kimmage DSC
development studies centre

Supplementary Quality Assurance

Polices and Procedures

for the delivery of programmes

by Flexible and Distance Learning

6 February 2013

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1. Introduction

The Kimmage Development Studies Centre (KDSC) is committed to delivering programmes with a comprehensive support system that facilitates effective learning. It is KDSC policy to ensure that the same rigorous approach to maintaining quality assurance (QA) and standards in delivering conventional 'face to face' programmes is also applied in the case of programmes, modules and course material delivered by 'flexible and distance learning' (FDL)[1], including the employment of e-learning methodologies.

Core KDSC quality assurance principles, policies and procedures are documented in its ***Manual of QA Policies and Principles*** (most recently updated March 2012). The manual documents KDSC policies and procedures across all seven areas identified by the ENQA for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions *(*policy and procedures for quality assurance; approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards; assessment of students; quality assurance of teaching Staff; learning resources and student support; information systems; public information), all of which are equally applicable to programmes delivered by DFL as they are to traditional face to face delivery.

Nevertheless, in recognising the unique attributes and considerations to be taken into account when delivering programmes and modules by FDL, KDSC has developed the following set of supplementary QA policies and procedures specific to this delivery mode.

In the absence of explicit HETAC Guidelines in the area of FDL, KDSC has drawn on a number of relevant documents, including:

- QAA (2010) *Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* , Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK (www.qaa.ac.uk)
- Commonwealth of Learning (2005) *Knowledge Series; Quality Assurance in Open and Distance Learning* , Commonwealth of Learning, BC, Canada

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[1] According to Farrell (2003*), distance education involves "the delivery of learning or training to those who are separated mostly by time and space from those who are teaching or training. The teaching is done with a variety of 'mediating processes' used to transmit content, to provide tuition and to conduct assessment or measure outcomes" He suggests that flexible learning is "the provision of learning opportunities that can be accessed at any place and time. Flexible learning relates more to the scheduling of activities than to any particular delivery mode". These terms capture the essence of the Kimmage DSC approach as it includes delivery of some aspects of the programme by e-learning and the use of multimedia through virtual education (Farrell, 2003*), but is not confined to them. (* Farrell, Glen (ed.). 2003. A Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Vancouver: The Commonwealth of Learning)

- (www.col.org/knowledge)
- ENQA (2009) *Workshop Report 14: Quality Assurance of E-Learning,* European Association for QA in Higher Education, Helsinki, Finland

and will seek to conform to best international standards in the area.

1.1. Mission and Philosophy

The mission of KDSC is to create an international, intercultural learning community which promotes critical thinking and action for justice, equitable sustainable development, and the eradication of poverty in the world. It aims to do this through facilitating the education and training of individual practitioners and groups working for social, economic and political change in society and so enabling all practitioners to work effectively for the holistic development of all.

The KDSC approach to quality assurance is based on the belief that it should be simple, flexible and relatively easy to implement. The KDSC sees educators as change agents who must take ownership of the quality assurance process and its procedures, and make it an intrinsic part of their work. The ethos and identity of the KDSC is embodied in a pedagogical approach based on participatory learning and critical thinking that seeks to empower learners. The ethos of the KDSC is reflected in all aspects of the life of the institute and can be characterised by professionalism married with voluntary contributions, a friendly and caring environment and accessibility of staff and resources.

Again it must be emphasised that the same high standards and values that underpin our approach to education through conventional face to face delivery - which include respect, dialogue and the promotion of ethic of service - will apply in the delivery of programmes by FDL.

1.2. Clarification of Terms

Throughout this document the following terms are used to give clarification to the policies and procedures for the delivery of programmes by Flexible and Distance Learning

Modes of Delivery - KDSC has two modes of delivery and scheduling of its programmes in development studies. Mode 1 involves participation in courses experienced at KDSC through classroom activities. Mode 2 is a 'Flexible and Distance Learning' (FDL) mode.

Flexible and Distance Learning (FDL) - The term 'Flexible and Distance Learning' applies to KDSC's mode 2 delivery, which involves the delivery of courses or programmes by distance and e-learning and flexible options around

the scheduling of courses for each individual learner. This flexibility also allows learners to choose to participate in some courses by distance mode and others through classroom activities. According to Farrell (2003)[2], distance education involves "the delivery of learning or training to those who are separated mostly by time and space from those who are teaching or training. The teaching is done with a variety of 'mediating processes' used to transmit content, to provide tuition and to conduct assessment or measure outcomes". He suggests that flexible learning is "the provision of learning opportunities that can be accessed at any place and time. Flexible learning relates more to the scheduling of activities than to any particular delivery mode". These terms capture the essence of the KDSC approach as it implies delivery of some aspects of a programme by e-learning and the use of multimedia through virtual education (Farrell, 2003), but is not confined to them.

The FDL Unit – is the academic and administrative unit within KDSC which is set up for the academic co-ordination and administration of the programmes. This will be set up when the number of annual student registrations reach 40 full-time equivalents. In the interim, responsibilities otherwise carried out within the FDL unit will be undertaken by the Programme Co-ordinator, the Registrar, KDSC admissions staff and ICT personnel.

The FDL Unit Manager – is responsible for the day to day running of the FDL Unit [appointed pending student registrations as above]

The Programme Co-ordinator – is responsible for academic standards within the programme.

FDL Education Technology Specialist – is responsible (in conjunction with the Programme Co-ordinator) for proividing training and support to FDL tutors for optimising the quality of processes with regard to online delivery of modules

FDL Tutors – are responsible for direct learner communication, support and assessment.

FDL Subject Specialists – are responsible for the development and annual revision of course outlines, reading lists and assessments and of core materials (every 3 years).

FDL Supervisors – as in the case of mode 1 (face to face) delivery of the MA in Development Studies, supervisors are responsible for the support of learners throughout their dissertation process.

FDL ICT Support Staff – are those, e.g., the ICT administrator, who ensure

[2]*Farrell, Glen (ed.). 2003.A Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Vancouver: The Commonwealth of Learning.

that the computer-based and e-learning dimensions of the programme are effective, efficient, reliable and accessible for learners and FDL staff.

FDL Modules and Units – in the case of the courses offered by distance, the terms 'modules' and 'units' are used. A module in this sense is one course. In the case of the PG/MA FDL programme, each module represents 5 credits of an overall 60 credit PG in Development Studies or a 90 credit MA in Development Studies

FDL Materials – The term 'FDL materials' refers to written materials which are available for learners through Moodle. 'Core materials' refer to the materials which were developed by subject specialists and written for distance learning by FDL writers. For the PG/MA FDL, core materials for each module are divided into 4 units, each of which correspond to 25 hours learning. Additional materials include reading lists and references and the components of the Study Guide.

FDL Managing Editor – has overall responsibility for ensuring that module materials are produced to the standard required at Level 9 and at a level ready to be passed by the academic committee.

1.3. Benefits and Challenges of FDL

In developing these QA polices and procedures, KDSC is cognisant of number of benefits and challenges posed by the delivery of FDL, in particular e-learning.

For learners, the benefits of FDL learning include:

- It gives learners flexibility, allowing them to learn at their own pace
- E-Learning allows learners to access information at convenient times
- It provides an opportunity to study while continuing to meet other commitments (such as work or family commitments)
- As e-earning is not geographically restrictive it provides education to remote learners who otherwise not be able to travel to a classroom.
- It provides access to online resources, including websites, journals, blogs, video and audio clips, and other media
- Learners can feel part of a 'community of learners' despite geographical distance

For teachers and tutors, the benefits include:

- In an distance learning environment the teacher acts as tutor, facilitator and as a general resource to assist student learning.
- While e- learning involves more self directed learning on the part of the learners, the teacher plays a role in designing learning activities
- There is a shift from homogenous and stable educational content to fast changing content in a wide variety of formats

- With e-learning there are faster methods for electronically revising and redistributing course materials and documentation – updates to course materials, notes, announcements, suggested readings, etc, will be almost immediate
- There is the option for testing and grading online
- E- learning provides a means to track learners' ongoing participation, acting as motivator for learners.

Despite these many benefits, critical challenges must be faced and potential learner obstacles overcome for the successful delivery of programmes or modules by FDL. KDSC has designed its FDL QA procedures specifically to address these special challenges. The most important of these potential learner obstacles that can adversely affect quality and KDSC safeguards are outlined below:

- **Learners' resistance to taking on the responsibility for their own learning** – well designed, web enabled learning demands interaction, critical thinking and synthesis. KDSC' s course materials, forum interaction, online tutorial support and assessment formats are designed to engage the student from the start and maintain their attention throughout the learning process.
- **Learners' preference for learning through social interaction** – an important process of the KDSC FDL tutorial process is to use online discussion forums , and to integrate forum interaction with core reading materials and assessment. In addition, learners can communicate with each other in a learning community via blogs and Skype, and engage interactively and collectively throughout the whole Moodle VLE. Virtual Classroom Technology (VCT) is being introduced incrementally into the KDSC FDL approach to allow for some synchronous interaction. The telephone is still an available piece of technology for learners who wish to contact their tutors or fellow learners. In addition on-site tutorials, workshops as well as entire modules delivered through traditional face to face education, are an integral part of the KDSC FDL programme.
- **Fear of others having access to personal information** - KDSC has put in place a series of security measures which are demonstrated to learners on registration. Learners are also told how their information is being used and who has access to it. All information is treated in complete confidence and in line with relevant national and international legislation.
- **Desire for direct access to tutors** – Learners are able to directly contact course tutors from within the learning environment through discussion forums or during Skype virtual office hours and they encouraged to attend online synchronous tutorials when they are available.
- **Discomfort with learning new methods and tools** – The KDSC FDL Moodle platform is designed to be easily leaned and simply operated. Once learners take the first step the subsequent ones are easier.

