QUALITY ASSURANCE HANDBOOK

2019 Edition – Part C

Section 1: Learning & Teaching (EXTRACT)

2019

1.4 Blended Learning Policy

Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part C Section 1	
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Roles with Aligned Responsibility	**Head of Quality Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning, Registrar, Learning Technologist, Academic Online Lead**
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Approved By	**Academic Board**
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References/ Supporting Documentation	• **QQI (2018)** *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes.*[1] • **National Forum (2018)** *Guide to Developing Enabling Policies for Digital Teaching and Learning*[2] • **QQI (2016)** *Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines*, **Section 2.1, 'Documented Policies and Procedures'.**[3]

1.4.1 Policy Overview

This policy document outlines the DBS blended learning policy as it relates to the development, approval, delivery and monitoring of programmes of study, and learner support and assessment therein. This policy document should be used by all stakeholders involved in the development, delivery and support of blended learning programmes and modules.

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[1] https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Statutory%20QA%20Guidelines%20for%20Blended%20Learning%20Programmes.pdf

[2] https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/publication/guide-to-developing-enabling-policies-for-digital-teaching-and-learning/

[3] https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf

1.4.2 Policy Statement

DBS is committed to ensuring the best possible learning and teaching experience for learners and faculty. DBS sees the introduction and development of blended learning modules and programmes as key to its strategic vision for innovation, academic quality and growth.

The approach of DBS to blended learning is based upon the definition of blended learning as 'the integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences' as defined by Garrison and Kanuka (2004) and referenced in the QQI 2018 Guidelines. However, in further developing its approach, DBS has identified a range of learning and teaching tools, and suitable mechanisms, that can be utilised in the delivery of programmes and which fall within the category of 'blended learning'.

The key aim for DBS in developing blended learning programmes is to ensure a rich learning experience for students, whereby constructivist approaches are used to ensure deep learning is scaffolded and higher order outcomes supported.

While DBS does not commit to the use of any specific technologies through its Blended Learning Policy, it is recognised that as new technologies emerge, it will be necessary for the DBS policy and approach to blended learning to evolve. The DBS Blended Learning Policy will therefore be monitored and updated on a regular basis. In addition, innovative approaches to learning and teaching will be examined on an on-going basis. Robust quality assurance checks will be in place to ensure the integrity and consistency of the learner experience.

At all times, blended learning will be used to support and enhance the learning experience for students and staff. Blended learning will not be utilised in any way that would compromise the student experience or learner outcomes. Teaching staff will also be supported in developing digital literacy and digital teaching capacities.

Initially DBS will introduce blended learning in pilot form, and with a limited and clearly defined scope.

Before commencing blended learning delivery, DBS carried out a gap analysis against the *QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes* (QQI, 2018) to ensure compliance with the guidelines under the following headings:
- Organisational Context
- Programme Context
- Learner Experience Context

1.4.3 Quality Assurance of Blended Learning

DBS standard QA policies will apply in all cases with respect to:

- Development and validation of new programmes
- Recruitment of staff
- Teaching staff qualifications
- Teaching staff development
- Delivery of programmes
- On-going monitoring and review of programmes (annual reporting, programme review, etc.)
- Governance and reporting

- Learner supports
- Learner conduct
- Assessment of programmes
- Exams processes (moderation, External Examiners, Exam Boards)
- Awards

Additional considerations relating specifically to blended learning are set out within this policy document. Where any policy considerations are not explicit, the standard Quality Assurance policies at DBS will apply.

DBS has used the National Forum's *Guide to Developing Enabling Policies for Digital Teaching and Learning* (National Forum, 2018) as a foundation for the development of this policy.

Curriculum Design

- Initial proposals for new programmes involving blended learning must include analysis of rationale, resourcing and capacity.
- Programmes incorporating blended learning are subject to the internal DBS Programme Approval process as laid out in the *QAH Part C Section 2* as well as external QQI approval.
- In piloting blended learning, no more than one third of a stage of a programme in terms of ECTS will utilise blended learning. This may be increased after the initial pilot phase, subject to internal review and approval.
- DBS may develop elements of QQI validated programmes as blended learning where this does not directly contravene a condition of validation.
- Where the introduction of blended learning constitutes a significant change to the essence of a programme, DBS will seek permission from QQI, and if necessary re-validation of a programme to incorporate blended learning.
- Blended learning modules will be carefully designed in accordance with the DBS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy.
- Delivery and outcomes of blended learning modules and programmes, particularly learner outcomes, will be closely monitored.
- All changes in module or programme delivery that affects the blend between online and face-to-face delivery will be referred initially to the programme team, approved by the Course Director and Board of Studies, and finally ratified through Academic Board.
- Blended learning programmes will be developed and delivered in collaboration with the Blended Learning Development Team.
- Blended learning programmes will be developed in accordance with the principles of Universal Design.[4]
- DBS is committed to ensuring that blended learning and assessments are accessible to learners with disabilities.

Technology-Enabled Assessment (TEA)

- TEA will be carried out in accordance with the DBS Quality Assurance standards and policies on assessments.
- TEA will be used to enhance and support learners' experience.
- TEA must provide opportunities for authentic and valid learning.

