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Delivery of Distance, Online, and Blended Learning Courses

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1. General

1.1 Purpose

This document is intended for recognized institutions (RIs) who wish to use distance, online, or blended learning to deliver a training course for seafarers.

Except when noted in this document, all existing requirements set out in a Transport Publication (TP) for a specific course or training program still apply.

The list of training courses and/or programs that can be delivered by using distance, online, or blended learning, and their relevant publications, are included in [Annex A](#).

1.2 Effective date

This document comes into force on April 10, 2024.

1.3 Authority

The *Marine Personnel Regulations* (SOR/2007-115), as amended, made under the *Canada Shipping Act, 2001* (2001, c. 26).

1.4 Definitions

Approved Training Course has the same meaning as in the *Marine Personnel Regulations* (MPR).

Approved Training Program has the same meaning as in the *Marine Personnel Regulations*.

Asynchronous learning means instruction is available for learners to access at any time, typically at a time that works best for them.

Blended learning means a mix of online and in-person instruction. The online instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Blended learning is also called hybrid learning and these terms have the same meaning.

Blended learning course means a course where blended learning is used.

Distance learning means a sequence of activities, designed to enable learning, delivered while learners and instructors are separated by time, space, or both. This may include asynchronous learning, synchronous learning, or both.

E-Learning means a broad term that captures learning facilitated by electronic resources. E-learning is also called digital learning and these terms have the same meaning.

Learning Management System (LMS) means a web-based software that facilitates course delivery in any modality. It can be used to post course information and learning resources, facilitate interactions between instructors and learners, submit assignments, and track learner progress.

Online learning course means a course where only distance learning is used.

Recognized Institution has the same meaning as in the *Marine Personnel Regulations*.

Synchronous learning means instruction that takes place in real time and requires learner presence (either in-person or online) at a set time.

1.5 Responsibilities

1.5.1 Transport Canada, Marine Safety and Security

Transport Canada, Marine Safety and Security (TCMSS) is responsible to authorize the delivery of distance, online, and blended learning courses for the training and advancement of seafarers.

TCMSS may periodically review:

- a) the mechanisms and infrastructure used to deliver approved distance, online, and blended learning courses against this standard; and
- b) the content, assessments, evaluations, and instructional design of individual approved courses, as well as evaluations used in assessing these courses.

1.5.2 Recognized institutions

Recognized institutions (RIs) are responsible to:

- a) have in place all necessary infrastructures to conform to the most recent amendments of this document;
- b) ensure instructors have technological, pedagogical, and subject matter expertise and knowledge, as well as the requisite preparation necessary to effectively deliver distance, online, and blended learning courses;
- c) ensure the content of approved courses is delivered as per the approved course outline for distance, online, and blended delivery;
- d) maintain portfolios and recording assessment results for each distance, online, and blended learning course;
- e) design required course and evaluation instruments;
- f) keep records of all course and evaluation results; and
- g) use the results of all evaluations to make continuous improvements to their courses. Evaluations may supplement other tools that the institution uses to improve their courses (i.e., formative evaluations, instructor peer feedback, etc.).

2. Course approval

2.1 Submission for approval

An RI that wishes to deliver a training course or program by using distance, online, or blended learning must submit their course and/or program proposal to:

- a) the Director of Seafarer Certification (AMSP), **or**
- b) the designated person for approval listed in the TP that applies to the course/program.

2.2 Proposal content

The proposal must be submitted as required based on the TP that applies, and must also include:

- a) name and credentials of instructors;
- b) contact information and availability of instructors;
- c) course code and name;

