produce original work, not just complete predetermined exercises.

5.3 Assessment Strategies (Formative and Summative)

Assessment in distance education serves multiple purposes: measuring student learning, providing feedback for improvement, motivating engagement, and certifying achievement. The Centre would use both formative and summative assessments appropriately in distance courses.

5.3.1 Formative Assessment

Formative assessments are ongoing checks for understanding that help students identify strengths and weaknesses while there is still time to improve. These assessments are typically low-stakes or ungraded. Examples include practice quizzes, draft submissions, self-assessments, discussion participation, and reflection exercises. Formative assessment is especially valuable in distance learning where instructors cannot observe students directly and need other ways to gauge understanding.

5.3.2 Summative Assessment

Summative assessments evaluate learning at the end of a unit or course and typically contribute to final grades. These include exams, final projects, papers, portfolios, and performances. Summative assessments should align closely with learning outcomes and allow students to demonstrate their achievement of those outcomes.

Effective assessment strategies in distance education would include:

- i. Using varied assessment types to evaluate different skills and accommodate different strengths. A course might include exams for knowledge recall, essays for analytical thinking, projects for application, and presentations for communication skills.

- ii. Providing clear rubrics or grading criteria for all assessments. Students should understand exactly what is expected and how work will be evaluated. Rubrics make grading more consistent and feedback more meaningful.
- iii. Distributing assessment throughout the course rather than concentrating it at the end. Regular assessments keep students engaged, prevent procrastination, and provide multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning.
- iv. Designing assessments that require higher-order thinking such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and creation rather than simple recall. These assessments are more meaningful measures of learning and are harder to complete through academic dishonesty.
- v. Including authentic assessments that mirror real-world tasks in media and communication professions. Students might create media products, develop campaigns, analyze professional work, or solve realistic problems.
- vi. Balancing individual and group assessments. Both have value – individual assessments ensure personal accountability while group assessments build collaboration skills important in professional contexts.

5.4 Practical/Studio Work Adaptations for Media and Arts Programs

Practical and studio work present particular challenges in distance education, especially for media and arts programs where hands-on training is essential. The CAL would work with the Institute of Film and Television to address these challenges through creative adaptations that maintain skill development while accommodating distance delivery.

Approaches to practical training in distance formats include:

- i. Hybrid models where theoretical content is taught online but practical work happens during intensive on-campus sessions. Students might complete several weeks of online coursework, then come to campus for a week of intensive studio work with equipment and facilities.

- ii. Using simulation software and virtual environments for skills that can be practiced digitally. Video editing, graphic design, audio production, and some aspects of filmmaking can be learned using accessible software.
- iii. Partnering with approved facilities in students' locations where they can access equipment and receive supervision. This might include media centers or professional studios willing to host students.
- iv. Demonstrating techniques through high-quality video tutorials showing processes step-by-step. While not equivalent to hands-on practice, good demonstrations help students understand techniques they will practice.
- v. Requiring portfolio development where students create work samples using available resources and submit them for critique. Virtual critiques through video conferencing can provide feedback similar to studio critiques.
- vi. Accepting that some advanced specialized training may only be possible on campus. The university is transparent about which skills require campus attendance and structures programs accordingly.

5.5 Student Engagement Strategies

Maintaining student engagement is one of the greatest challenges in distance education. Without the structure and social dynamics of regular class meetings, students can become disconnected, isolated, or overwhelmed. The Centre would employ multiple strategies to keep distance learners engaged and connected.

Engagement strategies include:

- i. Building community through introductions, icebreakers, and opportunities for students to share about themselves. When students know each other, they are more likely to participate actively and support each other.
- ii. Facilitating meaningful discussions with prompts that invite personal reflection, different perspectives, and application to real situations. Discussions work best when students must think critically, not just post opinions or restate readings.