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[4] http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/The-7-Principles/

- TEA will be carried out only through approved, secure platforms.
- Teaching staff must be supported in the design of TEA.
- Stakeholders must have the ability to access TEA and the digital competencies to engage with them.

Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)
- DBS is committed to making its VLE an open access repository within the institute, accessible by all learners and staff.
- DBS retains the Intellectual Property Rights and copyright of content created by DBS faculty for use on DBS programmes unless otherwise stated.
- DBS will use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that all online content used to develop and deliver blended learning programmes complies with Intellectual Property and Copyright laws.

Learner Support
- DBS commits to ensuring a safe online environment for its faculty and learners.
- Learners and faculty on all blended learning programmes will sign up to a Netiquette code of conduct for online behaviour.
- DBS acknowledges the rights of both faculty and learners not be available online 24/7.
- Programme teams have responsibility for monitoring and measuring the amount of online work required by learners and faculty to avoid 'digital overload'.
- As part of induction and orientation, learners will be provided with IT training in order to engage with blended learning courses.

Faculty Support
- DBS commits to resourcing a Blended Learning Development Team to collaborate with faculty on the development of blended learning courses. The team consists of, but is not restricted to, a Learning Technologist, an Academic Online Lead (blended learning pedagogical advisor) and an Instructional Designer. The blended learning team is an embedded and integral part of DBS.
- As part of its recruitment of faculty staff, DBS recognise the need to prioritise the pedagogical and IT skill-set required for the development and delivery of blended learning content.
- Training in the development and delivery of blended learning tools will be provided by DBS and is mandatory for all faculty engaged in blended learning.
- DBS commits to ensuring that its faculty are provided with the necessary professional development and training support systems to successfully develop and deliver blended learning courses. Blended learning CPD will further be incorporated into DBS's Academic CPD strategy.

Technical Infrastructure
- DBS commits to providing the on-campus IT infrastructure necessary to develop and deliver blended learning.
- DBS commits to providing faculty and learners with the necessary IT infrastructure on campus to engage with blended learning.

- All technologies used to support and deliver blended learning will be licensed by DBS.
- Under no circumstances are faculty permitted to use non-DBS licensed educational technology in the development or delivery of blended learning.
- All online teaching and learning content and activities utilised for blended learning will be accessible for learners through the DBS Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Administrative and IT Support
- Learners enrolled on modules and/or programmes offered through blended learning will be entitled to the same level of administrative and IT support that is provided to all learners in the College.
- DBS commits to monitoring and assessing its blended learning support and resourcing accordingly and to take proactive steps to address any issues that should arise.

1.4.4 Definitions and Terminology

- ABC approach to lesson design

Developed by UCL Digital Education,[5] ABC is a quick and easy hands-on workshop to 'storyboard' the proposed development of a blended learning module or programme.

- Blended learning

Within its statutory guidelines, QQI refer to Garrison and Kanuka's 2004 definition of Blended Learning, i.e. 'the integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences'.

- Contact Time

Contact time is defined as direct interaction between teaching staff and students. This may be traditional classroom based face-to-face contact, live online classes, chat rooms, discussion groups or e-mail discussions.

- Face-to-face learning

This term refers to any teaching and learning that takes place in a physical environment and is typically used to refer to a traditional classroom teaching environment.

- E-learning/Online learning/Directed e-learning

E-learning refers to the use of digital objects to facilitate learning. The term is not really in use any more among the educational technology community. More commonly used terms are Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), online learning and learning with digital technology, although all of these terms can be interpreted slightly differently but are also frequently used interchangeably. The key aspects to e-learning are that it involves learner interaction with digital objects. At its most basic, e-learning is frequently used to complement in-class learning.

- Flipped classroom

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[5] https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/case-studies/2018/jun/designing-programmes-and-modules-abc-curriculum-design

The 'flipped classroom' refers to a learning model whereby learners, having engaged with an appropriate level of directed digital content and having undertaken learning activity prior to coming to class, can confidently participate with in-class activities in an informed and meaningful manner. Typically, learner effort in a flipped classroom scenario is easy to quantify and the link to the in-class activity and the MIMLOs is obvious and clearly defined. With the flipped classroom, learners engage with the digital objects and activities online prior to coming to class. A very basic passive example of the flipped approach would be for the student to watch a video of a lecture before coming to class. Another, more engaging example would be a fixed series of animations, videos, active presentations, quizzes and other activities brought together in an interconnected and meaningful way. Often an authoring tool, such as 'Articulate Storyline', can be used to bring these objects together, so that the student can click through the multi-format online unit in a self-directed or 'on-demand' manner. Learners may further be required to engage in some form of social peer learning through an online discussion forum, for example, based on what emerged from the study of the digital objects. These objects may have voiceover or be scripted with captions. With a flipped classroom, the lecturer effort can be much greater, however, these objects tend to be constructed by a team of people, including the lecturer.

1.4.5 Additional Documents

- *DBS Guidelines for Developing Blended Learning*
- *DBS Procedure for Developing Blended Learning*
- *DBS Online Lesson Template for Blended Modules*