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ALLIANCE FOR EDUCATION OF WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

Learning Quality Standards

HANDBOOK

For independent, private, non-profit and other non-governmental schools and organizations (learning providers) providing educational programming to Afghan women and girls.

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INTRODUCTION

What Are the Learning Standards?

These standards outline the principles established by the Alliance for the Education of Women in Afghanistan as a model to measure and uphold the expected practices of educational provision and to be accountable towards the students being served. The overarching commitment of the Education Provider Standards is that women and girls in Afghanistan have access to quality learning programs that will enable them to thrive and contribute effectively to society.

They can be used by educational providers as a basis for verifying their own performance and guiding improvements. They provide agreed principles for the provision of quality educational services and can be used alongside the associated quality assurance mechanisms by educational providers to demonstrate and improve the quality of their services.

Designed for use by organizations, institutions, departments, and initiatives providing educational services in Afghanistan, these standards ensure that all providers contribute to a future where Afghan women and girls have access to quality learning programs. Educational providers that meet these standards are contributing to a world in which Afghan women and girls can access and receive quality education, empowering them to thrive and contribute to a more equitable and prosperous society.

Background

Soon after its establishment, the Alliance recognized the critical need for common standards to be adopted by the growing community of independent education providers working to meet the educational needs of Afghan women and girls. The standards were deliberated, discussed and developed by the member organizations of the Alliance at the second annual members' meeting in Doha, 13-14 June 2024, and then again at a Second Consultation, online, 17 September 2024. In drafting the Standards, we consulted well established resources including the HPass Learning Providers Standards, the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, and drew on the expertise of educational leaders and institutions familiar with Afghan education. Standards were further selected and adapted to meet the specific needs and experience of the member organizations of the Alliance.

Scope

The standards have been developed through the lens of providing education in crisis and emergency settings, addressing the unique learning needs of women and girls in Afghanistan. These standards are intended to support educational providers operating in a context of severe restrictions, resource depletion, and economic hardship. They offer member organizations an opportunity to compare their services with similar providers locally and globally, ensuring that the highest quality benchmarks are met. Alliance member organizations include educational programs for all levels of education including primary, secondary, tertiary as well as vocational, technical and information education; these standards are applicable to every level and type of education.

Where relevant national regulations exist, these standards are not a substitute but rather a supplement, enhancing the educational framework already in place. The standards and accompanying handbook will be periodically revised to incorporate feedback and insights from their application in the field.

Who Are These Standards For?

These standards are designed for use by organizations, institutions, and initiatives providing educational services to women and girls in Afghanistan. This includes NGOs, community groups, volunteers, government agencies, private and independent schools and educational institutions, and international donors involved in educational action. These standards are applicable to educational providers regardless of their size and scope, ensuring that all can contribute effectively to the Alliance's mission of upholding quality standards in educational programming for Afghan women and girls.

Structure

The educational provider standards comprise a set of five standards, each with associated focal sub-standards. Standards 1 (Duty of Care), 2 (Learning Resources Efficacy), and 3 (Design & Planning) represent the foundation of the educational cycle, while Standards 4 (Delivery) and 5 (Evaluation and Accountability) focus on implementation and assessment. Together, they contribute to the overarching commitment: that women and girls in Afghanistan have access to quality education that empowers them to thrive and contribute to a more equitable and prosperous society. Each standard outlines what educational providers need to do to meet the overarching commitment. Associated key actions provide specific steps that must be taken to achieve these standards.

HOW TO USE THE STANDARDS HANDBOOK

The Standards Handbook is designed as a practical guide to support educational providers in implementing, evaluating, and improving their programs. Recognizing the diverse settings in which Afghan women and girls are educated, the standards are intentionally flexible, allowing providers to tailor their approach according to local contexts, resources, and community needs. No matter what stage an education provider is at, they can evaluate themselves against the Standards, and start taking actions to integrate the Standards into their programs.

Flexibility and Contextualization

The standards can be adapted to suit various types of educational providers, including NGOs, community-based organizations, independent or private schools, vocational training centers, and digital learning platforms, among others. Providers operating in different regions, countries, localities, or cultural contexts should feel empowered to modify their approach to ensure relevance and responsiveness.

For example, a digital literacy program in an urban setting may incorporate advanced online tools, while a similar program in a rural area may focus on mobile-accessible learning. Each provider can interpret and apply the standards to meet their unique learner needs.

The examples provided in this handbook are only an indication of best practices ascribed to each standard and key action, they are set as a guide only.

Implementing Key Actions

Key Actions serve as specific, actionable steps for each standard, outlining what providers need to establish in order to achieve quality educational outcomes. Each Key Action describes practical measures to help providers ensure that educational services are relevant, effective, and inclusive.

For instance, under Standard 1: Design & Planning, Key Actions might include conducting needs assessments, consulting with community stakeholders, and piloting new programs before a full rollout. These actions are not exhaustive but provide a structured approach that can be expanded or adapted as needed.

A provider determines what Key Actions it needs to take based on the findings of a self-evaluation, which determines to what extent they are meeting the Standards at the time of the evaluation.