- d) detailed course curriculum list built from the applicable TP;
- e) list of required readings and references to be used, including textbooks and materials;
- f) learning objectives and/or learning outcomes and competencies;
- g) description of instructional approaches and methods used in the course, including:
 - (i) mode of delivery for each course objective, and
 - (ii) how instructors and learners will interact (synchronous or asynchronous);
- h) course calendar with a week-by week timeline that lists the anticipated dates that topics will be covered and assessments will be administered;
- i) strategies to be used to support, monitor, and assess learner attendance and participation ([see Section 6.1 for examples](#));
- j) description of each assessment, including how it aligns with course objectives and:
 - (i) weight of each assessment towards a learner's final mark;
 - (ii) anticipated date of each assessment;
 - (iii) the mode of invigilation (online, on campus, or otherwise proctored); and
 - (iv) whether each assessment will be synchronous, asynchronous, or a combination of both;
- k) copies of all assessments that will be administered, including the final examination;
- l) appeal conditions and related course regulations;
- m) checks put in place to protect academic integrity; and
- n) instructions for TCMSS to log in to the platform and systems used to deliver online learning.

2.3 Course approval

Approval to deliver a course is granted by TCMSS according to the criteria set out in the TP applicable to the course/program to be provided, and upon review and determination that the required submission elements for distance, online, and blended learning courses have all been addressed.

Before any course can be formally approved, the RI must have in place the supporting infrastructure necessary to effectively deliver a distance, online, or blended learning course. The infrastructure must meet the requirements of this document.

For more information, please see [technology requirements](#).

2.4 Course audit

TCMSS may audit any course covered by this document at any time.

The audit may be:

- in-person (i.e., during a visit to the institute), or
- remote (i.e., joining a live class online or reviewing curriculum materials).

When asked, an RI must give TCMSS access to the platforms and systems used to deliver the distance learning.

3. Quality management system

The recognized institution must operate under a quality management system (QMS) that conforms to Regulation I/8 of the STCW Convention (International Convention on Standards of Training

Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978).

Distance and blended learning must be included in the recognized institution's relevant policies and procedures.

4. Technology requirements

4.1 Delivery infrastructure

- a) At the core of most distance, online, and blended learning courses is some form of electronic communications, usually the internet.
- b) The connectivity of the recognized institution delivering the course material must be sufficient to ensure unrestricted access to material for all learners registered in distance, online, and blended learning courses.
- c) Access to course material must be secured using strong authentication measures.
- d) Access to course material must be available at all times, and learners must be given advance notice of scheduled outages (i.e., via email or posting the information on the learning management system).
- e) The RI must identify the minimum technological requirements necessary for learners enrolling in distance, online, and blended learning courses, and share these requirements with learners **before** they enroll.
- f) Technical support must be available for learners via email, telephone, and through resources such as help files and FAQs. Support must be available during the institution's business hours as well as other scheduled times.

4.2 Learning management system

Recognized Institutions must provide distance, online, and blended learning course content through a learning management system (LMS).

- The use of an LMS to support learners is also encouraged for any in-person courses (i.e., to make syllabus and assignments easily available to learners).

An LMS must be used to facilitate learner-learner and learner-instructor interactions.

- Student Information Systems (SIS) may be used as long as they meet the requirements below.

Protection of a learner's personal information and the integrity of the institution's academics are paramount. As such, the LMS must comply with [Section 8 - Security requirements](#).

An LMS used to deliver courses approved by Transport Canada must be regularly updated.

At a minimum, the system must be able to:

- track learner progress through the course material;
- store learner grades;
- report on learner's use of the system (i.e., log participation data, logins, etc.);
- give insight into the effectiveness of courses and identify areas for improvement;
- allow access to text, video, and links; and
- support secure communication between instructors-learners and learners-learners. This should include email and discussion forums at a minimum.

5. Instructors

The learning activity must be delivered by an instructor who is suitably qualified and experienced based on the criteria set out in the TP that applies to the course or training program.

In addition, the instructor must have the required technological, pedagogical, and subject matter expertise and knowledge, as well as the requisite preparation necessary to effectively deliver these courses.

We strongly recommend that instructors be educated and/or certified in distance, online, and blended teaching.

6. Content delivery

6.1 Attendance and participation

In distance, online and blended learning courses that are delivered synchronously, learners must:

- a) complete all examinations and evaluations, and
- b) meet the highest attendance requirements, either:
 - (i) the attendance requirements listed in the TP that applies to the course or training program, or
 - (ii) at least 90% of synchronous course sessions.

