TYPE: POLICY AND PROCEDURE	
SUBJECT: ONLINE LEARNING	REFERENCE: LWP19
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APPROVED BY: The Board of Directors	

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Scope: Learning works will use online/blended learning where appropriate, to support experiences that are flexible, responsive and effective and meet the needs of all its stakeholdersmostly, of the students themselves.

Introduction to Learning Definitions

Elearning

The term "eLearning" is referred to when learning is taking place using both a computer and the Internet. There are several facets to eLearning including the hardware (computers, mobile phones, digital cameras), digital resources the web, materials presented via Virtual, and online communication tools (e-mail, chat forums etc.) elearning environments, (online libraries etc.), software (tutorials, 'office packages etc.).

Blended Learning

The term blended learning is commonly referred to as a combination of face-to-face learning along with eLearning.

Different forms and services

Products and services may vary and take different forms. These may be:

- Single courses and/or entire programmes
- Entire courses and/or course units, lessons, or components
- Aimed at individuals or entire groups in classes
- Offered for credit at 'Learning Works' and/or for general interest without credit

Learning Works shall refer to both synchronous and asynchronous modes of delivery of its training and learning programmes when the term eLearning is being referred to.
 Whether synchronous or asynchronous the Lecturer/Tutor is responsible for the module being delivered while the student has the freedom to access the Virtual Learning Platform (VLE)anytime as it is available 24/7 andsynchronous sessions are recorded and made available on demand by the student. Among the eLearning pedagogies there are discussion forums, recorded webinars and peer to peer comments.
Each student has her/his own assigned ID and student-generated password to log into the learning management system.

Strategic Management

The strategy is to include both eLearning and blended learning so it can move towards a student-centred learning covering all MQF levels. Learning Works shall therefore commit itself to offer ways that students may choose to enrol and select the best possible option including the pattern or timeframe most suitable to them apart from traditional face-to-face learning.
Learning Works is also offering eLearning and blended learning to cater for student diversity. This shall also result in having teachers/ lecturers and support staff engaged in the process of enrolment and admission including teaching and learning using ICT and other resources which ultimately present elearning/blended learning options apart from the traditional, in-class, face-to-face approach.

The key features of the above are:

- Stakeholder Oriented – developed with particular attention on having a return on investment in eLearning especially for the learners.
- Consensus-based – developed through consultation with a balance of provider and stakeholders in Malta and beyond.
- Comprehensive – inclusive of all elements of the learning system: outcomes and outputs, processes and practices, inputs and resources.
- Futuristic – describing a preferred future rather than the present circumstances
- for design and delivery
- Adaptable – best used for adult and further and higher education and training, but adaptable to other levels of learning services
- Flexible – not all the above will apply in all circumstances and when eLearning involves activities or resources beyond Learning Works, such as the virtual mobility of students, institutional partnerships or development of open resources, the roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined and controlled by operational agreements where appropriate.

The elearning and blended learning are also governed by ethical and legal considerations to be in line and in conformity with GDPR.

Policy and Procedures

The Policy and Procedures pertaining to eLearning and blended learning are the responsibility of the Head of Institution of Learning *Works.* The Policy and Procedures address:
- Management,
- Responsibility,
- Accountability
- Staffing and staff development
- Financial, physical and technical resources (including software).

Designing and Development of eLearning and blended learning programmes

The eLearning and blended training programmes are designed in accordance with the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) framework as stipulated in the Referencing report, 4th Revised Edition, February 2016. Learning Works will also be carrying out, in the future, curricular mapping of online courses in line with the Guidelines for Quality Assurance issued b y the MFHEA.

Learning Outcomes

The intended learning outcomes for each training programme are:

- Clearly stated;
- Relevant, i.e., appropriate for the intended learners;
- Observable / demonstrable;
- Measurable;
- Achievable and realistic;
- Appropriate to the rigour and breadth of the award, certificate, diploma, degree awarded;
- Consistent with the mandate of the provider.

Curriculum and Training Programme

 The Curriculum content is:

- Credible with sources identified;
- Accurate;
- Relevant;
- Balanced and free of bias;

- Updated consistently and routinely. Documented;
- Appropriate to the learning outcomes;
- Culturally sensitive;
- Consistent with current copyright laws in the jurisdiction of the provider.

Training and Teaching Materials and other Research Resources

Both the teaching and learning materials are:

- Prepared by qualified content experts (author identified, recorded and documented) working with qualified design experts where appropriate (identified, recorded and documented);
- Readily available;
- Learner friendly;
- Interesting in content and layout;
- Well-organized;
- Free of cultural, racial, class, age and gender bias;
- Accessible to those with disabilities;
- Free from errors;
- Adaptable to learner needs and abilities but still respecting the learning

outcomes.

