



West College Scotland
Induction Booklet
For
Distance Learning Students

DISTANCE
LEARNING

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Welcome to West College Scotland

Welcome to the Distance Learning Unit at West College Scotland, I'm pleased that you have chosen to study with us.

This induction booklet is designed to help you settle in to your course.

The booklet provides you with essential information regarding the services the College offers to its distance learning students.

Whatever course you have chosen, I hope that you will enjoy learning at West College Scotland. Our staff are here to help and support you, therefore do not hesitate to speak to them if you have any problems or queries, especially during the early stages of your course.

Wishing you every success.

Section 1 - Distance Learning Unit

At West College Scotland the Distance Learning Unit is based at the Paisley Campus where we have a team of people dedicated to the support of our distance learning students. The Unit is staffed by Tracey Winters (Team Leader), Shona Burton, Pamela Mack, and Emma Robertson.

We have over 50 distance learning markers at the College who are experts in their subject area and experienced at supporting students who have opted to learn away from the College campus.

You can find the Distance Learning Unit on the ground floor along the corridor to the right of reception at the main entrance of the Renfrew Building RE119. We are open Monday to Friday, 8.45 am to 4.30pm, throughout the year.

We provide the following services:

Central Admissions	All enquiries are dealt with by the distance learning unit, making it easier to track the progress of your application.
Course Information	We are here to give advice on all courses. You don't have to have an appointment, there are no age barriers and we welcome any type of enquiry for any type of course.
Financial Advice	Finance is important when you decide to come to college, we will tell you the cost of your course and about the financial support that is available to you. You can discuss your own situation in complete confidence.
Careers	Careers advice is available to prospective students and throughout your course. You can make an appointment for a confidential careers interview. Our Careers Adviser will help you decide on career or further study options and guide you through our extensive range of careers software.
Counselling Services	West College Scotland is one of a small number of Scottish colleges offering a professional counselling facility to its students. The service is there to support students when, for one reason or another, the difficulties of everyday living and/or the demands of their course become too much. At these times, counselling offers a caring, supportive and confidential relationship in which you have time and space to address issues that are causing difficulty or distress in your life. Counselling is about change and empowerment – it's not guidance or advice giving. You can arrange an appointment through Student Advisory Services and Main Reception

Section 2 - College Facilities

West College Scotland has a wide range of facilities available to all students. When you register as a distance learning student at the College you have access to the same facilities as our students who are based on the College campuses.

There is a range of recreational and sports facilities, snack bars, refectories and high quality training restaurants. You will have access to the Library including PC access. Trained staff are available to help advise you on any financial matters and career options available to you, as well as offering general counselling services.

A member of staff from the distance learning unit will be happy to show you around the Paisley campus and point out facilities which you may find useful including the following:

- Admissions
- Well Stocked Library
- Careers Information and Advice
- Guidance and Counselling
- Study Areas
- College Car Parks
- Refectories and Snack Bars
- Students' Union

How to get here...

The Distance Learning Team are based at Paisley campus. The Campus is within easy walking distance of Paisley Town Centre.

- By car: Via M8, exit junction 27.
- By train: Excellent Services operate from Glasgow Central, Ayrshire and Inverclyde to Paisley Gilmour Street.
- By bus: Frequent Services from Glasgow, Renfrew, Barrhead, Erskine, Johnstone, the Paisley area and nearby villages.

When you arrive at college:

When you come into the college for any reason, i.e. using computers, library, sitting assessments or meeting with your tutor, you **MUST** sign in at the Main Reception.

Section 3 - Student Intranet

The Student Intranet is a private website which is only accessible to WCS students. It is accessed using the link provided on the home page of the Student Portal. The Student Intranet offers a wide range of information to all students as well as links to other websites and resources to support you in your learning. Details on forthcoming events are published regularly on the site as well as other important information for students.

You need to log on to Office 365 before you can access the Student Intranet. If you are not logged on then you will be prompted to do this by entering your College e-mail address and password when you click the link to the Student Intranet. Access is not restricted to the college campuses, you can log on from other locations including at home or work. To access the Students' Portal and the Student Intranet go to <http://students.westcollegescotland.ac.uk>

Here you will be able to download guides on how to make the most of Office 365 which provide you with the facilities below.

