

# Online Learning

## Regulatory Policy Statement

FEBRUARY 2025

### I. PURPOSE

This policy statement outlines the regulatory framework for approving and monitoring **online learning**.

The Education Standards Board exercises its authority under the *Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011* to regulate the provision of online learning in a manner that maintains high standards of competence and conduct by providers.

The various forms of online learning currently recognised include entirely online, blended, synchronous and distance learning. Additional options may also be considered. Refer to Appendix 1 for a detailed list of options that require registration and need completion of the application process.

If the proposed learning does not align with the provided examples, please contact the ESB for further information and guidance.

This policy is for guidance only and does not form part of the Standards established under the Act.

### II. OBJECTIVE

The objective of the policy is to ensure that online learning programs are subject to the same rigorous standards as face-to-face learning and that all students, regardless of the mode of delivery, have access to high quality education, that:

- addresses their developmental needs
- maximises their learning and development potential through an appropriate curriculum
- supports their educational achievement
- promotes an enthusiasm for learning
- supports, promotes and contributes to their health, safety and well-being.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- the *Standards for registration and review of registration of schools in South Australia* (the Standards)
- the *Evidence Guide*
- *notice of intent to register a new school in South Australia form*.

All documents are available on the Education Standards Board website at [www.esb.sa.gov.au](http://www.esb.sa.gov.au).

### III. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions will be used:

**Online Learning:** A method of education where the program is delivered entirely online, allowing students and teachers to engage from separate locations (but not necessarily geographically separated).

**Learning Management System (LMS):** A digital platform used to deliver online learning, including communication, resources, assignments, and assessments.

### IV. POLICY STATEMENT

The *Standards for Registration and Review of Registration of Schools in South Australia* set out the expectations for all schools, including those offering online learning programs. Schools must ensure that their online programs maintain the same high standards as in-person education, guaranteeing that students receive quality instruction, support, and protection, regardless of the learning environment.

In alignment with **Standard 1 (School Governance)**, schools delivering online learning must implement robust academic governance arrangements to ensure that the quality of online instruction is equivalent to that provided in face-to-face settings. The school's governing body is responsible for overseeing the development, delivery, and continual review of online learning programs. Additionally, schools must submit documentation outlining how the online curriculum will be delivered, assessed, and adapted for the virtual environment, ensuring it aligns with both state and national curriculum standards. Schools must also systemically monitor and report both academic performance and attendance in online settings, ensuring that online learners meet the same standards and legal requirements as those attending in-person learning environments.

While online learning is a mode of instruction, it must be offered only by schools with a physical, built environment that complies with **Standard 2 (Student Learning and Assessment)**. These schools must have the necessary infrastructure, grounds, and facilities in place to support both in-person and online education. This includes ensuring that they possess the technological infrastructure to deliver online learning effectively, including secure learning management systems, reliable internet access, and the necessary tools for virtual instruction, student engagement, and assessment.

Schools are also responsible for providing training to staff to ensure they are familiar with online instructional methods and the use of technology in delivering online learning. Furthermore, schools must ensure that teachers delivering online instruction are qualified, registered with the Teacher's Registration Board of South Australia, and trained in online pedagogical methods. Non-teaching staff involved in supporting online learning must also be appropriately trained to contribute to educational outcomes.

### **IV. POLICY STATEMENT CONT.**

Schools are responsible for monitoring student progress and regularly reporting to parents, ensuring compliance with educational and legal standards. The school's physical presence guarantees compliance with Commonwealth, State, and Local laws, as required for all registered schools. Additionally, schools must maintain mechanisms to review and improve online programs, using feedback from students, parents, and staff to ensure that online learning remains effective and aligned with broader educational goals.

In alignment with **Standard 3 (Student Safety, Health, and Welfare)**, schools offering online learning must ensure a safe, healthy, and supportive learning environment that protects the well-being of students. This includes complying with relevant laws and policies governing student safety, health, and welfare, ensuring that the same protections that apply to students attending physical school sites are extended to online learning environments.

Data security and privacy must be prioritised, with secure platforms implemented to protect students' personal information. Schools must also have policies and procedures in place for pastoral care, early intervention, child protection (including mandatory reporting), and behaviour management, which encompass online safety and well-being management.

Attendance and participation must be regularly monitored, with processes in place to address non-attendance and ensure consistent communication with parents or guardians regarding any issues related to student safety or welfare. Additionally, schools must engage parents or guardians to ensure adequate internet connectivity and access to devices at home to support student participation in online learning.

Mechanisms must be in place to gather regular feedback from students and parents about the online learning experience, which will be considered during reviews. By maintaining these standards, schools can ensure that students in online programs receive the same level of care, instruction, and protection as those in physical school environments.

### **V. APPLICATION PROCESS**

To gain approval for delivering online learning, new providers are required to complete an application form at least 12 months prior to expected commencement and submit the necessary evidence in accordance with the Evidence Guide. This evidence will be evaluated by the Education Standards Board to ensure compliance with relevant standards.

Once assessed, the application will be reviewed and determined by the Registrar, pending successful demonstration that all requirements have been met.

Consult Appendix 1 to determine if your delivery falls within the defined scope and an application is needed.

### **VI. REVIEW OF REGISTRATION**

Online learning programs will be reviewed by the Education Standards Board, as part of the regular review of registration process as provided for under section 54 (1) of the *Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011*, to ensure continued adherence to quality standards. These reviews will assess student engagement, curriculum delivery, and overall program effectiveness.

A notification to the ESB is required if your school is currently offering or intends to implement online learning.

Consult Appendix 1 to determine if your delivery falls within scope and requires notification.

### **VII. POLICY REVIEW**

The Education Standards Board is committed to involving key stakeholders in the regulatory process. This includes educators, parents, students, and representatives from the broader educational community. This policy review will span an anticipated 12-18 months, focusing on refining and clarifying terminology while actively gathering feedback.

Any major changes to the regulatory framework for online learning will be subject to a consultation period, allowing stakeholders to provide input before new policies are finalised.



# Online Learning in Schools

## WHAT IS ONLINE LEARNING?

Online learning is a method of education where students and teachers engage in learning activities entirely online, from separate locations. This flexible approach allows students to access educational content, collaborate with peers and interact with instructors using digital platforms (IN SCOPE).

## KEY TYPES OF ONLINE LEARNING

### Blended learning (IN SCOPE)

A combination of online and face-to-face learning, blended learning offers flexibility while maintaining in-person interactions.

Example: Students complete online theory lessons on science experiments and then attend lab sessions in person for practical work.

### Synchronous online learning (IN SCOPE)

In synchronous online learning, students and teachers connect in real-time, but from different locations.

Example: A history teacher hosts a live online lesson where students join via video conferencing, participate in class discussions, and ask questions during the session.

### Asynchronous online learning (NOT IN SCOPE unless part of Blended learning)

Asynchronous learning allows students to access course materials and complete assignments at their own pace without real-time interaction.

Example: An English teacher uploads video lessons and assignments on poetry analysis for students to watch and complete independently within a given timeframe.

### Distance learning (IN SCOPE)

Distance learning focuses on the geographical separation between students and educators. It can include online and conventional methods, such as mailed assignments.

Example: A rural student participates in distance learning, accessing a full curriculum online and uploading tasks or mailing in assessments for subjects like art, where physical submissions are required.

