

<b>Document Name and Version</b>	<b>Policy 11.2 Blended Learning Policy</b>
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## 1. Preamble

1.1 IICP College Blended Learning Policy occurs in the context of its Blended Learning Strategy, which in turn is grounded in and supports IICP College’s Institutional Mission, Vision and Goals. This policy addresses the regulatory and policy context of the provision of blended learning in Irish higher education contexts.

1.2 IICP College recognises that the relevance of arrangements originally designed for face-to-face provision may not always be appropriate and/or effective in the blended learning context. Therefore, IICP College has in place a suite of policies that specifically focus on what is distinctive in the blended learning context. These policies operate alongside its QA guidelines.

### 1.3 Strategic and Institutional Context

1.3.1 In accordance with QQI (2018)<sup>1</sup>, Guideline 3. 1, the College’s approved and published strategy takes account of the existing and planned development of blended learning provision.

1.3.2 This policy is developed in the context of the College’s current published Strategic Plan (2018–2020)<sup>2</sup> and Strategic Goals, as well as its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and its Access, Transfer and Progression Strategy. The development of this has included assessing the emerging risks and challenges to successful delivery of Blended Learning Programmes and

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<sup>1</sup> QQI (2018) *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes* [QQI, 2018].

<sup>2</sup> IICP College (2018) *Quality Assurance Manual* [QAM]. Policy 1.1.

Programme Components. The development of the College's Strategy on Blended Learning is associated with the development of a Strategic Plan for 2021.

#### 1.4 Legal and Policy Context

- 1.4.1 IICP College complies with the requirements of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Quality Assurance Guidelines in the development of QA procedures and in the development of programmes of education and training. This policy addresses the QQI regulations applicable to the College as an independent or private provider of higher education. When intending to provide Blended Learning Programmes, a provider must have regard to the QA guidelines on blended learning prior to seeking approval of their QA procedures.
- 1.4.2 This policy on blended learning provision is consistent with QQI standards, guidelines, policies and criteria relating to programmes and awards, in particular:
  - 1.4.2.1 QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (2018).
  - 1.4.2.2 QQI's policy on QA (core) Guidelines (QQI, 2018).
  - 1.4.2.3 QQI's Core Validation Policies and Criteria.
- 1.4.3 The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning guidance documents have informed this policy, including:
  - (i) Guide to Developing Enabling Policies for Digital Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (Murphy, 2018).
  - (ii) Teaching and Learning in Irish Education: A Roadmap for Enhancement in a Digital World 2015–2017 (National Forum, 2015).
  - (iii) National Professional Development Framework for All Staff Who Teach in Higher Education (National Forum, 2016).
- 1.4.4 This policy takes account of emerging discourses in professional body regulations.
- 1.4.5 This policy addresses the legislative and regulatory requirements that govern the College's use of blended learning, in particular:

1.4.5.1 Data Protection (including GDPR).

1.4.5.2 IACP Course Accreditation and Monitoring Regulations.

1.5 QQI Blended Learning policy defines blended learning as “the integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences”<sup>3</sup>. Blended learning combines classroom teaching with online learning, drawing on the strengths of each learning space. In its Blended Learning Strategy IICP College has adopted the following definition of blended learning:

*“Blended learning is the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences.”*

This definition emphasises that blended learning is more than an addition of online modes of learning, and instead is a process of programme design which considers learner needs, disciplinary requirement and pedagogic practices.

1.6 All programmes in IICP College are governed by existing policies contained within the College’s QAM. The focus of this policy is on issues that are particularly pertinent to the online and overall blended learning context, rather than other kinds of learning and teaching. IICP College standard QA policies 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
- Ongoing monitoring and review of programmes (annual reporting, programme review, etc.)
- Governance and reporting
- Learner supports
- Learner conduct

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<sup>3</sup> Garrison, D.R. & Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended Learning: Uncovering Its Transformative Potential in Higher Education. *Internet and Higher Education*, 7(2), pp. 95–105 at 96.

- Assessment of programmes
- Exams processes (moderation, external examiners, exam boards)
- Awards.

