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## **DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY**

**POLICY:** TO ENSURE THE DELIVERY OF THE BEST POSSIBLE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE TO GEOGRAPHICALLY ISOLATED STUDENTS WHO DO NOT HAVE DAILY FACE TO FACE CONTACT WITH THEIR TEACHER, THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF A DECENTRALISED DISTANCE EDUCATION NETWORK.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. The Department of Education creates a Division that coordinates all aspects of Distance Education.
2. With the implementation of Distance Education programmes:
  - a. Ensure that there is access to adequate facilities for on campus curriculum activities available for geographically isolated students when attending their school. (2017: S6) (2018: S4) (2019: A5,A6) (2021:S6)
  - b. A formula be developed to allocate a space entitlement within Distance Education facilities for students and teachers. (2019: A7)
  - c. The education of Geographically Isolated students must remain the priority within Schools of Distance Education. (2019: A8, A9) (2021: A9) (2022: A17,A21,S6)
  - d. P-12 curriculum be available.
  - e. Students with Specific Needs be fully supported including receiving allocated aide time in the home classroom and source suitable information and/or programs from experts in private practice.
  - f. SDE students are provided with affordable communication infrastructure capable of carrying clear, reliable two-way voice (VOIP) and comparable broadband data. (2015: S2)
  - g. All Distance Education families have access to a reliable internet service which supports the delivery of DE.
  - h. Digital materials are compatible with technology and infrastructure available in rural and remote classrooms.
  - i. Parents be fully informed with technical requirements necessary to implement the DE program.
  - j. Geographically Isolated students enrolled with SDEs receive daily lessons taught by SDE teachers.
  - k. Digital learning platforms are rigorously tested for optimum functionality and updates/changes fully meet the needs of geographically isolated students. (2021: A17, A18)
  - l. Distance Education materials be delivered to families in a timely manner, prior to the commencement of schooling. (2021: A16) (2024:A7)
  - m. Distance Education learning materials be delivered via Express Mail for all Geographically Isolated students during a severe weather event (2023: A6)
  - n. Online lessons provided by Schools of Distance Education have a maximum of 12 students per lesson. (2014: A22) (2017: A8)
  - o. Learning of Phonics be embedded in the Distance Education Prep and year one Curriculum. (2016: A13) (2017: A10)
  - p. School of Distance Education fees are negated for Queensland state schools where a full suite of curriculum is not available. (2018: S5)
  - q. Age of students, times and duration of lessons be taken into consideration when timetabling online lessons.(2018: A12)
  - r. The focus is the isolated learner working with an untrained Home Tutor in a multi-age rural and remote home schoolroom. (2014: A14, S6) (2015: A2)

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- s. Separation of Regional SDE Centres from mainstream schooling be maintained and de-centralisation of distance education schools be continued. (2018: A11)
  - t. Acknowledgement is made of the important role Home Tutors play in the delivery of learning. 2022: A19)
  - u. Staff in SDE schools understand the unique circumstances of Geographically Isolated students compared to those undertaking distance education by choice (2022: A20)
  - v. Enrolment Eligibility Plan for SDE students is established and implemented for all enrolment types. (2022: S7)
  - w. Principals of SDE schools understand the critical importance of grouping Geographically Isolated students from similar remote areas into the same online class. (2022: A10)
  - x. Address the often unrealistic, unfair, and unmanageable excessive learning expectations placed upon Geographically Isolated students and their tutors in SDE schoolrooms. (2022: A22)
3. Support needs to be facilitated by:
    - a. Budgeting which prioritises access to computer technology and field programmes for Geographically Isolated students
    - b. Access to sufficient Allied Health services to support Geographically Isolated SDE students and Home Tutors.
    - c. Provision of an internet and hardware subsidy for SDE students which reflects the current cost of connectivity (2021: A5)
    - d. Ongoing financial assistance be available to all Geographically Isolated students, including students in Home Education Units and private Distance Education units. (2016: A16)
  4. Sporting needs of Geographically Isolated students are met.
  5. Schools of Distance Education prioritise face-to-face opportunities with teachers and peers for Geographically Isolated students. (2021: A11, A12, A13)
  6. Enrolment to SDEs, with no additional fees, be available to rural students with exceptional circumstances.
  7. Provision of universally recognisable and best practice guidelines outlining maximum amount of daily exposure to computers. (2019: A1) (2021: F3)
  8. Endorse handwriting across all year levels. (2019: A15)
  9. Outcomes of all Reviews into Schools of Distance Education to be shared with stakeholders. (2021: A19)

