

Title: *Support for online learners (Gaelic medium)*

Transition(s) the practice supports: the aim of this is to identify where this would sit on the planned transitions map.

*Transition throughout a course of study in a distance/online learning context*

Abstract: a brief outline of the practice – this will allow all your institutional examples to appear on the one page of the website, linking to further information. This should be no longer than 120 words.

*Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is very aware of the challenges facing distance/online learners and has developed a range of support mechanisms to support and engage more with learners, allowing them to participate fully in a positive and motivating learning environment. These mechanisms include:*

- *Online Orientation and Preparation weeks - introduced in response to the need for technical guidance and online communication before learners commence their studies. This also enables staff to advise learners regarding preparatory reading of course Information and to prepare them to participate fully in learning from the first day of their course (e.g An Cùrsa Inntrigidh - (ACI).*
- *Ongoing support from Course Administrative staff – The Senior Administrator: Online Courses provides ongoing support and guidance to learners so that any problems they encounter are dealt with quickly and efficiently. Ongoing support also involves the distribution of Checklists of language points/structures taught in a Unit (for student self-evaluation purposes).*
- *Discussion Board - Enables learners on ACI to communicate with each other and share learning experiences. They also take part in a short preparatory telephone session with their tutor as a further introduction to the course and other participants. Students are also directed to supplemental materials and guidance files. A short questionnaire, in the same format as the course assessment, is used to give the College a clearer idea of students' goals.*
- *Online Counselling - Offers students flexibility in accessing a service at a time which suits them and which fits in both with their studies and their wider lives. It offers support to distance learning students and to students who face challenges in accessing a face-to-face counselling service. These challenges may involve; disability, transport facilities, rural location, family commitments and childcare reasons.*

Description: (this is the information to which the abstract would link) a more detailed description of the practice with an indication of what led to its development, how long it has been in place, and why it benefits students

*Learner retention, progression and success on ACI are all very high. Learner engagement is very good and learners feel that they are valued and listened to and their problems addressed quickly and efficiently.*

*ACI Orientation and Preparation weeks - Feedback from learners indicates that over 80% of students found the Orientation Week Very useful or Quite useful. The percentage of those students who Did Not Start (DNS) since 2007/08, when Orientation and Preparation weeks were introduced, has dropped significantly and is now very low. Learners feel that orientation is meaningful and purposeful and they are made to feel as if they are being treated as individuals and belong to a wider group of learners.*

*Ongoing support from Course Administrative staff – This ongoing support is crucial in supporting students through the programme and contributes to the high success rates within ACI. Students may access coursework only as timetabled so that their continued engagement is assured.*

*Checklists of language points/structures - These remind students that they have learning goals in every Unit, encouraging them to revise coursework or use the Supplementary materials, they may also increase a learner's confidence as they are made aware of the distance they have travelled in their learning. One of the benefits for tutors is that they are able to support learners who are not confident on a particular learning topic.*

*Online Counselling Service - This is at an early stage - the impact on learners, staff and/or other stakeholders is expected to be very positive. It is anticipated that the counselling service will impact on student retention and progression in enabling students to stay on course and graduate on successful completion of their studies. The service offers both synchronous and asynchronous counselling via skype texting and email. Students are able to choose the medium of counselling which suits them best. To get the full benefit from the service, students need to feel comfortable and be able to express themselves well in writing. The counsellor, based at SMO, is fluent in Gaelic and the service is available to students in both Gaelic and English*

Contact details: name and email address of key person who can discuss the case study in more detail. (with their permission agreed before submission)

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