

PROVIDER NAME: CCT College Dublin (CCT)

POLICY AREA: Programme Validation, Monitoring and Review

Policy and Procedure Title:	Blended Learning Policy	Document Number: CCTP404	Version: 1.1
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Purpose: This policy acts as an umbrella policy under which all CCT blended learning programmes leading to QQI awards will be developed, operated, managed and reviewed and their learners managed and supported. The purpose of the policy is to outline CCT College Dublin’s quality assurance arrangements specific to blended learning programmes leading to QQI awards, complementing CCT’s approved quality assurance policies and procedures, many of which include consideration of blended learning programmes.

The policy operates in the context of the CCT Strategic Plan, the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and the Blended Learning Strategy.

The policy applies to blended learning, including where

- a full module or modules may be delivered wholly online within a blended learning programme;
- where a module, modules or programmes may be delivered through a hybrid approach.

Definitions: From first embarking on strategic developments to implement blended learning in CCT College, terminology has evolved from reference to flexible and distributed learning, e-learning, online learning and blended learning to more current terms of technology-enabled and technology-enhanced learning. For the purpose of clarity, the term blended learning is used by CCT in a quality assurance context to ensure consistency with terminology within QQI policy and guidelines. Alternative naming conventions may apply in other contexts or further evolve over the life of this policy.

CCT relies upon Torrisi-Steele’s definition of blended learning as “*enriched, student-centred learning experiences made possible by the harmonious integration of various strategies, achieved by combining F2F (face-to-face) interaction with ICT*” (2011). This aligns with Kanuka’s definition incorporated into QQI’s Blended Learning Guidelines which refers to “*the integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences*” (Kanuka, 2004 in QQI March 2018) but further reflects the potential that the blend can comprise of face to face learning interacting with technology outside of the online context also.

CCT uses the term “hybrid learning” to refer to the delivery of programmes, or components thereof, which rely upon the dual use of face to face and online delivery methods to accommodate specific needs of the discipline, the programme and the learner cohort. Hybrid delivery will normally include live streaming of face to face classes for participation remotely concurrently.

CCT advocates the application of the pedagogy first approach to blended learning whereby the curriculum content and learning outcomes inform the choice of tools and the sequencing of these within a lesson or a module and not vice versa. Within this approach CCT encourages

	<p>the use of the Flipped Classroom, explained within the EADTU publication “Quality Assessment for E-learning: a Benchmarking Approach, Third edition, 2016” as the situation where “<i>students no longer acquire content knowledge by attendance at a traditional lecture but through independent study, reserving teacher-student contact time for more interactive sessions such as seminar discussion or problem-solving classes. The flipped approach is a natural fit with blended learning, where the independent study can be online using the VLE or the internet (including OER and MOOCs) and the teacher-led sessions can be face to face.</i>” (EADTU, 2016)</p> <p>The use of the flipped classroom is advocated in CCT as a technique within the pedagogy first approach meaning it is a tool to support effective learning but is not the pedagogy itself.</p>
Scope:	<p>This policy applies to all CCT programmes leading to a QQI awards validated for delivery through blended learning.</p> <p>The existing governance arrangements apply.</p> <p>The Dean of Academic Affairs holds executive responsibility for quality assurance and academic standards in respect of blended learning programmes.</p> <p>The Dean of School holds executive responsibility for teaching, learning and assessment including in respect of blended learning programmes.</p> <p>The Dean for Administration and Finance holds executive responsibility for the administration of the College including operations and facilities.</p> <p>The School Manager is responsible for providing operational leadership to faculty and ensuring effective management and coordination of all programmes within the school.</p> <p>Programme Leaders are responsible for the management of programmes in accordance with validation requirements and monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the learner experience on the programmes they lead.</p>
Staff Involved:	All administrative, technical and academic staff, student support services, the Management Team and Executive Leadership Team.
Policy	
<p>All blended learning developments in CCT College will reflect the strategic intentions of the College at the given time and will naturally evolve within and alongside the strategic development of the College.</p> <p>CCT blended learning programmes will satisfy the quality assurance guidelines of QQI and the policies and procedures of CCT College Dublin and in doing so shall satisfy the academic quality and standards required of all CCT programmes leading to QQI awards and reflect the underpinning concepts outlined within the CCT Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy.</p> <p>CCT recognises the ever-evolving nature of technology and the continuum that is blended learning and thus does not specify the technologies, approaches or the blend applied to blended learning programmes, beyond the requirement for programmes to use CCT approved platforms and technologies only. The use of</p>	

technologies within programme delivery are determined by programme development teams in the context of the best suited pedagogic approach for the discipline, programme level and award type, target learners and available technologies.

The existing quality assurance policies and procedures of CCT College, as approved by QQI, remain applicable in all instances and this policy seeks to supplement those with explicit requirements with regard to blended learning programmes. In the absence of explicit requirements being documented herein, the quality assurance policies, as published at <https://www.cct.ie/quality-assurance/> apply.