In asynchronous distance, online, and blended learning courses, learners must receive a participation score of 90% or higher to pass a course. Some examples of how students can participate in these courses include:

- make ongoing (regular) and meaningful contributions, as defined in the policy implemented by the recognized institution, to asynchronous discussion forums within the learning management system,
- actively participate in synchronous activities (i.e., small group discussions in breakout rooms, participate in class discussions via video, audio, or chat),
- submit video assignments where the learner demonstrates a skill or competency on camera, and
- participate in a required number of small-group or individual meetings with the instructor via a virtual environment.

The RI must explain how they will measure attendance and participation for a specific course in their policies for each course, and clearly communicate this to the learners before the course begins.

6.2 Academic integrity

Checks must be in place to ensure that the learners themselves are completing any coursework or participation activities assigned in an online learning environment.

Practices that support academic integrity in online learning environments must include:

- a) video submissions that show the learners demonstrating a skill;
- b) assignments that focus on applying course content in a real-world setting;
- c) assignments that require learners to work with others in a small group;
- d) use of the learning management system for formative assessments (i.e., practice tests), discussion-based activities, group work, sharing course materials and requiring learners to complete supervised in-person examinations;

- e) synchronous video assessments in a controlled virtual environment (i.e., locked-down browser); and
- f) one-on-one demonstrations of skills and competencies acquired.

6.3 Distance, online and blended learning course delivery

- a) Learning support must be available to learners through a variety of means (i.e., email, instant messaging, instructor office hours, scheduled one-on-one meetings via video or phone, etc.).
- b) Distance, online, and blended learning courses and their course materials (i.e., timelines, activities, assessments, and rubrics) must be finalized, ready to be delivered (designed, developed, and tested) before the course's start date.
- c) Standard course information must be made available to the learner at the beginning of every course. While this information will vary between institutions, the information must include:
 - (i) instructor profile, including background, availabilities, contact information and clear communication channels to be used (i.e., discussion forums, email or instant messaging within the LMS);
 - (ii) course outline;
 - (iii) course learning objectives and competencies;
 - (iv) description of how the learners will be assessed;
 - (v) attendance and/or participation requirements for learners;
 - (vi) description of how the course will be accessed;
 - (vii) description of how the course will be taught, including delivery mode (in-person, online, or blended) and whether it will be synchronous or asynchronous;
 - (viii) scheduling details (i.e., times and dates of synchronous sessions, how to attend synchronous sessions, assignment deadlines, and assessment due dates); and
 - (ix) how to get technical or instructional support.
- d) The RI must review all online content and ensure all technology performs adequately following software updates.
- e) At the end of each course, learners must be given an opportunity to provide anonymous feedback in the form of course and instructor evaluations. These evaluations are often done as an anonymous online evaluation.
- f) The instructor must identify the steps and strategies they will use to create an effective, efficient, engaging, and equitable learning experience for learners. They must also create an instructional plan that supports learners in succeeding and retaining the material.
- g) This information must be submitted to TCMSS for approval before the course begins, and must include:
 - (i) course/program's learning objectives;
 - (ii) mechanisms to allow learners to review material as desired; and
 - (iii) mechanisms for learners to access learning support and other types of online learner support.
- h) Practical skills covered in the course must be delivered in-person. Supplemental materials or resources to support or enhance the in-person training and allow for learner practice and mastery may be provided online.

- i) In a case where an RI feels that a practical component can be efficiently delivered online, the institution must demonstrate to TCMSS that the option considered does not impair the proficiency sought when requesting the authorization for the change in its delivery method.

6.4 Online synchronous delivery guidelines

- a) A distance, online, or blended learning course with synchronous elements must include instruction or learning activities that learners must attend at a specified time. Learners are expected to be present and participate in online synchronous activities.
- b) A blended learning course must be supplemented by in-person teaching and learning activities.
- c) The system used for synchronous delivery must support video and audio of the instructor, and a method for them to present course material such as slides, text, or video.
- d) Learners must have access to the required technologies for the course, as specified in the course description. These technologies (i.e., video, audio) should be included in the course plan, along with accommodation options (i.e., in cases of limited bandwidth, a learner could turn off their camera with their instructor's permission).
- e) In their course plan, instructors must include strategies to engage and facilitate participation of all learners during online synchronous sessions.

