Cairns School of Distance Education Program Delivery Policy

Background

For many years, core learning in distance education was paper based, utilising materials provided by a Queensland Department of Education development and production unit called Access Ed. Paper based correspondence courses were provided, supported by video tapes, audio tapes, textbooks and other support materials. These materials were further supplemented by HF radio (subsequently teleconference) lessons and periodic field program face to face activities. This system provided a broad yet thorough curriculum for student learning. However, whilst it was undoubtedly a step forward when introduced there were obvious disadvantages.

The first was the significant time lapse between students' completing work and receiving teacher feedback, sometimes up to 3 weeks.

The second drawback was the difficulty and expense of reviewing and updating these materials. They were expensive to develop and then unchangeable without further major investment.

The third problem was a lack of opportunities for interaction.

In the years after 2002, a decision was made by the department that the materials would be renewed. A Materials Development Forum was established, comprising representatives of Access Ed, Schools of Distance Education and SODEA. A significant decision of this group was to develop future materials digitally so that they could be amended and changed as required. It was also recognised that it was not possible to produce materials for digital and paper formats of equal quality. The most recent iteration of Distance Education course material development, C2C (Curriculum to the Classroom), was completed within this framework. Courses are available to access in BlackBoard and MiSticks have been sent out to facilitate off line digital access.

Where are we now?

In recent years the quality and accessibility of digital resources has improved greatly. We live in a digital world.

Recognition of these developments necessitates a plan to change the culture of engagement with learning materials from paper to electronic. Gradually teachers have increased use of the opportunities provided by email to facilitate rapid feedback to students, employed BB (BlackBoard Collaborate) as a repository of study courses and used Elluminate to enable real time interactivity.

Cairns SDE is continuing to phase in use of digital programs as the default option, recognising greater student independence in teenage years as well as the popularity of on-line learning. It should be stressed though, that handwriting, textbooks and novels are not neglected and remain an important part of our learning packages. Paper materials may be available for some elements of some courses.

Currently:

- Years 11 and 12 courses are fully digital with no printed version of course materials available
- Years 6-10 Australian Curriculum Version 8 digital resources are available in black and white print version. Non C2C subjects and Languages are only available digitally
- Course materials in Years P – 3 are also digital and are available on line on BB and via Mi-stick. However in these years, following approval of a print request, students may receive Australian Curriculum Version 8 resources in paper format including colour printing for handwriting/activity booklets or starter kits (Guides and teaching resources will not be printed in colour)

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Where to from here?

We will continue to address the advantages of digital program development and the disadvantages of paper as outlined in the rationale above.

We will also ensure the following important issues are addressed:

- Timelines of delivery, updating of materials and feedback
- Materials are developed for on-line as optimum version
- Financial considerations
- Sustainability
- Environmental consideration
- Costs

External variables

- C2C curriculum materials are not aligned to the current Australian Curriculum
- Changes in the required curriculum are anticipated to be ongoing
- There is a requirement for schools to schools to amend programs to deliver Australian Curriculum Version 8 by the end of 2020.
- There is no external program development or updating
- Our commitment to sustainable practices

Choice Points/Critical Issues

Consideration of which year levels require paper

Early years writing

Time spent by students working on line

Current course development and learning styles in the senior years

Preparation of students in "junior high school" for senior studies

Costs of printing copies of digital materials

Capacity of our school to develop paper based learning materials

Copyright constraints on modifying materials

Recuperating costs of producing print copies of digital materials by charging a fee

Implementation

Programs supporting asynchronous delivery will provide flexibility for our learners and families supporting "any time any place" engagement with programs and work requirements. The following decisions reflect the constraints identified and the necessity to develop our programs digitally

- Years 6 – 12 Australian Curriculum materials will be created digitally. There will be an opportunity to develop new courses which will also be developed digitally
- Years 6 – 12 materials will all be digital without the option for printed copies beginning Semester 1 2021
- P – 5 program materials will remain as is with print copies of printable courses available on request.
- Families in P – 5 who have requested and been approved to receive print copies of materials will be charged a fee per unit/term/semester if they are not part of the Student Resources Scheme
- Reasonable adjustments based on disability will be considered.

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