



DIE AFRIKAANSE PROTESTANTSE AKADEMIE NPC

Registration number: 2002/031756/08

Registered with the Department of Higher Education and Training as a private higher education institution under the Higher Education Act, 1997

Registration Certificate No. 1999/HE08/001

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INSTITUTIONAL POLICY ON DISTANCE LEARNING

Policy Owner	Board of The APA
Responsibility	Quality Commissioner and Quality Committee
Status	Approved
Dates of amendments	2018
Review date	2023

DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY

1. Introduction

Distance education is formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time or both for the majority of the instructional period. Distance learning materials are delivered through a variety of media including, but not limited to, print, audio recording, videotape, broadcasts, computer software, web-based programmes and other online technology. Lecturers support distance learners through communication via mail, telephone, e-mail or online technologies and software. Some important distinguishing aspects of the distance learning system of which an institution making use of the distance mode of provision should take note in the provision of a distance programme, are

- separation of teacher and learner;
- the role of educational organization;
- the use of technical media;
- the provision of two-way communication;
- industrial type operation; and
- separation of the learner from his peer group.

Distant learning at the APA is internet dependent, internet supported, digitally supported and neither fully online or fully offline. Some activities are campus or site based but the overwhelming majority of activities take place on a remote basis.

2. Relevant Concepts

Distance education is a mode of provision based primarily on a set of teaching and learning strategies (or educational methods) that can be used to overcome spatial and/or transactional distance between educators and students. It avoids the need for students to discover the curriculum by attending classes frequently and for long periods. Rather, it aims to create a quality learning environment using an appropriate combination of different media, tutorial support, peer group discussion, and practical sessions.

Mode of provision refers to the dominant mix of methods by which institutions mediate their curricula.

Open (and) distance learning (ODL) refers to the use of distance education methods to support the realization of open learning purposes and principles. Omission of the "and" as in Open Distance Learning implies that ALL distance programmes offered are based on open learning principles. Open learning typically involves making provision to support a wider range of student choices regarding access, curriculum, pacing, sequencing, learning modes and methods, assessment and articulation.

Technology-supported learning refers to structured learning opportunities mediated through software applications using digital resources (usually combinations of text, audio and visual/video files) and communication, and accessed through a range of fixed or mobile hardware devices. Such learning provision may be on-line and synchronous (e.g. real-time conferencing), on-line and asynchronous (e.g. text-based discussion forum) or off-line (e.g.

interactive or resource-based CD/DVD/flash drive). ICT (Information and Communication Technology) can support learning in contact, blended and distance programmes.

Student support is a generic term that is applied to a range of services that are developed by the Institution to assist students to meet their learning objectives and to gain the knowledge and skills to be successful in their studies. Student support includes:

- tuition support in the form of detailed, individualized and timely feedback to formative assessment; regional tutorials in a medium (face-to-face, online, telematic etc.) that is accessible to students; remedial interventions such as responsible open admission programmes to help underprepared students achieve success in order to decrease the distance between student and teacher;
- peer support in the form of institutionally arranged and supported peer self-help groups;
- in-text support in the form of well-designed well integrated courseware creating rich environments for active learning with a sensitivity for context, different voices, etc. and promoting dialogue between teacher

3. Requirements and Criteria

- **Programme excellence**

Programme design and assessment requirements should be consistent with the vision and mission of the institution as well as the mode of delivery and the exit level of the programme. The programme must include enough support and instructions for the appropriate mode of delivery and independent learning.

The Institution aim to provide a robust and sustainable infrastructure, delivered by sound educational methods to support the development of high quality digital content. Staff involved in designing active and interactive learning opportunities will have access to tools, suitable learning resources, different pedagogic approaches and delivery options including the use of e-learning.

- **Promotion of student learning**

Students will be supported from the enquiry-phase towards registration and planning for a reasonable choice of subjects, minimum and maximum study periods and workload according to their circumstances.

The Institution will provide guides and materials effective for distance learning and the use of e-tools. These materials will be made available for embedding in curricula where relevant. There will be on-going review of student distance learning experiences to identify further support materials and services that should be developed for students.

