

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

Quality Assurance Unit

**POLICY ON QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ONLINE AND BLENDED COURSES AND
PROGRAMMES AT THE UWI**

(Approved Version May 2023)

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Quality Assurance Unit

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1. INTRODUCTION

The University of the West Indies (The UWI) is committed to the provision of a quality teaching and learning environment for all stakeholders. In this regard the University ensures that relevant policies and procedures are in place which support adherence to high standards. Several policies intended to guide online and blended teaching and learning have been approved at The UWI, including The Policy on Quality Assurance of Online and Blended Courses and Programmes at The UWI; The UWI Global Online Policy; and The UWI Multi-Campus Teaching and Learning Initiative (MCTLI) Policy. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of ensuring the provision of policy guidelines for teaching and learning in online environments which take account of emergency and crisis situations, and which also guide The UWI's intention for multi-campus delivery. This revised version of the policy, Quality Assurance of Online and Blended Courses and Programmes at The UWI, is predicated on the quality dimensions of 'Fitness for purpose', 'Fitness of purpose' and 'Adherence to high standards' as outlined in the Quality Policy of The University of the West Indies (FGP.P9J 2016/2017). This policy supersedes the "Policy on Quality Assurance of Online and Blended Courses and Programmes at The UWI" (Revised June 30, 2020).

2. RATIONALE

The UWI's focus on continuously enhancing guidelines for the quality of blended and online learning is guided by the institution's vision to be "an excellent global University rooted in the Caribbean" (p. 8), along with the aims of The UWI Strategic Plan 2022-2027: The Revenue Revolution. Regarding The UWI Strategic Plan 2022-2027: The Revenue Revolution, the policy can help The UWI achieve the following strategic objectives through the "Access" pillar by guiding the appropriate use of online learning:

- AC1: Increase the number of full fee- paying students in senate-approved programmes both in online and face-to-face modalities at the: (a) national and regional and (b) international levels.
- AC2: Increase enrolment of students in non-senate approved programmes such as professional development short courses both in online and face to face modalities
- AG3: Enhance the quality of teaching, learning and student development as reflected through the voice of student surveys (p. 9).

Purpose of this Policy

The policy is intended to:

1. Provide a standard set of definitions related to online and blended delivery across The UWI;
2. Provide standards and guidelines for online delivery in courses and programmes.
3. Assure stakeholders of the high quality of education provision for online courses and programmes.

3. SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all campuses and entities of The UWI, and to all courses counting towards a UWI degree, diploma, certificate; professional certification (such as continuing professional education [CPE] and Continuing Education Unit [CEU]); and non-credit courses.

4. DEFINITIONS

Face-to-Face Course:

A course in which teaching and learning takes place predominantly in a physical space where instructors and students or learners meet in-person. A face-to-face course is based on course contact hours standards¹.

Online Course:

A course which has been intentionally designed so that all instruction takes place using technology and there are no requirements for face-to-face classes. An online course can be delivered synchronously, asynchronously or both. An online course may have a face-to-face final examination. An online course may be offered as:

- Online synchronous delivery: Teaching and learning which occurs when faculty members and students meet online at the same time.

¹ See Credit Hour guidelines for BUS and BGSR

- Online asynchronous delivery: Teaching and learning which occurs when faculty members and students interact with each other and the course material at different times.

Blended course:

A course which has been **intentionally designed** to mix face-to-face teaching and online teaching (i.e synchronous or asynchronous online). In order to qualify as a blended course at least **one credit hour** (12 hours) must be taught in **EACH** of the delivery modes (i.e. face-to-face or online). Delivery modes may include:

- Hybrid Flexibility (known as HyFlex) - A *HyFlex* course is a type of blended course which is offered in at least two delivery modes for **each** class session. This allows students to choose for *any given class* session whether to attend the face-to-face or online (i.e. synchronous online or asynchronous online) component of the course.²
- Multi-Campus Delivery (MCD) - MCD involves students registered at one campus, taking courses delivered by full-time faculty members from another Campus. The Multi-campus course is developed and delivered as a blended course, with some learners face-to-face and others online. The Multi-Campus course is part of the Multi-Campus Teaching and Learning Initiative (MCTLI).

Online programme:

A programme which consists of all online courses (see definition for online course).

