Ministry of Education
Knowledge Management & Accountability Division

2015/16 Distributed Learning Enrolment Audit

AUDIT REPORT

iLEARN BC SCHOOL SOCIETY
(036 96830)

2015/16 DISTRIBUTED LEARNING ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT:
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Background

Distributed Learning (DL) programs and courses are alternatives to regular classroom-based instruction for students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 providing a method of instruction that relies primarily on indirect communication between learners and British Columbia certified educators, including internet, other electronic-based delivery, teleconferencing, and correspondence. DL takes place when a student is primarily at a distance from the teacher.

The Ministry of Education funds Independent School Authorities based on the Authorities' reported DL enrolment in September, February and May each year. Independent School Authorities report students undertaking DL programs or courses to the Ministry on *Form 1701: Student Data Collection Completion Instructions for Independent Schools* (Form 1701).

The Knowledge Management and Accountability Division conducts DL Enrolment audits to verify enrolment reported on Form 1701. The outcomes of these audits could result in funding implications if adjustments are recommended. Funding recoveries are expanded to include full-time equivalents (FTEs) outside the audit sample where the auditors can make a clear link between the audit findings in the sample and those FTEs outside the sample.

Purpose

The purpose of the DL Enrolment audit is to provide assurance to the Ministry of Education and Independent School Authorities that Ministry directives and policies are being followed. The audits are based on *Form 1701: Student Data Collection, Completion Instructions for Independent Schools,* current Distributed Learning requirements and standards as well as related Ministry policies.

Description of the Audit Process

A DL audit was conducted at iLearn BC School Society during the week of May 24, 2016. The total enrolment reported at February 12, 2016 was 61.5000 FTEs, of which 112 student files were reviewed.

An entry meeting was held with the Principal and the DL Centre's staff, the Faculty Liaison and the Operations Manager to review the purpose of the audit and the criteria for funding as outlined in the Form 1701 Instructions. The process of the audit was reviewed and information about the program offered by the DL School was provided. The administrators and the audit team discussed the procedures that would be followed to undertake the audit.

The audit team worked out of the administrative offices at iLearn BC School Society. The auditors sought documentation to determine that the courses claimed met the DL Active Policy criteria by the activation submission date and other related Ministry directives. Throughout the audit there were many ongoing discussions with DL staff to ensure the audit team members had an understanding of all aspects of the program. All recommended adjustments were discussed

with the staff during the course of the audit, providing them with every opportunity to locate the necessary documentation.

An exit meeting was held with the Principal, Senior Administrator, Administrator, Faculty Liaison, Operations Manager and Records Clerk where the audit team presented their preliminary results and clarified any outstanding issues.

Prior to the audit visit, the Lead Auditor undertook a verification of the school-assigned teachers' status with the Teacher Regulation Branch.

Description of the Program

The Principal relayed the following information about the program to the auditors:
- Students have the option of taking their course as a Blended student (BL) or a Classroom Learning student (CL). BL students attend classes twice a week. CL students attend classes four times a week. Students interested in taking a course with iLearn come in for a consultation with the Principal. During this time programs (CL/BL) are introduced to the families.
- Once students decide they want to take a course(s) with iLearn, they fill out a course selection form and are passed on to the Registration desk.
- Registration includes reviewing school policies with parents and students. All necessary documentation is taken from students at this time. All related documentation is put in the student's registration file and kept in the Records Department.
- After registration, students are scheduled for an orientation with their teacher. A student's course(s) officially begins once they arrive for and complete their orientation. During the orientation students are introduced to the school's LMS. The teacher also goes over school policies in detail with the student; iLearn's academic integrity policy is covered with the student; and, rapport building via discussion/questionnaire is conducted.
- Students begin attending their scheduled classes. Attendance is taken for every class. If a student is absent a phone call home is made.
- Students set weekly due dates with their teacher, in class. If students do not attend class, or miss their due dates, their teacher submits an iAlert to the Faculty Liaison. The Faculty Liaison gets in touch with parents/students to identify if there is any concern about their engagement in the course(s).
- A student is activated in their course once they have completed an orientation, attended two classes, and completed assignments worth five percent of the learning outcomes for the course.
- As students' progress through their course(s) all work is dated, marked and kept on premise in the student work files.
- Student engagement in learning is supported through attendance calls, iAlerts, and monthly iReports following their progress through their course.
- Student work files are kept for two years after course completion.