Additional considerations relating specifically to blended learning are set out within the College's Blended Learning Policy Suite (Section 11 of its QAM). Where any policy considerations are not explicit, the standard quality assurance policies apply.

## **2. Purpose**

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles and processes which apply to the development, delivery and monitoring of programmes of study leading to an award or to specified credits towards an award which are to be delivered through blended learning.
- 2.2 The College is committed to providing flexible, adaptive and personalised learning spaces through a blend of face-to-face and online strategies. The principles and processes set out in this policy are intended to facilitate access to and participation in its higher education, and to ensure a high-quality, consistent learning experience for all learners taking part in Blended Learning Programmes.
- 2.3 This policy is also intended to guide the College in managing potential risks and vulnerabilities posed by the arrangements for Blended Learning Programmes and in particular to safeguard academic standards in such programmes.

## **3. Scope**

- 3.1 This policy applies to the delivery of programmes leading to a QQI award or to specified credits towards an award on the NFQ through blended learning.
- 3.2 This policy supports the College in developing flexible learning opportunities in professional and continuing education programmes.

3.3 IICP College is aware that not all its traditional programmes, policies and procedures are appropriate for blended learning, and has reviewed its policies and regulations to ensure they are fit for purpose in context. Most modules in IICP College include some form of online learning and/or have mixed modes of delivery. It will not always be appropriate, or desirable, to classify this provision as blended learning and treat it as such for quality assurance purposes. For example, the use of the VLE (Moodle) as a repository for course materials on a module does not itself constitute an example of a blended learning module. This provision should be considered solely under standard quality assurance processes.

3.4 This policy also guides the identification and management of potential risks posed by challenges and complexities in the arrangements for blended and online learning programmes and to safeguard academic standards.

#### **4. Roles and responsibilities**

4.1 The College ensures that online components of its teaching provision and learning are supported by fit-for-purpose organisational infrastructure and processes.

4.2 The College has responsibility for:

4.2.1 Providing appropriate Learning Resources, Facilities and Technology that supports blended learning.

4.2.2 Ensuring equality of opportunity for learners who are assessed, including the provision of evidence.

4.2.3 Providing a Safe, Secure and Inclusive Environment for all members of the College's online community.

4.2.4 Ensuring that eAssessments, ePortfolios and eVerification systems are secure, moveable and meet the required evidence needs.

4.2.5 Ensuring that appropriate recovery plans are developed for all eAssessments, ePortfolios and eVerification processes.

4.3 The Board and the Academic Council are responsible for determining the fit of blended learning within the stated goals and priorities of the College.

4.4 The Terms of Reference of the Academic Council, set out in Policy 2.6 of the QAM, apply equally to blended learning. The Academic Council is responsible for the approval of any new programmes or programme components, including the change of any programme or module to blended delivery. The Academic Council is also responsible for monitoring the quality of such programmes, as well as for monitoring the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures in place.

4.5 Programme Boards are responsible for:

- Curriculum development and delivery
- Designing contingency plans for system failures
- Quality reviews and reporting.

4.6 The Senior Management Team is responsible for supporting and facilitating the implementation of this policy and for fostering initiatives to build shared service platforms and technology infrastructure. The Senior Management Team will ensure that sufficient and appropriate technologies, tools and products are available to support teachers in the design of technology-enhanced programmes and assessments.

4.7 An Academic Technology Team is appointed for each Blended Learning Programme or Programme Component.

4.7.1 This team consists of:

- A Learning Technologist, who provides technological expertise to the team;
- An Academic Online Lead, who acts as blended learning pedagogical advisor to the team; and
- An Instructional Designer, who acts as lead in programme design and review.

4.7.2 This team is responsible for:

4.7.2.1 In the case of the development of new programmes, providing technological expertise to the Programme Development Team, and in particular providing a clear statement of:

- i. Resources needed to complement any online technology;
- ii. How the technology is to be used by teaching and other personnel involved both individually and collectively;
- iii. How it is to be used to confirm that the teaching and learning has occurred, including assessment and feedback.