When you log into Office 365 you will have access to the following Apps by clicking on the App icon



Mail - All students are provided with a college email address. This is attached automatically to college systems including Moodle and is used by default to send college emails to you – although you can choose to forward these emails to an account of your choice. Your email has all the usual features of webmail and outlook can be accessed from home.

Calendar and Tasks - Office 365 provides you with a calendar and task list to help manage your time and college activities.

People - A People Directory is also provided to allow you to search for the College email address of fellow students.

OneDrive - OneDrive gives you one Terabyte (over 1000 GB) of storage for your files. OneDrive offers secure access to your files anywhere that has internet access, allowing you to carry out your college work wherever you choose.

Sites - When in Office 365 clicking on the “Sites” link takes you to your Sites page where you will find links to the Student Portal, Student Intranet, Moodle and Office 365

Microsoft Office Web Apps – Word - Online versions of Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote can be used both inside and outside of the College allowing you to carry out your college work from any computer without having to install Microsoft Office.

Section 4 - Policies and Procedures

Problems with Your Course?

If you are having problems with a subject, please speak to your tutor in the first instance for guidance/help. If you do not have an assigned tutor for your course then you should contact distancelearning@wcs.ac.uk who will pass your query onto the Curriculum Quality Leader.

Student Complaint Policy

West College Scotland aims to offer every student a high quality, educational experience but there may be occasions when you feel that you have a legitimate complaint. The Student Complaint Policy is designed to meet such a situation.

There are separate procedures for complaints relating to your course, to those about other sections of the College and to complaints against other students. All students are encouraged to discuss their grievances in an informal setting with staff and most problems are resolved in that way. Details of the policy are available from your Tutor, Curriculum Quality Leader or the Distance Learning Unit. The policy can also be found on the Student Intranet.

Assessment

Most courses by distance learning are assessed internally although some now include an externally assessed element as well. The College operates an **Assessment Policy** that means that you are entitled to 2 attempts at an assessment (but not necessarily the **same** assessment). In very exceptional cases, a third attempt may be granted.

It is important for your success on the course that you keep up to date with assessed work. If you have genuine difficulties meeting a submission date you should request an extended submission date from your tutor. However, students who persistently ignore submission dates or extended submission dates will be referred to the Curriculum Quality Leader or Head of Sector who will agree a course of action with you.

Appeals Procedure

Occasionally, the situation arises where a student feels that they disagree with a tutor's assessment of their work or a decision not to allow a re-assessment. In most cases, discussion with the tutor will resolve the matter. Should you still be unhappy with a decision, there is a formal procedure to be followed to lodge an appeal and details can be obtained from your Curriculum Quality Leader.

The College has a system in place that ensures that all students are assessed to the same standard. Each course has "Internal Moderators" who regularly review students' assessments to make sure that decisions are made consistently to a set of nationally agreed standards. Additionally, awarding bodies such as SQA and NCFE appoint "External Moderators" who will inspect samples of work from all colleges to guarantee consistency of marking across the Further Education sector.

Section 5 - Health and Safety

The college recognises its duty to uphold the Health, Safety and Welfare of **all** persons in accordance with legislation. To help us to help you, remember safety is **everyone's** responsibility including yours. The nature of distance learning is such that you may never visit a College campus; however, should you come onto campus to use the library, sit an exam, etc. then it is important that you are aware of the following:

- Please sign in at the Main Reception
- Smoking is prohibited in all buildings
- Health and Safety Notice Boards are established in each building showing general rules for college safety. Be sure to read them.
- Car parking facilities are available – do not park on double yellow lines or in Assembly Point Areas. Observe the 5 mph speed limit. Take particular care driving near the nursery. Don't park in a position blocking other vehicles.
- Don't do anything that will harm you or your friends.
- Safety signs indicate what measures are required to be taken to protect you from harm. Safety clothing and equipment (where appropriate) are available.
- DO NOT TAMPER with safety equipment.
- Report any hazards you find in the college so that they may be remedied.
- Rules to be observed in computer laboratories, to ensure safety and compliance with legislation, are attached separately. Ensure that you read and observe these!
- The college is no a no smoking environment and smoking is not allowed on any of the campus grounds

Emergency Evacuation Procedure

There are notices in rooms/corridors showing the fire assembly points. Make sure that you read these. There are 2 alarms:

A continuous klaxon sound meaning evacuate **now!**

An intermittent klaxon sound meaning an evacuation in another building, so remain in location

When being evacuated, leave with your tutor/distance learning administrator and go via the nearest staircase to the correct assembly point to be counted/checked.

