



European Association
for Distance Learning

EADL Code of Conduct for Members

Preamble

It is essential for the success of EADL that the way members conduct business should stand up to the test of public criticism. In this context, the EADL Code of Conduct can be regarded as a means of introducing EADL to the public as an association of quality providers. It can help EADL members to gain a competitive advantage over non-members. But this will work only if members make a real commitment to meet the requirements of the Code of Conduct and display towards their students the attitude expressed by its rules. Mere technical compliance is not enough. The aim is to provide the kind of quality service students have a right to expect from EADL members.

To help its members derive the full benefit from the quality of the service they offer, EADL gives students a guarantee that they will receive from members the kind of quality service that the rules of this Code of Conduct define. To be able to give that guarantee, EADL needs an honest commitment from all its members to comply with the rules and regulations of the Code, and will set up a procedure to deal with any complaints that may be received from students.

Applicants for membership will be asked to confirm compliance with the Code by signing it. Existing members will also be asked to sign the Code, or to give an indication as to the period of time they need to implement the Code. They will be given a maximum of two one-year periods for full implementation. Members will be asked to renew their commitment every three years.

The Code is based on five principles:

- the principle of proper care
- the principle of legal security
- the principle of reasonableness
- the principle of reliability
- the principle of due publicity

1. The principle of proper care

General

Proper care is exercised in everything the member does. Tutors are properly qualified. If there are specific requirements for a practical as part of a course, these are complied with. There is no violation of consumers' interests. Advertising statements are truthful.

1.1 Information

At all times information given to potential students, either written or orally, is truthful and accurate. The language used in study contracts is clear and unambiguous. At least one person at the member is fully familiar with each of the courses offered, with the minimum demands these make on students, and with contractual regulations.

1.2 Guidance given to tutors

Tutors are given training to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge of distance learning to meet the needs of students for instruction and counselling. The member has clear rules for the rights and duties of tutors (payment, work hours, etc.). Tutors are familiar with work processes and

administrative procedures. They are given proper guidance concerning the professional criteria applying to them. The member ascertains that tutors employed have appropriate didactic and subject related capabilities. It assumes full responsibility for the employment of free-lance tutors and for the quality of their work.

A regular monitoring (at least once every 6 months) is made of tutors' work, and of guidance and marking standards. This applies to both tutors with an employment contract and free-lance tutors.

1.3 Work processes and administrative procedures

Students are enrolled quickly and efficiently and sent study material quickly. The member institute, its employees and tutors keep all information given by students confidential. Accurate records of students enrolled, for which course and when, are kept. Study material is despatched within 7 days of receipt of an enrolment, or delivered at the commencement of studies. Wrong or damaged study material is replaced immediately. Students are informed of any overpayment and a refund is made as soon as practicable. The student is given a copy of the study contract for his/her own records. Any refunds due are paid within 30 days.

Scripts are returned to students quickly, normally within 5 to 7 days from receipt by the member institute. If, exceptionally, this is impossible, the tutor informs students as to when they can expect their scripts to be returned to them.

Administrative or educational questions are dealt with within 7 working days. Letters requiring more time are acknowledged within 3 days of receipt, with an indication as to when a comprehensive reply can be expected.

1.4 Course materials

Instruction materials are produced by suitably qualified people according to the demands of the subject and the country in which the institution operates. All instruction materials and methods employed are educationally suitable for the objectives stated. Courses are appropriate for the learning levels and expectations of the target group. Course content is up-to-date and technically correct. Each course contains clear instructions on how to proceed. Courses are clearly printed, easy to read, suitably bound and convenient to use. Members make all reasonable efforts to keep informed about educational developments, theory building and research to ensure that instruction methods and materials conform to accepted practice in the distance learning field. Members have course and teaching evaluation systems.

1.5 Student support

Assignments are appropriate for the subject matter and of real assistance (not just token) in helping students to achieve their objectives. Tutors' comments are always legible. Tutors demonstrate a real conscientious desire to help students.