Guidelines for how to use the Moodle VLE have been developed. In addition, a full range of help facilities is available to learners, as well as back up support from the FDL Unit team should it be required.

- **Challenges posed by limited or intermittent internet access, low bandwidth, or other technological issues facing learners in certain locations** – Though every effort is made to ensure that learners with low band width or slower internet speeds can access the FDL Moodle and materials online (see ICT quality below), KDSC is very familiar with the challenges that many learners face in accessing the internet, especially in the countries of the Global South. On the other hand, internet access is improving at an enormous rate, especially in East African countries and in East and Central Europe. Learners are informed prior to commencement about the importance of having regular access to the internet in order to complete their course and that once fees are paid, they cannot recoup fees lost through lack of internet access at any time. For some, they may have to access the internet at 'internet cafés' or at work. Prior to payment of fees, learners are required to sign a declaration that they can access the internet sufficiently to undertake their course.

1.4. Ethos and Approach to FDL at KDSC

The approach to FDL at Kimmage involves a pedagogy of critical reflection on experience, shared learning and building skills and critical analysis of practice in the light of theory. It is a blended learning approach, which offers flexibility and options in relation to course delivery. Learners can participate in one or many modules online through the Moodle virtual learning environment (VLE). In order to fully realise the pedagogical approach of KDSC and to support learners in the realisation of the learning outcomes of each module and of the programme overall through more social interaction and collaborative learning experiences, it has been decided to integrate the core materials, readings, assessment and social interaction through discussion, with the discussion forum acting as the chief means of integration. In effect, KDSC is is adopting a VLE approach which combines individual and social learning. As part of this approach to e-learning, the use of virtual classroom technology (VCT) will be introduced incrementally. Though many providers are using virtual classroom technology as their main delivery mode, it is not thought that this is possible or desirable for KDSC at this stage, given Internet access challenges for many potential learners and the need to move more incrementally towards the introduction of virtual classroom technology into the Kimmage DSC approach.

2. Ensuring Quality of FDL Products

2.1. Quality of Module Materials

KDSC is committed to ensuring the quality of FDL modules and that there are clear and workable procedures in place for up-dating learning materials. Programme Design and Validation Procedures for FDL are in line with KDSC's QA on Principles of Programme Design (KDSC Manual on QA Policies and Principles, p.26) and Procedures for the Design and Validation of New Programmes (ibid, p.29). For the development of FDL materials, a system to ensure the quality of the design and development of core materials for the PG/MA FDL has been established at KDSC. This involves the appointment of a Programme Co-ordinator (represented on the Academic Committee), Managing Editor and professional Writers who liaise with Subject Specialists on the development of module materials. The process of ensuring the quality of module materials at KDSC involves the following steps:

- Meetings of Academic Committee with Managing Editor to agree roles and processes involved in developing module materials
- Meetings and on-going communication between Programme Co-ordinator and Managing Editor
- Initial meeting on Module Development – Managing Editor, Subject Specialist and Writer
- Recorded Discussion of Course Outline and Teaching Materials – Subject Specialist and Writer
- Sharing of Written Course Outlines and Teaching materials – Subject Specialist to Writer
- Draft outline of module materials – Writer to Subject Specialist and Editor, revised (where necessary) and agreed
- Copyright check undertaken
- Draft of units from Writer to Editor and Subject Specialist – revised (where necessary) and agreed
- Final Draft of module agreed by Editor and Subject Specialist
- Module Materials reviewed by Programme Co-ordinator and passed by Academic Committee

Once Module Materials have been developed, the following processes are in place to ensure quality of module materials at KDSC:

- Undertaking a pilot of selected courses with evaluation of the quality, relevance, accessibility, and appropriateness of the materials, including reflection exercises, assessment, readings and learning support processes. On the basis of the findings from the evaluation of this pilot, the Programme Co-ordinator, in consultation with the academic committee, decide whether or not other materials need to be piloted or not prior to roll-out. [In light of the evaluation of the first two pilot modules in January 2013, plans have been drawn up for the re-purposing of module materials (the greater use of the Moodle discussion forum opportunities, introduction of forum participation into assessment for a module (20%) and the integration of core materials, assessment and forum interaction) and annual review and evaluation of progress in this

regard.]

- Reading lists and assessments developed by Subject Specialist and passed by the Programme Co-ordinator and External Examiners
- On-going learner evaluation of module materials and learning processes
- Annual review by Subject Specialists of reading lists and assessment in the light of learner evaluation and in consultation with Tutors, the Programme Co-ordinator and Registrar
- Review and up-dating of module materials by Subject Specialists every 3 years, with proposed changes presented to a meeting of the Academic Committee and recommendations for changes implemented

2.2. Quality of Library Facilities and Reading Access

In line with Procedures and Guidelines for Programme Evaluation, the KDSC library and access to information and other resources are constantly under both internal and external review (KDSC QA Manual on Policies and Principles, p.45). The KDSC Librarian is responsible for ensuring that the reading resources and research facilities available are appropriate, up-to-date, and wide-ranging. At the same time, given that FDL learners are not 'on campus', at least for most of their study, additional efforts need to be made to ensure that learners have sufficient access to materials of high quality especially when undertaking learning from a distance. A library section is available on the FDL Moodle VLE. This includes a discussion/help forum and a list of relevant databases, online journals and appropriate resource-rich websites.

KDSC subscribes to an ever-increasing electronic resource collection that is regularly reviewed by the librarian and academic staff. This collection provides learners with relevant materials to compliment their module materials and assist them in researching for assignments and examinations. The materials available include development-related e-books, e-journals and articles, course specific web sites and documents, digital libraries, online databases, conference papers, book reviews and sector reports. Currently, KDSC FDL learners have access through the Moodle 'library' section to 61 development-related electronic sources and this list is being constantly up-dated. A 'useful links' section is available on the Moodle VLE where tutors and learners can upload links to relevant readings and materials. Learners are also provided with options for accessing hard copy reading materials, in an effort to give them as extensive a range of resources as possible. The quality of library access and resources is regularly evaluated by learners and reading lists are up-dated annually by Subject Specialists. Subject specialists also provide freely available electronic accompanying readings to supplement core module materials. At all times, while trying to ensure that learners have access to the widest possible range of development-related materials, KDSC is mindful of its responsibilities with regard to copyright law.

2.3. Quality of Assessment Processes

Quality Assurance for Assessment Processes with regard to FDL are founded on the assessment principles and processes set out in the KDSC Manual of Quality Assurance Policies and Principles and in KDSC Programme Assessment Strategies. The KDSC Programme Assessment Strategy for the PG/MA in Development Studies outlines the main issues associated with the design and implementation of programme assessment for the PG/MA in Development Studies under its two delivery modes: classroom,/ 'face to face' (mode 1) at Kimmage Development Studies Centre (KDSC) and its flexible and distance learning (FDL) (mode 2). Learners are provided with a copy of this assessment strategy and assessment requirements are explained to them by their tutors to ensure that they understand clearly how "their achievements will be judged, and the relative weighting of units, modules or elements of the programme in respect of assessment overall" (QAA, p.65). In the Programme Assessment Strategy, learners are furnished with information about the principles underpinning learner assessment at KDSC, grading criteria, examination regulations – including the role of external examiners, feedback mechanisms, appeals procedures, the KDSC academic honesty policy and disciplinary procedures. Specific assessment procedures associated with FDL are indicated in the Programme Assessment Strategy throughout. While many of the same policies and practices apply to the FDL mode of delivery of the PG/MA in Development Studies programmes as do to the classroom mode, additional considerations apply to ensure the quality of assessment for FDL. These relate to:

- Submission of assignments, feedback and marks by electronic means – safety and confidentiality
- The need for on-going assessment throughout each module – to support learners undertaking courses by distance
- The need to ensure that assessments submitted are those of the learner and the authenticity of the learning process (adapted from QAA, p.66)

2.3.1. Submission of assignments, feedback and marks by electronic means

Learners undertaking programmes by FDL are required to submit assignments securely by electronic means, through the FDL Moodle 'upload' feature. Utmost importance is given to the privacy of learners and at all times, learners have full confidentiality in relation to work they submit, which can only be viewed by their Tutor or Supervisor, Programme Co-ordinator, Registrar (or other academic staff in the case of an appeal) and relevant administration personnel. All personal information of learners using the Moodle system is protected and inaccessible from those without login information, which is specific to KDSC personnel. This is especially important in the case of learner assessment where security and privacy is essential in order to ensure the quality of assessment processes. With this in mind, Tutors will provide feedback and marks for FDL

learners through the Moodle system and grades will be posted securely online. These can only be viewed on the Moodle system by the relevant Tutor or Supervisor (in the case of dissertations), Programme Co-ordinator, relevant administration staff and the learner involved. Grades are passed on to the Registrar by the Programme Co-ordinator and reviewed, with External Examiners, at relevant academic committee and exam board meetings. As learners progress through the various modules, they are able to view a comprehensive report of all their grades and copies of all written feedback, which is designed to help in their learning development. When all marks are compiled by the Registrar, they are communicated securely to learners via Moodle.

2.3.2. The need for on-going assessment throughout each module – to support learners undertaking courses by distance

The quality of assessment processes for FDL is enhanced through "timely formative assessment on their academic performance to provide a basis for individual constructive feedback and guidance" (QAA, p.65). Consistent with the principle that all assessment should be relevant (fit for purpose) and proportional to the learning outcomes expected and credits awarded, while acknowledging the essential learning value of regular assessment in distance learning, learners undertaking programmes by FDL undertake regular, but short, continual and formative assessment as well as summative assessment. Assessments per module include 3 short formative assessments – 30% of marks , one of which is undertaken through the forum, marks for forum participation – 25% - for at least two submissions per unit, and a summative assessment – 50% of marks. Guidlines for grading all assessments, including rubrics for forum participation (See Appendix 3) are developed for each module. These assessments are co-ordinated by the Programme Co-ordinator in association with the Registrar, Tutors and Supervisors (in the case of the MA dissertation).

