

Frequently asked questions



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Online Distance Learning (ODL) postgraduate students

In response to queries from new ODL students, these FAQs cover the following topics:

Technical requirements (general)

VPN

Virtual classes and VLE

Assessments

Handbooks

Library resources and ebooks

Matriculation

Student card

Fees and finance

Study support and IAD

The campus

Technical requirements (general)

Q. I had problems with my software. Is there a list of software I should have installed on my computer?

A. If there are any particular technology requirements, these should be highlighted in your course technology handbook.

If you ever have any IT issues, just send an email to the IS Helpline - is.helpline@ed.ac.uk

Q. There are so many new things to learn about online learning technology, and I need help with orientation.

A. Find out about the different services provided to University of Edinburgh Online Learning students <http://edin.ac/16k2wVv>

A few key resources:

Making the most of IT - <http://edin.ac/15yxMma> (a video presentation on the core IS student services)

VPN set-up - www.ed.ac.uk/is/vpn

Office 365 (student email) - www.ed.ac.uk/is/office365

Q. I am a little overwhelmed with the MyEd site, where do I start?

A. There is a lot of information on MyEd, and you use this portal for many different things. The most important resources on it are 1. student email access, 2. ODL student channel, 3. contact details and programme info, 4. library searching.

Q. Can I access my university email via my smartphone?

A. You can connect your smartphone with email using these guidelines <http://edin.ac/ZnhTt0>

Q. Is the ODL compatible with android systems?

A. Most things like student email and MyEd are completely compatible, though some things are easier with a computer. In a virtual class, chat typing can be difficult on a phone – though if it's voice chat, that's fine. There are functional limitations when accessing a virtual classroom from a mobile device, you cannot view the webcam of the host, for example.

If your programme uses Collaborate for classes, download the android app from <http://edin.ac/18ZhALd>

Q. What is Eduroam?

A. A secure, world-wide roaming internet connection, allowing students to access wifi when visiting participating institutions. If you are planning a visit to a university campus, check if it is one of the institutions listed at <https://www.eduroam.org/index.php?p=where> – if so, you will be able to configure your device to make use of eduroam. For set-up instructions, go to <http://edin.ac/19eomNc>

VPN

Q. What does VPN stand for?

A. VPN is virtual private network. It is a secure connection between your device and the University of Edinburgh network. After a connection is established your device will be on a trusted network and therefore granted the same access as our internal computers.

Q. What is VPN for?

A. Both security and enabling access to some services. If you are on free wifi in a cafe anywhere in the world and you turn on VPN on your device this will secure the internet traffic for you. www.ed.ac.uk/is/vpn

VPN can help with accessing Library Resources, and it allows you to access some restricted services, such as searching for a student email address.

Q. Do I need VPN to access the Library or access journals?

A. It is not essential for library or MyEd access, since if you go via the library links you will usually be able to get access using your EASE login.

Because when you switch on VPN your computer is made to look like it's on the UoE network, it can simplify access to some of our subscriptions, but you should normally still be able to access things off-campus by following links via the library web pages and logging in with your EASE login.

Q. If I already have a VPN on my computer for my job, do you know if it will interfere at all?

A. You can have various VPN options in a drop down menu of VPN. When at work, use VPN at work if that is how it set up.

When you need it for studies then use the VPN for Edinburgh. Just name the VPNs something obvious and distinct, when adding them to your computer.

Virtual classes and VLE

Q. How will my ODL classes be given?

A. Each programme has their own set of platforms they use. All will be identified in your programme handbook and tech handbook.

Your virtual learning environment (VLE) could be something called Moodle, Learn or ESSQ - this is your main teaching space. Blackboard Collaborate is one of the virtual classrooms which is used, sometimes by on-campus students, but especially by ODL students. Some programmes will use other tools, such as discussion boards or Second Life. These programmes will provide specific guidance on these tools for you.

Q. Will there be any fixed classes that will require a me to be online at particular times?

A. It will depend on your course structure - most courses operate asynchronously but sometimes you are asked to attend online tutorials. Any pre-recorded lecture material will be fully asynchronous, however, so you can access it at your convenience

Q. Do programme teams publish online lecture dates ahead of term start?

A. These are usually confirmed during term time, along with the times of any synchronous tutorials, and whether or not you are required to attend them.

Q. How do I access Moodle?

A. Moodle isn't accessible via the MyEd portal, so if your programme uses Moodle and you haven't been given the link for it you should contact your programme team for access. The helpline is.helpline@ed.ac.uk can help with any technical issues with Moodle.

Assessments

Q. How are exams conducted for online distance learning students?

A. Each programme is different and chooses assessment relevant to their subject area.

A useful start is to consult your programme handbook for more information, and if you are still unclear, contact your programme team.

Handbooks

Q. Where can I find the course handbook?

A. Handbooks are usually found on your VLE. You could have up to three but at least one handbook(s) - for example, Programme, Course and Technical.

Often your programme handbook will be available on your course website. If you can't find it then then your contact your programme team.