#### **STAFFING**

10. Staffing levels and infrastructure be adequate taking into consideration the varying requirements of individual centres, students, and the need for a balance of teaching experience. (2014: S8)
11. In the appointment of staff, consideration be given to the unique features and duties characteristic of Distance Education.
12. Department of Education provide a non-teaching curriculum coordinator position in Schools of Distance Education.
13. Teachers appointed to Distance Education positions be given specific induction courses, web-conferencing licences, staff development programs and adequate professional development and follow up in-service courses.

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14. A specific role description of a School of Distance Education teacher be produced.
15. SDE schools are adequately resourced with qualified teachers, teacher aids and counsellors and have access to disability support to assist students requiring additional learning support (2024:A4)

## **CURRICULUM**

16. Ongoing curriculum development should have input from home tutors, parents and others directly involved in Distance Education. (2014: S3) (2015: A1)
17. Students to be provided with quality assured, all-inclusive curriculum aligned for multi age classrooms that keeps pace with current versions and is available in coloured print form and digital. (2014: A15) (2015: A2, S4) (2017: A12, S8, S9) (2019: S6) (2020:A9) (2022:A14)
18. The flexible delivery of distance education material should be maintained. (2015: A2, S4) (2021: A14, A15) (2022: A12, A13, S4)
19. Adequate funds are available to employ staff and resources to develop, review, evaluate, rewrite and deliver Distance Education curriculum materials. (2014: A19, A20) (2015: S3) (2017: A7, A19) (2019: A14:S6: A12) (2021: A8)
20. Geographically Isolated students' needs be met by access to Vocation Education, data conferencing, digitisation, and virtual schooling services.
21. Prep curriculum be suitable for use in multi-age classrooms and consistently reflect changes in the Australian Curriculum. (2017: A19) (2018: S3) (2019: A13)
22. Distance Education materials be written in an age-appropriate student friendly format and style. (2015: A2) (2018: A10)
23. Geographically Isolated students are not disadvantaged by the Senior Assessment and Tertiary Entrance (SATE) system. (2018: A8, A9).
24. Adequate access for all assessment processes for Distance Education students sitting senior assessments. (2019: A4)
25. Clear and flexible guidelines are set for SDE schools and State schools that allow flexible arrangements for students. (2022: A15)
26. Encourage SDE's to streamline and reduce the large number of online platforms currently being used. (2022: A11)
27. SDE schools need to modify curriculum programs to support students with Specific Needs and out of phase learning. (2024:A3)

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## **HOME TUTOR SUPPORT**

28. Home Tutors are supported through Professional Development and networking, including their own log in space on the eLearning website, to assist them in achieving appropriate learning outcomes for their students while recognising their diverse home situations and workloads.
29. Home Tutors receive adequate technology training to keep pace with digital curriculum materials.
30. The additional workload of teaching multi-grade and special needs students is addressed.
31. Distance education home tutoring is recognised as credible teaching experience.
32. Promote the role the Home Tutor plays in Education. (2021: A10)
33. Home tutors continue to be supported by the Partners In Learning Program. (2019: A11)
34. Purpose-built on-site accommodation for Distance Education families continue to be utilised when students are visiting the school for onsite activities. (2021: A20, A21, A22, A23, A24, A26, A27, A28, S5, S7, F4)
35. A flowchart is developed that Home Tutors can utilise to navigate programs and support for students with Specific Needs. (2024:A5)
36. Development of a designated contact and support network at each SDE to assist Home Tutors with home classroom management and learning assistance. (2024:A6)

## **KINDY**

37. Schools of Distance Education are included in plans by the government to give all Qld children access to a quality Kindergarten program.
38. eKindy teachers are based at each SDE so Geographically Isolated students can access face to face contact with their teachers. (2024:S1)