Using the Handbook as part of the AEWA Quality Assurance Framework

Further Guidance:

Each standard is supplemented with detailed guidelines, examples, and templates in this handbook to guide providers through every step of the process, from planning to evaluation. By following these guidelines, providers can enhance program quality, achieve desired learning outcomes, and build trust within the communities they serve.

Quality Assurance Manual:

In addition to the handbook, an annexed quality assurance mechanisms manual will be prepared to support providers in measuring and evidencing compliance with each standard. This manual will include metrics, evaluation tools, and documentation templates to help providers track their progress and identify areas for continuous improvement.

Self-Evaluation and Peer Recognition:

The handbook encourages providers to use the self-evaluation tool regularly, allowing them to benchmark their practices against the standards. For those wishing to engage with the Alliance's Peer Recognition Framework, the handbook provides instructions on completing self-assessments and peer reviews to build mutual trust and credibility within the network.

In sum, the Standards Handbook is intended as a living document, one that providers can refer to as they design, deliver, evaluate, and improve their programs. By using the handbook as a resource for ongoing development, providers play an active role in fostering an educational environment where Afghan women and girls can access quality learning experiences that support their growth, empowerment, and social participation.

STRUCTURE OF THE STANDARDS

The standards are organized into five core categories:

Standard 1: Duty of Care

Ensures the safety, security, and psychological well-being of all involved in learning programs.

Standard 2: Learning Resources Efficacy

Emphasizes the competencies, resources, and professional development necessary for effective program delivery.

Standard 3: Design & Planning

Establishes the foundational steps to analyze needs, design responsive programs, and coordinate effectively.

Standard 4: Delivery

Focuses on implementing high-quality, evidence-based pedagogical methods and maintaining transparent communication.

Standard 5: Evaluation and Accountability

Covers monitoring, evaluation of learning outcomes, and alignment with broader standards.

Each standard contains key actions required for compliance, providing specific steps for achieving and evidencing these standards.

FOUNDATIONAL STANDARDS

Standard 1: Duty of Care

Objective:

Ensure that learning environments prioritize the safety, security, and well-being of all participants, fostering a supportive atmosphere where learners feel protected and valued.

Description:

Implement policies and structures to safeguard learners, instructors, and staff. For online programs, incorporate cyber-security measures and online conduct guidelines; for in-person programs, ensure physical safety, psychological support, and child protection practices.

Key Actions and Examples:

1.1 Policy and Good Governance

- Developing and Upholding Written Policies: Establish clear policies on safety, privacy, code of conduct, and governance, ensuring continuity and consistency across programs.
  - ▷ Example: Create a policy outlining the privacy and confidentiality measures for all participants' information, especially for online platforms. This might include policies on data storage, access restrictions, and confidentiality agreements with staff.
  - ▷ Example: Develop a code of conduct for in-person and online classes, detailing acceptable behavior and outlining consequences for misconduct. For instance, define respectful online engagement guidelines and procedures for reporting inappropriate behavior.

- Oversight and Accountability Mechanisms: Establish oversight systems, such as regular audits and reporting, to ensure policies are followed.
  - ▷ Example: Conduct quarterly audits to review adherence to data privacy policies, and update procedures if issues are identified, ensuring that any gaps in security or confidentiality are addressed.
  - ▷ Example: Assign a staff member to oversee compliance with child protection policies, conducting regular training for staff on recognizing and reporting potential issues.

1.2 Child Protection and Safety

- Implementing Child Protection Safeguards: Establish and enforce policies that protect minors from harm, abuse, or rights violations, ensuring a safe learning environment for all young participants.
  - ▷ Example: For online programs involving minors, screen all instructors and staff through background checks and provide training on recognizing and preventing online risks, such as inappropriate interactions or exposure to harmful content.
  - ▷ Example: For in-person settings, establish a child protection policy that includes guidelines for staff behavior, safe physical environments, and clear reporting procedures for suspected abuse or rights violations.

- Training on Child Protection Protocols: Ensure all staff understand and apply child protection measures, creating a culture of vigilance and safety.
  - ▷ Example: Offer training sessions for instructors and administrators on child protection and safeguarding practices. For example, train staff on how to identify signs of distress and safely report incidents.

1.3 Security

- Physical and Cyber Security Measures: Implement security practices that minimize risks for all participants, whether online or in person.
  - ▷ Example: For online programs, use secure platforms with encryption and secure login procedures to protect against unauthorized access. Provide cybersecurity training to participants, helping them recognize phishing attempts or suspicious links.
  - ▷ Example: For in-person settings, ensure the safety of the learning environment by hiring security personnel, installing secure entry points, and conducting regular safety drills for emergencies such as fires or lockdowns.
- Security Awareness for Online Learning: Educate participants on safe online practices, reducing their vulnerability to digital threats.
  - ▷ Example: For online learners, provide guidelines on securing their devices, protecting personal data, and recognizing common online threats. For example, a short tutorial could explain how to create strong passwords and identify suspicious emails.