6.5 Online asynchronous delivery guidelines

- a) A distance, online, or blended learning course with asynchronous elements must include material for students to work through at a time that works best for them, within the set timelines for the task provided in the course outline.
- b) Special attention to strategies for learner engagement and information retention must be made.
- c) Asynchronous course elements must have a qualified instructor who can engage with learners through regular asynchronous communications to monitor and facilitate learner participation, interact with learners, provide feedback and support learner progress, and provide subject matter assistance. The instructor must be available to learners, and follow-up with them according to the recognized institution's policies.
- d) Asynchronous course elements should:
 - (i) be created using established online learning pedagogical principles and strategies;
 - (ii) include frequent and comprehensive assessments (formative and summative) triggered by learner progress; and
 - (iii) include mechanisms to maintain learner engagement and information retention.

7. Evaluations and examinations

7.1 Administration of evaluations and examinations

- a) A final examination or an evaluation that is worth a cumulative of 25% or more must be given in a fully invigilated in-person or online environment, as per the recognized institution's policy developed based on [Section 7.2](#).
- b) An evaluation that is worth a cumulative of less than 25% must be given in a:
 - (i) fully invigilated environment such as in item (a);
 - (ii) online environment approved by TCMSS that is similar to, but not limited to, the strategies listed in [Section 6.2](#); or

(iii) in-person setting.

7.2 Invigilation of evaluations and examinations

Where a learner isn't physically located near the recognized institution, another location may be considered as a fully invigilated in-person environment as long as the:

- a) recognized institution demonstrates to TCMSS that the measures in place to avoid cheating and ensure the integrity of the evaluation or examination are equivalent to an examination or evaluation conducted and invigilated on campus;
- b) location is a recognized institution or other location approved by TCMSS to administer examinations and evaluations;
- c) examination/evaluation is held in a secure location free of distractions; and
- d) supervision of the examination/evaluation falls under an approved invigilation procedure implemented by the recognized institution.

A recognized institution that wishes to conduct and invigilate an evaluation or final examination in a fully invigilated online environment must:

- a) demonstrate to TCMSS that the examination remains:
 - (i) valid – the examination is relevant to the standard/criteria being assessed,
 - (ii) authentic – the examination has been written/created by the learner,
 - (iii) current – the examination is relevant at the time it's held,
 - (iv) sufficient – the examination covers all required standards/criteria,
 - (v) reliable – the examination is consistent for all learners, over time and at the required level.
- b) demonstrate to TCMSS that the measures in place to avoid cheating and ensure the integrity of the examination or evaluation are equivalent to an examination or evaluation conducted and invigilated in person, and
- c) explain, in as much detail as possible, the online examination or evaluation process, the online invigilation rules and the software(s) used.

8. Security requirements

8.1 Federal and provincial privacy laws

The RI must respect all federal and provincial privacy laws that apply.

8.2 Privacy of student information

- a) The RI must have a policy that is compliant with the laws of the recognized institution's provincial jurisdiction for protecting the privacy of any learner data that may be collected, either intentionally or unintentionally, during the course. The policy will be provided to learners prior to enrolling in an online and/or blended learning course.
- b) Only persons authorized to work with learner's information must have access to it.
- c) Guidelines must be in place covering the complexity and frequency of change of passwords for learners, administrators, and faculty.

8.3 Security of information

- a) Information in the LMS must be regularly backed-up at least every 24 hours.
- b) Backups must be stored in a place that is protected from fire, flood, theft, and other incidents that could harm the information.
- c) On demand, the recognized institution must demonstrate to TCMSS that a backup file(s) can be opened, and it is not encrypted or corrupted.

ANNEX A

Table 1: List of training courses and programs

Training courses and programs	Relevant TP