Distance Education Overview

What is distance education at Southlands?
In its simplest form, distance education is a version of the learning program that we offer on the Albany campus. One of the ways in which this can be measured is whether or not a student can transition seamlessly between our on campus school and our distance education school.

Because we do not see our students face-to-face in the physical classroom - this requires us to think carefully about the implementation of our policies, procedures and the learning program.

How do we know that children are safe in our distance education program?
The Principal and staff of ACC Southlands work very hard to keep our students safe.

Here are some of the programs that we have put in place:

Induction Program
Our school provides a training program for all new parents and students who are joining the distance education program.

The training program covers the following student topics:
- Accessing the school’s learning management system
- Setting up your own profile in the school
- Setting up a timetable so that you can have structure in your school day
- Communicating with other students and finding other students with common interests
- Accessing your school courses
- Working through a typical lesson in distance education
- Participating in a class discussion
- Submitting work to your teacher
- Accessing your online textbooks
- Communicating with your teachers

The training program covers the following parent topics:
- Communicating with the school
- Taking attendance in distance education
- Being the onsite “eyes & ears” of the distance education program

Scheduled Return of Work
The school has put processes in place to receive work from every student on a weekly basis. Depending on the program (online, offline with online return of work) this could include participating in a class discussion or completing a quiz.

For students in our primary program we include things like completed worksheets. This would be a common thing to see any classroom in Western Australia and there is no difference in our distance education program.

We also have major assessment tasks developed in conjunction with our three main policies on student learning (Assessment & Reporting, Review of Student Work and Curriculum Evaluation).

These tasks are due in the latter half of the school term and they are submitted to the school as a part of the scheduled return of work.

**Online Audit Trail**

When a student is in school we can locate them based on their timetable and the teacher who is assigned to their class.

Distance education provides similar tools with their own advantages and disadvantages.

We know when a student account or a parent account is used to log into our school learning management system. This provides a timestamp in our system that we can trace. We even know what kind of browser they use to access the system.

We know what a student account does when it is within a learning management system. We can see where they are spending their time and what they’re working on.

You would think that you could possibly track the entire learning day from a student perspective but we believe this approach to learning would not be healthy for our students.

We believe in a blended learning environment where students use the advantages of the technology at their disposal but they also have plenty of time to work with a physical pen and paper and resources that are not driven by technology.

For example, a student could take less than a minute to see what they need to do for a Maths lesson. From an auditing perspective, the computer would tag the students as only being engaged for one minute. From our perspective, we would see the student using the computer as a reference but actually doing the work in a physical exercise book with a printout of the textbook.

Another example would be in any form of project-based learning. A student may use what they have learned in the school learning management system to guide their task but they would spend the majority of time away from our system working on the project. They may write a quick message to their teacher but that would only take a few minutes.

**Student-Teacher Communication**
All teachers are mandatory reporters. When a student is enrolled in the distance education program they receive a separate login account to their parents. It is possible for a student to raise a concern that they have with their teacher from their own login account. In the event that this was to occur, a teacher would respond as per the Child Protection Policy and the Mandatory Reporting Policy.

**Withdrawal from DE Enrolment**
Distance education is not for everyone. If a student is not engaging in their work there is a policy in place to review their ongoing enrolment in distance education.

Please refer to the DE Enrolment Policy for detailed information on this process.

**What about attendance in a distance education environment?**

**Weekly Attendance**
Parents are required to complete a record of their students attendance on a weekly basis using a website that we have developed.

In the event that the student is sick or absent from the program, a parent must confirm the reason for their absence.

Please refer to the DE Attendance Policy for detailed information on this process.

**Fortnightly Teleconference**
The fortnightly teleconference serves two purposes in our distance education program.

Firstly, it gives us the opportunity to bring all of our students together in a class cohort so that their class teacher can provide announcements and also encouragement based on what they have seen over the past two weeks. Our teleconference is no different to a school assembly.

Secondly, it gives us the opportunity to provide a point in time attendance register. by attending the teleconference you are attending our school.

**What does distance education look like for a primary school student?**
You receive a terms worth of school work from the school in the school holidays. The work includes a daily lesson plan for each subject.

Each subject has a short video to start the lesson where the teacher will talk directly to you. The video can be watched on your DVD player or on your computer.

After watching the video, you will have work to do in your textbook or in your workbook.
You return work to your teacher by logging on to the school’s learning management system (https://learning.acc.edu.au).

You will participate in a fortnightly teleconference with your teacher.

**What does distance education look like for a high school student?**

You attend classes by logging on to the school’s learning management system (https://learning.acc.edu.au).

You will be working with other distance education students throughout Western Australia. You will be able to share your opinion and what you have learned in class discussions. You will be completing assessment tasks appropriate for the subjects including things like exams, essays, and multimedia projects (yes - we do work with Minecraft as well).

You will not be working on the computer all day. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to work on tasks that take you outside and require you to use other skills that you cannot learn on the computer. You can also access your classes using an iPad or an iPhone. The learning program’s mobility allows you to learn from almost anywhere.

You will have the opportunity to build friendships with students your age and to talk about things that interest you outside of school. We have a vibrant, active and positive school community with lots of opportunities to talk about things like computer games, sports, TV shows, movies, books and much more.

Your workload will be very similar to a student in a private school with a high standard of academics. The difference will be that you will be able to work on your courses at a time of your choosing (we do provide a sample timetable and we highly recommend taking a structured approach to your learning).

When you need help, you will be able to communicate with your teachers primarily through the online messaging system but you can also contact the school via phone and you can even visit the school to meet with your teachers face-to-face. You will also get to meet your teachers at the residential program.

You will have a very clear understanding of what you need to do to succeed in the course. You will receive feedback on your work where appropriate. And you will receive two report cards per year (students do not receive a report card if they join mid-semester).