1.4 Psychological Wellbeing

- Implementing Mental Health Support Systems: Create support mechanisms to safeguard the psychological well-being of learners, instructors, and staff, especially given the challenging environments they may face.
  - ▷ Example: Provide virtual or in-person access to counselors who can support learners dealing with stress, trauma, or other mental health challenges. For online programs, consider integrating a "well-being check-in" at the beginning of each session to give participants an opportunity to express concerns.
  - ▷ Example: For in-person programs, establish designated quiet areas or "well-being spaces" where participants can take breaks to decompress when needed.
- Fostering a Culture of Psychological Safety: Promote an atmosphere where participants feel respected and supported, encouraging open communication and emotional resilience.
  - ▷ Example: During online classes, encourage instructors to regularly check in with learners, providing a safe space to share their thoughts or ask for help. For instance, start each session with a brief "well-being round" where participants can share how they're feeling.
  - ▷ Example: In in-person settings, incorporate regular "well-being sessions" or group activities focused on stress management, resilience, and emotional well-being, helping learners build coping skills that support their education and overall well-being.

Standard 2: Learning Resources Efficacy

Objective:

Ensure that educational program roles are filled by qualified individuals, instructors receive continuous professional development, and the learning environment—whether digital or physical—is equipped with the necessary resources to support high-quality education.

Description:

Focus on building staff competencies, providing access to necessary tools, and maintaining environments conducive to effective learning. For online programs, prioritize digital resources and platform usability; for in-person programs, ensure resources are well-maintained and accessible.

Key Actions and Examples:

2.1 Competencies

- Recruiting Qualified Staff: Ensure that educators and administrators have relevant qualifications and experience to meet high-quality learning standards.
  - ▷ Example: For online programs, prioritize instructors with experience in virtual teaching, digital literacy, and subject expertise. Conduct interviews that test both content knowledge and familiarity with online instructional tools.
  - ▷ Example: For face-to-face programs, recruit instructors with a background in teaching in culturally diverse or resource-constrained settings, as they can more effectively engage learners and adapt to local needs.
  - ▷ Example: For programs offering a credential, ensure instructors are appropriately certified, so the credential is recognized.

- Assessment of Volunteer and Temporary Staff: Even for volunteer or temporary positions, assess competencies to ensure they can contribute effectively to learning outcomes.
  - ▷ Example: Before hiring volunteers to teach digital skills, conduct a quick skills assessment or provide a basic digital literacy training to ensure they meet the minimum required competencies.
  - ▷ Example: In in-person programs, pair volunteers with experienced instructors initially, allowing them to observe and learn effective teaching strategies before leading sessions on their own.

2.2 Professional Development, Training, and Support

- Providing Ongoing Training Opportunities: Offer regular professional development sessions aligned with staff roles, focusing on both pedagogy and technological skills for online instructors.
  - ▷ Example: For online instructors, conduct monthly workshops on using LMS tools, creating engaging digital content, and effective online assessment strategies. Record these sessions for flexible access.
  - ▷ Example: In person, arrange peer-led workshops where instructors share teaching techniques and cultural insights, particularly useful for educators working with diverse Afghan learners.

- Access to Knowledge Resources and Networking: Ensure instructors have access to up-to-date resources and networks that support continuous learning and teaching excellence.

  ▷ Example: Provide instructors with access to digital libraries, journals, and educational networks relevant to Afghan women's education. For example, give online instructors resources on best practices in remote teaching and culturally relevant content.

  ▷ Example: Set up a shared online platform for instructors to exchange resources, lesson plans, and insights, creating a supportive learning community.

- Creating Support Structures: Establish support systems like mentoring, peer observation, and feedback loops to continually enhance instructional quality.

  ▷ Example: Assign each new instructor a mentor who can provide feedback and advice, helping them adapt to both the curriculum and the learners' needs.

  ▷ Example: In online programs, organize regular peer observation sessions where instructors observe each other's classes virtually and share constructive feedback.

2.3 Digital Learning Environments (When Relevant)

- Building Engaging Digital Platforms: Ensure online programs are delivered through interactive, user-friendly platforms that support dynamic learning experiences.

  ▷ Example: For digital literacy programs, use a platform with interactive elements, such as quizzes, discussion forums, and instant messaging, enabling learners to practice and reinforce skills immediately.

  ▷ Example: For online vocational courses, create multimedia content (e.g., video tutorials, downloadable worksheets) that learners can access at their convenience, supporting flexible learning schedules.

- Ensuring Accessibility Across Devices: Design digital resources and platforms that work effectively across various devices, including mobile phones, to accommodate users with limited access to technology.

  ▷ Example: Optimize the LMS to function well on mobile, allowing learners in areas with limited internet access to complete lessons, assignments, and assessments from their phones.

  ▷ Example: For courses that include video content, offer low-resolution video options or downloadable audio versions to accommodate bandwidth limitations.

2.4 Resources

- Ensuring Adequate Learning Resources: Provide sufficient materials, whether digital or physical, to support effective instruction and learning.

  ▷ Example: For online courses, ensure each module includes well vetted, high quality materials such as up-to-date reading resources, recorded lectures, or case studies, that students can access asynchronously.