2.3.3. The need to ensure that assessments submitted are those of the learner through security of examination undertaken at a distance and authenticity of the learning process

In line with best practice in FDL, learners have two forms of assessment – formative and summative in addition to marks allocated for forum participation. Formative assessments are uploaded through Moodle which is secured by a password system. Learners sign a declaration that each assignment they upload is their own work. Assessments are designed bearing in mind the importance of assessed work being attributed to learners, and considering that learners undertaking programmes by FDL have little face to face contact with or familiarity with academic staff. Given the variety of modules and different learning outcomes for each module to be assessed, the form of the summative assessment will vary depending on the module. Some subject specialists may choose to set an examination or essay, whereas others

will require a proposal or project report. In some cases, subject specialists might require a group assignment. Summative assessments should aim to address key learning outcomes of the module at the appropriate level and should be designed to be 'fit for purpose' [see MA Programme Assessment Strategy]. Where it is deemed important that these learners undertake an examination as the final assessment for the module, examinations are scheduled to take place at a secure learning centre convenient to the learner, where examinations are organised and supervised by a reputable KDSC representative there (see 3.7.1.3. of the KDSC Manual of Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures). This entails sitting time-limited, closed-book type of written examinations. Where Tutors identify a significant discrepancy between the standard and marks achieved in continuous assessment and examination, learners will be invited in the first instance to explain this discrepancy. If there is any suspicion, following explanation, that continuous assessments are not those of the learner registered, the KDSC Academic Honesty policy and disciplinary procedures will apply. In cases where assessments are not invigilated examination, in order to ensure the authenticity of the assessment and to ensure that the assessments submitted are those of the learner, summative assignments should be set with the following caveats in mind:

- They should be designed to allow learners to reflect on their learning throughout the module – this progression should be evident in the submitted assignment.
- They should focus on critical reflection on the experience of the learner in the light of theory and/or literature – any essays set should allow the reader to identify the authenticity of the writer.
- They can 'build on' formative assessments, forum discussions etc as a means of integrating the learning available through the forum with the final assessment.

In the case of group assignments, summative assessments should require the learner to report on both the group and individual learning. Group assignments should not be set as one submission but as individual submissions which reflect on the group learning. Group assignments allow for peer review, lessons of which can also be incorporated into individual reports.

3. Quality of Record Keeping and Data Management

It is the responsibility of the Registrars office to keep records of:

- Student registration and re-registration numbers
- Deferral/withdrawal numbers
- Programme and stage completion rates
- Assessment results (see below)
- Staff and learner feedback
- Tracer Study / Survey response rates

3.1. Personal Data

Details of procedures with regard to records of Personal Data – are available in section 3.9.1. (p.53) of the ***KDSC QA Manual*** and are not reproduced here.

3.2. Academic Performance and Achievement

Details of any programme, modules and assessments completed by learners (be they conventional face to face education or delivered by FDL) are recorded by the KDSC and maintained indefinitely, to facilitate the certification of learners' work through the accrediting bodies as well as facilitating access, transfer and progression for learners. All marks achieved by learners in assessments are recorded and maintained in secure Excel computer files in the Registrars office, which are updated on completion of each module and then saved also in hard copy. Access to these files is restricted to The Registrar, The Director and the Programme Co-ordinators. Prior to meetings of the Examinations Board, the agreed marks are transferred to the official HETAC broadsheets, and it is these which are finalised and signed on conclusion of the Examinations Board meeting. Both hard copies and electronic copies of Broadsheets are submitted to HETAC following Examination Boards.

Electronic copies of the broadsheets are maintained on computer files indefinitely, to facilitate the provision of transcripts and printing of Diploma Supplements by KDSC. Hard copy records of all final assignments (exams, essays, projects, final) is kept in the Registrar's office for a period of 5 years after which they are destroyed. Copies of final BA and MA dissertations are kept indefinitely in both the KDSC Library (for reference only) and in the respective Programme Co-ordinators offices. Learners are advised to keep a copy of all work, which they submit to the College for final assessment, as this cannot be returned.

Further details as to the storage of learners work in the case of learners who decide to defer completion of a programme or withdraw entirely can be found in section 3.9.2 (p.55) of the ***KDSC QA Manual.***

4. Quality of Services

4.1. Public information Services

It is the policy of the institute to ensure that up to date, accurate, and impartial information is available to all learners (both those intending to join the Development Studies programmes and those who have already joined), to enable them to plan their learning on the basis of a clear understanding of the level (within the National Framework of Qualifications) of awards available and associated entry arrangements, transfer and progression routes, as well as the content and learning outcomes, and learning and assessment methods used,

for each programme.

Information, which is published, on programmes and services offered by the KDSC includes:

- Programme and award title
- Accrediting Body
- Level of the award on NFQ, and associated credits
- Programme content
- Student profile
- Staff profile
- Application process and Entry requirements
- Teaching, learning and assessment procedures used
- Learner Support structures
- Access, transfer and progression arrangements (including RPL)
- Recent research papers

This information is promulgated to the students, and other interested stakeholders in a number of ways, including through: The Moodle VLE, the KDSC website; Programme brochures and marketing materials; KDSC Facebook page ; KDSC HTML newsletter.

Further details of these means of public information can be found in Section 3.10 of the KDSC QA Manual.

KDSC recognises its responsibility under the Freedom of Information Acts 1997, and the rights of learners to gain access to information held on them by the College, and will comply with any reasonable requests made under the Acts.

4.2. Admissions and Registration (including fee payment)

While the Programme Co-ordinator and Tutor are the main point of contact for academic queries once a student is enrolled, responsibility for all matters to concerning admissions, registration and fee payment, lies with the KDSC FDL Unit office. Staff in this office deal with general queries regarding the programme, including enrolment dates, course fees and methods of payment, general course content and scheduling, time commitment, and the applications process. Prior to the establishment of the FDL Unit, resonsibility for this area lies with the KDSC Registrar and admissions staff.

The applications process is initiated through the Kimmage DSC online applications facility (http://www.kimmagedsc.ie/downloads.html). As well as completing a standard online application form, candidates must submit by post or courier:

- an original or certified (official) copy of University transcript(s) and/or Degree certificates
- an additional 'post graduate form' (required in the case of learners wishing to register for the MA or PG Dip) outlining reasons for wanting to study, any prior skills and knowledge in the area and possible topic of research or area of interest for a final dissertation, or, for candidates applying for single modules only, a 500 word personal statement of reasons for wanting to study, prior experience and current responsibilities
- Two references, one of which should be an academic reference
- a photocopy of a statutory ID document such as a passport, birth cert or marriage cert.
- IELTS or TOEFL certificate where English is a second language (at least 6.0 in IELTS test)
- passport sized photo

Processing of applications are made by the FDL Unit Manager (or Registrar and admissions staff) and decisions regarding acceptance to a programme are made by the Programme Co-ordinator in association with the Registrar.

Learners who are accepted on to the programme will receive an electronic offer pack which includes:a learner agreement which includes the KDSC netiquette policy and a declaration form of ability to undertake the programme by FDL in terms of English language ability and internet access (See Appendix 4)

- a fee payment form and details of methods of payment
- other relevant information

Passwords to access online study materials will not be provided unless the learner agreement form is returned and payment made.

5. QA of Tutoring and Guidance on Learning

Central to the quality of the FDL experience is the quality of services provided to learners with regard to tutoring, counselling and student feedback and guidance on learning. These services are all provided in the case of KDSC by Tutors.

The quality of the tutoring service is ensured through:

5.1.Recruiting Tutors with Appropriate Skills, Knowledge and Experience

Only those who have documented qualifications and/or experience in teaching/tutoring and/or development studies will be appointed to the role of tutor. Tutors are carefully recruited by the Programme Co-ordinator, FDL Unit

Manager and/or Registrar through an interview process which will focus on previous relevant experience, skills in working with adult learners and/or in distance learning and understanding of relevant dimensions of development studies. On recruitment, Tutors are provided with a contract and a Terms of Reference (see Appendix 1).

5.2. Co-ordination of Tutoring Support

The Programme Co-ordinator will co-ordinate all Tutors in their learning support role. In the first instance, Tutors will be briefed about their role through the terms of reference outlined in their contract, given to them on recruitment and before they start work. This will outline expectations of them in terms of the support they provide to learners, their availability, their role as 'mentors' or 'counsellors' (answering any difficult questions/queries and encouraging learners through listening), marking and providing feedback and stimulating discussions and engagement in the area through the Moodle platform. It will also outline requirements with regard to liaison with the Programme Co-ordinator and Registrar and the limits on the contract. An element of ensuring quality in the tutoring service is an opportunity for Tutors to discuss the challenges they face and to provide each other with support. A Tutor support area is set up on the Moodle VLE to facilitate ongoing peer engagement on tutor-related issues, tutor training and support. This is facilitated by the Programme Co-ordinator with the assistance of the Education Technology specialist. The FDL Unit Manager (or Registrar until the Unit Manager has been appointed) will co-ordinate the administration of assessments, marking and feedback. In addition to extensive training on the use of Moodle, Tutors will receive ongoing online and telephone support from ICT personnel in the event of any questions or clarifications. Tutors' personal information will be protected as per KDSC QA on Data Protection (*KDSC Manual on QA Policies and Principles, p.60)*.

5.3. Review and Evaluation of Tutoring at KDSC

The standard and quality of the tutoring service provided will be evaluated after each module. The Programme Co-ordinator will discuss the findings of the evaluation with the relevant Tutor and an agreement on any measures to be taken will be reached at that time.