Do not Smoke! If the alarm happens during a time when you are not with a member of College staff, report to the member of staff you were last with. Do not return to the building until instructed.

First Aid/Illness

If you take ill at college, please:

- Inform either your tutor or a member of staff in the distance learning unit
- Where appropriate, he/she will note in our Sickness folder that you have been sent home
- Once you reach home, please telephone the distance learning unit to let us know that you have arrived safely.

Section 6 – Additional Support

West College Scotland offers Learning Support to students who have a disability that may affect their learning. This support takes the form of Extended Learning Support (ELS).

Learning Support is available to all students, full-time or part-time, attending our college. Additional or extended learning support is available to students with one or more of the following:

- Learning Difficulties
- Specific Learning Difficulties e.g. dyslexia
- Sensory Disabilities
- Physical Disabilities and Health Problems
- Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
- Difficulties in Learning Associated with Mental Health Problems

What Kind of help is available?

This may vary from something simple like the provision of coloured paper rather than white for handouts (of benefit to some people with dyslexia), to something more complex like the provision of a scribe.

Additional services available include:

- Loan of specialist equipment
- Arrangement of additional time for tutorials, assessments, etc
- Additional tuition in small groups or one to one basis for literacy/numeracy and information technology
- Advice about the Disabled Students Allowance (available to students on higher level courses)
- Access to Careers Guidance and advice about Grants and Bursaries

Individual Planning to Suit Your Needs

If you are eligible for Extended Learning Support, you, your tutor and Extended Learning Support Co-ordinator design a structured programme in the form of a Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP).

How to find out more?

Take advantage of this support and contact the Extended Learning Support staff or George Smith. You can also contact us at distancelearning@wcs.ac.uk and we will pass on your details.

Section 7 – The College Student Contract

As a student of the College, you have a right to expect

- To be treated with equal respect regardless of gender, age, race, etc.
- Access to information and guidance on all aspects of your course
- Through the Opportunities Centre, to have access to advice on non-course issues such as finance, career options, counselling, etc.
- To study in a safe and healthy learning environment
- An appropriate standard of premises and equipment for your course
- Regular opportunities to discuss your progress and performance
- Access to additional learning support, if required, to enhance your experience at the College
- The opportunity to develop your vocational and core skills
- To participate in elections for the Student Association
- To be represented on course committees
- To be able to use the College Complaints Procedure if required

The College expects students to observe specific College rules

- Drugs/Alcohol – Bringing alcohol and/or illegal drugs into college and their consumption and/or distribution on college premises is forbidden. Students under the influence of drugs or alcohol will not be allowed in college premises.
- Information Technology – All students are required to abide by the rules laid down by the College as regards computer use and internet access.
- Mobile phones - Phones are required to be switched off in class and library.
- Smoking – Students are required to abide by the College rule that bans smoking in all college buildings
- Health and Safety – In general, students are expected to act in a manner that does not place themselves or others at risk of injury. Students are also required to follow the health and safety regulations as laid down by their department.
- Fire Drills – When fire alarms are sounded, students are required to follow the procedures laid down by the College.
- Attendance – Students are expected to attend classes regularly and to inform their tutor or course leader if they are absent. They are also responsible for catching up on work missed as a result of absence.
- General Behaviour – All students are expected to maintain acceptable levels of behaviour on campus and to behave in a way that shows respect for other students and staff. They are also expected to conduct themselves in a manner that does not intimidate or harass others in the College.

Information on College Policies with regards to:

- Health and Safety
- Students Disciplinary procedure
- Student Complaints Procedure
- Assessment

is available on the college website (www.westcollegescotland.ac.uk) under Publications and Policies and the Distance Learning Unit.