During normal office hours, someone is always readily available at the member institute to handle oral enquiries of a counselling nature.

Members maintain records of students, supervise their progress and encourage them to complete their courses.

1.6 Tutoring and examinations

Students' exercises are assessed by suitably qualified people according to the demands of the subject and the country in which the member operates. Where face-to-face teaching or technology-based learning occurs (which includes the use of information and communication technology in the fields of learning, learning support and student services), their quality is on a par with that of the other activities of the member.

The member has appropriate standards for marking tests and exams. The number of examinations in a course is clearly stated before enrolment. All internal examinations are directly connected to the subject lessons and cover the essentials of the lessons. The number of assignments to be corrected by a tutor is appropriate to the subject and length of the course.

Examinations contain clear instructions and guidance on procedure. If professional subjects are taught which lead to formal (state) examinations, the member institute's tests throughout the course adequately prepare students to take those examinations by being in the same format and marked to a similar standard as the formal examinations. They cover the entire syllabus. All tests are marked by properly qualified people.

It is made clear whether the examination leads to a qualification and whether this is recognised by the state, relevant professional organisations or other bodies. Tests and examinations leading to qualifications are subject to the inspection of an independent third party, or co-marked by a third party.

Members issue only certificates or diplomas that fairly represent the instructions given, and do not make any statement or imply that any certificate or diploma is equivalent to a degree or to a certificate awarded by a recognised examining body unless the member has official recognition as an examining body.

If the member acts as an examination centre for formal examinations, these are correctly invigilated and proper examination facilities are provided.

After a final examination result is declared, failures are informed of any further options available (e.g. further study, resits etc).

1.7 Facilities

Where face-to-face teaching is an integral part of a course, appropriate teaching facilities are provided.

There are suitable facilities for two-way communication between the member and the student.

Students have adequate access to technology-based learning if that is part of the course. If technology-based learning is organised in addition to other learning elements, students who do not have direct access to it are given other means of participating.

1.8 Advertising

Members accept full responsibility for all promotional activities and sales methods. These recognise the great importance of educational interests. In particular, advertising and promotional literature is

informative and gives a truthful picture of both the member organising or running the course, and of the course itself. No improper inducements and overstated prospects of individual success are made in printed material, correspondence, any other media or personal consultations. There is no suggestion of qualifications or “degrees” which do not have proper recognition. Only students who can be expected to benefit from the instruction are enrolled.

Advertising shows due respect to colleagues and refrains from making aggressive competitive statements.

If members use representatives who make visits to homes, the following requirements are fulfilled:

- The potential student has the opportunity to choose freely between information and advice in writing or a consultation with a representative.
- The member makes certain that the representative is fully informed about the member’s courses, services, fees, study contracts, and operating policies, including this Code of Conduct, to provide the best possible information and advice to the potential student.
- If the student chooses to sign an enrolment form during a personal visit, he is advised verbally and by a condition stated in the enrolment form that he may cancel his enrolment without obligation at any time within 10 days of the signing thereof.

2. The principle of legal security

General

The conduct of EADL members is in conformity with the law of the country in which they are based.

2.1 Attitude

The member has adequate procedures in place to deal with complaints. These provide for the possibility to appeal to an independent third party.

Complaints are dealt with within 7 working days. Where more time is required to investigate and deal with a complaint, acknowledgement is given within 7 working days and the delay explained, together with an indication of when the complaint can be expected to be resolved. The limit is four weeks.

The verdict of the person or body that deals with complaints is binding for the member, which acts promptly to implement the ruling.

Where external or independent inspection is referred to, this means inspection carried out by persons or bodies which are familiar with inspecting tasks (inspectors, consumers’ organisations, accrediting bodies, certifying bodies and the like) and who have no financial or other connection with the member under inspection.