5.4. Training of Tutors in KDSC's FDL Processes and Procedures

Tutors are provided with extensive information and training on all aspects of their role:

- KDSC's QA policies and procedures, especially with regard to FDL
- Moodle, ICT use, policies and procedures

- Learner support – mechanisms for encouraging learner engagement and setting a schedule of support
- The KDSC FDL Study Guide
- Learner assessment and providing constructive feedback

In addition, they receive template documents which help them assistance in providing support to learners, e.g., welcome email, Tutor Guide, Tutor Evaluation Form.
A Training and Continuous and Professional Development Plan for KDSC FDL has been developed which identifies training and support needs, an initial tutor training plan and a Continuous Professional Development Plan for FDL Tutors and the Librarian. It also outlines a plan for training and support from December 2012 – 2013. This plan will be reviewed and up-dated on an annual basis. See Appendix 5. Training and support for tutors is provided through face to face, Moodle VLE and virtual classroom technology (VCT), as appropriate. The education technology specialist will support the Programme Co-ordinator in the delivery of training and support to tutors.

5.5. The Quality of Feedback and Marking

Tutors are training in learner assessment, which includes KDSC marking guidelines. This helps to ensure consistency in marking standards across all markers, as do regular meetings and discussions on improving marking standardisation among tutors and other KDSC academic staff. Quality of feedback is assured with reference to KDSC guidelines on providing good feedback (PG/MA Programme Assessment Strategy). There l tutors are given guidelines on how to provide feedback to learners. Providing constructive feedback is also part of tutor training, as indicated above and the quality of feedback received and the mechanisms involved are regularly reviewed in staff meetings and discussions.

5.6. Quality of Study Centres

Most classroom activities will take place at KDSC, as required, and facilities at KDSC are assured through measures outlined in KDSC's QA Manual on Policies and Principles. In addition, from time to time, it may be necessary for KDSC to hire a venue near a cohort of learners for classroom-based learning. Where this is required, venues will be vetted for appropriateness for the learning experience and checked by KDSC FDL Unit or programme staff.

6. ICT Quality

At KDSC, FDL is delivered over the open-source PHP-based 'Moodle' learning management system. This tried-and-tested virtual learning environment is continuously supported and can be easily updated over time. It is already familiar to many Tutors and learners alike and is extremely user-friendly. Furthermore, the high security features of the 'Moodle' system makes it an excellent choice for the delivery of distance-learning courses.

For the PG/MA by FDL, tutors and learners will be setup by ICT personnel and allocated relevant 'tutor' or 'learner' roles. Learners will only have access to modules that they have signed up for. Training of learners will take part before each module begins and is detailed below. Ongoing online and telephone support will also be provided for each module.

Course Content is delivered using Moodle's 'weekly format' to ensure that students know exactly what is expected of them at any stage during the module.

The addition of supporting audio and video content to the FDL modules is designed to enhance the learning experience for all participants.

While the initial system is extremely easy-to-use and secure, learner and Tutor feedback will be regularly monitored for suggestions on how to increase usability and performance. The location of most potential users in the countries of the Global South is strongly considered in all decision making relating to file size and user experience.

ICT support is provided by 'pushitfurther.com'.[3]

'PGDIP/FDLMA' is hosted with GoDaddy.com at kimmagedsc.ie/fdl/. 'Moodle 1.9.19' will run in a 'PHP 5.3.2' and 'MySQL 5.0.25' environment, which is extremely secure and will provide a reliable and fast connection to the course for students around the globe. As an open-source program, 'Moodle 1.9.19' will be continuously updated to the latest version available on GoDaddy, to optimise both usability and security. ICT personnel are signed up to PHP and MySQL mailing lists, to ensure timely notification of any security updates. Specifically in relation to 'Moodle', the secure forms setting is used. The 'opentogoogle setting' is disabled. Guest access will also be disabled. Furthermore, the 'enrolment key hint' feature is disabled as all participants will be registered and enrolled on modules by the administrator.

[3], Pushitfurther.com is an organisation, which has been providing learning solutions and support since 2006. Its managing director, Brendan Wynne, has a *B.A. in Communications* from Dublin City University and a *Graduate Diploma in Business Administration* from the University of Durham. He has over twelve years' experience in the design, development and support of distance-learning, blended-learning and other media solutions for hundreds of clients such as *British Telecom, European Space Agency, Baileys, SAGE, TBWA, Allied Irish Bank, ESB* and *Fine Gael*. He has extensive experience in the production of video, audio and other multimedia content for delivery online, via cd-rom, or through hand-held devices. He has also supported hundreds of distance-learning courses and delivered numerous training sessions.

In relation to participant access, even those with slower internet speeds will be able to use the application, while it runs most effectively for those with reasonably fast broadband connections. Students with lower internet speeds are specifically considered in relation to the download times of course material, which will be compressed and optimised where possible. Regular backups (every 24 hours) are made of the entire system to ensure that everything can be easily restored in the unlikely event of a technical problem. Restoration procedures are practiced regularly.

Passwords

The administrator sets up all users. Participants are enrolled on relevant modules by ICT personnel. Strong 'difficult' passwords are used for all participants. A combination of upper and lower case letters, numbers and non alphanumeric characters are used to ensure maximum security. Participants use a separate password for the 'PGDIP/FDLMA' system than they normally use. As the administrator sets up all participants, this policy can be easily enforced.

Only the administrator and high-level co-ordinators are given full admin access. Other tutors have access, which is limited to their own modules.

For extra security, password 'salting' is used, whereby passwords are stored in the user database as 'MD5 hashes'.

Assessment

Continuous and Summative Assessments appears on the 'PGDIP/FDLMA' system as text-based Assignments. Students are able to upload their assignment securely through the Moodle 'upload' feature. Utmost importance is given to the privacy of learners and at all times, students have full confidentiality in relation to work they submit, which can only be viewed by their 'tutor' and admin personnel. Students are only able to upload their own assignments and sign a declaration that each assignment they upload is their own work. Grading of assignments takes place through the 'Moodle' system and 'Grades' are posted securely online. These can only be viewed by the relevant tutor and student involved. As students progress through the various modules, they are able to view a comprehensive report of all of their grades, which should help in relation to their learning development.

Virtual Classroom Environment Through 'Big Blue Button'

For Virtual Classrooms, the Big Blue Button can be used as a 'Moodle' integration in relation to providing students and tutors with a virtual classroom environment. In the introduction of VCT, remotely-located students will once again be specifically-considered in relation to access and usability issues. The

system will share passwords with the 'PGDIP/FDLMA Moodle' system and adhere to similar security procedures.

To ensure technical optimisation, students will typically not use their microphones in the virtual classroom environment. However, tutors will have full control over the use of audio and can deliver the lecture in conjunction with visual material such as powerpoint presentations. A 'live chat' facility will be available during online lectures, whereby students can type queries into a text box. Other students and tutors can respond to these queries either by text or audio. Students can also be segmented to allow for questions to be answered in smaller groups. This will greatly enhance their online experience and development of communal knowledge.

Each session will be recorded and made available to participants within two days after it takes place for review purposes and in the eventuality that some students cannot attend or experience temporary technical difficulties.

Hosting BBB
Our Big Blue Button system will be hosted by hostbbb.com, an expert in providing this support. For the past three years, they have worked with dozens of clients in this area. We are using the 'shared access' system, which is more than suitable for our current needs, but can be expanded very quickly if necessary in the eventuality that student numbers increase. Having the capacity to archive BBB webinar sessions is an essential quality assurance component of its use. Archived sessions will be kept for 3 years.

7. Quality Control, Recruitment and Evaluation

The Programme Co-ordinator has responsibility for ensuring the quality of service and support provided by FDL staff: Tutor, Supervisor, Subject Specialist, ICT and administration staff.

7.1. Quality Control of Staffing

Staff quality assurance for FDL follows the broad terms outlined in section 3.2 Human Resource Management (Manual on QA Policies and Principles, p.22). The processes whereby quality of service is ensured are as follows:

- Recruitment and appointment of personnel with relevant experience, skills and knowledge
- Agreed contracts outlining Terms of Reference (Staff Terms and Conditions)

- Staff induction (in this case through training and information provided on recruitment and through regular online discussions with the programme co-ordinator)
- Staff appraisal – in the case FDL staff working exclusively in this area of KDSC's work, these will be conducted between such staff and the FDL Programme Co-ordinator. In the case of other KDSC staff who are working on the FDL programme on a part-time basis, their staff appraisal process will be required to take account of their work on FDL.
- Staff development and training – as outlined above, all staff will be provided with on-going training which is relevant to their needs and their role.

7.2. Evaluation

In addition to Human Resource Management considerations, quality of programmes delivered by FDL are subject to the same standards of overall programme quality assurance as outlined in section 3.4. (Manual of QA Policies and Principles, p.28), which outlines the internal and external evaluation and review mechanisms at work in KDSC, e.g., learner evaluations, tracer studies, annual staff planning workshop, external examiners and HETAC.

In the case of FDL, learners evaluate all support mechanisms provided on a regular basis – either on a unit by unit basis, or after 3 units are completed as well as at the end of course work. Though Tutors will not always be in a position to participate in the annual staff planning workshop, they will be invited to engage in reflection on KDSC FDL programmes and processes through online discussion facilitated by the Programme Co-ordinator. The review of programmes by External Examiners and HETAC will apply with FDL as with other modes of delivery. External examiners will be given access to the FDL Moodle VLE and module materials for relevant modules.

7.3. *Training of all FDL Staff*

All FDL staff are trained on aspects of FDL appropriate to their role and level of responsibility. As indicated earlier, Tutors will receive training on:

- KDSC's QA policies and procedures, especially with regard to FDL
- Moodle, ICT use, policies and procedures
- Learner support – mechanisms for encouraging learner engagement and setting a schedule of support
- The KDSC FDL Study Guide
- Learner assessment and providing constructive feedback

This applies in the first instance to all new Tutors and subsequently, refresher training/consultation with Tutors will take place on an annual basis. Where

Tutors are engaged in FDL and not necessarily resident in the one country or continent, training of Tutors will take place using the Moodle platform. Training on QA policies and principles; learner support; the FDL study guide; learner assessment; and providing constructive feedback is provided by the Programme Co-ordinator, based on the Tutor Guide provided. This is accompanied by reflection and discussion exercises. Where possible, VCT will be used in addition to the discussion forum. Training on the ICT aspect of FDL learning management systems is provided by the education technology specialist and/or support personnel. This is organised according to needs and requirements.