Section 8 – Study Skills

We want to help you to succeed in your Distance Learning course and this guide offers hints and advice for managing your studies. Returning to education after a break can be daunting, but there are many sensible steps you can take to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Where to Study?

Distance learners can study anywhere! Most people study at home, although some choose the local library or their lunch break at work to keep on top of their studies and assessments. You are welcome to use College facilities or flexi-slots in the computer areas when your time permits.

Wherever you choose to study, try to find a space where you will be able to leave your study materials out between study sessions. This saves time and makes it easier to study for just a short while. Choose somewhere comfortable and quiet, where you won't be interrupted by family or television, with space to store all your course-work and resources. It is worth pointing out to your family that you need some peace and quiet to study and negotiating some ground-rules at the start, especially if your course is a long one.

Storing Notes

Being organised from day one really helps in your studies. Decide how you are going to store course-work and assessments in your study area so that you can find them quickly and easily.

Separate ring binders labelled for each subject can be helpful or separate paper trays for storing each subject. Having a set place to keep work for each subject avoids the stress of losing materials that you have to find quickly for study or assessments. Get into the habit of 'filing' the materials once you have finished studying. It is just a matter of getting into a routine!

NB: It's always advisable to 'back up' any assessments prepared on disk in case the disk should become damaged. Always carry disks in some kind of protective cover.

When to Study?

It's best to come up with a regular time for studying and completion of assessments each week which fits in with your circumstances. Consider your other commitments – part-time work, home commitments. For example, if you work during the day or evenings during the week, it might be best to use a Saturday morning so that you have the rest of the week free. If you're usually out at the weekend, decide on a morning, afternoon or evening when you will do your work. You need to discipline yourself to always sit and work at the same time.

As you are given assessments to do, mark the date for submission on your planner and then set yourself small targets. For instance, if the assessment is to be handed in 10 days from now, decide on small 'chunks' which can be done at a time, and decide on how many hours it will take. Now pencil in on your calendar which mornings/afternoons/evenings you will do each part. Try to stick to the same time slots all the time, but if you really have to miss one, pencil in an alternative time.

If you consistently approach assessments in this way, they will become more manageable. Make a start on assessments as soon as you are given them.

When choosing your study slot, think about whether you perform well in the morning or later in the day? Are you an 'early bird' or a 'night owl'? Consider the following:

- Early morning. I wake up full of energy ready for the day ahead
- Afternoons suit me best
- 5 pm onwards is good for me
- I am a 'night owl'. I only begin to really come alive after 9 p.m.

This should help you decide on the best time of day for you to study. Consider what free time you have, choose the most suitable time/days to work and mark these off on your weekly planner.

How to Study?

Now that you know the best time and place to study, you need to develop some techniques to carry out your studying. There are various techniques and different ones will be appropriate for different subjects. Here are some general points to consider.

- Competence in practical subjects can only be achieved by practice. Learning to type, or to do a Spreadsheet, for example can only be done by repetition of what has been learned.
- When working with notes which you wish to memorise, it can be useful to use a highlighter pen to pinpoint the main points. Key words can be highlighted or underlined and you can concentrate on learning these simply by covering up the notes and trying to write out the main points.
- When reading information, it can be useful to ask yourself 'what new information do I remember?' Try to explain it to a friend or a helpful member of your family. If you can't do it, you know that you haven't really grasped it. Go back with the target of being able to explain in your own words what you have read.
- Memorising a layout of headings – called a mnemonic – can help. How do you start? For example, some people remember music notes as Every Good Boy Deserves Fun – EGBDF.
- Remember to take short breaks periodically so that you stay fresh, say perhaps every hour.

Research Skills

When undertaking assessments you might be asked to undertake some personal research for facts, opinions and evidence. So where do you start? Clearly the best source of information depends on the subject studied, but there are some sources which are of general relevance.