- iii. Using collaborative activities and group projects where students work together toward shared goals. Collaboration creates accountability, allows peer learning, and reduces isolation. Virtual collaboration tools make group work possible across distances.
- iv. Providing regular communication from instructors through announcements, emails, and participation in course activities. Students stay engaged when they feel the instructor is present and interested in their progress.
- v. Connecting course content to current events, trending topics, or students' personal interests and career goals. Relevance increases motivation and engagement.
- vi. Offering choices in assignments or topics where appropriate. When students can pursue their interests within course parameters, engagement increases.
- vii. Celebrating student work by showcasing excellent examples, creating galleries of projects, or highlighting achievements. Recognition motivates students and demonstrates the value of their efforts.
- viii. Reaching out proactively to students who show signs of disengagement such as missing assignments, not participating in discussions, or not logging in regularly. Early intervention can prevent dropouts.
- ix. Creating reasonable workload expectations with clear schedules. Overwhelmed students disengage. Courses should be challenging but manageable for students balancing multiple responsibilities.

The Centre would train faculty in engagement strategies and provides ongoing support for improving student engagement in distance courses. Regular evaluation of engagement indicators helps identify courses or students needing additional support.

SECTION 6: FACULTY REQUIREMENTS AND SUPPORT

Faculty are the heart of any educational program, including distance education. Teaching in distance and alternative learning formats requires specific skills and competencies beyond those needed for traditional classroom teaching. Faculty teaching distance courses must be qualified, trained, and supported to deliver excellent online instruction.

The university recognizes that transitioning to distance teaching can be challenging for faculty who have spent years developing their classroom teaching skills. Therefore, the institution provides comprehensive support to help faculty succeed in online environments. At the same time, the university maintains high expectations for teaching quality regardless of delivery mode.

6.1 Faculty Qualifications for Distance Teaching

Faculty teaching distance courses must meet the same academic qualifications required for on-campus teaching. This includes appropriate terminal degrees or professional credentials in their fields, demonstrated subject matter expertise, and relevant experience.

In addition to academic qualifications, faculty teaching distance courses should possess or develop the following competencies:

- i. Understanding of online pedagogy and how people learn in digital environments. This includes knowledge of instructional design principles, engagement strategies, and effective assessment methods for distance learning.
- ii. Technical proficiency with the Learning Management System and other technology tools used in course delivery. Faculty should be comfortable creating and uploading content, managing discussions, grading assignments, and using communication tools.
- iii. Ability to communicate effectively in written formats since much online teaching happens through text. Faculty must write clear instructions, provide

constructive feedback, and create welcoming and professional communication.

- iv. Skills in facilitating online discussions and collaborative activities. Leading productive online discussions requires different techniques than managing classroom discussions.
- v. Commitment to regular and timely communication with students. Distance learners depend on consistent instructor presence and prompt responses to questions and concerns.
- vi. Awareness of accessibility requirements and ability to create inclusive online learning environments that accommodate diverse student needs.
- vii. Flexibility and willingness to adapt teaching approaches based on student feedback and changing technology. Online teaching constantly evolves, and faculty must be open to continuous improvement.

New faculty hired specifically for distance teaching positions are expected to demonstrate these competencies during the recruitment process. Existing faculty transitioning to distance teaching would receive training and support to develop these competencies.

6.2 Training and Professional Development

The CAL would provide comprehensive training and ongoing professional development for faculty teaching distance courses. Training is not optional but required before faculty teach in distance formats. The university views faculty development as an investment in educational quality.

Faculty training and development programs would include:

- i. **Foundational Online Teaching Certificate:** All faculty new to distance teaching complete a structured training program covering online pedagogy, course design, technology tools, student engagement, assessment, accessibility, and academic integrity. This program combines self-paced

modules, interactive workshops, and mentored course development. Faculty must complete this certificate before teaching their first distance course.

- ii. **Technology Training:** Regular workshops and tutorials on using the LMS, video conferencing tools, multimedia creation software, and other technologies relevant to distance teaching. Training is updated as new tools are introduced or existing tools are upgraded.
- iii. **Course Design Support:** Instructional designers work one-on-one with faculty to develop or convert courses for distance delivery. This includes helping faculty structure content effectively, create engaging activities, design appropriate assessments, and ensure accessibility. Design support is available throughout course development, not just at the beginning.
- iv. **Peer Learning Communities:** Faculty teaching online courses meet regularly to share experiences, discuss challenges, exchange teaching strategies, and learn from each other. These communities provide ongoing informal professional development and reduce the isolation that online teaching can create for faculty.
- v. **Advanced Workshops:** After completing foundational training, faculty can participate in advanced workshops on specific topics such as creating interactive videos, facilitating effective discussions, using data analytics to improve teaching, incorporating student feedback, or adapting courses for mobile learning.
- vi. **Mentoring Programs:** Experienced distance education faculty mentor colleagues who are new to online teaching. Mentors provide guidance, answer questions, share resources, and help new online instructors navigate challenges. Mentoring relationships may be formal assignments or informal connections.
- vii. **Conference and Seminar Support:** The university supports faculty attendance at conferences, webinars, and professional development events

