

Distance education enrolment – guidelines and procedures

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1. Policy statement

The Department of Education (department) provides distance education services from preschool to year 12 through distance education centres. A distance education centre refers to a government school that is established as a distance education centre under the *Education Act 2015* (the Act) and includes schools of the air and the government school known as the Northern Territory (NT) School of Distance Education.

There are a number of categories under which children and young people can seek full-time equivalent enrolment with a distance education centre. Children and young people can also be enrolled concurrently in a distance education centre and in another school or program to meet their learning needs, which is referred to as dual enrolment. This document outlines distance education enrolment criteria and procedures for each category of prospective students.

All distance education enrolments require children and young people to:

- meet the requirements for enrolment in an NT Government school as detailed in the Enrolment procedures
- be enrolled for a minimum of one semester for preschool to year 9 enrolment, and by negotiation for years 10 to 12
- have access to a telephone, computer and the internet. Provision of information technology equipment may be facilitated by the department
- be provided with an appropriate learning space and environment. This includes a well-lit, ventilated space, absence of unwanted distractions to learning, and access to learning materials and resources
- be suitably supervised and supported by an adult each school day to complete their learning, including any requirement to attend the distance education centre or another place. This is not a requirement for children living independently and prospective mature age students; however, it may be beneficial to do so
- participate in all scheduled telephone, email and online lessons, complete all course requirements, and attend residential blocks where required.

Parents of children, children living independently, and prospective mature age students must:

- provide for home or town visits by a distance education school teacher and or a department officer.

2. Children and young people seeking dual enrolments

Dual enrolment is where a child or young person is enrolled in two or more schools to accommodate the child or young person's specific circumstances. This section applies to children and young people who intend to participate in distance and online learning.

This process does not apply for dual enrolments which do not involve a distance education centre. For more information about other types of dual enrolment please read the Enrolment procedures and the Attendance recording and reporting procedures.

2.1. Criteria

For children and young people seeking dual enrolments, the following criteria must be met:

- the school where a child or young person is currently enrolled is unable to provide an appropriate course due to one of the following reasons:
 - a specialist teacher is unavailable
 - the child or young person is transferring between schools with subject differentiation
 - school timetabling constraints limit or prevent the child or young person's subject choice
 - components of the school's program are delivered in first language
 - the school has limited capacity to deliver alternative programs or programs that meet the child or young person's learning needs
- arrangements for dual enrolment are negotiated by school principals.

2.2. Procedures

Parents of children, children living independently, and prospective mature age students must:

1. provide documentation including reasons why they are seeking dual enrolment
2. liaise and communicate with the coordinator of the school where the child or young person is currently enrolled
3. provide anything required by the coordinator for their negotiation with the school where the child or young person wishes to be enrolled.

Principals of both schools must ensure:

1. the school where the child or young person is currently enrolled is unable to provide a chosen course
2. the school to be listed as the main school is the school that has main responsibility for curriculum delivery to the child or young person and for reporting on their academic progress
3. the other school the child or young person attends is listed as the subsidiary school
4. the child or young person's education, training and wellbeing related information is collated and shared between schools.

For attendance recording and reporting in relation to dual enrolment, read the Attendance recording and reporting procedures.

3. Children and young people requiring flexible education arrangements

A child or young person may undertake a full-time study load through a distance education centre or be enrolled concurrently in two or more schools, including a distance education centre, to accommodate flexible education arrangements. Flexible education provides programs differently to the way they are normally provided.

Circumstances where flexible education arrangements may be required include:

- children and young people who require support through therapeutic interventions and or attend youth diversion programs
- school-aged pregnant students and parents who require greater flexibility.

3.1. Criteria

Enrolment in a distance education centre is negotiated on a case-by-case basis between the distance education centre and the relevant school principal or program manager to accommodate a child or young person's flexible education arrangement.

3.2. Procedures

Principals of distance education centres must ensure:

1. enrolment is negotiated and determined on a case-by-case basis dependent on the child or young person's needs, between the distance education centre and the relevant school principal or program manager
2. they advise parents of children, children living independently or prospective mature age students what additional documentation needs to be provided as part of the enrolment application
3. in the cases of dual enrolments, children and young people remain enrolled in their main school and their attendance is marked accordingly.