- People as a source of information can be useful where memories of the past e.g. Second World War or opinions are needed. Use your judgement to decide the usefulness of the information, which will be limited by their knowledge and experience of the area you are investigating.
- Encyclopaedias – This source is found in a library, sometimes in CD Rom form. They are useful for general information – such as researching an important figure in history or other scientific history. Encyclopaedias can also refer the reader to more specialist ‘in depth’ sources. Specialist encyclopaedias are also available and the librarian can advise you on which ones are available.
- Directories – Most of us are familiar with a telephone directory as a source of basic, logically arranged information. In addition to this, there are specialist directories which can be used in research to allow you to find where further facts and information may be available. Next time you are in your local library; check what kind of information can be gained in for example, Crockfords, British Music Year Book and Willings Press Guide.
- Specialist Journals and Magazines – Practically every subject studied will have its own specialist magazine. For instance, there are dozens of PC magazine’s offering advice on hardware, software and use of the Internet. Some magazines are available in the College library and reference libraries are also a possible source.
- Television, Radio and Video-tape – Programmes relevant to your subject may well come up on television from time to time. If you have a video recorder these programmes can be recorded and viewed as an additional source of information.
- The Internet – Data on every topic can be found by searching the Internet – possibly the most comprehensive source of information ever available.

Tackling Assessments

This is an area that tends to worry many students, but by applying common sense and preparing properly good results can be achieved. The key to undertaking assessments is to read the question properly and ensure that you are answering it. How do you go about this? The first thing to do is to highlight/underline the key words. Take the following question and decide which words you would consider to be the key words:

“Evaluate the factors that affect supply of and demand for bread.”

You will probably have selected the following –

evaluate supply demand bread

The key word here is **evaluate** which means that you have to estimate the impact of the factors, i.e. state how much they affect the supply and demand.

It's worth making a plan of what you intend to say – for instance, listing the factors which you think would affect the demand and supply of bread. You then take each factor affecting supply in turn and discuss how much it would affect supply. Then do likewise with the demand factors. Once you have drafted your answer, you should ask yourself whether you have answered everything asked. If you think so, it is good practice to end with a conclusion, summarising what you found.

For some assessments you first need to undertake some research and you would apply the same technique, examining the question to be certain what information you need to obtain before proceeding.

Appendix A provides a glossary of common terms used in assessment questions.

Appendix A

Glossary of Assessment Terminology

Account	You are often asked to “Give an account of...” and this means that you need to give a clear statement of the facts about a particular issue or episode.
Account for	If a question asks you to do this, you should concentrate on the reasons which lie behind an event, situation or development. It can be useful to put the question to yourself in a more direct form e.g. “Account for a renewed interest in nuclear generated power” directly translates as “Why has there been a renewed interest in nuclear power?”
Analyse	This is more than being asked to describe. It states a requirement for close examination of reasons for an event e.g. “analyse the factors that have contributed to the movement of women’s equality.” More simply put – Which factors made it happen and to what extent did they contribute? To analyse is to break down into smaller, component parts i.e. examine each factor/cause and to grade factors in terms of relative importance.
Appreciation	In everyday speech this has come to mean noticing the good points of something or somebody. Similarly ‘criticise’ has come to mean notice only the bad points. In study and exam terms the two words mean the same. Either means that you are to give your considered judgement on a topic – good and bad points e.g. “Write an appreciation of the work of the 1945 Labour Government” would mean discuss the good and bad points.
Assess	Like ‘estimate’ this asks you to turn your attention to the relative importance or value of issues under consideration e.g. “Assess the importance of electronic developments in the modern office” means estimate the value of it.
Characteristics	Characteristics are the typical aspects of a subject or issue. This type of question would ask you to describe in order to show how certain features are typical e.g. “What are the characteristics of Perfect Competition” – in other words, how would you describe a market which is ‘Perfect Competition’.