4.7.2.2 In the case of the provision of validated programmes, providing technological expertise to faculty and learners, and in particular:

- i. In advance of programme provision:
  - Ensuring the reliability of delivery systems and confirming that appropriate technical support and contingency plans are in place in advance of programme provision;
  - Ensuring the availability and life expectancy of the technology is appropriate to the programme, including the numbers of learners and duration of the programme.
- ii. For the duration of programme provision:
  - Providing administration and technical support;
  - Testing the systems being used;
  - Orienting and supporting learners in using technology in blended courses;
  - Ensuring staff and learners are comfortable with the systems being used;
  - Providing expertise to Programme Boards and Examination Boards;
  - The induction and training of learners in the use of the technology.

4.8 The Technology Manager provides training and support to students, teachers, support staff, programme development teams and programme review teams, and assures the quality and reliability of the College's Learning Technology. The role includes:

- 4.8.1 Testing the reliability of learning technology and online student support systems;

- 4.8.2 Supporting teaching and student support staff to increase and improve their use of digital technologies;
- 4.8.3 Supporting students to increase and improve their use of digital technologies through providing scheduled training events and individual support;
- 4.8.4 Setting up College-wide educational technology systems;
- 4.8.5 Acting as Learning Technologist in Academic Technology Team.

## **5. Principles**

- 5.1 IICP College recognises that blended learning design and implementation is an evolving sector within training and education, and needs to be grounded in the College's context and its learner community as well as the educational aims and objectives of any programme or programme component. To this end the College's Blended Learning Policy is shaped and guided by its Blended Learning Strategy.
- 5.2 Blended Learning approaches provided by the College are designed to enhance the learner learning experience, cater to diversity among learners, optimise learner engagement, and lead to improved learning experiences and outcomes.
- 5.3 Blended learning always includes some elements of face-to-face tuition. In addition, blended learning will include a combination of, for example:
  - (i) Online learning resources developed for online delivery;
  - (ii) Access to learning technologies such as Virtual Learning Environment;
  - (iii) Tools to support virtual learning and off-campus learning – virtual learning spaces and discussion and other forums to support learners;
  - (iv) Online activities to support formative and summative assessment;
  - (v) Assessment submitted, marked and returned to learners with feedback through electronic or other media.
- 5.4 The College recognises that not all teaching and learning is appropriate to blended or online approaches. Consequently, the College identifies the conditions for effective blended learning. These conditions are required to be addressed when



designing, implementing and reviewing Blended Learning Programmes and Components. The conditions are expanded and developed in detailed procedures contained in Section 6.

## 5.5 Effective Blended Learning

- 5.5.1 Effective blended learning is achieved through a process of systematic course design/redesign that takes account of the best features of the online and face-to-face learning environments.
- 5.5.2 Effective blended learning is achieved through a focus on constructive alignment of learning outcomes, assessments, content and learning activities.
- 5.5.3 Effective blended learning ensures that learners are adequately prepared to function in a blended learning environment.
- 5.5.4 Effective blended learning requires that all teaching and support staff are adequately trained and supported as appropriate to their role.
- 5.5.5 Effective blended learning ensures that assessments are rigorous and fit for purpose, and are safe and secure.
- 5.5.6 Effective blended learning ensures that learner supports are adequate and fit for purpose.

## 6. Policy

- 6.1 QQI require that the provider has approved and published expectations for the overall quality of the blended learning provision. In articulating its expectations, IICP draws on a range of policy and practice sources, as set out in Section 1.4<sup>4</sup>, that address the design and delivery of higher education blended learning programmes. The College recognises that education technology is developing. Rather than committing to specific technologies in its policies and procedures, the College is committed to exploring the possibilities that these developments provide for programme enhancement. The College will ensure that there are robust quality assurance procedures in place to ensure the effectiveness and currency of its technology, and its contribution to the quality of the learner experience.

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<sup>4</sup> In addition to the policy sources identified in Section 1.5, the College draws on a range of literature relating to BL in Professional and Higher Education Sources, as outlined in the bibliography.

6.2 Policies, regulations and processes must be fit for purpose in the context of blended learning. The following commitments underpin the development and implementation of Blended Learning Programmes in IICP College:

### 6.2.1 Governance

6.2.1.1 The College has in place, and has made available publicly, arrangements for governance, leadership and management of the College. These arrangements are set out in Part 2 of its QAM.