focused on distance education and educational technology. Faculty are encouraged to stay current with developments in online teaching.

- viii. **Research and Innovation Opportunities:** Faculty are encouraged to conduct research on distance education, experiment with innovative teaching approaches, and share their findings. The university may provide grants or release time for faculty pursuing scholarship in online teaching and learning.

Professional development is not a one-time event but an ongoing process. Faculty would therefore receive continued support throughout their distance teaching experiences, with opportunities to deepen skills, learn new techniques, and adapt to changing student needs and technologies.

6.3 Workload Allocation and Compensation

Teaching distance courses requires significant time and effort, particularly in course development, ongoing communication with students, and providing feedback. The University recognizes these demands and would ensure that workload allocation and compensation for distance teaching are fair and appropriate.

Workload considerations for distance teaching include:

- i. Course development time is recognized in workload calculations. Developing a new distance course or converting an existing course to distance format is a substantial undertaking. Faculty developing curriculum and modules for teaching courses would be renumerated accordingly.
- ii. Teaching load for distance courses is calculated considering class size, course level, and delivery format. Large enrollment distance courses require more time for communication and feedback than small classes. Courses with substantial writing or project work require more grading time than multiple-choice assessments.
- iii. Time required for ongoing course maintenance is acknowledged. Distance courses need regular updates to content, technology, links, and materials. This maintenance time is factored into workload assignments.

- iv. Faculty teaching distance courses have the same expectations for availability and communication as faculty teaching on campus. Response times to student emails must be prompt in order not to leave them stranded.
- v. Compensation for distance teaching would be paid based on approved payment schedule by the University.
- vi. Teaching assistants or instructional support may be provided for large enrollment distance courses to help with grading, facilitation, technical support, and communication. Support staffing follows the same principles as on-campus courses.

6.4 Teaching Quality Evaluation

Faculty teaching distance courses would be evaluated according to the same standards as faculty teaching on-campus courses. Teaching quality is assessed through multiple methods providing comprehensive feedback on effectiveness and areas for improvement.

Evaluation and appraisal methods for distance teaching include:

- i. Student appraisal conducted at the end of each course. Students provide feedback on course organization, instructor communication, feedback quality, engagement strategies, technology use, and overall satisfaction. Evaluation instruments are adapted to address aspects specific to online teaching.
- ii. Course observations where evaluators review course content, structure, activities, assessments, and interactions. In distance courses, observations involve accessing the LMS to examine course design, reviewing recorded sessions, and assessing the overall learning environment. Observations are conducted by department chairs, instructional designers, or peer faculty.
- iii. Course quality reviews using standardized rubrics assessing elements such as learning outcomes, instructional materials, learning activities, assessment,

learner support, and accessibility. Quality reviews may be required before courses are first offered and periodically thereafter.

- iv. Student success data including completion rates, grade distributions, and learning outcome achievement. While student performance is influenced by many factors, patterns in student success can indicate teaching effectiveness or course design issues.
- v. Self-reflection and self-assessment where faculty analyze their own teaching, identify strengths and challenges, and develop improvement plans. Reflective practice is an important component of ongoing professional development.
- vi. Peer review where colleagues observe courses and provide constructive feedback. Peer review is typically formative and focused on improvement rather than judgment. It allows faculty to learn from each other's practices.

Evaluation and appraisal results would be used for multiple purposes including individual faculty development, promotion and tenure decisions, course improvement, and program assessment. Evaluation is viewed as a tool for continuous improvement, not just accountability. Faculty would receive clear expectations for distance teaching performance and constructive feedback on their work. When evaluation identifies areas needing improvement, faculty are provided with support and resources to enhance their teaching. Persistent teaching quality concerns are addressed through formal processes consistent with university policies and collective agreements.

