

1 Becoming a distance learner

In this section:

- understand what it means to study by distance learning with WEDC
- identify factors that will help you learn

What does distance learning with WEDC involve?

We believe our postgraduate programmes are unique in your area of study, which is why we have received so much interest from numerous countries throughout the world!

Getting started

If you have already applied and are enrolled onto the programme, then the next step is to book the first module *Management of Water and Environmental Sanitation Services*. If you have completed this or other modules, check out the study schedules from the [‘Studying with us’](#) tab on the [programme portal](#) to find out which module you should study next. To book a module, use the [Module Booking Form](#).

How the programme is delivered

The programme is comprised of a collection of discrete modules presented to you on the portal, and replicated as far as possible on a USB pen drive. Recognising that reliable Internet access may be limited in some parts of the world, we will send the pen drive to you before each module starts so you can choose to work offline.

The internal module resources are drawn from the University’s Learning Management System called ‘LEARN’. On registration you will be granted access to a username and a password for LEARN. When you have paid for a module, the materials will be released so you can get started straight away.

Our postgraduate modules are sub-divided into ‘units’ which are particular areas of study relating to the module. There are usually 15 units to each module, with a few exceptions, such as *Research Methods* and *Research Dissertation*.

To study a unit we provide a unit guide. In some cases the guide itself contains all we require you to study for its topic with recommendations for further reading. In other cases it is a point of navigation to other resources too, ranging from academic texts, videos, webinars, recorded lectures and other learning ‘assets’, depending on the nature of the subject. In effect, the portal is a ‘one stop shop’ for the programme.

There is also the option to print the core learning materials (those that are not interactive) You can also opt for us to send you the paper-based materials to you at minimal extra cost, determined on a module-by-module basis.

Assignments

As your module progresses, you will be required to submit assignments. An assignment is your response to set questions based on the materials you have studied up to a particular point. The mark for each assignment contributes to your module mark. There are two assignments to submit for each 15 credit module.

In the *Research Dissertation* module, there is an oral examination. If you are unable to visit Loughborough for a face-to-face examination, then you can make contact via Skype on a computer with a webcam and Internet connection for your interview. This initial visual contact is required for identification purposes. If, after the initial contact, there are transmission problems over the Internet, then the interview can continue by telephone.

Access to email or the Internet will be necessary for submitting an electronic copy of each assignment as we require an electronic version to run plagiarism checks. Submitting an electronic version is useful to you too if you are unable to get the original to us by the required date. For the *Research Dissertation* module, occasional access to the Internet and/or a good library will be necessary and this is useful, but not essential, for the other modules.

Assignment guarantors

As assignments are undertaken in your own time and location, we require a ‘guarantor’ to confirm that the assignments have been completed entirely by yourself. You and your guarantor must complete and sign a [Declaration Form](#) and each assignment must bear the guarantor’s signature. You can change your guarantor at intervals throughout your studies if there is a just reason for you to do so, for example if you move home or are likely to be working elsewhere for a prolonged period. Refer to Section 5 for further information about





1 Becoming a distance learner

changing your guarantor. In the first instance, [The Distance Learning Administration Team](#) will be able to advise you about finding a suitable guarantor.

Assignment feedback

Our programmes involve you, the learner, and us, your tutors, in a cycle of study, directed assignments and feedback.

Feedback is essential to the learning process. It gives you information you need to progress with your study by answering two basic questions:

- How am I doing?
- How can I improve?

Feedback takes the form of constructive advice provided by your tutor when you have submitted each assignment. You may also ask for advice about areas of a module that may or may not be related to an assignment. You can do this by emailing or telephoning the responsible examiner (module tutor) directly, or sending a request by post. Contact via Skype can often also be arranged.

Programme regulations

The programme is governed by Loughborough University regulations. These are presented to you on the portal. PDF versions feature on the pen-drive. You should familiarize yourself with these as there are certain conditions you must comply with when undertaking a postgraduate programme with Loughborough University.

Learning how to learn

Within the context of your distance learning programme, the learning process consists of a cycle of events. Learning takes place at every stage of this cycle, pictured on the right.

Read

Your main source of learning is through reading the module notes and supporting materials. Whilst there are interactive learning materials (video, animations, webinars and recorded lectures etc.) reading is still a core requirement. The module notes are highly illustrated which presents certain information in a condensed and accessible form, as well as giving you an opportunity to take a short break from reading!

Reading efficiently, however, is an important skill that will be of benefit throughout your studies. There are several skills involved with this process. (See Section 7.)

Review

The ability to reflect on what you read is one of the most important skills you will need to develop throughout your studies. Note-taking is one approach that will help you reflect and review your thoughts. The actual process of making notes helps you gain a deeper understanding of the subject and capture the essential points of a topic. (See Section 8.)

Test

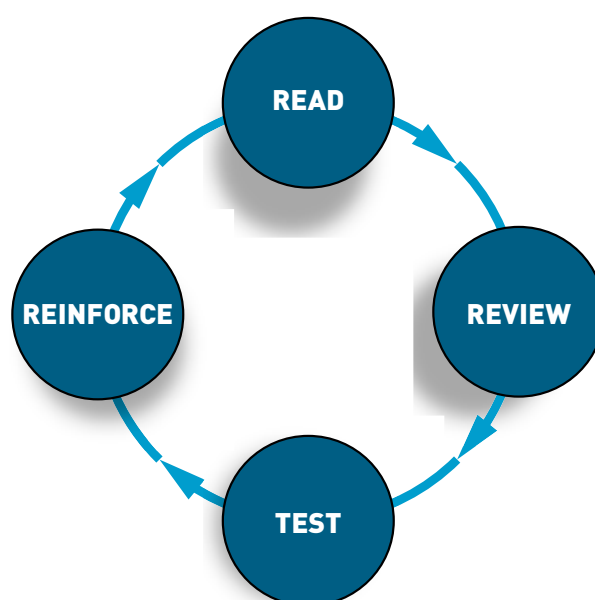
Self-testing the concepts you are reading about is also an essential feature of the learning process. This is often known as 'self-assessment', a process of critical analysis of your own work, which will help you to:

- improve the overall quality of your work; and
- help you diagnose any difficulties you may have, early and efficiently.

(See Section 4.)

Reinforce

Relating what you have learnt to a real life situation reinforces your learning. This is why case studies are an important feature of our modules. Another way of reinforcing your learning is to consider how it relates to your own current working situation.



If you are facing difficulties with any aspect of your programme, please contact us. Our contact details are given at the end of this document.