6.2.1.2 The College has in place financial policies and procedures that ensures appropriate investment in specialist, reliable and accessible information technology, administrative systems and infrastructure.

6.2.1.3 The College has in place risk management policies and procedures that are applicable in all learning environments. These are contained in QAM Policy 2.4. Specific considerations relating to risk management in blended and online environments are set out in Section 11 of the College's Quality Assurance Manual. Specific responsibilities for risk management in blended and online environments are set out in Section 6.2.3 of this policy.

6.2.1.4 The College's governance framework ensures that the College complies with its legal and statutory obligations in a blended and online learning context, including child protection legislation; data protection legislation; applicable professional body requirements; and intellectual property and copyright legal obligations.

### 6.2.2 Quality Assurance

(i) The College has in place benchmarks and indicators for effectiveness and accessibility of learning resources and other learning that apply equally to Blended Learning Environments. Blended Learning Programmes have in addition specific benchmarks and indicators set out in its BL Policy Suite that are fit for purpose in a blended and/or online learning environment. This includes:

- Standards for online and blended learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms, contained in section 8.1.

- New Programme Development, Monitoring and Review procedures for ensuring online and blended learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms are subject to informed peer review and meet the College's quality standards.
  - Measures of contact time. Contact time is defined by the College 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 email discussion.
- (ii) Institutional blended learning strategies, policies and procedures are clearly supported by governance arrangements, and integrated into quality systems.
- (iii) Academic Policies interface with IICP College's QAM, and are appropriate to blended learning.
- (iv) Arrangements for assuring compliance with any legal or regulatory obligations are appropriate to the blended learning and online learning context.

### 6.2.3 Business Continuity, Resilience and Risk Management

- (i) The College has in place a policy and procedures for the management of risk that apply equally to Blended Learning Environments. Department managers have responsibility for the identification, management and notification of risks as impacting on the College in BL environments. Specifically:
- The Technology Manager has responsibility for the identification, management and notification of risks identified in technology environments.
  - The Head of Academic Affairs has responsibility for the identification, management and notification of risks identified in all programmes.
  - The Registrar has responsibility for the identification, management and notification of risks identified in the implementation of College policies.
  - The QA manager has responsibility for developing, reviewing and updating the Risk Register, and associated policies and procedures.
  - The Senior Management Team are responsible for:
    - Developing the Organisational and Academic Risk Registers;

- Monitoring, reviewing and updating the Risk Registers and Risk Appetite Register;
- Submission of the Risk Registers to the Board and Academic Council.

#### 6.2.4 Student Record Systems

- (i) The College's student record system supports Blended Learning Programmes and learners and their quality assurance.

#### 6.2.5 New Programmes Policy

- (i) The College has in place an approval process which requires teaching and learning plans for each Blended Learning Programme or Programme Component that provides all learners with an equitable, fair and realistic opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
- (ii) Approval processes and criteria for Blended Learning Programmes and Programme Components appropriate to blended delivery are in place and integrated with face-to-face Approval Processes.
- (iii) Initial proposals for new programmes involving blended learning include analysis of rationale, resourcing and capacity.
- (iv) Programme Design, Development and Approval policies ensure that:
  - the teaching, learning and assessment strategies and delivery mechanisms adopted in blended and online learning delivery are specifically designed for and appropriate to this context.
  - Online and blended learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms are subject to informed peer review and meet the College's quality standards contained in section 8. The New Programme Development process includes an External Expert Review which address the quality of learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms.

#### 6.2.6 Programme Monitoring and Review policies ensure that:

- (i) the necessary pedagogical and technological expertise is available to any Blended Learning Programme, and that academic staff are provided with the necessary development and support systems to function effectively in the delivery of blended and online learning programme provision.

- (ii) Online and blended learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms are subject to informed peer review and meet the College's quality standards contained in section 8.1.

#### 6.2.7 Staff Recruitment and Development

- (i) Staff development policies take account of pedagogical and technological upskilling needs.
- (ii) Staff recruitment, induction, support and development frameworks ensure that staff are appropriate to blended and online learning.