  ▷ Example: For in-person settings, make sure physical materials—textbooks, workbooks, and writing tools—are available. For example, a literacy program might provide each learner with a workbook and reading material at the start of the course.

- Resource Allocation Based on Program Needs: Allocate resources effectively to address program requirements, ensuring that both educators and learners have the tools necessary for success, especially in IT-focused classes.
  - ▷ Example: For IT or digital literacy programs, provide necessary software tools, with a preference for open-source options to minimize costs and allow customization. Use software like LibreOffice for document creation, GIMP for image editing, and OpenShot for video editing, giving learners hands-on experience with widely accessible tools.
  - ▷ Example: For online programs, allocate resources to ensure a well-curated learning management system (LMS), even if using open-source platforms like Moodle. A thoughtfully designed LMS enhances navigation and allows seamless access to materials, assessments, and interactive features, improving the digital learning experience.
  - ▷ Example: If online participation is low due to connectivity issues, allocate part of the budget to provide mobile data packages for learners in need, improving accessibility.
  - ▷ Example: For in-person programs, prioritize safe, clean, and functional classrooms. Ensure there are enough teaching supplies (e.g., notebooks, markers) and seating arrangements to accommodate all learners, creating an environment conducive to effective learning.

Standard 3: Design & Planning

Objective:

Establish the foundational steps necessary to analyze educational needs, design effective and inclusive programs, and coordinate meaningfully with stakeholders and sector actors to ensure relevance, responsiveness, and impact.

Description:

Learning providers conduct evidence-based needs assessments and design programs that reflect learners' realities and aspirations. Educational programs align with recognized benchmarks and apply inclusive methodologies such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Coordination with others in the education sector enhances program quality, coherence, and sustainability.

Key Actions and Examples:

3.1 Data Collection

- Surveys: Develop simple, accessible surveys to measure need and/or demand in your target population. Use paper, digital or both formats depending on the target respondents, where feasible to increase reach.
  - ▷ Example: In a rural village, distribute paper surveys through community centers or partner NGOs, asking about basic skills like literacy, health education, and agricultural knowledge.
- Focus Groups: Host focus groups, in person or online depending on what is safe and accessible for participants, to discuss their challenges and/or educational needs in depth. Engage community leaders to gather a representative mix of participants for a comprehensive view.
  - ▷ Example: A focus group in an urban area might reveal a need for career-focused skills such as computer literacy, allied health sciences, or bookkeeping for small business support.

- Household Visits: Conduct home visits where formal sessions are impractical, allowing educators to understand family needs, aspirations, and obstacles.
  - ▷ Example: During a household visit in a remote region, a provider learns that mothers want basic health education, while teenage daughters are interested in financial literacy to help with family expenses.

- Analyzing Job Market Trends: Conduct a thorough review of employment websites to identify in-demand skills and job trends relevant to Afghan women, helping align learning programs with potential employment opportunities.
  - ▷ Example: Review websites like Jobs.af or https://www.acbar.org/ or international job portals that feature opportunities in Afghanistan. Identify roles frequently listed, such as administrative support, digital literacy, healthcare roles, and teaching positions, and note the skills or qualifications required.

- Aligning Curriculum with Market Needs: Use findings from job site analyses to shape curriculum content, making programs more relevant to the employment market.
  - ▷ Example: If administrative roles frequently require proficiency in Microsoft Office, include modules on Word, Excel, and email communication in digital literacy courses to equip learners with practical, job-ready skills.

- Interviewing Employers for Additional Insights: Reach out to local employers to gain insight into skills gaps they observe in the workforce, especially concerning women.
  - ▷ Example: A logistics company may indicate that there is a shortage of women with inventory management or logistics planning skills. Based on this, a learning provider might develop an introductory module on logistics and inventory management.

- Individual Interviews: One-on-one interviews help capture personal stories and aspirations, especially from those uncomfortable speaking in larger groups.
  - ▷ Example: A young woman might share her interest in becoming a teacher but lacks access to information on how to become certified.

- Community Observations: Spend time observing daily activities in the community to identify unspoken educational needs or gaps.
  - ▷ Example: Observing that many women sell handicrafts at markets but lack pricing skills, a provider could design a program on basic pricing and sales tactics.

- Online Surveys and Social Media: In urban or semi-urban areas with internet access, leverage social media to conduct quick polls or surveys, allowing a broader and anonymous reach.
  - ▷ Example: Conduct an Instagram poll to gauge interest in English-language courses or digital skills training, revealing demand among younger, digitally connected women.

3.2 Prioritization Process

- Scoring Needs by Urgency: After data collection, assign scores to each identified need based on urgency, potential impact, and feasibility.
  - ▷ Example: Rank literacy training as high priority if the majority of women in a community are illiterate, while ranking vocational skills lower if there is less immediate interest.

- Mapping Resource Availability: Assess available resources (staff, funding, materials) and infrastructure (internet, physical spaces) to identify which programs are feasible.

  ▷ Example: In a community with limited internet access, prioritize offline programs such as in-person classes or radio-based learning.