2.2 Complaints procedures

Members take a sympathetic and reasonable attitude to complaints and make every effort to see that fairness is accorded to all parties. Complaints procedures are made public on the member's website and in its prospectus. Officers named in the complaints procedure information are existing persons. In the context of complaints procedures no single person has more than one function. All complaints are handled confidentially.

2.3 Filing

Complaints and settlements are kept on file for at least two years.

3. The principle of reasonableness

General

There is a reasonable relationship between offers made by the member and its performance, and the efforts and costs involved.

4. The principle of reliability

General

Students can rely on the continued validity of agreements made with the member for the duration of the course. Members allow students to suspend the study of their courses for a reasonable period of time and subsequently to continue on the original terms.

If members offer a guarantee of further tuition for a specific period or until success is gained in an examination, the conditions of the guarantee are specified in their promotional literature, and they are fully and honestly implemented.

5. The principle of due publicity

General

Before registration of a student, conditions of delivery, entry requirements and terms of payment are made known.

5.1 Teaching modes

It is clearly stated whether teaching is mainly face-to-face or at a distance. In the case of distance teaching it is clearly stated whether the face-to-face teaching element (if there is one) is an integral part of the distance learning course, or additional to it.

5.2 Study guide or website

Information given to potential students in promotional materials, study guides and on the website is truthful and accurate.

A sound consultation service is offered to prospective students and already enrolled students.

For each course the prospectus or website provides the following minimum content:

- the course name
- the objectives and syllabus of the course
- the course level
- the duration of the course and the total work load
- the study load required by the student - i.e. the study time (e.g. hours or weeks)
- qualifications (if any) that can be obtained
- internal and external examinations (state examinations or examinations of professional bodies) prepared for
- the number of examinations or assignments in the course, and resits available
- the target group the course is aimed at
- any requirements of previous knowledge
- information as to whether the course material supplied is all-inclusive or if additional materials have to be purchased
- the amount of the fee
- the terms of payment
- the services included in the fee
- the conditions for cancelling the course before completion

5.3 Contract

The contract with the student states in writing:

- the course name and the name of the institution
- the fees for the course
- the tuition and services included in the fee
- the terms of payment, when and how payment is to be made
- the duration of the contract
- the conditions (if any) for cancelling the course
- terms and conditions for any refund of fees
- details of any guarantees
- a cooling-off period of at least 7 days after receipt of the first study materials
- who owns the course material (the student or the member)
- a clear explanation of any special conditions pertinent to the member or the country it operates in concerning the course, or the contract
- the complaints procedure and the independent person or body complaints can be addressed to

Monitoring by EADL

EADL makes sure these standards are complied with by reacting in a suitable manner to any student complaints received. Complaints procedures are as follows:

- Upon receipt of a complaint a decision will be made whether it is within the purview of EADL. This is the case if the student has first made a complaint in accordance with the complaints procedure of the member which it concerns.
- If it is within the purview of EADL, the complaint will be registered and the person who made it will be informed of the time within which a decision is to be expected. If before appealing to EADL

the student has not first made a complaint in accordance with the complaints procedure of the member which it concerns, the complaint will be referred back to that member.

- In the case of a complaint not being in the purview of EADL the complainant will be given the reasons why this is so.
- Upon acknowledging a complaint, the EADL Executive Committee will appoint a person to deal with it. Care will be taken to appoint persons only who have no financial or other interests in the member concerned by the complaint. The appointment must be approved by both the complainant and the member concerned.
- The member concerned is asked to react to the complaint.
- The person appointed to deal with the complaint judges it as it relates to the member's reaction and this Code of Conduct.
- He informs the complainant, the member, and the Executive Committee of his judgement.

When it has been informed of the judgement, the member about which the complaint was made is expected to act promptly, and to do anything the judgement requires it to do within a reasonable period of time. The judgement and the way the complaint has been dealt with are put on file.

If a member about whom a complaint has been made fails to act adequately on the judgement passed, as a last resort it can be expelled, in which case information about this will be published on the EADL website.

At each AGM the Executive Committee presents a general report about complaints received.