The Institution will ensure that the students have the opportunity to participate in a rich and varied learning experience, learning and interacting with their peers and tutors independently of place or time. They will have access to high quality learning and information resources in a variety of formats and they will be adequately skilled in making effective use of the technologies provided.

It is important that they are information literate i.e. that they can sort out, evaluate and engage with a wide range of information resources effectively and ethically when critically engaging with their discipline. To achieve this, the Institution will:

- (i) Provide students with an online personal learning space, which helps to meet their diverse learning needs.

- (ii) Provide students with opportunities to access and be trained in the use of a range of technologies, developing e-skills enabling them to work and participate in a technology-rich society.
- (iii) Empower students as learners in an e-learning environment, helping them to learn effectively with technology in order to develop their lifelong learning skills.

The Student has to be able to connect to the internet with a personal computer, laptop, tablet or other electronic devices and has access to a mailing address and a telephone, to:

- (i) Communicate effectively with the tutor to acquire guidance and study materials.
- (ii) Communicate effectively with other students to enhance teaching and learning.
- (iii) Obtain study material and other media to study and learn successfully.
- (iv) Hand in assignments or any other required form of proof of the student's progress during the duration of a module or programme.
- (v) Give feedback interactively via a range of technological pathways.
- (vi) Be assessed fairly in formative - and summative assessments.

- **Staff**

The Institution will ensure that staff has every opportunity to further develop their skills and that good practice in the use of e-learning is recognized and distributed. The use and support of distance learning will be reviewed annually to ensure it is fit for purpose. To achieve this, the Institution will:

- (i) Develop an appropriate and sustainable model for the development and support of technology enhanced learning.
- (ii) Ensure the physical and virtual infrastructure blend to make best use of learning spaces and environments.
- (iii) Support programmes to develop action plans for the embedding of distance learning within their curricula.
- (iv) Ensure the provision of support for teaching staff, including materials and systematic and targeted training.

A comprehensive training programme of workshops which address both the pedagogical and technical skills required.

There will be on-going review of staff distance learning experiences to identify further support materials and services that should be developed for staff.

- **Teaching and Learning**

The appropriate distance teaching and learning methods for a particular programme or course:

- (i) Will without doubt make use of specific ICT. See in this regard Annexure 1 for Teaching and Learning in the distant programme at the APA.
- (ii) Will be determined by the nature of the programme, the profile of the students, students' access to resources and the HEQF level of the programme.

- (iii) Will include independent study of learning materials, completion of various activities, interactive methods, formative assessment tasks, tutorials, practical work and opportunities to interact with others as well as research activities.
- (iv) Continuous upgrading of teaching methods.
- (v) Can include work-integrated learning as a planned component of a curriculum when outcomes can only be achieved through work-based experience.
- (vi) Will support and complement the purpose of the programme.

Study materials:

- (i) Print media remains the practical choice since it is inexpensive, reliable and accepted as a medium for studying purposes. The programme material should be well designed to facilitate access to information and should prepare the student for learning, develop the necessary skills, attitudes and knowledge that the student needs, guide the student through the learning process and include sufficient and appropriate learning activities to enhance knowledge. The Institution will invest in good quality design and study material and will provide effective in-text student support services.
- (ii) Technologies with limited interaction such as digital media (audio and video cassettes, CDs, DVDs), satellite broadcasting, online distribution of content and information the Institution's websites, audio and video podcasting and streaming, and possibly radio and television will also be used to facilitate the process of teaching and learning. Some of the technologies that are asynchronous such as wikis, blogs, social networking facilities and e-portfolios can be used effectively to support teaching and learning.
- (iii) Multimedia with interactive possibilities. Diverse and current technologies that will serve the Institution's educational mission and be sustainable will be included in the delivery of courseware. Technologies such as telephony, multimedia CDs and DVDs, video and audio conferencing, messaging via cell phones, e-mail, discussion forums/chat and other web-based programmes for supporting innovative learning in distance education.
The multimedia approach with interactivity between students and lecturer(s), students and tutors, students and students, and students and institution is effective but must comply with the criteria for effectiveness.
Criteria for the selection of media include access and availability, pedagogical appropriateness and integration of the media into a coherent experience.