Blended programme:

A programme which consists of a planned mix of face-to-face, blended and/or online courses.³

This combination might be:

1. face-to-face and blended courses (30:70 or 70:30)
2. face-to-face and online courses (30:70 or 70:30)

• ² [\[1\]](https://edtechbooks.org/hyflex) Beatty Reference to be added- Beatty, B.(???). *Hybrid-Flexible Course Design: Implementing student-directed hybrid classes*. Retrieved from <https://edtechbooks.org/hyflex>

³ For additional information on E-Learning definitions please see <https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/updated-e-learning-definitions-2/>

3. blended and online courses (30:70 or 70:30)
4. face-to-face, blended and online courses (30:X:Y or X:Y:30 or X:30:Y).

Emergency Remote Teaching:

A temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond, 2020).

Crisis Circumstances - refer to any natural or man-made event, disaster, accident, humanitarian or political crisis or any other serious situation which may have a significant impact or pose a serious, immediate threat to the normal, or planned operations of the institution. [<https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/crisis-situation>]. Emergency remote teaching applies only for the duration of the crisis or threat. All campuses should have a business continuity plan which provides guidelines for operations during crisis circumstances.

5. READINESS FOR DELIVERY

Readiness for online and blended teaching and learning is a key consideration for Departments, Institutes, Schools, Centres, Units and Sites (DISCUS), faculty members and students.

DISCUS Readiness:

An assessment should be conducted within DISCUS to determine whether moving the course/programme into an online or blended format makes sense financially and academically. DISCUS should ascertain whether the necessary structures and resources exist to support students and faculty in an online and/or blended environment. These supports should include financial and human, instructional, administrative and technical resources. DISCUS readiness also includes ensuring that:

- courses and programmes have been intentionally designed for online or blended delivery;
- provision has been made for adequate marketing of the courses/programme;
- there is clear communication with students (e.g. orientation, handbooks, websites etc) to ensure that they are aware of all programme requirements.

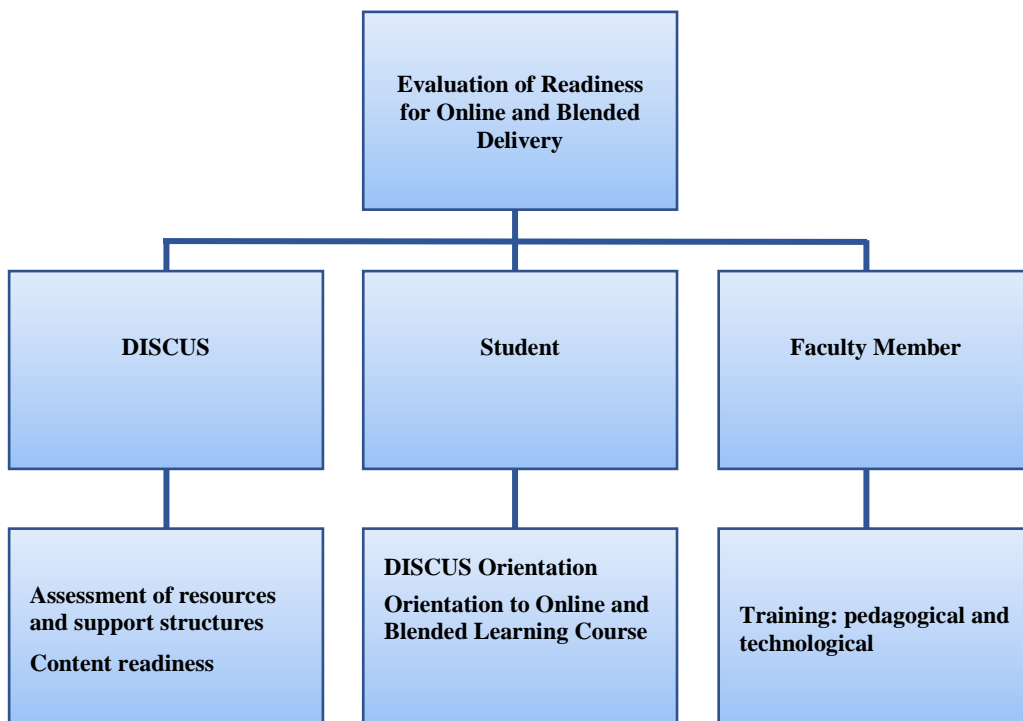
Faculty Readiness:

It is critical to ensure that all persons involved in teaching blended and/or online courses are equipped with the necessary skills and attributes to facilitate students and therefore training is **mandatory** for all first-time online faculty members. Re-training and orientation are required for faculty members whenever new systems and tools are introduced. Training will be provided by the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) and/or the Online Faculty Development Committee.