4. Children and young people experiencing special circumstances

In all special circumstances, principals of distance education centres must ensure:

1. they have received appropriate documentation detailing a child or young person's special circumstances
2. provisions are made for a child or young person's re-integration to regular school attendance or for a flexible education arrangement
3. where required, they seek independent advice regarding the suitability of distance education meeting a child or young person's needs.

4.1. Medical grounds

4.1.1. Criteria

To be enrolled in distance education centres on medical grounds, children and young people must meet the following criteria:

- the child or young person has a long-term illness or medical condition preventing attendance at school
- a report or certificate from a medical specialist is provided to validate that the child or young person cannot attend a mainstream school for more than 80 consecutive school days. The report or certificate must detail how the child or young person's medical condition impacts their ability to attend school and the length of time the child or young person is expected to not attend school

- the principal is satisfied that there are no other available and appropriate local provisions
- a report or certificate from a medical specialist is provided annually to continue enrolment on medical grounds.

4.1.2. Procedures

Principals of distance education centres must ensure they have received a current report or certificate from a medical specialist.

4.2. Exclusion

4.2.1. Criteria

Exclusion refers to a student being temporarily prevented from:

- entering the whole or part of any land, premises or facility occupied or used by the school or
- participating in any program or activity conducted by or on behalf of the school.

Children and young people who are excluded from NT Government schools may be enrolled in distance education centres if they meet the following criteria:

- the exclusion prevents the child or young person from attending school or participating in a school-based program
- the exclusion is temporary and enrolment in a distance education centre will be limited to such time as the exclusion ceases.

4.2.2. Procedures

Principals of distance education centres must ensure:

1. they have received evidence that a child or young person has been excluded by the Chief Executive
2. they have received approval from the Chief Executive for a child or young person to enrol in a distance education centre.

4.3. Expulsion

4.3.1. Criteria

Expulsion refers to a student being permanently excluded from attending any NT Government school. Under section 92 of the Act, this includes:

- any land, premises or facility occupied or used by a school or
- participation in any program or activity conducted by or on behalf of a school.

Enrolment in a distance education centre after expulsion is at the direction of the Chief Executive.

4.3.2. Procedures

Principals of distance education centres must ensure:

1. they have received evidence that a child or young person has been expelled by the Minister
2. they have received approval from the Chief Executive for a child or young person to enrol in a distance education centre.

For detailed information about expulsion, go to the department's Behaviour and wellbeing webpage.

4.4. Unforeseen extraordinary circumstances

4.4.1. Criteria

The mainstream school where the child or young person is currently enrolled must be able to demonstrate:

- the child or young person's educational needs cannot be met by mainstream schooling with access to school and regional resources
- effective collaboration has been undertaken between the school and the parent regarding the child or young person's needs
- parental consent has been received for the child or young person's enrolment with a distance education centre, and appropriate facilities and resources as well as suitable supervision and support to complete the learning program will be provided
- a personalised plan has been developed to manage the child or young person's re-entry into mainstream schooling that outlines the roles of the mainstream school and the distance education centre in the transition process.

4.4.2. Procedures

Principals of distance education centres must ensure:

1. they have received suitable evidence detailing the unforeseen circumstances
2. an assessment of additional need is conducted and documented
3. a personalised plan is developed and documented.

5. Children and young people demonstrating elite performance

5.1. Criteria

For children and young people to be enrolled in distance education centres on the grounds of elite performance, the following criteria must be met:

- the child or young person's usual place of residence is in the NT
- the child or young person is talented in high level competition or performance, for example, dance, theatre, music or sport, or involved with competition or performance at a state, national or international level
- participation in the above does not allow for regular attendance at an education facility.

5.2. Procedures

Principals of distance education centres must ensure:

1. they have received evidence that a child or young person is supported by an official organisation or state sponsored program in their area of talent
2. if the above is not available, seek independent documentation attesting to a child or young person's level of achievement and their support needs.

6. Children and young people undertaking home education

Home education is education of a child conducted by a parent of the child, primarily at the child's usual place of residence. A parent who proposes home education for their child must obtain an approval from the department. For home education, go to the department's Home education webpage.

6.1. Full-time distance education

Children and young people who have home education approval and wish to apply for full-time distance education must contact a distance education centre for enrolment. Once a child or young person is enrolled full time with a distance education centre, the parent must advise the Home Education team via homeeducation.doe@education.nt.gov.au of their child's withdrawal from home education.