#### 6.2.8 Student Support

- (i) The College's learner support framework is fit for purpose, clear and supports learners to develop the necessary independent study skills to successfully progress through the programme.
- (ii) The College has in place policies on information provision that ensures that prospective learners receive clear information about the blend of learning in programmes, and the prior knowledge and skills required of them, so that they can make informed choices prior to committing to the programme.
- (iii) It is the responsibility of learners to ensure they have the required local access and technical facilities when they are participating off-campus.

### **7. Procedures**

7.1 All programmes in IICP College adhere to IICP College's documented QA Policies and Procedures contained in its QAM. These procedures outline additional conditions that must be satisfied in the design and delivery of Blended Learning Programmes.

#### 7.2 New Programme Policy

7.2.1 All programmes leading to an award from IICP College are subject to a rigorous design and approval process against established criteria. This process is set out in Policy 9.3 IICP College New Programmes Policy, which applies to all new programmes, including Blended Learning Programmes, developed in IICP College that are intended to be submitted to QQI for validation.

- 7.2.2 All Blended Learning Programmes in IICP College are guided in their design by Policy 11.4 Incorporating Digital Technology into the Curriculum<sup>5</sup>.
- 7.2.3 The design of all Blended Learning Programmes must ensure that:
- (i) The teaching, learning and assessment strategies and delivery mechanisms adopted are specifically designed for online and blended contexts, and subject-specific and educational scholarship informs the pedagogy and instructional design.
  - (ii) The processes and regulations as specified in Policy 1.3 Access, Transfer and Progression Strategy and Policy are fit for purpose in a blended and online learning environment.
  - (iii) Blended and online learning developments are learner-centred and subject-led rather than technology-led.
  - (iv) Blended and online teaching and learning resources are appropriate to the context of delivery and are subject to informed internal and external peer review. Peer commentary addresses IICP College standards contained in Section 8.1.
  - (v) Teaching, learning and assessment practices are accessible, in so far as is possible, to all learners. Modules can be adapted with ease to suit students with disabilities, such as those with hearing, vision, or physical difficulties. Blended and online teaching and learning resources take into account the College's Accessibility Guidance, and are reviewed against the College's "Universal Design Checklist for Blended Learning Modules and Programmes", contained in section 8.2.
  - (vi) Online learning and support systems are secure and reliable.
  - (vii) Programme Design, Teaching and Learning Strategy, Schedule, Learning Outcomes and Credit Allocation are specific to the blended learning environment of the programme. In particular, Programme Schedules should

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<sup>5</sup> This policy draws on: Guide to Developing Enabling Policies for Digital Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (Murphy, 2018). National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. Retrieved from <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/publication/guide-to-developing-enabling-policies-for-digital-teaching-and-learning/>

distinguish between face-to-face components and online components, and record contact hours.

(viii) A Programme Assessment Strategy (Section 4.5.6) is in place which ensures that arrangements for online assessment including formative assessment, information provision on assessments, the conduct of assessment and marking/grading are rigorous, robust and fair.

(ix) All programmes have in place a programme-specific contingency plan in the event of failure of the designated modes of delivery. This should ensure that all practicable steps are taken to ensure continuity of service delivery of online learning and support systems.

(x) Intellectual property rights and software licensing issues are addressed.

### 7.3 Academic Policies

7.3.1 The College ensures that the Academic policies and procedures specified in its QAM are fit for purpose in a blended and online learning environment. To this end Programme Design, Approval, Monitoring and Review should attend to the following:

7.3.1.1 *Attendance.* QAM Policy 3.1 Policy and Procedure for Attendance should be adapted appropriately for online programme components. In particular attendance requirements for online components of programmes, together with programme-specific mechanisms for gathering attendance records, are specified in the programme design, and communicated clearly to learners.

7.3.1.2 *Academic Integrity.* QAM Policy 3.3 Academic and Professional Integrity Policy and Policy 3.4 Academic and Professional Impropriety Policy and Procedures should be applied in a manner that is fit for purpose in a blended environment. In particular, in all Blended Learning Programmes there must be arrangements in place to manage the submission, receipt, marking and return of assessments, and in particular to confirm the identity of remote learners and mitigate against fraudulent practices, attempts to gain unfair advantage, or academic malpractice.