Curriculum development:

The Institution will support more accessible, flexible and creative models of curriculum delivery through distance learning based on sound pedagogical principles. Innovation and best practice in use of distance learning will be embedded in our learning and teaching, assessment and feedback strategies to support student learning and success. To achieve this, the Institution will:

- (i) Promote wider use of technology to provide a more flexible, inclusive and accessible curriculum.
- (ii) Support innovative use of technology to provide engaging, active and interactive learning activities.
- (iii) Explore how greater use of electronic resources may be incorporated into the curriculum.

- (iv) Advise upon and support the appropriate use of technologies for efficient and effective forms of both formative and summative assessments.
- (v) Ensure that distance learning is taken into account in programme and module planning when working with partner institutions in the development and/or delivery of the curriculum.
- (vi) Ensure feedback on distance learning provision is gathered so that distance learning embedding is informed by student and staff opinion.

- **Assessment**

The assessment strategy:

- will ensure that students develop effective cognitive, reflective, self-management and practical skills,
- will include formative assessment which is designed to support the teaching and learning processes or support research skills,
- will include formative and summative assessment aspects that will be used for making a judgment about the achievement of the learning outcomes,
- will assist students and tutors to monitor their learning in relation to formative assessment tasks and feedback.

Integrated assessment strategies will be implemented, as outlined in the Assessment Policy.

- **Library and information services**

Library support is an integral part of quality distance education. The Library and Information Services offered in distance learning, should be designed to meet effectively a wide range of information, bibliographic and user needs. The basic need for the library and information services distance learners are –

- Library management and support services for distant library users,
- Provision for additional costs of distant library and information services,
- More flexible library services,
- Provision of mutual beneficial alliances,
- Greater student access to information resources, such as text, supplementary reading and reference services,
- Learning how to find the information they need from the information that is available,
- Developing ways to apply the information gained and to make sound, information based decisions.
- The distance education institution is responsible for providing convenient, direct physical and electronic access to library resources for distance learning programmes equivalent to those provided in traditional settings and in sufficient quality, depth, number, scope, correctness and formats to
 - o meet the students' needs in fulfilling course assignments and enrich the academic programmes,
 - o meet teaching and research needs;
 - o facilitate the acquisition of lifelong learning skills; and
 - o accommodate other informational needs of the distance learning community as appropriate.

In traditional Library services students go to the library to access the range of information services that they need to satisfy their learning needs. In distance education a cocktail of modalities has to be used to take library services to distance learners. The Library and Information services provided to distance learners should include:

- reference assistance,
- computer based bibliographic and informational services,
- reliable secure access to institutional and other networks, including the internet,

- consultation services,
- a programme of library user instruction design to instill independent and effective information literacy skills while specifically meeting the learner support needs of distance learning community,
- assistance with and instruction in the use of non-print media and equipment,
- reciprocal or contractual borrowing, or inter-library loan services using broadest application of fair use of copyrighted reserved and non-reserved materials,
- prompt document delivery, such as a courier system and / or electronic transmission,
- adequate service hours for optimum access by users, and
- promotion of library services to the distance learning community.

- **Library, information and teaching and learning services through ICT**

The recent widely availability and use of ICT services, as well as the reduction in technology and study costs, make the rise and the use of ICT part and parcel of higher education and training.

Distance learning can be effectively provided by ICT for quality education as well as the provision of library and information services. ICT provides access to the web, library databases, electronic journals, email-facilities, different communication facilities, etc.

Library and information as well as teaching and learning services should make use of ICT services to

- Provide and use library and information to and by distant students,
- Networking,
- Access of different course contents,
- Helping distant students in using ICT services in quality distant education to study, for supplementary study, prepare assignments, assessments, feedback, etc.
- Email facility for easy communication between students and tutors.

ICT selected must be appropriate to the circumstances, the needs of the students, the purpose of the programme.

Appropriate management, administration and ICT systems

The Institution rely on well defined processes, procedures and robust organisational systems supported by ICT.

- It will review and develop its governance, management and technology infrastructure on an ongoing basis in order to give effect to its institutional vision and ODL mission.
- It will implement processes which will enable teaching, learning and support services to be offered in an optimal way through integrated, systemic distant learning processes.