Student Readiness:

Preparation for learning in an online or blended environment is vital to student success. Students should be provided with an appropriate orientation for online and/or blended delivery by their DISCUS, prior to beginning their online/blended programme. Students should be encouraged to complete the online Orientation to Online and Blended Learning Course. For more information contact CETL.

Figure 1: Readiness for Online and Blended Course Delivery



6. APPROVAL PROCESS FOR ONLINE AND/OR BLENDED COURSES AND PROGRAMMES

Course Approval

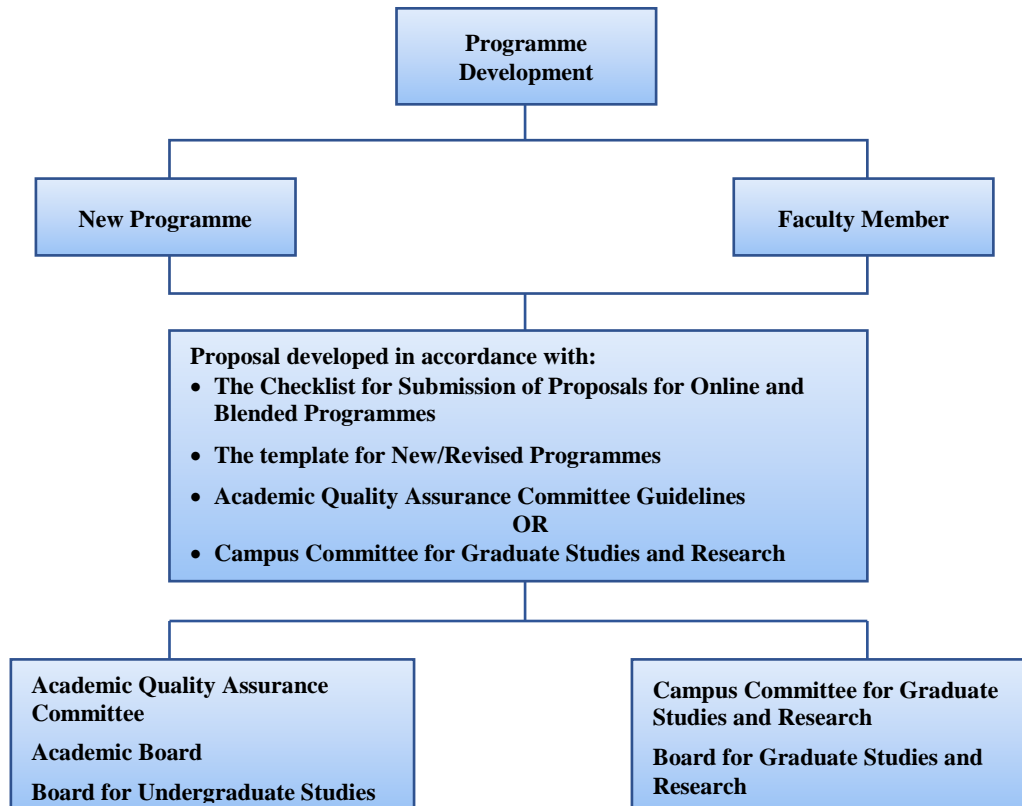
All new and/or revised courses, including those with changes in the mode of delivery, **MUST** be submitted for formal approval via the Campus Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) to Academic Board and/or the Campus Committee for Graduate Studies and Research (CCGS&R).

Programme Approval

All new and revised programmes **must** be submitted for formal approval via AQAC to Academic Board and/or the CCGS&R for approval at BUS and BGSR respectively, using the relevant approved templates.

The *Checklist for Submission of Proposals for Online and Blended Courses and Programmes* (See Appendix I) **must** be completed and submitted in addition to the templates.

Figure II: Programme Development Approval Process



Approval Process for MCTLI Courses

The MCTLI is offered in 2 phases:

Phase 1 MCTLI – Existing courses can be shared based on departmental arrangements, which meet the criteria outlined in *The MCTLI Phase 1 Quality Assurance Checklist*. The Phase 1 Quality Assurance Checklist addresses the minimum standard for course delivery, technical preparedness, faculty preparedness, student support, assessment and evaluation.

- i. The Checklist is completed by the faculty member and submitted to the Head of DISCUS or Dean of Faculty.
- ii. An MCTLI Course Application is completed by Head of DISCUS or Dean of Faculty and submitted online to PVC BUS or PVC BGSR along with relevant forms.
- iii. PVC BUS/BGSR submits to MCTLI Committee for Approval

Phase 2 MCTLI – The offer of re-designed courses which meet the quality assurance standards for multi-mode teaching after the course has been offered for two academic years as a Phase 1 MCTLI.