7.3.1.3 *Assessment.*

- (i) Blended learning modules and programmes are designed, reviewed and revised in accordance with IICP College assessment approach, principles, policy and procedures as set out in Policy 5.2 Assessment Regulations.
- (ii) Internal moderation of online assessment tasks, material and results and results occur in accordance with IICP College QAM, in particular Policy 5.3 External Examiner Policy and Policy 5.4 Moderation of Assessment Material and Results. Moderation activities must include input from staff who have the required expertise in online assessment and delivery. The Academic Technology Team may provide such expertise.
- (iii) Examination Board regulations contained in Policy 5.1 Policy and Procedure Examinations Board Regulations apply equally to blended learning and F2F programmes. Examination Boards for BL programmes must include input from staff who have the required expertise in online assessment and delivery. The Academic Technology Team may provide such expertise.

7.3.1.4 QAM Policy 4.5 Learner Information Provision and Feedback in Assessment must be adapted to take into account the blend of online and face-to-face provision in a particular programme.

#### 7.4 Staff Support and Recognition

7.4.1 IICP College should ensure that teaching and support staff are suitable and have appropriate knowledge and skills in the provision of blended and online learning, as appropriate to their area of delivery.

7.4.1.1 In Blended Learning Programmes or Programme Components the policy Recruitment and Selection of Core Teaching and Teaching Support Staff (QAM Policy 7.2) should specify the knowledge and skills required for the delivery of blended and online learning components within a programme.

7.4.1.2 Staff development opportunities (QAM Policy 7.5) should provide planned opportunities for programme staff to develop their expertise in and to test programme technologies and new or evolving technologies.

7.4.1.3 Programme staff should have access to appropriate specialist staff to support their blended learning provision, and the monitoring, review and



change of that provision. This will include technological, pedagogic and teaching and learning expertise, which is provided by the Academic Technology Team.

7.4.1.4 Blended Learning Programme design teams (QAM Policy 8.3 IICP College New Programmes Policy Section 6) and Programme Boards (QAM Policy 8.4 IICP College Monitoring and Evaluation Policy) should have access to expertise in designing a programme, as well as academic, technical and professional expertise in the pedagogy and assessment appropriate to blended learning.

## 7.5 Student Support and Preparation

7.5.1 IICP College is responsible for information provision to learners and prospective learners. The manner in which the College addresses this responsibility is set out principally in QAM Policy 1.3 Access, Transfer and Progression Strategy and Policy and QAM Policy 8.1 IICP College Public Information Policy. These policies apply to all programmes, including Blended Learning Programmes.

7.5.2 Prospective learners must have access to appropriate and sufficient information about programmes of study and about the College to make an informed decision about their choice of programme, including:

- (i) Entry requirements, including technological competence requirements.
- (ii) Descriptions of the online components of the Blended Learning Programme or Programme Component or aspect of study.
- (iii) Technical requirements for participation in any online component of the programme, including requirements for access, bandwidth and any prescribed hardware or software in order to ensure that they can meet technological requirements to participate.
- (iv) The intended learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment methods of the programme and component modules.
- (v) A clear timetable, including a schedule for the delivery of their online learning study materials, learner support (local and/or remote) and for the submission and assessment of their work.

- (vi) Learner responsibility in online assessment.
- (vii) Information on the ways in which their achievements will be judged, and the relative weighting of online and other remote parts of the programme in respect of assessment overall.
- (viii) Clarity on the specific level of engagement expected for different elements of the blend of online and face-to-face learning, in particular mandatory workplace learning, supervision and personal therapy, if any.
- (ix) Attendance requirements for each component such as face-to-face learning, workplace learning, synchronous and asynchronous activities. Any professional registration requirements should be clearly indicated.