4. Management of Distant Programmes

The institution by way of programme coordinators will conduct ongoing benchmarking of the programme(s) against national and international reference points as well as research and subsequent interventions to improve the quality of distanced provision.

The Institution will review and develop its governance, management and technology infrastructure on a constant basis in order to give effect distance education.

The Institution will employ sufficient academic, administrative and professional employees to ensure that the distance learning systems operate optimally and provide continuous, consistent and quality service to the students.

ANNEXURE A

1. Making use of the Moodle system

What is the Moodle System of die Afrikaanse Protestantse Akademie?

It is used in communicating the information from lecturer and support staff to the user of the information. It is the customised *Information Communication Technology* of the institution used to communicate to students and to enable students to download recorded classroom lectures, e-books, additional study material and peer submitted reports; also to serve as a digital platform for students to upload assignments and reviews. It also serves as a platform to communicate questions directly to the lecturer or the class.

2. How is Moodle implemented?

The abovementioned email addresses of the students are linked to our secondary domain (i.e. my.apa.ac.za). This domain is served by a Moodle System customized especially for distance learners. We offer all students online training as well as a user manual on how to access the system, use the resources and how to submit required assignments etc. The system is secured by a unique username and password for each user (see figure 1 below)

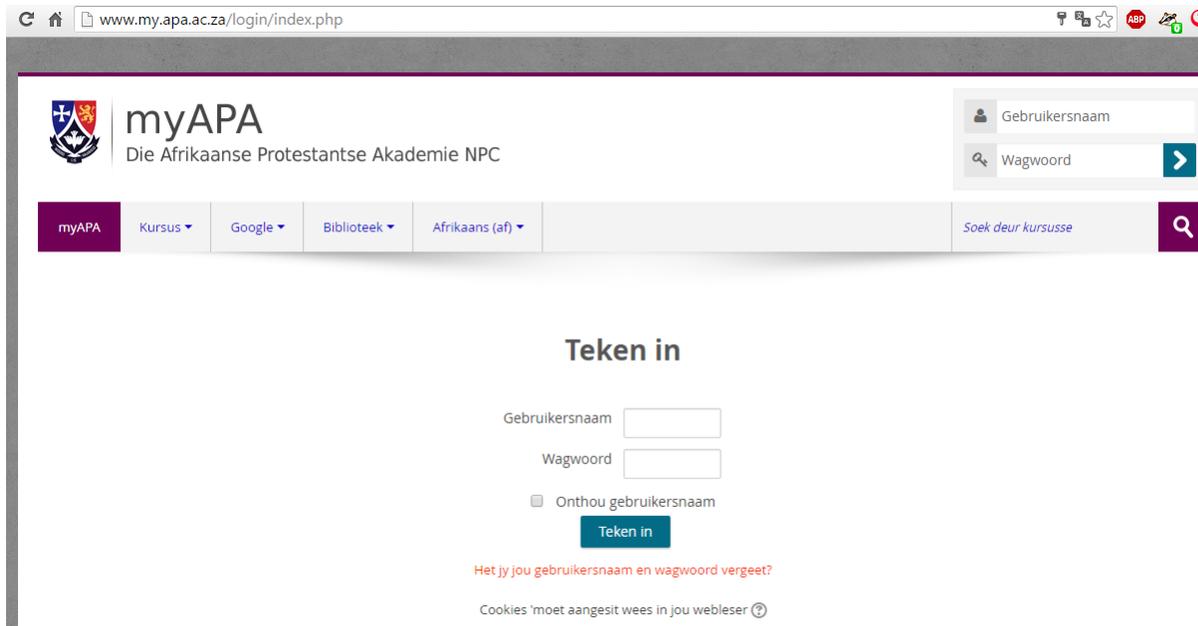


Figure 1

All academic staff members are registered on the Moodle System as well and a student is able to contact a lecturer via the Google Applications which are integrated in the system or the Moodle Messages at any time if he/she needs help on a specific subject or assignment (see figure 2 below). All courses a student is registered for, is listed on a student's home page (see figure 3 below for an example).