- Stakeholder Input: Revisit findings with community representatives to validate prioritization, ensuring alignment with stakeholder values and immediate needs.

  ▷ Example: After presenting initial plans, members of a local women's network agree that health education should be the highest priority, as it addresses an urgent local need among women.

- Pilot Feasibility Testing: Test a sample version of the highest-priority program to gather initial feedback and refine the approach.

  ▷ Example: For a program on agricultural techniques, start with a small group, refining the curriculum based on feedback before expanding.

3.3 Developing a Needs-Based Program Proposal

- Synthesizing Findings: Develop a program outline based on aggregated data, incorporating feedback from all data collection methods.

  ▷ Example: If literacy, basic health, and financial skills rank highly, create a foundational program combining these three areas to maximize impact.

- Setting Clear Learning Objectives: Define specific, measurable outcomes for the program based on identified needs.

  ▷ Example: For a health literacy course, objectives could include understanding basic first aid, nutritional needs, and disease prevention techniques.

- Community Involvement in Program Design: Engage local stakeholders in finalizing the curriculum, ensuring it meets practical needs and is culturally appropriate.

  ▷ Example: Involve local mothers and young women in designing a digital literacy course, ensuring the topics (e.g., mobile banking, job search skills) are relevant.

3.4 Design

- Curriculum Development: Design a curriculum that is responsive to the identified needs and reflects both best practices and tailored learning goals.

  ▷ Example: For adult learners, integrate life skills and work-oriented training into literacy programs, including practical topics like financial literacy, household management, and health education. For younger learners, focus on age-appropriate foundational skills such as literacy, numeracy, and social skills.

  ▷ Example: In rural areas, the curriculum might prioritize basic literacy and numeracy, while in urban settings, add modules on digital literacy, job skills, or language proficiency.

- Applying UDL (Universal Design for Learning) Principles: Integrate diverse learning formats like visuals, audio, hands-on activities, and interactive content to accommodate different learning preferences and needs.
  - ▷ Example: For a literacy program, use storytelling techniques that combine spoken language, visual aids, and simple written materials, ensuring that learners with varying literacy levels can follow along. Incorporate group activities, allowing learners to discuss and apply new knowledge in a supportive setting.
  - ▷ Example: To teach digital skills, provide hands-on practice with devices where possible and use instructional videos or illustrated guides for those with limited prior experience.

- Pilot Programs: Start with a small-scale pilot to gather feedback, test learning strategies, and make improvements before wider implementation.
  - ▷ Example: Launch a 3-month pilot in a selected region to test the curriculum's relevance and engagement level. Hold regular feedback sessions, using surveys, interviews, or focus groups to capture learner reactions, engagement, and retention. Based on this feedback, adjust the curriculum, delivery methods, or support materials before expanding to additional regions.
  - ▷ Example: If a pilot shows that learners struggle with certain technical content, consider simplifying these sections, breaking down complex topics, or adding supplementary materials to aid comprehension.

- Building in Cultural Relevance and Flexibility: Adapt the curriculum to reflect cultural norms and regional preferences, making content relatable and accessible for Afghan women and girls.
  - ▷ Example: Incorporate local themes or cultural narratives into educational materials to make learning more engaging. For example, literacy programs could use folk tales or local proverbs that resonate with learners, facilitating both engagement and comprehension.
  - ▷ Example: Include flexibility in the curriculum design to adjust based on learners' evolving needs, especially in changing or uncertain environments.

- Setting Measurable Learning Objectives: Clearly define what learners are expected to achieve by the end of the program.
  - ▷ Example: For a vocational training program, establish specific objectives that can be measured such as "Execute basic financial management tasks," "Reach a typing speed of 40 WPM," or "create an original graphic design using Adobe software"
  - ▷ Example: In literacy programs, goals might include "Recognize and write basic letters and words" or "Read simple sentences independently."

3.5 Coordination and Partnerships

- Forming Strategic Partnerships: Establish partnerships with other educational organizations, sister institutions, and vocational training centers.
  - ▷ Example: Collaborate with a vocational institution to offer advanced courses as exit pathways for learners who complete foundational programs, providing continuity in their education journey.

- Sharing Best Practices: Regularly connect with partner organizations to discuss best practices, common challenges, and innovative solutions.
  - ▷ Example: Hold quarterly meetings with partner institutions to exchange successful teaching methods or curricula updates that can improve learner engagement and outcomes.

- Community Involvement and Buy-In: Engage with relevant stakeholders when possible to understand their perspectives, adapting programs to better fit community priorities.
  - ▷ Example: Host community meetings or focus groups to gather feedback on program relevance and impact, which can help refine the mission and approach to better meet community expectations.

- Providing Exit Pathways: Develop clear exit pathways that guide learners toward further education or employment opportunities.
  - ▷ Example: Partner with local businesses or other institutions to secure internships or apprenticeships for program graduates, providing them with practical experience and potential job placements.
  - ▷ Example: Run a referral service for students and graduates that connects them to opportunities from other providers that will build on their learning pathways.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

Standard 4: Delivery

Objective:

Learning programs are implemented effectively, using evidence-based pedagogical practices and clear communication to create an inclusive and transparent learning environment.