SECTION 7: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Distance learners need access to the same comprehensive support services as on-campus students. However, delivering these services to students who may never visit campus requires different approaches and technologies. The University is committed to providing distance learners with accessible, responsive, and effective support services that address their unique circumstances and challenges.

The university recognizes that adequate support services are critical to student success and retention in distance programs. Students who feel supported, connected, and valued are more likely to persist and succeed. Therefore, student support is integrated throughout the distance learning experience from admission through graduation.

7.1 Academic Advising and Counseling

Academic advising helps students navigate their programs, make informed decisions about courses and career paths, and stay on track for timely graduation. For distance learners who may feel disconnected from the institution, academic advising would provide an important personal connection and source of guidance.

Academic advising services for distance learners may include:

- i. Dedicated advisors assigned to distance programs who understand the unique structure, requirements, and challenges of distance learning. These advisors are specialists in supporting remote students.
- ii. Multiple communication channels including video conferencing, phone, email, and online chat allowing students to connect with advisors in ways convenient for them. Advisors maintain regular availability including some evening and weekend hours to accommodate working students.
- iii. Proactive outreach to students at key points such as registration periods, before important deadlines, when academic difficulties emerge, or when students appear to be disengaging. Advisors do not wait for students to ask for help but reach out when support may be needed.

- iv. Program planning assistance helping students map out their course sequences, understand prerequisites, balance workload across semesters, and make strategic decisions about electives and specializations.
- v. Academic performance monitoring and intervention when students struggle. Advisors notice when students are on academic probation, failing courses, or not making satisfactory progress and work with them to develop improvement strategies.
- vi. Career guidance and connections between academic programs and career goals. Advisors help students understand how their studies prepare them for careers and connect them with career services for more specialized support.
- vii. Assistance with university policies and procedures including registration, graduation requirements, academic petitions, leave of absence, and other administrative matters. Advisors help students navigate institutional bureaucracy.
- viii. Referrals to other support services when students need help beyond academic advising such as counseling, financial aid, disability services, or technical support.

Personal counseling services would also be available to distance learners. Students may experience stress, anxiety, personal crises, or mental health challenges that affect their studies. The university would provide access to counselors through online/video counseling for distance students who cannot access on-campus counseling services.

7.2 Technical Support

Technical problems can prevent students from accessing courses, completing assignments, or participating in learning activities. Prompt, effective technical support is essential. Some key aspects of technical support as a student service may include:

- i. Accessibility through multiple channels (phone, email, chat, ticketing system) during extended hours including evenings and weekends when many distance students study.
- ii. Clear communication about what support can help with (LMS access, password issues, software problems, connectivity troubleshooting) and what falls outside support scope (personal device problems, internet service provider issues).
- iii. Fast response to urgent issues that prevent course access or interfere with time-sensitive activities like exams or assignment submissions. Priority levels ensure critical problems get immediate attention.
- iv. Patient, clear guidance recognizing that not all students have the same technical comfort level. Support staff provide step-by-step assistance without making students feel inadequate for asking questions.
- v. Comprehensive documentation in the form of FAQs, troubleshooting guides, video tutorials, and how-to articles allowing students to solve common problems independently at any hour.

7.3 Library and Research Resources Access

Access to library resources and librarian assistance is necessary for academic success, particularly in research-intensive courses and programs.

Key library support services for distance students would include:

- i. Extensive digital collections of journals, books, media, and databases accessible remotely 24/7 without need to visit the physical library.
- ii. Virtual reference services where librarians answer research questions, recommend sources, demonstrate database searching, and provide research consultation via email, chat, or video conferencing.
- iii. Online research guides and tutorials specific to media, arts, and communication fields helping students develop information literacy skills and learn to use library resources effectively.

- iv. Course-integrated library instruction where librarians create customized materials for specific courses or join online classes to teach research skills relevant to assignments.
- v. Document delivery service providing electronic copies of materials not available online or physical materials shipped to students when necessary.

