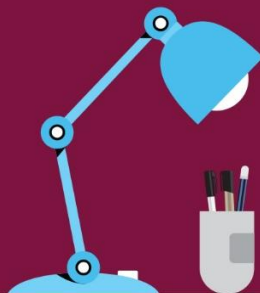# Distance Learning Evaluation Tool

Stage 1

Introduction

Recently, schools in the U.A.E. put in place different models of distance learning as their core education platform in response to the unexpected disruption of normal schooling. While circumstances vary, the efforts made by schools to implement a changed and largely unfamiliar method of education in a short space of time must be recognised.

The variation that exists between schools' provision must be acknowledged, specifically the experience of staff and students in using distance learning techniques or materials, the available resources in school or in homes, and the level of support which parents are able to provide. International best practice emphasises that special circumstance distance learning programmes cannot replicate what is done in school.

There is a need to evaluate all schools' distance learning programmes, the provision and impact on students' learning experiences. This evaluation tool is informed by a review of international best practices, an in-depth understanding of our schools, and feedback from parents, students and principals.

Leadership and governance continue to be accountable for key areas of education. These key areas include students' participation in their educational provision, students' ability to access their learning, their continuing momentum for learning with appropriate and regular feedback, and their highest possible levels of social and emotional wellbeing including regular communication between students, teachers and parents.

A tool for improvement

The purpose of the tool is to evaluate the school's distance learning provision and more importantly, to support the school in identifying areas that require improvement. It will also allow schools to prioritize and plan improvement in an efficient and more focused manner. Schools are encouraged to use the tool as a starting point for their improvement journey in order to move from a temporary alternative to normal schooling (Stage 1) to a more sustainable distance learning option. Schools may seek clarification on areas for development and final outcomes.

Scope and purpose of the Evaluation Tool – Stage 1

Student experience	Ensuring continuation of students' learning beyond the physical boundaries of school
Learning	Continuing students' progress and momentum in learning by identifying priorities
Delivery models	Adapting the most effective practices in teaching and monitoring for distance learning, using a range of modalities (such as live sessions, pre-recorded, assignments and integrated activities)
Protection, care and wellbeing	Safeguarding students' health, wellbeing and cyber safety during the distance learning Prioritising wellbeing, implicitly and explicitly

Purpose

To evaluate and improve the learning experiences and wellbeing of students using distance learning in special circumstances.

The Evaluation Tool holds the wellbeing of students and the continuity of their learning as the highest priorities. It covers essential aspects of provision, leadership and student learning. It has a straightforward structure with descriptors that are easy to understand and easy to use during short evaluation visits. The structure optimises the time and resources for all stakeholders.

Additionally, the structure provides the means to identify what is working and what is not. The results of the evaluation will give schools direction in terms of which areas of provision need strengthening, and which areas are working well.

What will be evaluated?

Who will be consulted?

How will we evaluate?

Students' distance learning and wellbeing

Attendance and participation
Safeguarding
Learning opportunities
Equity of access
Wellbeing

Teaching and monitoring students' learning

Planning and delivery
Sharing intended learning outcomes
Distance learning provision
Monitoring and assessing learning

Leading and managing students' learning

Agility
Contingency
Communication and engagement
Resources management

- Students
- Parents
- Teachers
- School leaders

- Virtual Lesson Visits (VLV)
- Virtual discussions
- Stakeholder questionnaires
- Samples of key documents and students' work

3 Zones

13 Themes

A Student' distance learning and wellbeing	B Teaching and monitoring students' learning	C Leading and managing students' learning
Attendance and participation	Planning and delivery	Agility
Safeguarding	Sharing intended learning outcomes	Contingency
Learning opportunities	Distance learning provision	Communication and engagement
Equity of access	Monitoring and assessing learning	Resources management
Wellbeing		

The Monitoring tool consists of **three Zones, 13 Themes and 39 Descriptors.**

Each Zone consists of a number of Themes. Each Theme has a number of Descriptors, which explain the key components.

Zone A Students' distance learning and wellbeing	Zone B Teaching and monitoring students' learning
This Zone prioritises students' wellbeing and safeguarding, and their access to, and participation in the distance learning. It also evaluates the quality of the students' learning experiences and checks that students are maintaining continuity and momentum in their learning.	This Zone evaluates teaching and curriculum adaptation for distance learning, and the extent to which teachers monitor students' learning and provide them with feedback for improvement.
Zone C Leading and managing students' learning	
This Zone focuses on schools' capacities to maintain their distance learning provision for an undetermined period of time. Schools need to be prepared for sudden changes in circumstances, and to be able to draw upon the support cooperation of well-informed parents and governors.	