Description:

Execute educational programs with fidelity to the course design, ensuring both logistical and instructional aspects are managed to provide a high-quality, student-centered learning experience. For online programs, ensure digital accessibility and user-friendly navigation; for in-person programs, ensure safety and inclusivity in the physical environment.

Key Actions and Examples:

4.1 Evidence-based Pedagogy

- Using Diverse Teaching Methods: Implement a range of instructional methods to meet diverse learning needs, removing barriers to participation.
  - ▷ Example: For online literacy programs, use interactive digital storytelling with visuals and audio recordings to engage learners. Encourage online discussion groups where learners can share their understanding and relate the story to their lives, fostering peer-to-peer support.
  - ▷ Example: In virtual vocational training, combine video-based instruction with interactive quizzes and online hands-on assignments. For example, teach sewing techniques through video demonstrations, followed by assignments where learners upload photos of their practice projects for feedback.

- Differentiated Instruction: Tailor lessons to address the varied abilities and experiences of learners, whether online or in-person.
  - ▷ Example: For online digital literacy classes, provide beginner tutorials for students with limited prior experience and advanced resources for others, allowing learners to proceed at their own pace.

- Active Learning Techniques: Engage learners actively by involving them in group work, discussions, and problem-solving activities, both in virtual and in-person settings.
  - ▷ Example: In an online health education course, use breakout rooms to create small group discussions where learners can practice responding to health scenarios. This builds both knowledge and confidence, helping them feel prepared to apply their learning in real-life situations.

4.2 Communication

- Establishing Open Communication Channels: Create accessible ways for learners, educators, and staff to communicate openly, such as through virtual group meetings, online forums, or suggestion forms.
  - ▷ Example: Hold weekly virtual check-in meetings to address questions, clarify course content, and provide an open space for learners to share challenges and receive peer support. These sessions can also serve as a motivational tool for remote learners.
  - ▷ Example: Set up a dedicated online messaging platform, like a WhatsApp group or a discussion board, where learners and instructors can quickly exchange updates, share resources, and provide encouragement.
  - ▷ Example: Identify an ombudsperson in the organization to whom learners can bring any concerns.

- Feedback Loops: Collect feedback regularly from all stakeholders to adjust the program as needed, ensuring continuous improvement.
  - ▷ Example: Mid-course online surveys help gather feedback on what learners find helpful and any challenges they face. If multiple learners mention difficulties with digital navigation, consider adding a tutorial or guide to improve accessibility.
  - ▷ Example: For online courses, instructors can offer an anonymous digital feedback form where students can submit suggestions or concerns, ensuring that even quieter learners have a voice.

4.3 Transparency

- Clear Expectations and Program Scope: Inform learners and staff upfront about the learning provider's capabilities, limitations, and expected outcomes.
  - ▷ Example: During virtual orientations, clarify the credentials learners can earn, such as a completion certificate or a recognized credential, and explain any prerequisites for obtaining these credentials. If the program does not provide a recognized credential, ensure that is clear to learners.
  - ▷ Example: For programs with limited support services (like job placement), communicate this clearly online and emphasize other available resources, such as career workshops or online job search assistance.

- Communicating Limitations and Challenges: Be transparent about any limitations or adjustments due to external factors, like tech issues or resource constraints.
  - ▷ Example: If an online class faces technical difficulties, notify learners immediately and provide a workaround, such as a recorded session or an alternative platform, to ensure they don't miss important content.

4.4 Administration

- Implementing Secure Data Management Systems: Ensure that all learner and staff data is handled securely in both online and offline settings, protecting personal information and maintaining confidentiality.
  - ▷ Example: For online programs, use secure, password-protected platforms with clear data privacy policies to store learner records. Train all administrative staff on data protection to ensure compliance.
  - ▷ Example: When collecting online attendance or assessment data, use encrypted software or forms that protect user information.

- Maintaining Accurate Records: Keep updated records on attendance, academic progress, and feedback, which are crucial for tracking program effectiveness.
  - ▷ Example: For virtual classes, instructors log attendance through the learning management system (LMS) and track engagement data, like time spent on modules or participation in discussions.
  - ▷ Example: Regularly review records to identify any trends, such as low engagement or low attendance, which could indicate challenges with the online format or accessibility that need addressing.

4.5 Facilities (When applicable)

- Ensuring Safe, Hygienic, and Welcoming Learning Environments: For in-person programs, facilities should meet basic safety, health, and inclusivity standards.
  - ▷ Example: Arrange seating for in-person sessions to promote interaction while ensuring accessibility for those with mobility needs. Include features like open spaces and clear walkways to accommodate all learners comfortably.
  - ▷ Example: Maintain hygiene by providing hand sanitizers and cleaning supplies, ensuring classrooms are well-lit, ventilated, and offer drinking water.

- Promoting Inclusivity in Learning Spaces: Whether online or in-person, ensure the learning environment is inclusive and welcoming for all participants.
  - ▷ Example: In virtual classrooms, use a range of accessible materials, such as video captions, audio descriptions, and downloadable PDFs, to accommodate various learning needs.
  - ▷ Example: In both online and in-person settings, provide clear instructions in local languages, and offer materials in multiple formats (e.g., visual aids, audio recordings) to accommodate diverse learners.