The Moodle system is also linked to the electronic library system and other relevant e-learning facilities, as well as to the official home page (apa.ac.za) and the official calendar of the institution (see figure 4). Students also have a linked calendar to their online profile they can use to add to Android/Apple Devices in order to be notified of upcoming events, notifications and changes.

e-Leer - jou geleentheid tot wysheid en insig.

”Neem kennis! In die kalender verskyn die datums vir eksamens en ander belangrike reëlings. Die kalender word gereeld opgedateer, so dit is belangrik dat u gereeld gaan kyk of daar byvoegings is:

<http://www.apa.ac.za/jaarprogram/>

U kan die volgende iCalendar adres gebruik om die kalender in Android of Apple by u kalenders te voeg vir nuutste kalender inligting op u slimfoon of tablet

<https://www.google.com/calendar/ical/dieapameester%40apa.ac.za/public/basic.ics>

DRINGEND VIR ALLE AFSTANDSTUDENTE

Studente word versoek om kennis te neem van die volgende kennisgewing:

🏠 Navigasie

My tuisblad

- ▣ Webwerf tuiste
- ▶ Webwerf bladsye
- ▶ My kursusse

✉ Messages

No messages waiting

Messages

⚙ Administrasie

▼ Voorblad instellings

✎ Turn editing on

🌐 Google Apps

- ✉ Gmail
- 📅 Calendar
- 📁 Google Drive

🏠 Main menu

- 📰 Webblad nuus

Figure 2

▼

▼ *Vou almal*

My tuisblad

- ▣ Webwerf tuiste
- ▶ Webwerf bladsye
- ▶ My kursusse
- ▼ Kursusse
 - ▶ Algemene
 - ▼ BA
 - ▶ Afrikaans
 - ▶ Bybelkunde
 - ▶ Christelike Berading
 - ▶ Duits
 - ▶ English
 - ▶ Filosofie
 - ▶ Frans
 - ▶ Geografie
 - ▶ Geskiedenis
 - ▶ Grieks
 - ▶ Hebreeus
 - ▶ Latyn
 - ▶ Nederlands
 - ▶ Opvoedkunde
 - ▶ Rekenaartegnologie
 - ▶ Sielkunde
 - ▶ Sosiologie
 - ▶ Wiskunde

Figure 3



Jaarprogram

Home > Jaarprogram

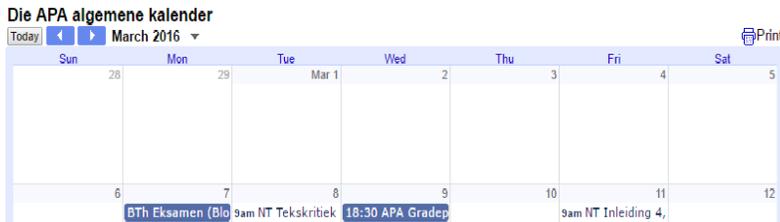


Figure 4

3. Lectures for distance learners students on Moodle

All class lectures are recorded and uploaded to the Moodle System (see Figure 5 below for an example). Distance learners students are able to download the lecture and listen to the presentation every week.

