

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



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Responsible	DISTANCE LEARNING MANAGER
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E-LEARNING POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to exploit new delivery mechanisms, including the e-learning, to the benefit of a wider range of students both on and off campus and expand taught programmes using traditional, blended and full e-learning delivery mechanisms.

The Policy Statement

The College will use e-Learning where appropriate to support the achievement of its goals in providing learner-centred learning experiences that are flexible, responsive and effective and meet the needs of all its learners and partners. E-Learning will be used to innovate both learning and its delivery and will be delivered making effective and efficient use of all resources whilst maintaining the quality standards the College is committed to.

Policy aspects pertaining to e-Learning will, where relevant, be embedded in **all** College policies and procedures to ensure a consistent and corporate approach to associated systems, processes and responsibilities.

What is e-Learning?

For the purpose of this policy, and the Quality Assurance and other procedures it relates to, an award is considered to involve e-Learning where:

A student cannot reasonably be expected, without due provision of individually focused accommodations (to meet the needs of disability, for example), to meet the learning outcomes of the course without accessing and/or engaging with the electronically delivered and/or supported components of the course.

Here, the word course is intended to cover both awards and informal courses. Where an offering provides e-Learning components or e-Content on which the achievement of the learning outcomes is NOT dependent, it does not fall within the scope of this policy but nevertheless, such provision is subject to the requirements of the College relating to electronic learning content, including its provenance, quality, and management.

2. PRINCIPLES OF THE E-LEARNING POLICY

2.1 Principle 1: *The College will ensure that its e-Learning provision can meet the needs of a full range of flexible and independent learning experiences. This will include on and off campus learners in local, regional, national and international settings and cover both blended*

and fully e-Learning courses ranging from full awards to informal and individual learning.

The key here is “flexibility” – to meet the needs of a wide range of learners, drawn from diverse contexts, with very different learning requirements, requires providing College staff with the appropriate skills and professional capabilities, ensuring that working practices, policies, processes and responsibilities are appropriately aligned, and that technical and infrastructural systems supporting e-Learning are adaptable whilst being robust and effectively managed.

- 2.2 Principle 2: *The College will ensure that students taking e-Learning courses have equity of opportunity with those taking courses delivered in more traditional ways, and that its marketing, recruitment, administrative and support procedures and provision are fully aligned to the needs of the e-Learner.***

This principle is fundamental to all aspects of retention, widening participation and inclusion, and also to meeting the needs of the lifelong learner, those involved in CPD, and partner organisations.

- 2.3 Principle 3: *The College will continually work towards ensuring that all systems, both manual and electronic, used in the e-Learning context interoperate in the most effective way to provide learners with a effective and increasingly individualised learning environment encompassing all aspects of their experience as a student of the College.***

E Learning is not just about VLEs – its success depends on the effective interoperation of all systems supporting the learner, including the various MIS, financial and student record systems, PDP systems, those providing resources such as e-Library and e-Book systems, and corporate repositories, as well as all of these linking to, and exchanging data with, regional, national and international systems. This has to be achieved in such a way as to provide the prospective, current and past student with a view of their experience at WLCBMS that is personal to them. Part of this work will need to provide a single, simplified, but individual, point of access to the learning experience.

- 2.4 Principle 4: *The College will exploit the range of technologies used in the e-Learning context to work with partner organisations, employers and individuals to assist it in meeting its goals of supporting the independent and lifelong learner and continuing professional development.***

This principle follows from the previous one. In order to work well with outside organisations and facilitate the lifelong learner, including in areas such as progression and CPD, it will be essential that not only do the College's own systems used to support e-Learning interoperate, but that they can also import and export information readily from partners and other organisations.