7.5.3 In addition, IICP College is responsible for supporting learners throughout their programme of study. As part of induction and orientation, learners should be provided with IT training in order to allow them to engage with blended learning courses. Particular attention is to be given in Blended Learning Programmes to ensure that learners have access to timely, appropriate and sufficient information about their programmes of study and about their performance, including:

- (i) Timely formative assessment on their academic performance in the online sections of the programme to provide a basis for constructive individual feedback and guidance;
- (ii) Information about the quality assurance processes in place;
- (iii) Clear, timely information on how they access learning resources from the start of their programme, and the mechanisms the provider has in place to test and confirm learner identity;
- (iv) The mechanisms in place to identify and respond to learners who may be struggling with online remote learning;
- (v) Support structures in place for different programme components, such as clinical work, academic writing, research, technological issues and personal circumstances that impact on learning and attendance;
- (vi) Identified and available support staff (academic, administrative, technical);
- (vii) Learner reportative system in their programme and in the College;

- (viii) Opportunities to give formal and informal feedback on their experience of the programme, including the effectiveness of blended and online learning arrangements, learning resources, learner support and learner representation.

## 7.6 Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Review

- 7.6.1 The QA processes that underpin all of IICP College's programmes, apply equally to all IICP College programmes. However, Blended Learning Programmes necessitate additional considerations. The College is responsible for ensuring that the arrangements for the delivery of programmes and provision of support to and assessment of learners are appropriate, are fit for purpose and maintain academic standards. This may require the adaptation of existing policies and/or the development of programme-specific quality assurance procedures adapted to online and Blended Learning Programme Components.
- 7.6.2 This section identifies the adaptations that need to be included in the design, development, approval, monitoring and review of Blended Learning Programmes and Components.
- 7.6.3 Programme Monitoring. As stated in QAM Policy 8.4 IICP College Monitoring and Evaluation Policy a programme, including design and delivery, course materials, and intended learning outcomes, must be regularly reviewed, updated and improved using feedback from stakeholders.
  - 7.6.3.1 The following additional criteria must be considered during reviews by stakeholders of Blended Learning Programmes or Programme Components, and included in the Annual Programme Quality Report:
    - i. The effectiveness of integration between online and face-to-face components;
    - ii. Learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms delivered online or with an online component;
    - iii. All materials and media such as audio-visual, printed or digitised assets used to deliver online learning;
    - iv. Blended and online-specific learner supports;

- v. The effectiveness of the technology and technological infrastructure, including its ease of use and adequacy;
- vi. The effectiveness with which the programme actively engages learners with faculty, with each other and with their learning.

7.6.3.2 Monitoring of Blended Learning programmes must include peer review of online and blended learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms. Peer commentary addresses IICP College standards contained in section 8.1, and is included in the Programme Annual Quality Report submitted to the Academic Council.

## 7.7 Programme Review and Revalidation

7.7.1 QAM Policy 8.5 IICP College Programme Review and Revalidation sets out the College's approach to its 5-yearly cycle of programme review and revalidation. The additional criteria stipulated in this policy are considered during programmatic review of Blended Learning Programmes or Programme Components, and included in the Programme Evaluation Report.

7.7.1.1 Programme Review and Revalidation of Blended Learning programmes should include peer review of online and blended learning materials and resource, and address IICP College standards contained in section 8.1. This peer review is included in the Programme Review Report.

7.7.2 QAM Policy 8.6 IICP College Reviewing the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance: Cyclical Review sets out the College's approach to reviewing the effectiveness of (i) its institution-wide quality assurance procedures, (ii) the manner in which it ensures compliance with regulatory requirements including QQI policies and guidelines, and (iii) its quality enhancement approach. In Blended Learning programmes, Cyclical Review includes a review of the effectiveness of the College's Blended Learning Strategy and Policy, and incorporates a review of its effectiveness in quality assuring its online and blended learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms.