6.2. Part-time distance education

Home education students may be enrolled in distance education centres as part-time students if the following criteria are met:

- the child is undertaking Transition to Year 9, and provides a reasonable justification for participating in distance education or
- the young person is undertaking senior secondary studies Years 10 to 12
- the parent makes arrangements with the distance education centre to enrol their child in a selected distance education subject or subjects
- the home education Teaching, Learning and Assessment plan, approved by the Home Education team details the selected distance education subject or subjects.

Back-to-School payments for home education students participating in part-time distance education are processed by the Home Education team.

6.3. Procedures

Contact Home Education by calling 08 8944 9214 or emailing homeeducation.doe@education.nt.gov.au, or go to the NT Government Home education webpage for detailed information.

International students

7.1. Criteria

International student refers to any student who is the holder of a visa. For children and young people to be enrolled in distance education centres as international students, the following criteria must be met:

- the child or young person is not an Australian citizen or permanent resident
- enrolment must be for a minimum of one semester for preschool to year 9
- enrolment is by negotiation with the distance education centre for years 10 to 12.

7.2. Procedures

Contact International Education by calling 08 8901 1336 or emailing international@education.nt.gov.au, or go to the NT Government International education webpage for detailed information.

7. Children and young people residing overseas

8.1 Criteria

Overseas student refers to a person who is not an Australian citizen or resident in Australia and who is under the age of 18.

Enrolment in a distance education centre as an overseas student is at the direction of the Chief Executive.

8.2 Procedures

Contact International Education by calling 08 8901 1336 or emailing international@education.nt.gov.au for detailed information.

8. Children and young people residing interstate

There are three subcategories of interstate children and young people who may be enrolled in an NT distance education centre:

- geographical isolation
- mature age
- dual enrolment.

To be enrolled in a distance education centre, a prospective interstate student must meet the following general criteria:

- the child or young person must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident
- the child or young person's usual place of residence is not in the NT
- enrolment must be for a minimum of one semester for preschool to year 9
- enrolment is by negotiation with the distance education centre for years 10 to 12.

The prospective interstate student must also meet the specific criteria of one of the subcategories and provide any required supporting documentation.

9.1 Interstate student enrolments on the grounds of geographical isolation

A child or young person residing interstate may be enrolled on the grounds of geographical isolation where the family's closest business centre is Darwin, Katherine, or Alice Springs. An interstate isolated child or young person must provide evidence, such as postal address or a letter from the employer, that Katherine or Alice Springs is used as the family's business centre.

For additional criteria and procedures for enrolments on the grounds of geographical isolation, go to the section on Children and young people who are geographically isolated.

9.2 Interstate student enrolments on the grounds of mature age

For criteria and procedures for enrolments on the grounds of mature age, go to the section on Young people as mature age students.

9.3 Interstate student enrolments on the grounds of dual enrolments

For criteria and procedures of enrolments on the grounds of dual enrolment, go to the section on Children and young people seeking dual enrolments.

9.4. Procedures

Principals of distance education centres must ensure:

1. they have received proof of a child or young person's residence
2. they have received all required supporting documentation for one of three subcategories
3. no enrolment fee is charged.

9. Children and young people who are geographically isolated

10.1. Criteria

For geographically isolated children and young people to be enrolled in distance education centres, the following criteria must be met:

- the distance education centre must be the closest to the primary family home or the business centre the family uses
- the distance between the principal family home and the nearest appropriate NT Government school is at least 56km via the shortest practicable route
- the distance between the principal family home and the nearest transport to an appropriate NT Government school is at least 4.5km and the distance to the school is at least 16km via the shortest practicable route

- there is no reasonable access to an appropriate NT Government school for at least 20 days of the school year due to adverse travel conditions, such as impassable roads or other circumstances beyond the family's or student's control.

10.2. Procedures

Principals of distance education centres must ensure:

1. they have received proof of a child or young person's residence
2. they have received appropriate documentation detailing the adverse travel conditions or special circumstances where applicable.

11. Children and young people temporarily travelling or moving interstate or internationally

11.1. Criteria

To be enrolled in distance education centres, children and young people temporarily travelling or moving interstate or internationally must meet the following criteria:

- the child or young person's usual place of residence is in the NT
- the child or young person, individually or with their family, must be returning to the NT
- the interstate or international school is unable to provide a chosen course
- the enrolment is for a minimum of one semester and a maximum of two semesters
- if the child or young person intends to stay on after 12 months, a decision will be made by the principal based on their level of participation, and an approval from a Senior Director Education will be required
- if the child or young person demonstrates a low level of participation, the principal may consider curriculum reduction.