Observations

The auditors found that:
- All members of the teaching staff of the iLearn BC School Society are currently certified with the Teacher Regulation Branch.
- The teachers lead the educational programs of their students. The teachers communicate with

students in a variety of ways to support their learning. They use telephone, face-to-face, and emails to accomplish this.

- The school uses face-to-face classes and workshops where attendance is taken and progress is monitored as a method of student instruction.
- The staff know their students very well and are able to articulate their progress and to identify their unique needs.
- The school follows the Distributed Learning-BC Residency Policy.
- There was evidence that students' work was evaluated by teachers on an on-going basis as they worked through their courses. There was also evidence of the high course completion rate.
- The information required by the auditors to conduct the audit was not readily available upon arrival at the school. The auditors worked with the staff the first day to ensure they understood what documentation was required, as evidence, to conduct the audit in a timely manner. The school staff remained on site, after the auditors left for the day, to ensure the evidence the auditors required would be available to following day.
- Student work was not often dated making it difficult to determine whether substantive course activity was completed prior to the claim date. The school staff were able to produce evidence from teacher records and student attendance records to verify work completed prior to claim date for a number of the courses.
- It was difficult, to determine the date of submission of substantive student course activity and the date of activation. School staff provided clarification of the dates upon request. The DL Active Policy requires that there be dated evidence that the student is active on or before the dates listed in the Form 1701 Instructions; that there are dated examples of student work, assessment data and teacher gradebook or other tracking system entries; and, that current course selection/enrolment forms are dated and signed by the student, parent or both.
- There were a number of student files with student names that differed from the names listed on the Form 1701 data report. The school staff explained that there were a number of students with similar family names and students chose a 'preferred' name that was used by the school.
- The school did not follow the Distributed Learning Active Policy with respect to:
  o Student claims must meet the active criteria on or before the active claim date.
  o Reporting only those courses where there is evidence of substantive student course activity being submitted by the activation date.
- The staff worked very hard throughout the week to gather evidence and provide data.
- There were a number of courses claimed for funding which did not have evidence of substantive course activity in accordance with the DL Active Policy and the Form 1701 Data Collection Instructions.
- There were a number of students for whom there were more courses claimed than the auditors were able to find. It was clarified that these courses were claimed in error and the school provided the auditors with a written explanation. Each ineligible course claim was verified by the auditors with the school staff.

Audit Sample Findings

The auditors found that:
- 5.8750 FTEs (consisting of 5.0000 school-age Grade 10-12 and 0.8750 non-graduated adults) reported at the February Data Collection claim date did not meet the requirements of the DL Active Policy or in accordance with Form 1701 Instructions.
- 1.0000 school-age Grade 10-12 FTEs reported for funding were enrolled in fewer courses than claimed.

Recommendations

The auditors recommend that:
- The school staff ensure effective tracking of student claims from the time of registration until they are reported to ensure the claims are eligible for funding in accordance with the Form 1701 Instructions and related DL policies.
- The school ensure that all data entry correctly captures the correct number of courses, course names, actual student legal names and activation dates before being reported for funding.
- All student work be dated to determine when it was submitted to teachers for evaluation and marking. It is further recommended that teachers indicate the date they mark the student work.
- The school ensure the date of submission of substantive student course activity and the date of course activation are clearly evident.
- The school staff ensure all student files contain the correct legal name as well an indication of the preferred name of the student to ensure there is no confusion regarding related student claim, student name, and documentation found in the file.
- The school report for funding only claims for those students who are active in accordance with the Form 1701 instructions and the Distributed Learning Funding and Active Policies. To be eligible and in accordance with DL directives, schools must have evidence of active participation. Substantive course activity must be submitted by the student to the teacher. The activity must represent a minimum of five percent of the course's learning activities. The activity must be clearly linked to the learning outcomes of each course. The activity must be evaluated by the teacher and entered into the teachers' records on or before the date the student becomes active prior to the claim date.
- The school staff implement procedures to ensure all active requirements are identified by program or course, and dated in accordance with the directives of the DL Active Policy.
- The school ensure that Grade 10 to 12 students are active in each eligible course claimed for funding. Each course must meet the 'active' attendance requirements in accordance with the Form 1701 reporting instructions and aligned with the DL Active Policy criteria.
- The school be required to undertake a compliance workshop to aid with understanding the various aspects of reporting eligibility for student claims.

Auditors' Comments

The auditors wish to express their appreciation to the school staff for their cooperation and hospitality during the audit.

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