## 8. **Supporting Documentation**

## 8.1 Blended Learning Programmes: Standards for learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms

<b>Standard</b>
The learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms used meet the College's quality standards.
Learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms in Blended Learning programmes are subject to informed peer review . Peer review is integrated into programme development, and programme and module monitoring and review. Peer review addresses quality standards, academic content, pedagogic approach, and accessibility.
There are appropriate and sufficient learning resources available to support online learning and remote study.
Processes to ensure the delivery of any study materials direct to learners remotely through, for example, online methods or correspondence, are secure and reliable, and there is a means of confirming its safe receipt.
The different media used are integrated so that they support and complement each other in enabling learner achievement of the stated learning outcomes.
Open Access Resources are subject to informed peer comment, meet the College's quality standards, are adapted to ensure contextual relevance, and integrated appropriately into various teaching and learning activities.
Intellectual property rights and software licensing issues are addressed appropriately.
The different media used provide interactive learning experience for each module delivered online and academic content appropriate to the unit of study
Arrangements are in place that make reasonable effort to ensure blended learning experiences are accessible to all learners, including learners with disabilities. All materials and used to deliver online learning conform with the College's Universal Design Checklist for Blended Learning Modules and Programmes
Programme design is learner-centred and provides a consistent and accessible experience for all learners.
All modules of a programme are owned by an academic or training department. This applies to online learning even when some modules or sections are outsourced.
There is clarity in the information provided to learners and staff about communication channels and the availability of advice and support. What learners may reasonably expect is specified.
Learners can test and monitor their progress at appropriate points.

The whole learning environment for blended learning used in conjunction with the learning resources requires active engagement by the learners.

The relationship between learning materials and other components of learner support activity such as face-to-face tutorials and By-Your-Side sessions is defined.

Protocols and information are provided to learners and staff on the use of the full range of online interactions and forums in their learning.

There are nominated academic/professional moderators who understand and have the authority to intervene in, for example, cyber bullying that may constitute risk to learners and/or the provider.

## 8.2 Universal Design Checklist for Blended Learning Modules and Programmes

Universal design is a framework focused in making learning available to all students (see the Quality Matters™ Review Standards (QMRS) website at <http://bit.ly/QM-Standards>).

AREA	GUIDANCE	ACHIEVED / NOT ACHIEVED	COMMENTS
SCANABILITY	Does the course navigation make it easy for students to find what they need?		
	Is there a consistent theme (for example, colour scheme or page layout)?		
	Does the course promote readability (headings, reading level, supplemental content)?		
LEGIBILITY	Are the fonts uniform, accessible (colour/contrast) and sized appropriately?		
	Is colour usage accessible? (i.e.		

	colour alone is not used to convey information)		
	If there is a teaching assistant, is contact information included.		
SEARCHABILITY	Is alt text provided for all digital images? Is text kept as text (not in images)?		
	Are course documents posted in accessible formats (HTML, PDF, Word)?		
VIEWABILITY	Are media files closed captioned or transcribed and easy to play?		
	Is user-friendly colour used sparingly and consistently?		
	Have you avoided using underlined text (aside from active links) and misleading phrases like "click here"? Have you included labels (PDF, Word, Excel) in your non-HTML links?		

## 8.2 Universal Design Guidance for Blended Learning Modules and Programmes

Use this guide to consider where there are opportunities to improve the design of online learning programmes and modules.

### **Information Provision**

<b>GUIDANCE</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
What is the purpose of your course? Where can students find out?	
Does the syllabus use HTML or an accessible PDF or Word format?	
Have you included a link to technical support?	
Are the course policies on accessibility and academic support listed in the course?	
Are your course competencies stated and measurable?	
In addition to the course-level competencies, have you included module-level objectives?	
Will students know which competency an assessment targets? How can they tell?	
Are the module-level objectives student-friendly and measurable?	
Can students tell which learning activities support which objectives?	

### **Assessment of student learning**

#### **Tier One**

Will students know how they are being graded on each assignment?	
Are students provided with specific and descriptive criteria for their assignment expectations?	
Is each objective assessed through multiple means?	
Do you have a variety of assessments available for students to show mastery?	

### **Materials, Resources and activities**

When students enter your course, will they know right away how to get started?	
Do you explain the structure of the course to students before they begin?	
Are the materials accessible and usable by students (see online design factors)?	
Are alternate methods available for learning activity and assessment expectations?	
Will students know what to expect from you in terms of interaction in the course?	
Do the tools utilized in your course directly support competency attainment?	



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