Standard 5: Evaluation and Accountability

Objective:

Maintain and improve the quality of learning services through continuous monitoring and evaluation, aligning programs with recognized standards, and ensuring that learners' achievements are formally recognized.

Description:

Regularly evaluate program effectiveness and learner progress, using findings to refine and enhance offerings. For online programs, adapt monitoring methods to capture digital engagement, and for in-person settings, utilize direct observation and feedback.

Key Actions and Examples:

5.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

- Ongoing Monitoring of Learning Programs: Set up continuous monitoring mechanisms to assess program quality, learner satisfaction, and progress.
  - ▷ Example: In an online program, track digital metrics such as login frequency, module completion rates, and participation in discussion forums. These indicators can highlight engagement patterns and areas that might need additional support.
  - ▷ Example: For in-person sessions, instructors can use observation checklists to assess student participation, comprehension, and engagement in real time, adjusting instruction as needed.

- Conducting Evaluations at Set Intervals: Evaluate program or course outcomes at regular intervals (e.g., mid-course and end-of-course) to ensure alignment with learning goals.
  - ▷ Example: After each module, run a short survey to gather learner feedback on content clarity and relevance. For example, a health education module might ask if learners feel confident about basic first aid skills after the training.
  - ▷ Example: In online settings, conduct virtual feedback sessions where learners can discuss their experiences and provide suggestions for improvements. This also helps build a sense of community and shared purpose.

- Using Evaluation Data for Improvement: Use insights from monitoring and evaluation to refine program content, delivery methods, and support mechanisms.
  - ▷ Example: If learners in an online language course report difficulty with certain grammar topics, provide additional resources, such as recorded grammar lessons or interactive exercises, to address this gap.
  - ▷ Example: For in-person programs, if evaluations show that learners are struggling with pace, consider adjusting lesson timing or offering additional review sessions.

5.2 Assessment of Students

- **Setting Clear Learning Objectives for Assessments:** Define measurable learning outcomes for each program, ensuring assessments are directly aligned with these goals.
  - ▷ Example: In an online vocational training program, establish objectives such as "Learner can develop a basic household budget" or "Learner is able to complete a digital resume." Use assessments like budgeting exercises or resume submissions to evaluate these outcomes.
  - ▷ Example: For literacy programs, objectives could include reading comprehension skills, tested through short reading passages with comprehension questions; and reading speed tests. These tests can be matched against a baseline test to measure learner progression.

- **Using Formative Assessments:** Employ regular, low-stakes assessments to gauge learner understanding and provide immediate feedback.
  - ▷ Example: In online courses, use quizzes at the end of each section to assess understanding. Include automated feedback, explaining correct answers to enhance learning.
  - ▷ Example: For in-person sessions, conduct quick group activities, like verbal Q&A or brainstorming, to check understanding and clarify concepts on the spot.

- **Providing Summative Assessments:** At the program's end, use summative assessments to measure overall achievement and mastery of skills.
  - ▷ Example: In a digital literacy course, ask learners to complete a final project, such as creating a simple presentation, to demonstrate their mastery of technology skills.
  - ▷ Example: For health-related programs, use a combination of written exams and practical demonstrations to assess knowledge retention and practical application.

5.3 Standards Alignment

- **Ensuring Compliance with Recognized Standards:** Align program content with recognized educational and professional standards relevant to the field.
  - ▷ Example: An online project management training program meets standards defined by the Project Management Institute (PMI) and the International Project Management Association (IPMA) which set international benchmarks for competency in project management.
  - ▷ Example: For an engineering degree, content reflects the educational standards set by the International Engineering Alliance (IEA), the global professional body that accredits engineering programs.
  - ▷ Example: Literacy and numeracy programs might align with UNESCO benchmarks, ensuring content is structured to meet specific literacy learning outcomes, and draws on the latest evidence about effective methods for literacy education.

- Continuous Review for Relevance: Periodically review program content to ensure alignment with current standards, adapting when industry or educational standards change.
  - ▷ Example: If an online curriculum incorporates digital skills, stay updated on tech trends, such as commonly used software or skills in demand by local employers, and update content to stay relevant.
  - ▷ Example: For health education, integrate updates on public health guidelines or practices that reflect the latest knowledge on health and safety, especially in emergency situations.

5.4 Recognition and Credentialing

- Offering Recognized Credentials: Where possible, seek to provide recognized certifications that validate learners' skills and achievements, enabling them to advance academically or professionally.
  - ▷ Example: Partner with accredited institutions or professional bodies to offer co-branded certificates for completion of vocational courses, giving learners a credential that adds value in the job market.
  - ▷ Example: For online programs, use digital badges or certificates endorsed by the Alliance or recognized partners to signify successful program completion.
  - ▷ Example: Pursue accreditation with the relevant credentialing body for your educational program or school in order to issue credentials to your learners that will be recognized globally.