Zone A – Students' distance learning and wellbeing

Descriptors

Attendance and participation	Students: ■ attend and participate in the learning sessions and activities ■ conduct themselves in a respectful manner
Safeguarding	Students: ■ have clear guidelines about online safety and cyber bullying, including who to contact if they have concerns ■ feel safe when working online and know what actions to take if safety issues arise
Learning opportunities	Students: ■ experience a balance of learning methods (such as live sessions, pre-recorded, assignments and integrated activities) appropriate to their needs ■ maintain continuity and momentum in their learning
Equity of access	Students: ■ have equitable access to the school's distance learning material ■ have the resources/technology and skills to access distance learning
Wellbeing	Students: ■ have opportunities to connect with their peers and teachers ■ know who they can contact if they need to discuss wellbeing concerns ■ are able to manage their workloads ■ have an age appropriate balance between screen time and other learning activities, including regular breaks and physical activity

Zone B – Teaching and monitoring students' learning

Descriptors

Planning and delivery	Teachers: ■ use a balance of learning methods that are appropriate for online learning and to students' needs ■ ensure that resource requirements for completing activities at home are reasonable and easily accessible ■ collaborate to ensure that students' workloads are manageable ■ plan for continuity and momentum in students' learning
Sharing intended learning outcomes	■ Lessons have clear intended learning outcomes and activity guidelines ■ Teachers modify learning outcomes to meet the needs of diverse groups of students ■ Intended learning outcomes and expectations for the activities are shared with students and parents
Distance learning provision	Distance learning provision: ■ allows students flexibility with their time management and assignment deadlines to accommodate home circumstances ■ covers essential content in identified key subjects ■ provides a balance of opportunities for academic and non-academic experiences
Monitoring and assessing learning	Teachers: ■ use a variety of assessment approaches to monitor students' learning ■ coordinate submission dates of students' work with other subjects ■ provide students with relevant feedback about their work

Zone C – Leading and managing students' learning

Descriptors

Agility	■ Short-term planning is responsive and adjusts to changing circumstances on a daily/weekly basis ■ Leaders review the distance learning programme on a regular basis and make appropriate adaptations and improvements
Contingency	■ Longer-term planning considers possible scenarios and options, including resource availability
Communication and engagement	Parents: ■ receive regular communication from the school about their own role, and teachers' responsibilities ■ receive appropriate guidance about how to support their children's distance learning, including the use of learning technologies ■ receive regular updates about their children's learning Teachers: ■ are clear about their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities ■ provide parents with flexible opportunities for communication, in coordination with the school Leaders ■ address parental concerns and communicate responses promptly ■ facilitate parent support networks Governors: ■ receive regular relevant communication from the school leaders ■ provide school leaders with necessary guidance, support and resources
Resource management	The school: ■ ensures that students have the necessary technology to access distance learning ■ ensures that teachers have the necessary training and technology to offer the distance learning

The overall evaluation of the school's distance learning

Evaluators will conduct a range of activities, including analysing questionnaire findings, reviewing documents and student work samples, interviewing school leaders and attending live virtual lessons.

Evaluations will be made at the Theme level, where each Theme will be evaluated as "Developed", "Partially Developed" or "Not Developed".

The following will be applied to evaluate the school's distance learning:

	Overall
Developed	At least nine Themes are *Developed* and none are *Not Developed*
Partially Developed	At least ten Themes are *Developed* or *Partially Developed* *
Not Developed	Four or more Themes are *Not Developed*

*No more than three Themes are Not Developed

Areas that are evaluated as Not Developed must be prioritised by schools for improvement.

Code of conduct

During the visit, evaluators will:

■ keep the interest of learners at the heart of the visit

■ respect the confidentiality of information, including deletion of all access links and personal information at the end of the visit

■ make evaluations impartially, free of personal bias or prejudice

■ conduct themselves professionally, with courtesy and respect, and with due consideration for the current special circumstances

■ activate cameras for face-to-face discussions, where appropriate, with the senior and middle leadership teams (Academic and Wellbeing)

■ only use silent observer access during virtual learning visits

■ not record any interviews or virtual learning visits (observing live lessons)

■ identify and make note of successful practices in distance learning and what areas need development

■ arrive at a fair distance learning profile of the school, using the evidence available, in line with the monitoring tool

Evaluation activities

Analysing stakeholder questionnaires	■ In planning for the visit, evaluators consider relevant information extracted from questionnaires. This provides an indication of the main areas in which the distance learning provision is most successful and where improvements are likely to be necessary.
Conducting discussions with school leaders	■ Structured discussions provide opportunities to review specific points in relation to the themes of the evaluation tool. ■ Evaluators follow set questions in order to optimise consistency and objectivity.
Observing live learning sessions	■ Evaluators conduct short visits to online lessons to observe interactions and learning. They consider learning objectives and teaching activities, feedback to students, students' engagement, enjoyment and acquisition of new knowledge and skills. ■ Presence will be visible (evaluator's icon will show) but evaluators will have their cameras and microphones off during the visits. They will not interrupt the lesson/activity in any way
Reviewing work samples	■ Samples of students' work and different types of assessment materials will be used as indicators of how well students are committed to learning and the levels of work achieved. ■ Work samples may be uploaded or accessed via links to learning platforms.
Reviewing documents	■ Evaluators will review the documents submitted by the school