Other staff receive training as necessary. On establishment of the FDL unit, administration personnel will receive training/induction into KDSC and FDL at KDSC by the Programme Co-ordinator. This will include some face to face training/mentoring as well as some e-learning, based on the Tutor guide. Supervisors receive up-dating on the Moodle system and FDL by ICT support staff and the Programme Co-ordinator.

8. Ensuring Learner Support

8.1. General Learner Support Mechanisms

Learners are supported in their learning through a variety of mechanisms. They are appointed a Tutor who is their point of contact and key support person for the programme. They are also supported through various ICT mechanisms, especially Moodle, including student online forums, bulletin boards and through FDL study guide materials. These provide important guiding materials for learners which help them to understand the programme and modules and to navigate the requirements of the programme through guidelines[4]. It includes information on:

1. Introduction to Kimmage DSC and the KDSC Flexible and Distance Learning MA (FDLMA)
2. Programme Validation
3. The Development Words Used
4. Programme Content, Procedures and Schedule
5. Programme Calendar
6. Study Pathway Options
7. An Introduction to Programme Modules and Units

[4]The current draft study guide is subject to initial evaluation through the pilot process being undertaken in Spring 2012 and will be up-dated and finalised in June 2012 on the basis of feedback from the evaluation.

8. Programme Assessment – Guidelines for Marking and Programme Assessment Strategies
9. ICT Support and the Role of the Tutor
10. Study Skills for FDLMA
11. Rights and Responsibilities of Kimmage DSC programme participants
12. Evaluation of FDLMA
13. KDSC Referencing Style Guide
14. How to use the Moodle VLE

8.2. Management of FDL

A central aspect of ensuring the quality of learner support with regard to FDL is the clear co-ordination of FDL. KDSC has arranged for the establishment of an FDL unit which acts as the hub for FDL learner support.

The FDL Unit – is the academic and administrative unit within Kimmage DSC which will be set up for the academic co-ordination and administration of the programme. This unit will be established when the number of learners registered on the Moodle VLE have reached 40 FTEs. In the interim, aspects of the role of the unit will be undertaken by the Registrar, KDSC admissions staff and the Programme Co-ordinator.

The FDL Unit Manager – will be responsible for the day to day running of the FDLMA Unit; for communication with learners regarding programme administration issues such as applications, grades, registration and fees; and for administration regarding staff on the programme, i.e., the Programme Co-ordinator, Tutors, Supervisors, Subject Specialists, Administrative Staff and ICT Support Staff etc. In association with the Programme Co-ordinator, he/she is responsible for scheduling. She/he is responsible for organising examinations, recording marks and assessments on behalf of the Registrar, and for ensuring that ICT systems and support are maintained at the highest quality. The FDL Unit Manager will supervise administration staff, including ICT support staff and those responsible for marketing and communications. She/he will liaise with the Registrar on application processes and examination results and manage the administration of Tutor work with regard to assessments and grades.

The Programme Co-ordinator – The programme co-ordinator fulfils the roles and functions of any programme co-ordinator as outlined in KDSC QA Manual (p.32). He/she is responsible for academic standards within the programme. It is the responsibility of the Programme Co-ordinator to ensure that the programme meets QA standards and the needs of learners and other staff at every level. She/he liaises with the Unit Manager, Subject Specialists, Tutors,

Supervisors and the Registrar to ensure that the programme meets the required Level 9 academic standards and is responsible for training, support and guidance of Tutors; management and guidance of Supervisors and on-going review and evaluation of programme materials (including core materials, readings, assessments, learning outcomes, module outlines etc) and learner evaluation of the programme. The Programme Co-ordinator is represented on the Kimmage DSC academic committee.

FDL Tutors – are responsible for direct learner communication, support and assessment. Each is appointed on a module by module basis. Once learners are registered for the FDL programme, they are informed by their tutor of the starting date of the module and guided through the initial set-up and orientation (through the Study Guide). Where they have undertaken a FDL module already, the tutor introduces her or himself to the learner and directs them to the relevant study materials for the second or following modules. Tutors liaise with the Programme Co-ordinator and the subject specialist where queries around course materials or assignments arise, they mark assignments within a module and provide summative and formative feedback on these assignments. Tutors liaise with the FDL Unit Manager on assessment marks and feedback as well as with the Unit Manager (where necessary) and the FDL ICT Support Staff in order to respond to learner queries with regard to ICT issues.

FDL Subject Specialists – are responsible for the development and annual revision of course outlines, reading lists and assessments, as well as core materials (every 3 years), in consultation with the Programme Co-ordinator and the Academic Committee. In the case of mode 1 (face to face) programme delivery of the PG/MA in Development Studies, subject specialists act as classroom lecturers and facilitators. Where courses are not available by distance, subject specialists also act as virtual or face to face classroom facilitators, providing direct support to learners (as with the Tutors above), they mark assignments and provide summative and formative feedback on these assignments to learners. At KDSC, FDL subject specialists are likely to have multiple roles, e.g., they may also act as Tutors, Supervisors, or as the Programme Co-ordinator. They participate in exam board meetings and may be participate in the KDSC academic committee.

FDL Supervisors – as in the case of mode 1 delivery of the MA in Development Studies, Supervisors are responsible for the support of learners throughout their dissertation process. They act as primary or secondary markers for the dissertations of other learners they are not supporting . They liaise with the FDL Programme Co-odinator on assessment and standards, and participate in exam board meetings and on the academic committee of Kimmage DSC (see attached Guidelines for Supervisors Appendix 2) .

FDL Examination Invigilators – Examination invigilators undertake the roles outlined in section 3.7.1.3. of the KDSC Manual of Quality Assurance Policies

and Procedures (p.36), except in the case of FDL, where examination invigilators can be appointed independent KDSC representatives, not solely full-time academic staff of KDSC or MS-TCDC[5].

FDL ICT Support Staff – are those who ensure that the computer-based and e-learning dimensions of the programme are effective, efficient, reliable and accessible for learners and FDL staff. This includes the ICT administrator who manages the FDL Moodle Platform.

Education Technology Specialist – works with the Programme Co-ordinator to ensure that tutors are trained and supported to provide effective online learning.

While acknowledging that clear co-ordination and clarity of roles are very important to ensuring quality in learner support, at KDSC, learner support is also considered with regard to:

- Learner enquiries and responses
- Learner assessment submission, tracking, feedback response times etc

8.3. Learner Enquiries and Responses

For the agreed duration of the module, and within reasonable working arrangements for Tutors, Tutors are responsible for responding to learner enquiries within a 48 hour period (either directly or based on the assistance of the Programme Co-ordinator or Unit Manager) and are responsible for making unsolicited contact with learners at least twice per unit through the Moodle learner forums or bulletin boards.

An important ICT support service provided by KDSC for FDL is that of ICT 'help desk' support. While learners may, in the first instance, contact their Tutor if they are having ICT difficulties, they also may post queries/questions onto the Moodle site, where they will be responded to by ICT personnel. In the event of not being able to access the Moodle site, learners can contact their Tutor by Skype or phone and she/he will forward their query to the relevant personnel. If the Tutor is unable to respond, she/he makes contact with the Unit manager or Programme Co-ordinator. When a learner has an enquiry for ICT support personnel, she/he can expect a response within 3 days.

8.4. Learner Assessment Submission, Tracking, Feedback Response Times

[5] MS (Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke – Danish Association for International Co-operation) – Training Centre for Development Co-operation, now part of Action Aid, and based at Usa River, Arusha, Tanzania.

The FDL Unit Manager has overall responsibility for ensuring quality in relation to systems for learner assessment submission and tracking. It is their responsibility, in consultation with the ICT administrator, to ensure that the KDSC system for tracking assessment submission is working and that assignments are submitted. Prior to the appointment of an FDL Unit Manager, the Registrar takes this responsibility. The Programme Co-ordinator (in consultation with Tutors) is responsible for overseeing assessment submission and for follow-up with Tutors and learners with regard to any outstanding assignments. The Programme Co-ordinator and Unit Manager liaise with Tutors and the Registrar on the implementation of KDSC's examination regulations as set down in the Programme Assessment Strategy. Where necessary, he/she is also responsible for the identification of reputable examination facilities and the appointment of independent, reputable examination invigilators who act as KDSC representatives for closed-book examinations.

Though Tutors (and Supervisors in the case of the dissertation) are responsible for marking and providing feedback, it is the responsibility of the Programme Co-ordinator to ensure that grades are provided in a timely fashion (2-3 weeks) and that feedback is substantial and constructive. A timetable for grades and feedback will be put in place and Tutors will be strongly encouraged by the Programme Co-ordinator to provide marks and feedback at that time.

Learners will regularly evaluate the programme with regard to examination regulations and feedback and these issues will be discussed among FDL staff in training and planning and at the annual KDSC staff workshop.

