

Information card 7

How to prepare learners for distance learning

Distance learning can be life changing for many people. To study via distance learning, a person needs to be ready academically, have study skills and be motivated. PET distance learners also need to meet our entry criteria, select the “right” course, understand when and where they are going to study in prison and be independent thinkers.

Learners will often require support around study skills such as time management and chunking text, as well as help with ensuring they have a conducive study environment and relevant IT access.

If you are a member of prison staff, the guidance below can help you support people who are preparing for distance learning - whether they are serving their sentence or on remand.

<p>Resources to help with study preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PET’s Distance Learning Handbook for Prison and Education Staff provides information around distance learning, including “Getting ready for distance learning” (page 9). You can download a PDF version from the Prison Staff Resources area on our website: www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/login-area • In the PET Course Prospectus, learners can find information about what distance learning is (page 2) and how to prepare to study (page 7). You can download and print a PDF version of the prospectus on the PET website: www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/our-courses
<p>Identifying strengths and areas for support</p>	<p>PET’s entry criteria PET sets out the criteria learners need to meet to apply for our courses. Learners must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Be serving a sentence (not on remand) in a prison in England, Wales, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man ○ Have six months or more left to serve on their sentence ○ Have gained level 2 English (literacy). Some courses also require level 2 Maths (numeracy) ○ Be over 18 years old ○ Not be studying another PET course at the same time <p>To help someone become an independent learner and prepare well for studies, you need to consider and discuss other areas with them too:</p> <p>Selecting a suitable PET course You can ask what their interests are and which subjects or areas they already know about. Learners have told us that having previous knowledge of and background in a subject helps them enjoy and complete courses.</p> <p>Exploring learners’ motivations and strengths You can ask why the person would like to study the course, what they’d like to achieve, and what motivates them to start and complete it.</p>

	<p>Supporting research It is important that you encourage learners to spend some time understanding the course and the subject area they'd like to study, including what to expect in terms of course structure and assessments.</p> <p>You should also encourage them to: think about how they will manage their time and maintain a space for studying; consider what qualifications, courses, jobs or volunteering they have done that relates to their course; and discuss the ways in which this course will benefit them and support their plans for the future.</p> <p>Resilience and problem-solving You should discuss the learner's strengths, resilience and self-discipline. You can ask them to give you some examples to demonstrate that they know what to do if they have any issues during their studies. For instance, what would they do if they had problems writing or submitting assignments? Do they know who to contact for support?</p>
<p>Digital taster courses to try distance learning</p>	<p>PET have seven free digital taster courses on Virtual Campus (VC) for people who are looking to start independent learning but aren't sure where to begin. They can try these digital courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discover the joy of Reading for Pleasure with NEC ○ Get moving with Cell Workout's Health and Fitness ○ Unwind with The University of Derby's Nature Connectedness ○ Level up with Inside Academy's Digital Marketing and Social Media ○ Learn workplace essentials through RRC International's Health and Safety ○ Dive into In-House Records' Music Production and Industry ○ Explore sustainability and green living with TEC Wales' Green Skills <p>Find out more about the digital courses on the Prison Staff Resources area on our website: www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/login-area/</p>
<p>Short PET courses to improve study skills</p>	<p>You can encourage learners to take one of our free short courses before making a PET course application to improve their study skills, determine if distance learning is appropriate for them, and increase their confidence. Learners can choose from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sports and Nutrition ● Construction, Trades, Health and Safety ● Business, Accounting and Book-keeping ● Mental Health and Counselling

	<p>The courses are available on VC2 and Coracle laptops and in a printable format via the Prison Staff Resources area of our website: www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/login-area/</p>
<p>What you can do to help learners - a summary</p>	<p>If you are a Distance Learning Coordinator, you can support people who are interested in distance learning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Finding out what they would like to study via distance learning and why ○ Helping them select a course which they feel would help them achieve their goals. Allow time for this: it can take a while to select the “right” course ○ Exploring their strengths and identifying areas of improvement ○ Providing study resources such as the free PET short courses and digital courses to help them brush up on study skills, engage in learning, and find out what area of studies they may be interested in ○ Checking they meet PET’s entry criteria. If they are not eligible to apply, suggest what they can do to apply in the future ○ Helping them maintain a suitable study environment ○ Providing information around what to do if issues arise when studying. For instance, you can provide information on course providers’ support and the free PET Advice Line ○ Letting them know you are there to support them <p>If have another role in the prison, you can support people who are interested in distance learning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Speaking to them about their goals and aspirations and what course they would like to study and why ○ Exploring their interests, skills and knowledge in the subject area they are thinking of applying for ○ Signposting them to the PET Advice Line ○ Referring them to your prison’s Distance Learning Coordinator. If you’re not sure who the coordinator in your prison is, please call PET and we’ll help you identify them
<p>FREE Advice Line and FREEPOST for learners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People in prison can call PET’s Advice Line for free on: 0800 048 7520 from 10am-12pm and 2-4pm on Tuesdays and 10am-12pm and 2-6pm on Thursdays ● Please encourage learners to call the Advice Line: our team will be able to help you by ensuring learners are well-informed about what they need to consider to become distance learners and answering any questions, including about completing our application form. ● Learners can write to us at: FREEPOST, Prisoners’ Education Trust
<p>Contact us</p>	<p>If you have any questions or would like any advice, you can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Email us on accesstolearning@prisonerseducation.org.uk ● Call us on 020 3752 5680