Learning Aids and Technology for The Teacher and the Learner

Learning technologies provided are appropriate to:

- The field of study or subject matter content and skills;
- The intended learning outcomes;
- The relevant characteristics and circumstances of the learner;
- The cost and benefit for the learner;
- Provide multiple representations of content;
- Enable concept mapping within the learning environment;
- Make available real-world situations and simulations;
- Provide assistance and guidance including communications to the learner;

Learning materials and the delivery reflect sound technical design so that they are:

- Navigable;
- Easily updateable and frequently updated;
- Complemented by multimedia, rather than distracted by them;
- Inclusive of "live" links to relevant and previewed documents subject;
- In line with copyright law;
- Reliable;
- Sensitive to bandwidth constraints of students;
- Compliant with current technology and ICT standards.

Student- Centred and User-Friendly Technology

The comprehensive course package (all materials and technologies) is:

- Appealing in appearance;
- User-friendly;
- Customizable;
- Inclusive of all institutional services and activities (registration, payment, advising, tutorial assistance and library services);
- Complete;
- Reviewed and evaluated routinely

Design of Assessments

The design of eLearning/blended courses uses a balance of formative and summative assessments to assess the intended learning outcomes against agreed marking criteria. Moreover, the timetable is formulated in a way   that allows the student to concentrate week by week and includes readings carried out every week where appropriate while the assessment is indicated up front, so the student has ample time for preparation.

Grading rubrics are in the process of preparation and will be available at the end of the academic year.

Course participants will have the possibility of contesting assessment decisions in line with Learning Works Policies on complaints, grievances and appeals.

In the case of blended courses, summative assessments are carried out on campus.

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism, intentional or non-intentional, is not permissible. Learning Works is against plagiarism and informs the student accordingly through its policy and procedure on plagiarism in the Student Handbook which is also available online on its website. Learning Works has its plagiarism software, *Turnitin,* to detect this.

   Student identity in online activities is verified through individual login with students having unique usernames to log into the LMS. All users of the LMS are responsible for ensuring that their usernames and passwords are secure.

Use of Technological Devices and Technical Assistance

The development of online learning material needs to be accessible and usable via a variety of devices including mobile phones. This material consists of videos, recorded webinars, power points, links to webs and *You Tube* etc.
All videos to be used as a mode of delivery in synchronous teaching are to be sent to the administration for approval prior to use. If 'You Tube' social media videos are to be used, the lecturer should submit the link to that video for approval by the Head of Institution to determine its quality.Once approved, the link can be part of the pedagogy used in teaching and learning.

The requirements for videos are as follows:

Resolution	Name	Quality
2560x1440	1440p	2K
1920x1080	1080p	Maximum resolution for HD
1280x720	720p	Minimum resolution for HD
854x480	480p	Standard definition

Technology Technical Assistance

Technical assistance with the technologies being used and provided shall be applied to:

- The purpose of the technology/ technologies;
- Skills and knowledge required to manipulate and interact with the technologies being used.

Technology, computers and other ICTs are appropriately used to:

- Engage and support learners;
- Accommodate and promote individualization;
- Create opportunities for students to do meaningful work;
- Increase proficiency at accessing, evaluating and communicating information;
- Improve student abilities to solve complex problems;
- Nurture artistic expression;
- Enable active engagement in the construction of knowledge;
- Meet National and International standards for students with disabilities.

The following are engaged to provide technical assistance for eLearning staff and users at the three main stages of production, delivery and access.

HIVE, a third-party ICT specialist gives the technical assistance for the website.
The IT Department of the Vassallo Group also gives technical assistance where needed and applicable. Similarly, the administration team also gives technical assistance where applicable.

Mode /s of Delivery for eLearning and Blended Training Programmes

Zoom is used for synchronous, non-traditional, online teaching whereas the virtual learning platform for asynchronous learning is Moodle.

Learning Works provides students with a password to access sessions on Zoom. They will also be provided with the same password for asynchronous eLearning courses.

Delivery of eLearning and Blended Training Programmes including Feedback

Feedback to student assignments will be delivered in a timely manner by the lecturer. Lecturers should also respond to all submitted work within two weeks (10) working days from the date of submission.

Student Contact Hours for courses will be determined according to the credit hours assigned to the course. The VLE also records the amount of time students spends on the VLE.
New students enrolling on a training programme with Learning Works are required to attend the eLearning environment training during the first week of student orientation. Students may also attend the on-going eLearning orientation throughout the semester should they so wish.

Staff Recruitment and Support

Staff recruitment of instructors / teachers / lecturers will be based on:

- Recognized qualifications in the subject area;
- Teaching experience at the relevant level (e.g., secondary, adult);
- Relevant work experience and/or current knowledge in the field;
- Content support persons, e.g., course tutors;
- Tutors and mentors (lecturers or work- based mentors);
- Process support persons, e.g., administration technical support;
- Learning skills support (lecturer acting as tutor);
- Career planning and employment counselling (to be referred to third parties if necessary).