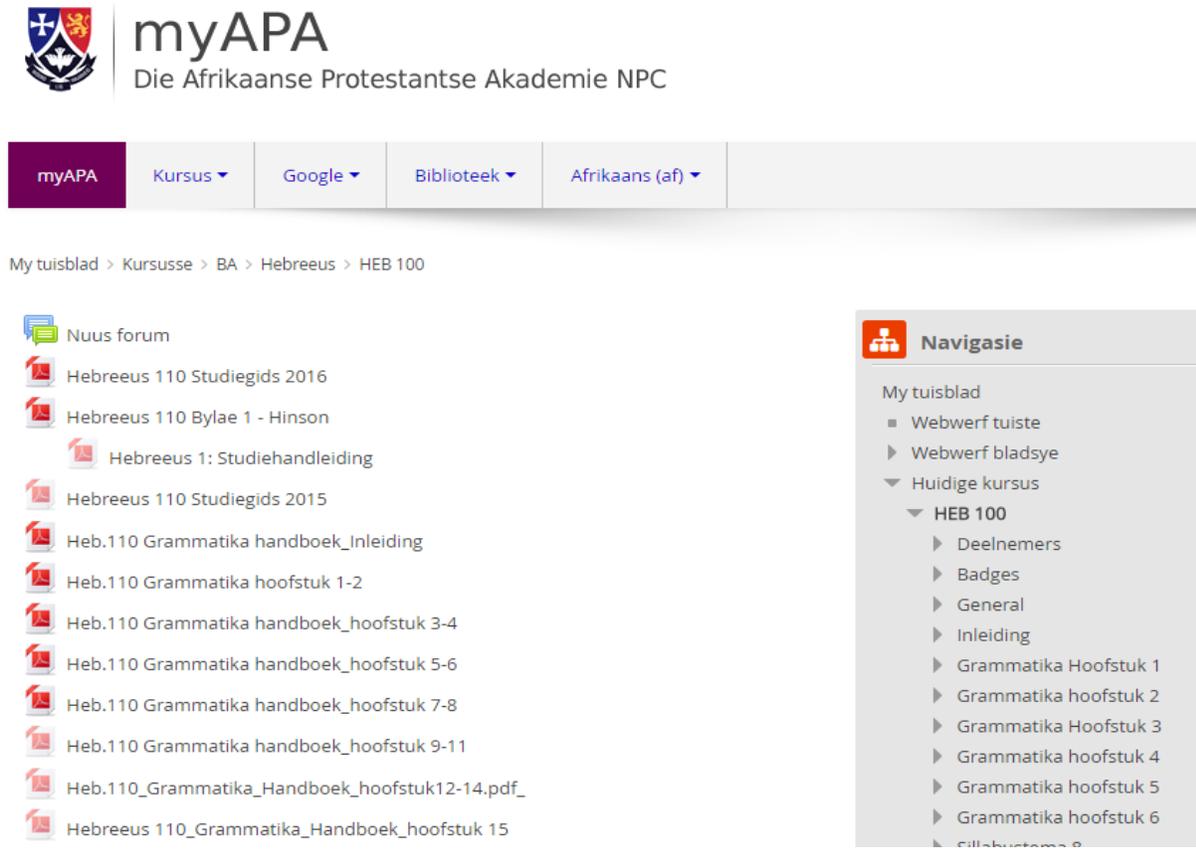
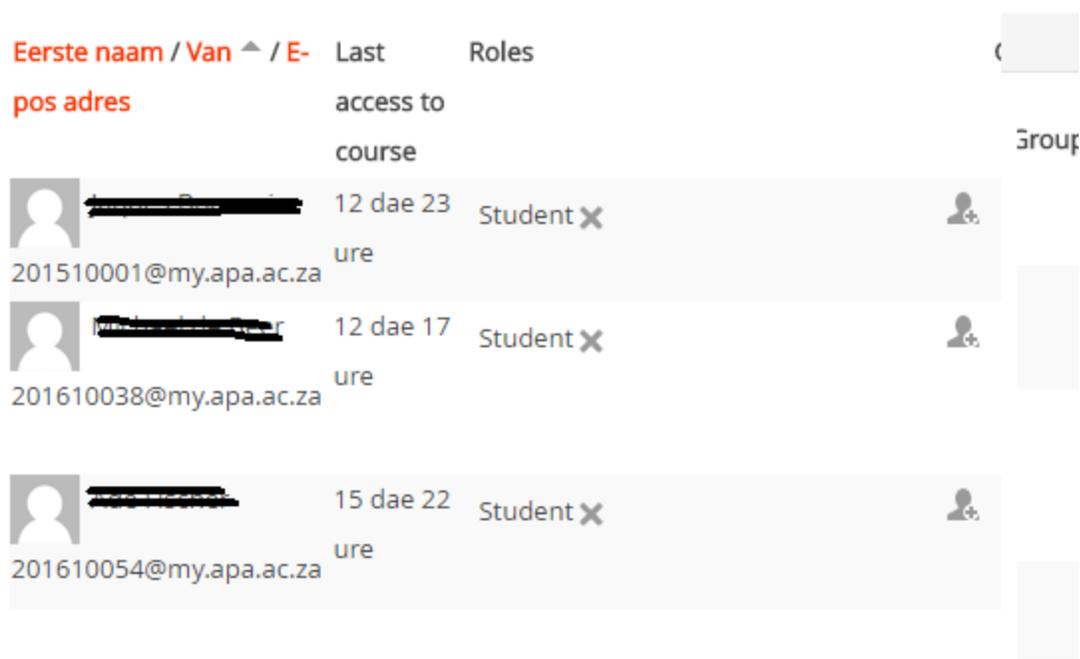