8.4.1. Procedures for Scheduling, Notification and Administration of Examinations and Ensuring the Integrity of Examinations

As outlined in section 3.7.1.3. of the KDSC Manual of Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures, additional procedures for examination invigilation may apply in the case of modules delivered by Distance Learning and where the examination is completed off campus (eg at a specified examinations centre). Where examinations are required as a summative assessment for a FDL module, in consultation with the FDL Programme Co-ordinator, the FDL Unit Manager is responsible for scheduling examinations, for identifying reputable examination centres and for appointing independent invigilators who act as KDSC representatives. As is common with many DL providers, a system of agreement will be put in place with the British Council to co-ordinate and manage examinations in centres close to learners. The KDSC representative at the British Council will be given guidelines by the FDL Unit Manager about how to manage examinations, including to ensure that examinations are undertaken by the registered learner – photo ID required – and that scripts are photocopied, and sent securely by courier (e.g., DHL) to the FDL Unit Manager in a timely fashion. Learners will be given significant notice of examination dates and venues (when they begin each unit) and information about what is required in the examination, e.g., how many questions to answer. Learners

have an opportunity to sit the examination on one of two dates, with the second date acting as a repeat examination date if necessary. The examination process and procedures will be evaluated by learners and revisions made to arrangements accordingly.

8.4.2. Learner Registration with HETAC

It is the responsibility of the Registrar to ensure learners who are studying for the purposes of gaining credit or an award (single subject certification, post graduate diploma or MA Degree) are registered with the validating body HETAC, in sufficient time before the relevant examination board meetings.

8.4.3. QA of Exam Boards, Dispatch of Parchments and Transcripts, and Learner Follow-up.

Procedures for Exam Board meetings, which is the sole authority to make a summative assessment of programme results, are in accordance with Sections 2.2.8 and 4.8 of HETAC *Assessment and Standards (2009)*.

Exam board meetings are convened and arranged by the Registrar of KDSC, at appropriate times of year (to mark the end of a programme Stage) in cooperation with the relevant programme coordinator . It is the responsibility of the the Registrar to prepare a draft broadsheet of results in advance of the Exam Board. In preparing for an Exam Board, KDSC will act in accordance with the relevant protocols in HETAC Assessment and Standards, 2009 (Section 4.8.6).

Full details of KDSC procedures with regard Exam Boards are documented in Section 3.7.1.9 (p. 37) of the KDSC QA Manual

Following an Exam Board, and publishing of results, learners have the right to request a re-check or review or results, within a particular time frame appropriate for the HETAC grant of awards. Details of the grounds for review, as well as procedures on rechecks and reviews are documented in Section 2.6 of the Programme Assessment Strategy, and in Appendix 6 of KDSC 'Course Participants Rights and Responsibilities' – Section IV***.***

It is the responsibility of the Registrar to ensure that learners are notified of their results following an Exam Board meeting, the date and schedule of HETAC conferring and arrangements in the case of learners who can not physically attend a conferring. In which case parchments will be dispatched by courier or other secure means.

It is also the responsibility of the Registrar to ensure that each learner who has received an award is issued with a 'European Diploma Supplement', or in the case of learners who have not completed all stages of an award, a similarly detailed transcript of results.

Appendix 1: Tutor Terms of Reference

www.kimmagedsc.ie

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Terms of Reference for:

KDSC tutor on its PG/MA in Development Studies Programme

Tutor Terms of Reference

To attend all required Tutor Training (as agreed with the Programme Co-ordinator) and familiarise themselves with KDSC's QA policies and procedures, especially with regard to FDL; Moodle, ICT use, policies and procedures; Learner support – mechanisms for encouraging learner engagement and setting a schedule of support ; The KDSC FDL Study Guide and Learner assessment and providing constructive feedback

To Communicate with learners undertaking a module, i.e., to send a welcome email to module participants through the Moodle Bulletin and to contact learners the week before the course starts, to introduce themselves and to highlight information available on the Study Guide.

To check, in consultation with the FDL Unit Manger or Registrar, that allocated participants have registered officially and signed a Learner Contract prior to starting the module.

Make special efforts to ensure that the course participants are familiar and comfortable with using each element of the FDL Moodle VLE including Study Guide materials, Forums, core materials, library section and assessment submission.

Post discussion topics on the module forum at least twice per unit, and to mark forum participation with reference to the rubrics for forum participation.

Over the course period, to answer all queries, where possible through the

module forum, from allocated participants with 48 hours. If it is not possible to answer in full, it is highly recommended to respond with 48 hours with details of when it will be possible to deal with that query in detail.

To send forum reminders to each allocated participant regarding upcoming assignment deadlines.

To follow up promptly if an assignment deadline has not been met either by email or telephone and to communicate with the FDL Unit Manager and the Programme Co-ordinator in this instance.

To check that allocated participants have taken part in forum discussions and to comment on the quality of that contribution.

To liaise with the Programme Co-ordinator and the subject specialist where queries around course materials or assignments arise.

To mark and provide detailed, written feedback for each learner on 3 formative assessments, forum participation and 1 summative assessment, per module. This is to be done within the agreed period of time (2-3 weeks following submission). To provide marks and feedback to the FDL Unit Manager and for the Registrar.

To liaise with the FDL ICT Support Staff in order to respond to learner queries with regard to ICT issues. To inform the FDL Unit Manager and/or ICT administrator at the earliest possible opportunity if experiencing technical difficulties, communication problems or in the case of a participant wanting to opt out of the programme.

To fill in a detailed evaluation form regarding the tutor experience.

Appendix 2: Supervision and the Role of the Supervisor

Introduction to Supervision

Upon submission of research proposals (following the course in research methods) students are allocated a supervisor from among the teaching staff in KDSC by the Programme co-ordinator. The supervisor will be the primary MA contact person for students in relation to their dissertation from that time. ***Means of communication, a timetable of work, support arrangements and progress-monitoring procedures, as appropriate, should be agreed between the student and the supervisor.***

Where any difficulties arise, they should be addressed in the first instance by the student and supervisor. In the case of the relationship between the MA supervisor and the student not working out, the Programme co-ordinator or the Director may be contacted (depending on who is most immediately relevant) and an appropriate solution arrived at by all concerned.

When the supervision working relationship has come to an end, students and supervisors will be asked to evaluate the supervision process and such evaluation reports will be sent to the Programme co-ordinator for future planning.

The Role of the Supervisor

The role of the supervisor is to support the student through the process of undertaking primary research and in their writing of an MA dissertation.

To this end, supervisors should:

- meet with students, where appropriate or possible,
- advise students on the scale and practicalities of their research
- read draft chapters and provide oral and/or written feedback
- communicate with the MA co-ordinator on an on-going basis and through 2 dedicated meetings
- provide a written report and preliminary grading of the student's dissertation

It is important for everyone to remember that a dissertation is a student's work and not that of a supervisor. It should therefore reflect students' work and skills and not those of the supervisor. Supervisors will usually read and comment upon only one draft of each chapter and they will read and comment upon a final draft of the dissertation. KDSC may not accept a dissertation for submission unless a draft has been read by a supervisor.

Students should:

- have realistic expectations of their supervisor
- keep their supervisor informed of their progress
- agree a means of communication/feedback between them and their supervisor
- agree an outline timetable of work and allow supervisors sufficient time to read drafts
- present their supervisor with drafts that are of a high standard (including bibliographies and full references)

It is not the role of the supervisor to proof-read, edit or correct grammar in a student's draft work.

Meetings and Advice

Where possible, students are asked to meet and/or communicate with supervisors regularly. Supervisors are expected to advise students on the scale and practicalities of their research.

A schedule of meetings, drafts and feedback should be agreed between the student and the supervisor [Please see Timeframe and Final Deadlines for MA Work]. It is anticipated that each supervisor will spend 25-30 hours working with each student. This includes meetings, Skype or email contact, reading and feedback on draft chapters. Meetings should be in person where possible. Where such meetings are not possible, communication should generally be via Skype or email. [Email offers a better opportunity for keeping records than telephone or Skype contact.]

It is important to remember that students are responsible for their dissertation and for making contact with their supervisor*.* Where there has been no contact for over a month, supervisors are asked to make a reasonable effort to make contact with the student to find out about their progress, and to inform the MA co-ordinator if there is no return contact or if, for some reason, progress has not been made during that period.

Ultimately, students have responsibility for ensuring that contact is maintained between them and their supervisor.

Reading and Providing Feedback

Students prepare draft work for supervisors to read.

Before submitting draft work to a supervisor, it should:

- Reflect the presentation standards outlined in Section 3 (above)
- Have a dissertation title and student name attached
- Be fully referenced – including a bibliography
- Have been proof-read, i.e. that grammar, spelling etc have been checked

Supervisors will read draft dissertation chapters and provide feedback to students on their work. Constructive feedback on draft work is an important aspect of the learning from the process of undertaking an MA, and therefore an important aspect of a supervisor's role.

Feedback should be:

- Detailed
- Clear
- Accessible for the student
- Advisory rather than prescriptive
- Written, where possible

If supervisors' advice or suggestions are not being followed despite repeated attempts to communicate errors or omissions to students, e.g., in relation to the proper sourcing of material, a supervisor will highlight this to the student asking them to respond before they can move on with further writing and supervision work.

It is important for supervisors and students to agree a method of feedback that they are both happy with. At the KDSC, most feedback is provided via email. Please keep all written and computer records of communication and feedback until after the MA Exam Board Meeting in any given year.

Supervisors and Marking

The dissertation accounts for 33% of the overall marks for the MA. Two internal examiners (not a student's supervisor) are appointed for each MA dissertation. The primary marker has responsibility for allocating the grade in consultation with the secondary marker, who also reads and independently grades the dissertation. A selection of dissertations are also examined by the external examiner, and grades are finalised at an Exam Board Meeting, which is usually held in February.

Grading Criteria for the Dissertation

In addition to the Kimmage DSC general grading guidelines (see Course Handbook) the following questions are used when marking dissertations. These are reflected in the Supplementary Grading Criteria for MA Dissertations.

Overall: Has the dissertation clearly identified a particular issue in development studies? Has it reviewed relevant evidence already available

regarding this issue? Has it, through primary research, explored particular research question(s) and contributed a 'value added' dimension to discussion of the issue i.e., added to previously available knowledge?

