

Distance education enrolment – guidelines and procedures

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1. Policy statement

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

There are several 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, a computer, and the internet
- be provided with an appropriate learning space and environment. This includes a well-lit, ventilated space, and absence of unwanted distractions to learning
- 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, as required.

Parents of children, children living independently and prospective mature-age students must provide for home or town visits by a teacher from a distance education school, or a department officer.

2. Children and young people seeking dual enrolments

Dual enrolment is where a child or young person is enrolled in 2 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 only applies to dual enrolments which 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

Children and young people seeking dual enrolments must meet the following criteria:

- 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
 - the school has limited capacity to deliver alternative programs or programs that meet the child or young person's learning needs.
- School principals must negotiate arrangements for dual enrolment.

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 the coordinator requires for their negotiation with the school where the child or young person wishes to enrol.

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 2 or more schools, including a distance education centre, to accommodate flexible education arrangements. Flexible education provides programs differently to the way they are normally delivered.

Circumstances where flexible education arrangements may be required include:

- children and young people who require support through therapeutic interventions 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 mainstream 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 enrol 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

Under section 92 of the Act, 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 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
- the parent of the child or child living independently consents 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

Children and young people seeking enrolment in distance education centres on the grounds of elite performance must meet the following criteria:

- 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 or a teacher, primarily at the child's usual place of residence, but does not include education through a distance education centre. The parent is responsible for planning, delivering and assessing their child's home education. A parent who proposes home education for their child must obtain an approval from the department. For more information on home education, go to the department's Home education webpage.

6.1. Full-time distance education

Children and young people who have approval for home education may apply to enrol in distance education. To apply for full-time distance education, parents must contact a distance education centre for the child's 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 arranges 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 the department's Home Education team by calling [08 8901 4902](tel:0889014902) or emailing homeeducation.doe@education.nt.gov.au, or refer to the department's Home education application procedure, or NT Government webpage for detailed information.

7. 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 is 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 8999 5895, emailing internationalservice@education.nt.gov.au or going to the NT Government International education webpage for detailed information.

8. Children and young people residing overseas

8.1 Criteria

Overseas student refers to a person who is not an Australian citizen or residing 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 8999 5895 or emailing internationalservice@education.nt.gov.au for detailed information.

9. Children and young people residing interstate

There are 3 subcategories of interstate children and young people who may be enrolled in a NT distance education centre. These are:

- 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 is 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 following 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 Darwin, 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.

10. 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 primary family home and the nearest appropriate NT Government school is at least 56km via the shortest practical route
- the distance between the primary 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 practical 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, will 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 2 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 6 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

Schools must ensure free provision of instruction, materials, and facilities, required to deliver the standard curriculum program.

For distance education schools, free provision includes:

- all course materials required as part of the standard curriculum program
- information technology equipment required as part of the standard curriculum program, where the distance education school is the student's primary enrolment
- postage costs for course materials and IT equipment required as part of the standard curriculum program
- residential visits that are required as part of the standard curriculum program.

Schools must not charge refundable or non-refundable deposits, bonds or hire fees for IT equipment and course materials.

Free provision of IT equipment and course materials will not be provided to students who reside overseas or interstate.

Schools may charge school fees for extracurricular activities and optional extras that are not required as part of the standard curriculum program. Parents choose to provide these for their children, and students are not disadvantaged if extracurricular activities and optional extras are not accessed.

For all proposed school fees, school bodies must consider equity issues and implement appropriate equity provisions. All students have the right to access all educational services provided by the school.

For a full overview of what parents can and cannot be charged as a school fee, and information about equity provisions, refer to the department's School fees and voluntary contributions policy and guidelines.

Information on fees for international students studying at a NT Government school via distance education can be found on the NT Government's International education webpage.

14. General disposal schedule for student records

Principals must ensure student record folders remain in the property of the department and are maintained and disposed of in accordance with the School management records disposal schedule. Copies of a folder may be sent with the appropriate approvals from the parent, child living independently or a mature-age student, in 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. Policy

- 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>
- Expulsion guidelines – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/behaviour-and-wellbeing>
- Home education application procedures – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/curriculum#home-education>
- Mature age student enrolment procedures – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>
- School fees and voluntary contributions policy and guidelines – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/school-communities>

15.3. Resources

- Home education – <https://nt.gov.au/learning/primary-and-secondary-students/home-education>
- International education – <https://nt.gov.au/learning/international-education>
- Internet subsidy scheme – policy, application and claim procedure – <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/policies/6979>
- School management records disposal schedule – https://dpsc.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/593749/Disposal-Schedule-2018-10-School-Management.pdf

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