- 2.5 Principle 5: *The College will ensure that as far as possible, resources for both tutors and learners, including e-Learning course content, College e-Resources, and those provides from external sources are easily accessed from point of need. In addition, it will via the use of managed repositories, ensure that College owned e-Content and e-Resources are readily available for repurposing and reuse by those entitled to do so, and will thus actively support cross discipline and Faculty developments.***

It is important that content can be used in multiple systems and contexts, and that where resources reside in fixed systems (for example Books), that they can accessed readily from references help in other systems. Along with this, the independent learner needs to be able to search easily for resources relevant to their needs, even where these resources reside "outside" the course they currently studying. Lastly it is imperative, to avoid needless duplication of effort, that, where appropriate tutors (including partners) can readily access and reuse tried, tested and quality assured resources created or identified by their colleagues (in such a way that their colleagues work is acknowledged). All of this will enhance the ability of the College to respond to new e-Learning opportunities and the experience it offers to its learners, and assist in underpinning the cross discipline and departmental developments the College requires for the future.

- 2.6 Principle 6: *The College, through its quality processes, will ensure that e-Learning provision meets the standards expected by the College, funding bodies and relevant legislation, and that it is accessible, educationally sound, engaging and appropriate to its target populations, whilst ensuring that course developers and those facilitating learning have the scope to innovate and fully employ their professional skills and judgement.***

The College's academic planning processes need to be both robust and flexible enough to allow it to respond in a timely manner to new opportunities. Whilst QA has, in the past, concentrated on manners of e-Content, it is important that policies and procedures are developed to

ensure that e Learning offerings are fit for the target population, including the independent learner, and offer an educational sound experience which is both effective and engaging. It will be important here to ensure a distinction is drawn between “e-Learning” as defined at the start of this policy, and “e-Enhanced” learning where engaging with the e-components of an award are not a prerequisite to meeting its learning outcomes. Unless this is done, approval and QA procedures could act as a barrier to progress. It is important, however, that QA procedures ensure that standards required by external bodies and legislation are met.

- 2.7 Principle 7: *To ensure that the potential of e-Learning to innovate learning and meet the needs of an increasingly diverse range of potential learners is realised, the College will actively encourage research, scholarship and development in all aspects of e-Learning, and in particular, pedagogy for e-Learning. In addition, it will, via appropriate staff development, ensure all management, administrative, support and teaching staff have the skills, and understanding of each others’ roles, required to play their part effectively in the provision of e-Learning.***

The College possesses considerable expertise and excellence in the research and practice of e-Learning. It must develop the means to encourage and promote these, whilst also ensuring that the outputs of this work is effectively not just disseminated, but embedded in practice across the institution. Experience at the College, backed by research, has shown that effective dissemination of lessons learned is most effectively achieved where this is embedded in the development process along with appropriate staff development. Indeed, a practice of active development of all groups of staff in their part of the e-Learning context is essential if effective working practices and delivery are to be maintained and further enhanced.

- 2.8 Principle 8: *The College will monitor and evaluate the use of all systems and practices contributing to its learners’ e-Learning experiences, to ensure that practice, policy and strategy are responsive to lessons learned and agile in respect of new opportunities, and will actively seek to remove barriers that impede or restrict effective e-Learning.***

Experience and research have shown that eLearning can only be considered fully embedded into an institution when all policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities pertaining to the use of e-Learning

are fully integrated into the College's strategy for teaching and learning.

- 2.9 Principle 9: *The College will ensure, assist by the use of monitoring and evaluation, that the resources required to support e-Learning, in human, technical and infrastructural aspects, are appropriate to its requirements and will allow it to provide its e-Learners with realistic definitions of the levels of service they can expect***

The College needs to develop a holistic approach to the evaluation of e-Learning that is integrated with the monitoring of the overall students experience. In addition it needs to understand the true resourcing requirements of e-Learning if students are to be given expectations of the service the College will provide them with that are achievable.

- 2.10 Principle 10: *The College will ensure that, by using effective costing models and market research, the pricing of e-Learning offerings is both competitive and appropriate to the target populations.***

Market research is both dependent on, and contributes to, effective costing/pricing of courses and the College must investigate ways that new proposals can be evaluated against demand that are both realistic and affordable.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

The E-Learning Policy is the responsibility of the Distance Learning Manager who will report directly to the Academic Committee on matters relating to policy function.

4. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 4.1.** Distance Learning Assessment Policy (Wlcb045)
- 4.2.** Distance Learning Provision Quality Assurance (Wlcb038)
- 4.3.** Wider Participation Policy (Wlcb044)

5. APPENDIX

- 5.1.** CPD Calendar (exemplar)