11.2. Procedures

Principals of distance education centres must ensure:

1. they have received six weeks in advance, a statutory declaration detailing:
 - the family's intention to travel
 - the anticipated duration of travel
 - the expected home address on return from travel
2. a detailed itinerary including addresses of where the family will be staying.

For children and young people temporarily moving interstate or internationally due to their parent's employment, principals must ensure:

1. they receive evidence of the interstate or international employment that includes:
 - parent's name

- the employer's name and location
- length of employment.

12. Young people as mature age students

A prospective mature age student is a person who is 18 years or older and has not been enrolled in a school in the preceding 12 months.

12.1. Criteria

To be enrolled in distance education centres, prospective mature age students must:

- comply with the Allocation of government school education guidelines and Mature age student enrolment procedures.

12.2. Procedures

Prospective mature age students, principals of distance education centres and the vetting entity must comply with the Mature age student enrolment procedures.

13. Costs for distance education

This section identifies the costs included and not included in the standard distance education curriculum. Fees for international students studying at a NT Government school via distance education can be found on the NT Government's International education webpage. The costs that are listed at 12.2 Costs not included in the standard distance education curriculum are additional to gazetted fees.

13.1. Included costs in the standard distance education curriculum

Costs included in the standard distance education curriculum are:

- the provision of teaching and learning activities
- instructional support
- instructional materials
- administration and facilities associated with the standard curriculum program
- administration and coordination of the standard curriculum program.

13.2. Costs not included in the standard distance education curriculum

13.2.1. Educational items

Educational items are items for which parents of children, children living independently, and mature age students are expected to provide, or reimburse the school for, including:

- items which students take possession of, for example, textbooks and student stationery
- materials for teaching and learning where the child or young person consumes or takes possession of the finished articles, for example, home economics, ceramics, photography and catering

- school uniforms where applicable
- travel costs incurred to receive instruction, for example, the cost of a student ID card to access free bus travel
- services associated with, but not considered to be part of instruction in the standard curriculum program, for example, transport and entrance costs associated with camps and excursions.

13.2.2. Optional extra items

Optional extra items are those that are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program and are offered on a user-pays basis, and for which parents of children, children living independently, and mature age students may choose whether to participate or not. There is no impact on a child or young person's access to education if they do not choose optional extra items.

Optional extra items include:

- instructional support, resources and administration beyond the provision of the standard curriculum program, for example, student computer printing for personal use, internet access for recreational or non-school use
- extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program, for example, instrumental music tuition
- entry costs associated with performances, productions and events, for example, attending a performance on a school excursion
- materials for subjects where the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials or services required for the standard curriculum program and higher cost alternatives which may be more desirable, for example, requesting payment for the use of mahogany in woodwork instead of the standard pine
- materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program, for example, school magazines or school photographs
- school facilities and equipment not associated with provision of the standard curriculum program, for example, hire or lease of equipment such as musical instruments or notebook computers.

14. General Disposal Schedule for Student Records

Principals are obliged to ensure student record folders remain in the property of the department and are to be maintained and disposed of in accordance with the General Disposal Schedule for Student Records. Copies of a folder may be sent with the appropriate approvals from the parent, child living independently or a mature-age student, in the instances of a student transfer to an interstate or non-government school or to a private training provider.

15. Related legislation, policy and resources

15.1. Legislation

- *Education Act 2015* – <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/EDUCATION-ACT-2015>

15.2. Guidelines and procedures

- Allocation of government school education guidelines – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/school-operations/allocation-of-government-school-education-26-semesters>
- Attendance recording and reporting procedures – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment>
- Enrolment procedures – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>
- Mature age student enrolment procedures – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>
- Suspension guidelines – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/behaviour-and-wellbeing>

15.3. Resources

- Behaviour and wellbeing – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/behaviour-and-wellbeing>
- Home education – <https://nt.gov.au/learning/primary-and-secondary-students/home-education>
- International education – <https://nt.gov.au/learning/international-education>

Acronyms	Full form
NT	Northern Territory

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