Library resources and ebooks

Q. How do I find the library resources?

A. Library resources guides for your subject areas: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/is/subject-guides-a-z>

We have access to a wide range of resources via the library catalogue and other databases, so it might be a little intimidating at the start. If you would like a guided tour, details of the next library induction sessions will be announced on the masters blog <http://iad4masters.wordpress.com/>.

Q. How do I find ebooks?

A. There will be links to course texts on your virtual learning environments (VLEs), but if you want to see what other ebooks are available from the library, you can search here:

<http://aquabrowser.lib.ed.ac.uk/> and then refine your results to ebooks.

Q. Can e-books be downloaded?

A. It does vary from publisher to publisher. Some ebooks allow you to download at least small parts, while others require you to be online while you read them.

Q. Can I borrow a book from library by post?

A. No, but usually all of the texts you require will be available online (any exceptions to this will be made clear by the course team).

You should find out if you can use a nearby library – for example, if you live in the UK, you can use a reciprocal scheme called SCONUL Access, to use university and research libraries near you. Register and get more info at <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/sconul-access>

Q. What if the Library only has a print version of the journal article or book chapter that I need?

A. Check the catalogue to find out if the journal or book is available electronically if so, you should be able to get the material online. Otherwise, if the item is in University of Edinburgh's printed stock, then there is no fee for sending you a scan of an article or chapter. Ensure that you indicate in the notes field that you are on a distance programme when you make a request through the Interlibrary Loans service.

Q. What if the library doesn't have the journal article or book chapter that I need at all, in print or electronically?

A. If the book or journal is not in the University of Edinburgh Library system, the Interlibrary Loans team get scans for you from other, external, libraries. As a postgraduate student on a taught master's programme, you have an allocation of 20 requests per academic year at no charge. If you need more than 20 from external libraries, additional requests are charge at £5 each.

Q. How do I register to use the Interlibrary Loans service?

A. To use the ILL service, register using the barcode on your matriculation card at <http://illiad.lib.ed.ac.uk/illiad/>, and register for electronic document delivery by contacting the ILL

team at webill@ed.ac.uk and letting them know you're on a distance learning programme. More information on ILL is at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/is/inter-library>

Matriculation

Q. How do I complete my matriculation?

A. There are a number of different levels to the matriculation process. After you have accepted your place on the course, you will need to wait until your attendance (on the VLE) is confirmed by the programme team during your first week of study in order to be fully matriculated.

It's usually fairly straight forward, and not a lot will need to be done by you - your personal tutor will be in touch. For more information, go to <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/registry/matric>

Q. I am supposed to be starting my course soon, but still have a conditional offer – what should I do?

A. That means they are waiting for a few more details, usually references.

Contact the team and find out which reference they are waiting – perhaps you can contact the person to speed things up.

Student Card

Q. As ODL students, what do we need the student card for?

A. Your card is useful for library access - you need the barcode on it for document delivery requests. It can help get access to local resources, and many use the card for student discounts. It is a formal ID that acknowledges your student status with us.

Q. How do I get my student card?

A. In order to trigger development of your student id, you need to upload an image.

Q. How do I upload my photo for a student card?

A. There is a section in MyEd under 'my studies' where you can upload a photo and this will trigger the send out of your student ID.

Q. How is the card delivered?

A. Cards are sent by post after you've uploaded your image

Q. Can my student card be sent to my postal address rather than my residential address?

A. If you have the two addresses listed on your MyEd channel already, your card should be sent to your postal address - but you can always double-check with is.helpline@ed.ac.uk that this is the address to be used.

Fees and finance

Q. When will I be invoiced?

A. There is an automatic trigger when you accept your place on the programme (and become classed as 'unconditional firm'), which causes the Fees department to develop your invoice.

Q. When should I pay my fees?

A. You have until week 6 (technically) to pay this invoice and if you have any reason why this timing is not possible, you should contact fees immediately.

You can check the fee status on the MyEd portal, and if you have any questions about fees you should contact fees@ed.ac.uk

Study support and IAD

Q. How can I develop better study skills?

A. Contact the Institute for Academic Development (IAD), visit our website and blog. We have lots of resources to help with your studies, such as an online writing course, online course on time management, resources on writing. Find out more at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/iad/postgraduates>

Q. What is the IAD Masters Blog?

A. The Masters Blog at <http://iad4masters.wordpress.com/> is a website for postgraduate taught students with a lot of useful resources, and highlights online events which can help you with your studies. The blog also signposts different central services such as Careers and Information Services.

The campus

Q. Are ODL students allowed to visit the University campus?

A. Of course! If you are in Edinburgh, you have full access to all on-campus services - and the programme team may even be around to say hello. If you're coming to Edinburgh, bring your student card - it's useful for accessing the library.

Q. Can I attend some modules on campus?

A. This is a conversation you will need to pick up with your programme team. For some programmes it may be possible to count an on-campus module towards your ODL programme, but the decisions are made on a case by case basis.