Literature Review: Has the literature review provided a comprehensive introduction to the issue under investigation? This need not imply a comprehensive survey of all available literature, but rather a sufficient overview to establish the nature and relevance of the issue and also to justify the pursuit of the particular research question(s) explored in the primary research.

Methodology: Is the methodology appropriate to the research question(s) posed? Has the research been carried out thoroughly and with a reasonably open mind? Does the author display awareness of possible limitations in the methodology adopted?

Primary Research Findings: How well do these answer the research question(s) posed? Do they relate back directly to the issue in development studies overviewed in the literature review, i.e. how well integrated is the dissertation as a whole? Are they presented in a fully transparent manner, e.g. is it always possible to determine on what basis a particular research finding has been arrived at? Are they presented in a balanced manner, e.g. are pieces of evidence contrary to the author's principal argument accorded sufficient weight?

***Presentation*:** Issues of structure, spelling and grammar are obviously relevant here. However, the principal issue concerns consistency of referencing. Are all sources of information clearly identified and referenced in a consistent manner throughout and listed accurately in a final bibliography?

4.2. MA Grades are allocated as follows

70+ - Honours (1st class)
60 – 69 – Honours (2nd class)
40 – 59 – Pass

Good luck!

Eilish Dillon

Contact Details:

Phone: 353 1 4064384

Email: eilish.dillon@kimmagedsc.ie

Address: Eilish Dillon, Kimmage Development Studies Centre, Whitehall Road, Kimmage, Dublin 12.

Appendix 3 – Rubrics for Grading Forum Participation

Guidelines for Discussion Forum Participation
Throughout this module, you will be making contributions in the form of forum postings (messages) through Moodle – your thoughts or ideas on various discussions/debates initiated by your tutor or another learner or links to other websites/resources etc.

The following are some guidelines to help you when posting a message on a Moodle Discussion Forum:

- The messages should be on topic and relevant (i.e., the message should relate to the topic in the Subject Box). Initial discussions will usually be initiated by your tutor and you will be replying to your tutor or to another learner who has contributed before you.
- When you use 'reply' to an existing message, please ensure that your message is relevant to the message to which you are replying. (The subject line can be changed when replying to reflect the point you are making.)
- When you wish to make a new point, click 'Add a new discussion topic' and write your message. As the module progresses, you will be invited to start your own discussions.
- Messages should be concise – they should rarely be more than 150 words. Each message should discuss only one issue. If you wish to raise another issue, compose another message. That is, if you wish to make a number of points then compose a new message for each point and make sure the subject line reflects the content of your message. This will make it much easier for everyone to follow the discussion.
- Messages can come in many forms. They can:
  - ask questions
  - move topics on
  - respond to the contributions of others
  - add examples or offer resources*
  - expand the ideas of others
  - bring in new arguments or evidence
  - critique a previous message
  - summarise issues which have arisen
- Your message should be interesting, reflective and should try to link your own experience with ideas/concepts you are considering in your study. You should try to argue any points being made as clearly as possible. Simply stating agreement or disagreement (without giving reasons) is rarely helpful.
- Your messages should be well-structured and well-written with limited grammar, syntax or referencing errors.
- Messages should be posted regularly – you should be monitoring the discussion on an ongoing basis so that you can meaningfully contribute. Do not respond to what other people have written without carefully considering your own responses.
- Try to make sure that your message is a reply to the appropriate previous message and that it encourages further engagement on this or a related topic. Even though the flow doesn't always happen in sequence, it is good to try to keep it going as much as possible.

Overall, online discussions should in many ways be similar to a face-to-face group discussion with the significantadded advantage that you will have time to think and reflect before you make your contributions. Please see the Kimmage DSC 'Netiquette Policy' for details of how to communicate online.

*Please note that the resources you offer do not have to be confined to the resources supplied – if you find other sources, which are relevant, you can refer to them as well. It is important to provide the full reference (see the Kimmage DSC Referencing Style Guide) for any resources you refer to.

Grading Criteria for Forum Participation

For this module, 20% of the overall marks are allocated to your participation in forum discussions. You are required to contribute two substantive postings per unit (at least 8 in total) to the discussion topics posted on the forum. Your tutor will initiate forum discussions and will guide you through the details of what's expected of your forum participation from unit to unit. The following grading criteria are used with regard to assessing forum participation:

Criteria	**75% + Excellent**	**65 – 74% Very Good**	**55 – 64% Good**	**40 – 55% Fair**	**35 – 40% Pass**	**Under 35% Does not Pass**
Frequency and timliness/distribution of Postings	Approx. 4 postings per unit – well distributed	Approx. 3.5 postings per unit – well distributed	Approx. 2.5 postings per unit – fairly well distributed	Approx. 2 postings per unit – fairly well distributed	Approx. 1.5 postings per unit	Less than 1.5 postings per unit
Content of Postings – Substance, Quality, Argument and Referencing	Excellent, Clear points being made, Provocative, challenging, reflective and critical, Using reading and substantive links to other sources	Very Good, Some clear points made, Some challenging or reflective thoughts being communicated Evidence of some reading and links to other sources	Good, Fair points made, Some thoughts expressed well but others are not fully clear or related to a core argument, Little evidence of reading or links	Fair, Few points made Points expressed are not very clear or relevant or substantive, Very little evidence of reading	Little content in postings or what's presented is not very clear or relevant to the discussion topic	Very poor interaction with the discussion forum – ideas taken from others without acknowledgement or few postings with little content, reflection or links to discussion
Structure and Presentation[6], How the Postings Engage with others, Responsiveness, Structure and Nature of Postings	Very well-written, V. Interesting, V. Responsive to others, Encourages engagement on topic, Very clear structure and argument	Well-written, Interesting, Good responsiveness Encouraging further engagement, Clear structure and argument	Fairly well-written Little response to others, Fairly clear structure but some repetition or misplaced comments	Many errors in writing and presentation, Little link between ideas expressed and discussion, Structure weak, Repetition or misplaced comments	Significant errors in writing and presentation, Ideas stand alone without engagement, Poor structure, Adds very little	Writing style poor with many errors, No link between points made and discussion or No points made, Posting repeats previous contributions without adding to the discussion
Exploration of Concepts/ Ideas, Analysis, Originality, Insight etc	Postings v. analytical with reference to relevant concepts and theory, Very active engagement between content and experience, Questionning approach with critical reflection and insight	Postings analytical not descriptive, Active engagement between content and experience, Critical reflection and insight evident	Some analysis, not too descriptive, Reflection on the link between content and own experience, Some original ideas and insights presented	Postings tending to be descriptive, Little reflection on the link between content and own experience, Very few original ideas and little insight shown	Very descriptive postings, Very little reflection on the link between content and own experience, No original ideas or insight	Postings mostly descriptive with no reflection on ideas, concepts or theory, No original ideas or insight, Nothing new added, Few or no postings per unit

[6] For details of how to assess 'structure and presentation' or 'writing quality', please consulte Kimmage DSC General Guidelines for Marking

Appendix 4 – FDL Learner Agreement Form

Kimmage Development Studies Centre
MA in Development Studies by Flexible and Distance Learning.

FDL MA Learner Agreement with Kimmage DSC 2012/13

Please read the following agreement carefully, sign and return to the Kimmage DSC Admissions Office, together with payment of course fees (as per invoice). Please note that passwords to enable access to course materials will not be provided to learners unless fees are paid and this agreement is signed and returned electronically. Please keep a copy of this Agreement for your records

Part A: Kimmage DSC Responsibilities

KDSC agrees to provide all Learners registered for FDL MA in Development Studies programme modules with the following:

1. A personal password that gives the learner access to the Kimmage DSC FDL online / virtual learning environment. This provides access to:

● **An Electronic Forum** where the learner will be engaging with her/his tutor and with other learners on a regular basis and where she/he will be informed of important events, resources, etc

- **A Study Guide for each FDL module** offering an introduction to the programme, an introduction to the online learning environment, useful administrative information, study tips and advice, and a study calender**,** which assists the learner in planning their study, as well as highlighting important deadlines
- **Detailed Course Materials for each FDL module** a learner has registered for, which will take him/her through the programme of self directed study. Composed of different Units, these materials incorporate reflections and exercises into the study text. Units can be downloaded and printed.
- **Details of Assessment** (Continuous and Final).
- **Links to key Essential and Background Readings for each module** and other relevant resources.

2. The support of a Tutor throughout the learner's online study. The tutor is responsible for all direct Module communication, support and assessment for each module. Tutors will respond to course queries with 48 hours.

3. The support of ICT Support Staff throughout the learner's online study, should it be required. Please note that this IT support will be limited to matters relating to accessing the online learning platform (moodle), downloading and uploading materials, etc, and does not include problems with internet access or hardware on your personal PC, laptop or other device.

4. Kimmage DSC will be responsible for all issues regarding formal course assessment, registration with the validating body, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), and issuing of single subject certificates, final award parchments and transcripts. Note that final awards are made

subject to a learner completing all programme requirements and attaing the required number of credits, as in the approved programme schedule

Part B: Learner Responsibilites

As a registered Learner on the Kimmage DSC FDL MA in Development Studies programme:

1. I confirm that I have a standard of English language sufficient (equivalent to IELTS 6.5 or higher) to undertake an academic course of study at Level 9 (Post Graduate Diploma / MA Degree), within in the Irish National Framework of Qualifications.

2. I confirm that it is my own responsibility to ensure that I have competency in using internet, email and word processing and have access to the use of a computer with the following capabilities:

- Internet connection and an up to date web browser such as Internet Explorer 6.0 or above
- Access to a private email account
- Software that can read Word and PDF files
- Sufficient capacity for downloading and use of any required software, such as the latest version of PDF
- Skype Headset (microphone and headphones)

3. I do not hold Kimmage DSC responsible for any breakdown in Internet connections or difficulty with computing capacity, as detailed above.