Figure 5

All relevant announcements and scheduled meetings/changes are communicated to the Distance Learners via Moodle. The lecturer is able to see who have noticed the announcement and who still need to acknowledge the notice when he/she logs into the system (see Figure 6

below for an example). This enables the lecturer to follow up if a student fails to respond to a scheduled notice.



Eerste naam / Van	Last	Roles	Group
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Student	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Student	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Student	[Redacted]

Figure 6

4. Student email accounts

All students receive an email account from the institution at enrolment. The typical address is example@my.apa.ac.za. This domain and these email addresses are registered at *Google Educational* and it gives every student access to Google Scholar for online research, Google Books (i.e. e-books and e-resources) and all related Google Software and applications free of charge. The email addresses are also used to create Google Groups and discussion forums on our Moodle System relevant to every academic program. All students have access to Google Discussion Groups, Scholarly debates and free online resources while they are enrolled at the institution (see figure 7 below). When a student graduates, he/she has the option to keep the email address free of charge to encourage students to be actively involved in ongoing research and academic discussions even after they graduated from our institution.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Groups	Email Address ▲	Type
<input type="checkbox"/>	myAPA Administrasie e-posse	admin@my.apa.ac.za	Public (domain)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alle Studente	allestudente@apa.ac.za	Custom
<input type="checkbox"/>	APA Alumni	apa-alumni@apa.ac.za	Custom
<input type="checkbox"/>	BA Dosente	ba-dosente@apa.ac.za	Custom
<input type="checkbox"/>	BA Studente	ba-studente@apa.ac.za	Custom
<input type="checkbox"/>	Classroom Teachers	classroom_teachers@apa.ac.za	Custom

Figure 7

5. Access to Library and Information Services

The convergence of communication technology via Moodle offers die Afrikaanse Protestantse Akademie an array of options to deliver library and information services to distant students. The expanded use of Moodle in the delivery of library and information services has served to reduce the barriers to library and information services that are occasioned by distance for distance learners. A student can access the library of die Afrikaanse Protestantse Akademie 24/7 from any site via the webpage or the Moodle System.

If a student want to use a specific book he/she can log into the library system with their supplied credentials and place a hold on a specific book(s), or ask for the library resource to be couriered to any address nationwide within 24 hours or to have a look inside the book. Due to the unreliable postal system the using traditional post should be opted out and rather budget to use courier services to deliver library books to students when requested. This decision is in the best interest of our students and is adequate for the amount of requests we receive for books from the library.

With Google Books integration the system is able to give students a preview of the book in the library, but due to copyright on library resources students are not able to download an electronic copy of the resource. The resource must be physically booked out of the library and couriered to the student. Students who are unable to visit the library should not be in a disadvantage to get or stay in contact with the required resources.

Students also have online access to extensive online library resources linked to our library profile

such as OpenLibrary, Jonathan Edwards Centre for Africa and ResearchGate. Our library is also linked to WORLDCAT, and other tertiary institutions in Southern Africa via a dedicated proxy server and we have an agreement to borrow resources not available in our library from other institutions as the need arises. Distant students are thus adequately catered for in obtaining library resources. We also make extensive use of online resources and e-books to enable distant learners easy access to study material.

Annexure B

Schematic presentation of distant teaching & learning of the APA.



My APA-webblad
Moodle



Institution

Provide academics

Provide study guides

Provide study material

Provide timeschedules and frames

Provide student support and guidance

Provide ICT system and support

2 Contact Sessions per annum

Assessment

Feedback

Distant Student

Enroll vir webpage (apa.ac.za)

Given access to ICT system

Receive study material and guides

Forums, chat groups, instant messaging, e-mail, Android App

Receive study letters

Interact via ICT system

Hand in assignments

Attend contact sessions

Assessment

Enquiry, dispute, review procedure