Programme Management

The person accountable for programme management shall be the Head of Institution who is accountable for:

- Student management and students' rights;
- Learning management;
- Technology planning and utilization;
- Recruitment and selection of appropriate personnel;
- Planning and evaluation of all aspects of the product/service;
- Responsiveness and flexibility to the student and to changing learning requirements;
- Maintaining links within the education and business communities;
- Research and continuous improvement;
- Financial viability and continuity.

Since there can be usability issues of online environments, students and lecturers encountering difficulties in navigating and learning, shall be provided with pre-recorded videos to assist them. Moreover, real time support is also provided by the IT department of Learning Works on ctabone@learningworks.edu.mt or jbonello@learningworks.edu.mt or on telephone 00356 22107219.

Student Communications Support

Though Learning Works is committed to provide the best services possible in relation to communications support, there are shared responsibilities that students need to be aware of. These include:

- Own responsibility for ensuring the minimum technology requirements to complete online courses, including access to a computer and printer and a stable DSL Internet connection. Students may check with Administrative Executive to ensure that they have access to accessible technology.

- Students and Learning Works will answer all forms of communication in a timely fashion. Learning Works administration must communicate with students by email and Whatsapp prior to a lecturer's absence for a synchronous session.

- Learning Works is committed to meet the specific needs of students with disabilities and complies with the provisions of the Equal Opportunities Act for any required support.
- Learning Works will offer free one-to-one or group training and support to students in all the three areas of production, delivery and access.

Tutor and Mentoring Support

Lecturers acting as tutors are all qualified and currently using the Online Learning Platform, Moodle.

All lecturers shall function as tutors and support students in several ways like direct face-to-face support before or after a lecture, through emails or other type of social media. Any 'ad hoc' feedback is done within a minimum of 48 to 72 hours when a student makes a request for assistance. Tutors are to monitor students including those who do not make contact to check if any assistance is needed.

Regular student support comes through feedback after every assessment whether formative or summative. The feedback can be in the form of emails or any other means that helps the student learn.

Mentoring by tutors refers to the support given during on-the-job training where students are under supervision as they are still in a learning curve. This type of support is usually engaged in face-to- face situations, however, this can be also adapted, depending on the nature of on the job according to a specific module.

A report is finally presented by the mentor to Learning Works both to the lecturer carrying out the module the administrative executive.

Learning Works will offer CPD on online teaching to all lecturers. This training willcover both pedagogical as well as technical areas.

Learning Works will provide CPD training to ensure all lecturers are up to speed with the technology used for online teaching

Institutional Support, Archiving and Back up Plans

The management and implementation of the online (virtual) aspect of Learning Works' programmes will be managed by the institution's administrative department located within The Training Hub, The Landmark, Qormi.

Learning Works offers an open space and also provides laptops that can be used by students for research purposes and also to access the online library with photocopying facilities on demand at the administration offices.

These services are provided for reasons of limited domestic band width availability, software licensing or specialist video conferencing. The area might also be used for online examination purposes where the identity of the student needs to be verified. The same can be done with the actual classrooms.

Learning Works has a website which offers support for students who are still in the process of applying. The Prospectus can be found on the website but can also be found as a hard copy.

The Prospectus has three direct email links for any support required   including telephone numbers for direct contact.

The emails provided for student support are:
 Head of Institution: cbonnici@learningworks.edu.mt
 Executive Administrator: ctabone@learningworks.edu.mt
 Administrative Assistant: jbonello@learningworks.edu.mt

Telephone number: 00356 22107219/00356 21584229 or 00356 79584200

The current LMS has the capability to store most of the data requested i.e., students' records, assignments and assessments. Learning Works keeps other statistics in Excel format.

Learning works guarantees that it has a relevant data protection system and back -up mechanismusing 'One Drive' and supported also by our third-party software and ICT technical support provider 'Seasus.'

Admissions

If on application the student is not sure of possessing the right qualifications, student support is given following the writing of an email on info@learningworks.edu.mt

The students will be informed by email if they have been enrolled. A Learning agreement will be attached to the email.

Once students are enrolled, they are given a link to access the online platform. The mail will also have a contact address should the student encounter any technical difficulties with the online platform.

Applicants submit their application forms and pay their tuition fees online. Once the process is completed our administration department contacts them with further details on the course. Each student is uniquely registered in our Learning Works System called Moodle.

Collecting Student Feedback

The student questionnaire will include a question about the Policy and procedure for e - Learning/blended learning so that the answers can be used in the Quality Cycle for the revision of Policies and Procedures

Quality Cycle for Revision of Training Programmes

The IQA team will carry out an annual audit to determine whether the Policies and Procedures are executed and exercised as well as to review the policy.

Following feedback from the students and lecturers as well as external experts contracted by the institution, programmes go through a review process to ensure that they are updated accordingly.

Charlo Bonnici
CEO