- i. Selected courses must be re-designed, in consultation with the campus CETL and submitted for approval using the approved templates for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and courses. Subsequent offerings must be reviewed and updated according to campus AQAC and Academic Board; and CCGSR requirements.
- ii. One Faculty member will be responsible for the re-design and teaching of the selected course. The re-design includes determining the most appropriate mode of delivery and preparing the course accordingly.

Approval Process for Emergency Remote Teaching

Any course which uses Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) must adhere to the *Checklist for Emergency Remote Teaching* (See Appendix II). Emergency Remote Teaching ceases when the emergency/crisis ends.

The Chair of AQAC/CCGSR should be notified by the Head of the DISCUS or Dean of Faculty of any course being delivered by *Emergency Remote Teaching*.

7. QUALITY ASSURANCE (QA) OF ONLINE AND BLENDED COURSES AND PROGRAMMES

The UWI has a well-articulated QA process for academic programmes which includes quality evaluations and quality assurance reviews. A monitoring system should be built into the delivery of online and blended courses and programmes, and a Quality Evaluation (QE) should be conducted after the first offering of any new online or blended programme.

Quality assurance should take place at every stage of the teaching and learning process regarding online and blended courses, starting with the course/programme approval, DISCUS support, through the development and delivery stage. The UWI has chosen to use the Online Learning Consortium's Quality Scorecard suite of rubrics to support these processes.

<https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/consult/olc-quality-scorecard-suite/>

8. ASSESSMENT INTEGRITY

Two major security concerns regarding online and blended courses and programmes are:

- minimizing opportunities for cheating; and
- authenticating student identity.

To address these concerns, at least fifty per cent (50%) of all courses in an online programme must have a traditional face-to-face proctored examination, except for courses where an approved electronic proctoring system is employed. The face-to-face assessment must have a weighting of at least 40 per cent (40%) of the total course. Where a Campus feels that due to the nature of the discipline, a programme should have assessments that total more than 50 per cent coursework it must state explicitly the measures that will be taken to assure the integrity of the assessment process. For courses with more than 50 per cent (50%) coursework students will be required to pass both the face-to-face and coursework components.

APPENDIX I

CHECKLIST FOR SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS FOR ONLINE AND BLENDED COURSES AND PROGRAMMES V4 REVISED MARCH 08 2023

Introduction

The following checklist⁴ has been developed to ensure that online and blended programmes meet the required standards of development, delivery, and student support. It is to be used in conjunction with the standard template for New and Revised Programmes and Courses. The completed checklist should be attached to the Programme Proposal for submission to the Board.

In responding to each criterion below, you may reference the relevant section in the programme or course proposal and/or provide a brief explanation and supporting evidence.

1. Programme/Course Structure and Alignment:

- a) The online/blended programme/course is aligned to the vision, mission, and strategic plan of the UWI.
- b) The online/blended programme/course complies with the policies of the UWI, such as but not limited to The UWIs: *Data Protection Policy* (April 2021), *Information Security Policy* (September 2016); *The University of the West Indies Information Security Policy Guidelines*; *Acceptable Use Policy Information & Communication Technologies (ICT)* (December 2014); *Policy on Intellectual Property Management and Commercialisation*; *The University of the West Indies Risk Management Policy, October 2022*
- c) Clear roles and responsibilities for persons directly involved with the day-to-day teaching/facilitation and support of the course are outlined (e.g. faculty member/subject matter expert, instructional designer, multimedia support, programme coordinator)
- d) Sufficient qualified and academic staff are provided to support the online/blended programme/course.
- e) The budget for the online/blended programme/course is sufficient to support the resources required to effectively support the online/ blended course/programme over the lifetime of the course/programme

⁴ A combination of check marks and reference to the programme proposal document should be used to support requests. The online expert must review and check before completing the confirmation note referred to in No. 6.

1E) For a blended programme, clearly indicate the modality of each course

Course Name/Code	Delivery method (blended, online asynchronous, online synchronous, face to face)
1.	
2.	

2. Technological Support:

- a) The course delivery technology to be used is the institutional approved technology solution for course delivery⁵
- b) IT resources and educational technology tools identified as necessary for specific courses have been approved.
- c) Availability of technical services to ensure continued ease of access to curricular materials. Submit confirmation from Campus IT Services (or the relevant entity) of their ability to provide the necessary services, or submit alternative arrangements made/to be made by the Department.