4. I confirm my availability to access the Kimmage DSC Moodle Virtual Learning Environment and recognise the importance of participating actively in the online learning Forum.

5. I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the **Kimmage DSC Netiquette Policy and Code of Practice 2013**, appended below.

6. I undertake to read all necessary background information information as detailed in the Study Guide.

7. I agree to comply with participation and assessment requirements as established for each module for which I register. I understand that all continuous assessments need to be completed before I can undertake the final assessment.

8. I understand that all assignments must be submitted by the required deadlines and it is my responsibility to keep copies of all my assignments until module assessment is complete.

6. I understand that I may be required to pay an additional fee to a local exam centre before I can sit an examination.

7. I agree to pay the required course fees for each module that I have registered for, before such modules commence.

8. I understand that these fees will not be returned, unless for any reason Kimmage DSC is not in a position to run courses by Flexible and Distance Lerning delivery mode.

NAME----------

PERMANENT HOME ADDRESS ----------

TELEPHONE NUMBER----------

OTHER (WORK) ADDRESS----------

WORK TELEPHONE NUMBER----------

EMAIL ADDRESS----------

PPS Number (Irish learners only)[7]

Signature----------

Date----------

[7] Please note that for all Irish based students, a PPS Number is required for learner registration with the validating body for this programme - Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) (www.qqi.ie). All personal information provided above is confidential and will not be shared with third parties, other than QQI Learner Services Unit, for commercial or any other reason .

Appendix 1 (please detach before returning the agreement above and keep a copy for your records)

Kimmage DSC Netiquette Policy and Code of Practice 2013 : How to Communicate Online

1. Introduction

This Kimmage DSC Netiquette Policy outlines a code of good practice and regulations associated with respectful online communication for all programmes run by Kimmage DSC. This policy is a new addition to the 'General Code of Conduct' as outlined in Section 6 of the Kimmage DSC Participants' Handbook 'Course Participants' Rights and Responsibilities'. It should be regarded as complimentary to the Kimmage NET Appropriate Usage Policy (AUP) outlined in the Kimmage DSC Participants' Handbook. It will be made available, in 2013, to all learners and tutors engaging in online learning through Kimmage DSC, through the Kimmage DSC website and through Moodle.

All learners and facilitators, tutors and lecturers are expected to communicate with each other in a respectful manner through email, discussion forums, the Moodle platforms, webinars and in any other online communication. In order to ensure this respectful online communication, the following code of practice applies:

2. Kimmage DSC Code of Practice in Online Communication

Remember the Person – communicate with others respectfully. Be pleasant and polite. Do not use offensive language in what you write or what you say. Don't be confrontational for the sake of confrontation.

Engage with Respect – do not dominate discussions, listen to others and acknowledge their contributions. Don't make fun of others, e.g., another's ability to write or their English language skills. Do not engage in any personal attacks or over-personalise discussions online. Respect people's privacy and be careful of how you mention individuals (those participating in a course or not) as you may be engaging in libel or unintentionally revealing private or sensitive information about another.

Respect Confidentiality and Privacy – be careful not to discuss individuals' views in any other context other than that of the Moodle forum. Do not name or refer to others (those undertaking the programme or outside it) in a way which may harm them in any way. Respect privacy and do not engage in any form of verbal abuse or slander.

Be Cautious in using Internet language – do not capitalise all letters as this suggests shouting. You can use emoticons to indicate tone, but do so carefully and do not overuse them. Try to avoid using vernacular or slang language which may be misinterpreted.

Keep an Open Mind – remember that you are communicating with different people, whom you don't know, from a variety of cultural contexts, so you will need to 'keep an open mind'. You should be free to express your opinion but careful that it is respectful of difference and that it does not stereotype or discriminate against others. With debate and the experession of opinion comes the responsibility to be able to hear others' different view points and to be

able to engage in mature discussion and debate.

Respect other People's Time and Bandwidth – it is important to consider the various contexts within which others are engaging with you in online communication. Many people have a lot of demands on their time and some do not have immediate access to the Internet – in fact, for many Kimmage DSC course participants, Internet access is irregular and sometimes very slow. Tutors and facilitators may not be able to respond to your queries immediately and while some participants constantly check email and course forums, for others the oppportunities are less regular.

Communicate with Honesty – a key feature of the Kimmage DSC Academic Honesty Policy (see Kimmage DSC Participants' Handbook, Section 6, V), is the importance of honest communication. This is also true of online communication. For example, when you are posting on the discussion forum, pay attention to the content of your writing. If you are drawing on the ideas or work of another, reference them. Never plagiarise ideas or thoughts from another without giving them credit. Refer back to an earlier post and direct a comment to the person whose idea prompted yours. Think and edit before you press the 'send' button.

Share your Ideas and your Knowledge – sharing ideas or resources that you have found is a very common way of building up good working relationships with people online, and the Internet offers incredible opportunities for shared learning. If you find something interesting, share it with others.

Do not engage in 'Inappropriate Behaviour' – As outlined in the Kimmage DSC Participants' Handbook, Section 6, inappropriate behaviour is described as follows: "In view of the core principle of respect for the individual, Kimmage DSC wishes to assert the rights of individuals to participate fully in their educational endeavours in an atmosphere of reasonable comfort, safety, security and intellectual freedom. In doing so, Kimmage DSC strictly and unequivocally opposes all attempts to infringe upon these rights. Such infringements of rights can occur with instances of discrimination, bullying and harassment. These forms of inappropriate behaviour can take on many forms, for example, racial discrimination, gender discrimination, wherein individuals are mistreated because of their ethnic identity or because of their sex. Sexual harassment and other actions that are perceived as unwelcome, humiliating, intimidating or generally offensive to the victim are also considered completely inappropriate within this College".

3. Netiquette Procedures

Failure to comply with the above code of practice is regarded as 'inappropriate behaviour' as detailed in the Kimmage DSC Participants' Handbook (Section 6, IX), and as such, disciplinary procedures (Section 6, VI, VII, VIII) or procedures for responding to inappropriate behaviour (Section 6, X) will apply. Details of these procedures are available on the Kimmage DSC website and are made available to FDL MA participants through Moodle.

Appendix 5 – Training and CPD Plan for KDSC FDL, December 2012 – March 2013

Training and Professional Support Needs (as identified through Personal Development Plans)

FDL staff need specific training which meets the individual needs of FDL staff based on the knowledge, understanding and skills required for online tutors and other support personnel, e.g., the librarian:

Pedagogy –
Intro to online learning approaches, technology and terminology
Online tutoring vs classroom teaching – is there any difference?
Role/skills of the tutor
How to create a learning community and the value of shared, experiential learning

Technology -
Introduction to the use of appropriate tools – general – discussion forums, virtual classroom, blogs, links to websites, video etc
Focus on the Kimmage DSC FDL Moodle platform – and how to use the discussion forum
Introducing virtual classroom technology

Management -
In the context of different phases of online tutoring... focus on management
Of Material/Content – focus on the structuring of the FDLMA content; adapting core materials for engaging, active learning and for the discussion forum
Of Student Support – Issues re: forum engagement, tutor availability, netiquitte, learning contract, types of questions to ask, expectations of the learners etc
Of Assessment – types of assessment, deadlines, following up with feedback and marks etc.

Additional ICT and educational technology support for all FDL staff, especially tutors and the librarian

Review and Up-dating of Training and Continuous Professional Development Plan

This plan will be reviewed in July 2013 in preparation for the next phase of modules to be delivered through FDL in September 2013.

Initial Tutor Training - Plan being Implemented for New Tutors from December 2012

The Programme Co-ordinator, in association with tutors and an educational technologist, has developed the following plan for initial tutor training (ITT) for all new tutors for the KDSC FDL. It is organised and delivered by the Programme Co-ordinator with the support

of other relevant personnel, the educational technologist (see ToR for Sara Kyofuna, Appendix 1) and the ICT administrator (see Service Contract for Brendan Wynne, Appendix 2).

Aim:
The aim of KDSC ITT is to develop tutor understanding, knowledge and skills to enable them to creatively and effectively support online learners engaged in the KDSC FDL programme.

Learning Outcomes:
Having completed ITT, tutors should:

- Understand the KDSC FDL approach to online learning, processes, procedures and roles as they pertain to learners, tutors and other personnel
- Know and be able to fulfill their specific roles and responsibilities, especially with regard to tutor support and assessment
- Have a clear understanding of the connection between pedagogy and learning technology and know how to use the Moodle VLE creatively to encourage social interaction among individual learners, e.g., discussion forums, virtual classroom technology, links, blogs etc
- Be able to creatively and effectively use the Moodle VLE to support learners throughout the module

Total Training Hours: 15

Continuous Professional Development for FDL Tutors – Plan to be Implemented from January 2013

Personal Development Plans were developed by FDL tutors Patrick Marren and Fiona Meehan in December 2012. In addition, the programme co-ordinator, Eilish Dilon and the librarian, Anne Kinsella, developed personal development plans in Jan 2013 [See Appendix 1 below]. It was agreed (between the programme co-ordinator and the new tutors) in Dec 2012 that new tutors would not develop a personal development plan until initial training had been undertaken – it was felt that it was difficult to identify what further training and support was needed before undergoing initial training and experience.

Aim:
The aim of KDSC continuous professional development (CPD) for tutors is to ensure that tutors continue to develop the necessary understanding, knowledge and skills to enable them to creatively and effectively support online learners engaged in the KDSC FDL programme.

Total Training Hours: 9

Continuous Professional Development for the FDL Librarian – Plan to be Implemented from January 2013

A continuous professional development plan was developed by the Librarian in Jan 2013 in consultation with the programme co-ordinator.

Aim:
The aim of continuous professional development for the FDL Librarian is to develop the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to enable the librarian to provide ongoing support to FDL learners in the acquisition of additional resources and materials relevant for each module in the MA programme.

Total Training Hours: 4