- Leveraging the Alliance's Peer Recognition Framework: For providers unable to obtain formal accreditation, use the Alliance's Peer Recognition Framework to ensure learners' achievements are acknowledged and trusted.
  - ▷ Example: Work with other Alliance members to recognize each other's certifications. For example, a graduate of a digital literacy course from one organization can have their credential recognized by another organization, allowing for seamless learning progressions.
  - ▷ Example: Use the Peer Recognition Framework to assure stakeholders that programs meet shared quality standards, even if formal accreditation is not possible, building confidence in the program's value.

ANNEX 1

Rubric with 1-to-5 Scale

Rating	Description
1. Not Met	The criterion has not been addressed or implemented.
2. Minimal	Limited efforts have been made, but significant gaps remain.
3. Developing	The criterion is partially met; foundational elements are in place, but further development is needed.
4. Fully Met	The criterion is met and implemented effectively.
5. Exceeds	The criterion is exceeded with exemplary practices that go beyond the standard's requirements.

Standard 1: Duty of Care

Criteria	1. Not Met	2. Minimal	3. Developing	4. Fully Met	5. Exceeds
Policy and Governance	No written policies or governance structures.	Policies exist but are incomplete or inconsistently applied.	Policies are in place but require updates or clearer enforcement.	Comprehensive policies and governance structures are in place and applied.	Policies demonstrate leadership in sustainability and stakeholder trust.
Child Protection and Safety	No child protection measures in place.	Some measures exist but are not comprehensive.	Measures are in place but lack full implementation or training.	Comprehensive child protection measures implemented.	Policies are exemplary, with leadership in safeguarding practices.
Psychological Wellbeing	No attention to psychological wellbeing of participants.	Some support for wellbeing, but inconsistently provided.	Supports exist but are not consistently implemented.	Psychological wellbeing is prioritized and supported across programs.	Exceptional focus, with innovative and tailored supports in place.

Standard 2: Learning Resources Efficacy

Criteria	1. Not Met	2. Minimal	3. Developing	4. Fully Met	5. Exceeds
Competencies	Staff lack qualifications or competencies for their roles.	Some staff meet competency requirements; gaps remain.	Most staff are qualified, but some roles lack alignment with required competencies.	Staff are qualified, with roles assigned based on merit and expertise.	Staff competencies are exceptional, with continuous professional development integrated.
Digital Learning Environments	No capacity for digital learning delivery.	Digital learning capacity exists but is underutilized.	Some elements are functional, but gaps remain in learner engagement.	Digital environments are engaging and effective for learners.	Demonstrates leadership and innovation in online education.

Standard 3: Design & Planning

Criteria	1. Not Met	2. Minimal	3. Developing	4. Fully Met	5. Exceeds
Needs Analysis	No formal needs analysis conducted.	Limited data collected; analysis does not fully reflect community needs.	Needs analysis addresses some key areas but lacks comprehensive coverage.	Comprehensive needs analysis conducted, addressing most key areas.	Exceeds expectations, with innovative methods and extensive community involvement.
Program Design	No structured program design process.	Program design exists but is not aligned with identified needs.	Program design addresses some needs but is incomplete.	Program design aligns with identified needs and includes clear objectives.	Integrates UDL principles and innovative approaches tailored to learner needs.
Coordination and Partnerships	No partnerships or coordination with other organizations.	Limited engagement with partners; alignment is unclear.	Some partnerships exist but lack alignment with broader goals.	Active participation in sector coordination and partnerships.	Demonstrates leadership in partnerships and sector coordination, lifting others.

Standard 4: Delivery

Criteria	1. Not Met	2. Minimal	3. Developing	4. Fully Met	5. Exceeds
Evidence-Based Pedagogy	No use of evidence-based teaching methods.	Some methods are used inconsistently.	Evidence-based methods are used but lack full alignment with program objectives.	Consistent use of evidence-based methods in program delivery.	Methods are fully integrated and tailored to learner needs.
Communication	Limited or ineffective communication channels.	Communication channels exist but are inconsistent.	Some two-way communication occurs but is not accessible to all stakeholders.	Clear, accessible two-way communication channels are in place.	Channels actively foster collaboration and continuous improvement.
Transparency	Stakeholders are unaware of the organization's scope or capacity.	Limited transparency with stakeholders.	Some efforts are made to communicate scope, but clarity is lacking.	Organization communicates its scope, limitations, and capacity effectively.	Transparency is a cornerstone, using innovative methods to manage stakeholder expectations.

Standard 5: Evaluation and Accountability

Criteria	1. Not Met	2. Minimal	3. Developing	4. Fully Met	5. Exceeds
Monitoring and Evaluation	No monitoring or evaluation processes in place.	Processes exist but lack consistency or depth.	Some processes are in place but not comprehensive.	Regular, structured monitoring and evaluation processes are in place.	Exemplary processes include clear impact assessments.
Student Assessment	No assessment of student learning outcomes.	Assessments are irregular or not aligned with objectives.	Assessments align partially with objectives but lack consistency.	Regular, formative assessments align with learning objectives.	Methods are exemplary and context-sensitive.