3. Faculty Preparedness and Support for Online Teaching:

Provide evidence of /or plans for training initiatives to develop the competency of faculty to deliver quality online teaching in accordance with established best practices. This includes:

- a) Training in online pedagogy
- b) Training in the use of the chosen technology platform(s)
- c) A plan for student engagement during online synchronous sessions in a course
- d) A plan for how asynchronous online course development standards will be applied using a UWI approved rubric
- e) Availability of reliable technical support for faculty during the online programme/course

⁵ This is considered a mission-critical enterprise system and should be supported as such.

4. Student Support:

Indicate:

- a) arrangements for the training/orientation of students in the use of the relevant technologies
- b) proposed faculty student ratio is clearly stated
- c) provisions to ensure that remote students have access to and can effectively use the relevant online library and information services
- d) provisions for advising students on academic matters.
- e) for online synchronous delivery, state the provisions for tutorial support and access to course materials
- f) the tools and methodologies that will be employed to create/facilitate a learning community.
- g) availability of reliable technical support for students during and after the online programme/course
- h) how the relevant data to support student success will be monitored to improve student success and retention
- i) what process is in place for the success and retention of students in the programme/course

5. Assessment and Evaluation:

Indicate:

- a) the online assessment strategies that will be used (e.g. class tests, exams, projects, etc.) and how they will be used for online students
- b) How opportunities for academic honesty in the online environment will be maximized
- c) How opportunities for academic dishonesty in the online environment will be minimized
- d) arrangements for proctoring of exams in remote locations, where applicable.
- e) arrangements for practicum and access to laboratory facilities, where applicable

- f) Opportunities for student feedback to improve the course/programme

6. Template for Confirmation Report

The confirmation report is intended to provide evidence of consultation with online instructional designer, education technologist or other online expert with respect to the design of the programme/courses for online delivery, including any recommendations. A template for the confirmation note is shown below:

- 1. Programme and or Course Name:**
- 2. Delivery Mode (Online or Blended):**
- 3. Name and Job Title of Online Consultant:**

I certify that consultation on the programme or course has taken place with

.....
(Department/Lecturer) and that the proposed programme or course structure, the instructional materials and delivery systems are aligned with the learning objectives of the programme.

Recommendations:

Signed: Online Consultant
Affiliation (Open Campus, CETL, other)

APPENDIX II

REVISED: JUNE 2020

PROPOSED CHECKLIST FOR EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING

Emergency Remote Teaching refers to a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances¹ (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond, 2020).

This Checklist was developed to ensure that courses transitioning to ERT meet a minimum standard for course delivery, technical preparedness, faculty preparedness, student support, assessment and evaluation. This Checklist should be completed by the faculty member and submitted to the Head of DISCUS or Dean of Faculty.

Course Delivery:

- The structure of the course should clearly indicate the online components and the associated delivery method (i.e. synchronous or asynchronous)**
- For synchronous delivery (via video-conferencing or web-conferencing), state the provisions for access to course materials, and state the dates and times for instructional delivery.

Technical Preparedness:

- Availability of /or plans to acquire the required technology resources to deliver online teaching and to support online learning. Online delivery platforms include learning management system (such as Moodle), web-conferencing system or virtual classroom (such as Blackboard Collaborate), or a videoconferencing system at the delivery and receiving endpoints.**
- Availability of reliable technical support for lecturers and students before and during synchronous online sessions
- Availability of technical services to ensure continued ease of access to curricular materials such as video recordings.

Faculty Preparedness for Online Teaching:

- training in the use of the chosen technology platform(s).**

Assessment and Evaluation:

- the assessment tools that will be used – class tests, exams, projects, etc. and how they will be administered to remote students

- arrangements for proctoring of exams in remote locations, where applicable.

- arrangements for practicum and access to laboratory facilities, where applicable.

Student Support:

- arrangements for the training/orientation of students in the use of the relevant technologies**

- provisions to ensure that remote students have access to use the library resources

- provisions for advising students in academic matters.

Course Code and Name:

Signed:

Instructor/Head of DISCUS/Dean of Faculty

[1] Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T. & Bond, A. (2020, March 27). The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning. EDUCAUSE REVIEW. <https://er.educasue.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning>

[2] The Programme Approval Guidelines for the various AQACs and CCGS&Rs stipulate that before a programme can be approved there must be consultation with various entities including the Library, Bursary and CETL.