7.4 Career Services

Career services help students and graduates identify career goals, develop job search skills, connect with employers, and transition from education to employment. Distance learners need the same career support as on-campus students and benefit particularly from services that help them leverage their education into career advancement.

Career services for distance learners include:

- i. Career counseling and exploration helping students identify interests, strengths, and career options in media, arts, and communication fields. Counseling is available via video conferencing or phone.
- ii. Resume and portfolio review where career advisors provide feedback on professional documents students need for job applications. For creative fields, this includes guidance on developing strong portfolios showcasing student work.
- iii. Interview preparation including mock interviews conducted via video to help students practice and improve their interviewing skills. Advisors provide constructive feedback on presentation, answers, and professional presence.
- iv. Job search strategies and resources including access to job boards, information about employers in creative industries, networking strategies, and guidance on using social media professionally.
- v. Connections with employers and alumni through virtual career fairs, online networking events, industry panels conducted via video, and introductions to professionals in students' fields of interest.

- vi. Internship and practical experience support helping students find relevant opportunities, prepare applications, and make the most of work-based learning experiences. This is particularly important for distance students who may need help finding opportunities in their locations.
- vii. Professional development workshops on topics such as networking, personal branding, negotiating job offers, freelancing, entrepreneurship, and career transitions. Workshops are delivered online and recorded for students who cannot attend live sessions.
- viii. Alumni career services extending support beyond graduation. Distance learning alumni can continue accessing career services as they progress in their careers or consider career changes.

7.6 Grievance Mechanisms

Students must have clear, accessible processes for raising concerns, filing complaints, and seeking resolution of disputes. Grievance mechanisms provide accountability, protect student rights, and ensure fair treatment. Distance learners need grievance processes that work remotely and do not require campus presence.

Grievance mechanisms that may be employed by distance learners include:

- i. Clear policies and handbook published on the university website explaining student rights, grounds for complaints, procedures for filing grievances, timelines for resolution, and appeal processes.
- ii. Multiple levels of grievance resolution starting with informal resolution between students and instructors or relevant staff, escalating to Dean of Students, then to formal grievance committees or administrative bodies if informal resolution fails.
- iii. Online submission options allowing students to file formal complaints or grievances electronically without needing to submit paper documents or appear in person.

- iv. Remote participation in grievance hearings via video conferencing when hearings are necessary. Students should not be disadvantaged in grievance processes because they cannot travel to campus.
- v. Timely processing with clear timelines for each stage of the grievance process. Students receive acknowledgment of complaints, updates on status, and written decisions with explanations.
- vi. Confidentiality protections ensuring that filing a grievance does not result in retaliation and that information is shared only with those who need to know for resolution purposes.
- vii. Appeal options if students disagree with grievance decisions. Appeals are handled by different individuals or bodies than the original decision-makers to ensure impartiality.

Common types of grievances in distance education include disputes over grades, concerns about instructor behaviour or communication, technical problems affecting performance, academic integrity allegations, and dissatisfaction with program quality or support services. All grievances would be taken seriously and handled according to established procedures that protect both student and institutional interests.

7.7 Assessment and Examination

Facilitators would be expected to use various assessment strategies such as assignments, quizzes, and projects that students complete regularly.

- i. Online exams would follow specific rules to ensure fairness. The CAL would set clear procedures for how these exams run, including technical requirements and submission deadlines. Students must know when exams happen and what format they would take.
- ii. The Centre would set up a framework proffers measures to prevent cheating during online assessments. This might involve proctoring software that

monitors students during exams, or other methods to verify that students complete their own work honestly.

- iii. Not all assessments are written tests. Students may need to demonstrate practical skills or submit portfolios showcasing their work overtime in the case practical intensive courses. These alternative assessment methods recognize that learning happens in different ways and allow students to show their knowledge through various formats.
- iv. All assessment and grading shall be done in line existing university policies.

7.8 Quality Assurance and Evaluation

The CAL would develop a framework for regularly monitoring and evaluating how well programs work. This would require consistently checking whether the education delivered meets quality expectations.