Comment	This is a completely open-ended instruction which invites you to perform a number of possible tasks including assessment, criticism or consideration or all three. “Comment on the view that Japanese industry was originally imitative” means – Do you think that this statements is true, if so, back it up with reasons and if not, likewise back it up with reasons.
Compare Contrast	Both of these instructions involve placing different sets of facts, opinions or information side by side. To be precise ‘compare’ should ask you to find similarities whilst ‘contrast’ demands point of difference. Increasingly, the word ‘compare’ is being used to refer to finding dissimilarities as well as likeness. ‘Contrast’ always requires a discussion of differences.
Consider	This is another open-ended instruction. It could be taken to mean ‘think and write about’. For example, “Consider the role of the secretary in the work of management” could be taken to mean what is the role, and how does it contribute? – or it could be taken to mean that you are to write about how the role has changed and moved closer to management.
Criticise	To the average person, the terms tend to be used in a negative, fault-finding way but criticism involves an objective examination of a topic in order to find merits as well as faults. “Examine critically the arguments for a return to capital punishment” would require you to come up with the pros and cons of doing this.
Define	A definition requires you to explain what something is and your explanation will always be better if you can include examples of what you mean. For example, “Define what is meant by Current Assets.” You could answer this by giving a brief explanation of what Current Assets are, but your answer will be much clearer if you add on “for example, items such as Stock or Bank, which change value on a daily basis.”
Demonstrate	This means ‘show’. For example, “Demonstrate how the government tried to combat inflation in the late 1970s” would mean describe what they did to deal with inflation.
Describe	This requires you to give s description of a person, situation, item and you must concentrate on making your description as accurate as possible, without giving a lot of irrelevant details.

Discuss	In a discussion, you need to make points for and against a situation. As in a debate, you give one view and then another, perhaps putting forward the good points and then the drawbacks. You should always ensure when answering this type of question that you have evidence or opinions for and against the point of view. Once both points of view have been put forward it is good to sum up with a conclusion.
Estimate	This instruction does not mean 'have a wild guess', but means you need to decide the value or impact of something or somebody e.g. "Estimate the significance of a spreadsheet in modern business forward planning" This would require you to decide how much spreadsheets contribute to business forward planning.
Evaluate	This requires you to consider the good and bad points of a person/situation/topic e.g. "Evaluate the impact of email on the paperless office" – this would require you to write about how much email has contributed towards the paperless office both on a positive and a negative perspective.
Examine	This requires a thoughtful, searching enquiry into a topic or point of view. It means you must describe causes and effects, reasons and explanations as well as analysing the information. For example "Examine the factors that influence the government's attitude to the environment" – this would require you to come up with the factors which influence government attitude and explain why they affect government attitude.
How far To what extent	This instruction requires careful planning of your answer. Usually the question demands breaking facts/events down into separate parts and then evaluating the significance of each – great or little. "To what extent is Scotland's growing demand for home rule a result of the discovery of North Sea Oil?" In other words you have to consider the reasons why there is a growing demand for home rule, and then consider how significant the North Sea oil factor is compared to the other factors.
How true How important	This means 'discuss'. Usually you will examine one side of an argument/issue and then look at another viewpoint. "How true is it to claim that wage rises are the biggest influence on inflation", for example, would require you to consider all the factors which cause inflation, and then decide how significant a factor wage rises are.

Illustrate	This is another word for 'describe' or 'show'. The answer will be concerned with giving examples. For example, "Illustrate the main causes of the Industrial Revolution in Britain in the eighteenth century" would require you to describe the causes and how they brought about the industrial revolution.
In what way(s)	This instruction requires you to itemise a number of points and show the differences. For example "In what way does a government training scheme attract an employer to consider someone for potential permanent employment?" – requires you to list and describe the ways in which the training scheme would attract employers.
Justify	This instruction requires you to list points that agree with an assertion which is made. You are not required to discuss the opposite point of view. For example "Justify the long term advantages of replacing workers by robot technology in manufacturing industry" requires you to give the advantages, but not the drawbacks.
Outline	This instruction asks you to concentrate on essential points of the topic and deal with each point briefly and concisely. For example "Outline the important features of a letter of apology" means that you must list and briefly describe the important features.
Significance	This asks you to consider how much a factor contributed to a situation e.g. "Discuss the significance of birth control in the emancipation of women" requires you to look at the factors which resulted in emancipation and then decide how significant birth control was in relation to other factors.
Summarise	This asks for a very brief description or explanation, concentrating on main points. For example "Summarise the traditional arguments used to justify blood sports" – means that you are to briefly list and describe these arguments.
Trace	This asks you to follow the growth and development or process. It is best tackled chronologically i.e. in order of occurrence starting with the origin. "Trace the growth of new technology in newspapers production over the past 10 years" – would require you to describe how newspapers were first produced, and then what changes took place in production methods over time.