- i. Student voices matter in improving programs. The CAL would create mechanisms for students to share feedback about their learning experiences. This feedback would help identify what works well and what needs improvement.
- ii. All Programs will undergo regular reviews on set schedules. These review cycles ensure that courses stay current, relevant, and effective. The CAL would examine curriculum content, teaching methods, and student outcomes periodically.
- iii. Programs would be compared against national and international standards to ensure competitiveness and quality. This benchmarking helps identify best practices and areas where the institution can improve.
- iv. The policy emphasizes continuous improvement, meaning the CAL would constantly seeks ways to enhance its distance education offerings based on data, feedback, and changing educational needs.

7.9 Financial Provisions

Fees and other financial obligations for students would be developed and communicated to students with the support of the Directorate of Finance of the University. The Centre must have its own finance office to support its daily operations.

Payment of fees would be made in line with GTEC approved norms for all other programs. This permits students to pay 50% of fees in the first semester and the difference in the second semester. Any other arrangement must be approved by the Director of Finance of the University.

Undergraduate and post graduate programs that do not receive a minimum of 30 and 20 applications respectively would not be considered financially viable so would not run.

7.10 Intellectual Property and Copyright

This section deals with who owns the teaching materials created for distance learning courses. When faculty members develop course content, videos, readings, or other materials, the policy clarifies whether these belong to the individual teacher, the institution, or are shared.

Faculty members have both rights and responsibilities regarding course materials. However, other major materials such as modules and related resources facilitators are contracted to develop and paid for by CAL shall be owned by the Centre. In creating content developers have the obligation to ensure materials meet quality standards and do not violate copyright laws.

SECTION 8: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1 Governing Council

The Governing Council sits at the top of UniMAC's governance structure. They approve the distance education policy and major decisions about these programs. The Council ensures adequate funding flows to distance learning initiatives and monitors whether these programs align with the university's overall mission. They hold ultimate responsibility for the strategic direction of distance education at UniMAC and must ensure it maintains the institution's reputation for quality.

8.2 Academic Board

The Academic Board approves new distance learning programs and courses before they go for external accreditation. The Board ensures these programs meet UniMAC's academic standards and maintains quality comparable to traditional on-campus programs. They review curriculum proposals, assess learning outcomes, and make decisions about academic policies specific to distance learners. The Board also addresses academic appeals and ensures fairness in how students are assessed.

8.3 Center for Alternative Learning

This Centre is responsible for the the day-to-day coordination and running of distance programs. They liaise with IT directorate to manage the learning management system and other technology platforms that deliver courses. The unit trains faculty on how to teach online effectively and provides technical support to both facilitators and students. They coordinate program delivery, handle student inquiries, and troubleshoot problems. This Centre also collects data on how programs perform and reports to the Board about successes and challenges.

8.4 Faculty and Departments

Existing departments may develop concepts and programs to be considered by the CAL Board before it goes to Academic Planning Committee subsequently to Academic Board for approval. Programs emanating from the department shall be

hosted by the CAL but a coordinator shall be appointed by the department to work with CAL.

However, CAL can on their own can a put committees together to develop programs for them. All cost associated with program development and accreditation shall be borne by CAL.

All faculty and facilitators teaching courses on programs shall be treated as part timers and shall be remunerated as such based on a university approved payment schedule. The CAL reserves the right to advertise to recruit facilitators (part timers) for its courses. All applications shall be considered approved by the Board before Directorate of Human Resource issues letters.

All faculty members and qualified academic staff from other tertiary institutions who apply shall be hired and remunerated based on their ranks. The remuneration of all others who may be qualified from industry and other professional environment shall be determined by the Board.

8.5 Policy Review

8.5.1 Review Cycle

The policy may be reviewed every five years. Regular reviews prevent the policy from becoming outdated as technology and education practices evolve rapidly. The Centre would determine period for review and aspects that require changes after consulting with major stakeholders in the space.

8.5.2 Amendment Procedures

Changes to the policy follow a formal process. Anyone at UniMAC can suggest amendments, but proposals must be communicated to the Head of CAL. Suggested changes are documented clearly, explaining why the amendment is needed and what impact it would have. The Centre typically reviews proposals first, then forwards same to the Board for consideration and subsequently approved by

the Academic Board. The CAL communicates all approved amendments to everyone affected and updates official policy documents promptly.