Procedure Outline / Method(s) used to carry out this procedure	Responsibility of	Evidence generated by this procedure to ensure its effectiveness
<p>In accordance with QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Provider of Blended Learning Programmes and good practice guidelines articulated within the EADTU SeQuent (Supporting Quality in E-learning European Networks) Handbook (2015), procedures for assuring the quality of blended learning programmes in CCT reflect requirements of the organisational context, the programme level context and the learner experience context. The following procedures outline the mechanisms in place in respect of same.</p> <p>1. Development within strategic context</p> <p>The Executive Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring that all proposed developments are aligned with the strategic intentions of the College, as articulated in the Strategic Plan, underpinned by appropriate investment plans and specified timeframes for implementation.</p> <p>Specifically, the ELT is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defining objectives, definitions and parameters specific to blended learning • Appropriate dissemination and communication of strategic objectives and timeframes (and any changes to these) to ensure shared understanding and empower relevant governance structures to make informed decisions • Budgeting and allocation of financial resources, along with measures for approval and monitoring of expenditure and investment, to support the fulfilment of strategic objectives • Ensuring and implementing a planned approach to the acquisition, implementation, enhancement and or integration of necessary infrastructure and resources (human and physical) for the fulfilment of objectives 	<p>ELT</p>	<p>Minutes of meetings Strategic planning documents Budget plans Contracts with third parties Communications to staff</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing arrangements to facilitate the trialling and testing of technologies at different stages in the acquisition and implementation stages. • Management of matters pertaining to intellectual property, copyright, data protection and licensing arrangements. • Effective oversight of third-party services engaged for the provision of services e.g. VLE hosting and management. • Implementing effective monitoring arrangements to ensure development and implementation of arrangements consistent with strategic intent. 	Academic Council	Minutes of meetings
<p>Academic Council retains responsibility for the academic oversight and governance of all programmes, proposed and current, including those delivered through blended learning.</p>		
<p>2. Programme Development, Validation, Monitoring and Review</p>		
<p>The existing Programme Validation Policy, Programme Review and Revalidation Policy and the Programme Management and Annual Monitoring Policy apply.</p>	Proposer	Minutes of meetings
<p>For the purpose of blended learning programmes, the programme proposer (in the case of new programmes) or programme leader (in the case of established programmes) is responsible for defining the technical resources and infrastructure requirements of the programme and identifying any specialist tools, hardware or software requirements. This is established in the curriculum planning stages when the nature of the blend is determined. CCT encourages the application of the ABC curriculum design model established by UCL.</p>	ELT	Validation documents / programme documents
<p>The ELT is responsible for undertaking budget planning and allocation of resources in accordance with requirements or advising where budget or resource constraints require consideration of alternative approaches.</p>		Budget records
<p>Workload considerations in blended learning programmes are determined on the basis of contact hours being defined as those hours which require student engagement with faculty, with other students or with content as part of a structured lesson / supervision / learning activity. This can include synchronous and asynchronous activity but excludes independent study required for assessment preparation or homework for example.</p>	Programme development team	Programme documents

Independent study is defined as the notional learning hours a student is required to employ to complete elements of the programme independently, including any revision or assessment preparation time.

Programme development teams are required to be mindful of the potential for overload in blended learning programmes.

Programme Development Teams are required to consult the CCT Standards and Guidelines for the Design and Development of Blended Learning Programmes, Materials and Learning Resources, available from the QA Officer.

3. Policies, Regulations and Processes

The Dean of Academic Affairs is responsible for ensuring the continued relevance and fitness for purpose of quality assurance arrangements in the context of blended learning programmes. This will be managed through the annual QA monitoring processes, as reported to Academic Council, supported by the Quality Enhancement Committee. As the extent or nature of blended learning provision evolves within CCT, consideration will be given to continued suitability of policies, procedures and mechanisms for their implementation.

The CCT Privacy Statement reflects the collection, processing, storage and sharing of personal data in the online environment, in accordance with GDPR, outlining the legal bases upon which it relies and the purpose for its collection and with whom it is shared.

All remaining policies, procedures and regulations as published by CCT remain applicable to blended learning programmes. In the absence of a specific policy relating to blended learning provision, it is assumed that the mainstream policy applies along with any specific requirements within the policy as documented.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning, under the direction of the Dean of School, is responsible for the provision and maintenance of guidelines for blended learning to ensure satisfaction of CCT approved minimum requirements.

4. Appointment, induction, training, professional development and appraisal arrangements

The ELT in conjunction with Academic Council for academic staffing matters, is responsible for monitoring the suitability of minimum requirements of teaching and support staff, and arrangements for addressing these.

<p>Dean of Academic Affairs</p>	<p>QA Manual, policies and procedures Annual review records</p> <p>Privacy Statement</p>
<p>CTL / Dean of School</p>	<p>Learning space guides</p>
<p>ELT, Academic Council</p>	<p>Recruitment and selection records</p> <p>Prof. Dev. Register</p>

In addition to the minimum requirements of academic staff as outlined in [CCT's Recruitment, Selection and Probation Policy](#), those academic staff engaged in blended learning programmes will be required to evidence suitable technical competence and experience and a sound understanding and experience of facilitating learning through technology. Where this is not apparent, completion of specific induction and professional development programmes will be a mandatory requirement. The Centre for Teaching and Learning will facilitate access to the National Forum Digital Badges “Getting Started with Online Teaching” and “Teaching Strategies for [New] Lecturers” for which the Dean of Academic Affairs is an approved facilitator.

Staff are encouraged to engage in CPD relating to pedagogic matters, this is not restricted to academic faculty and engagement in research and scholarship is actively encouraged.

The appointment of specialist support staff to facilitate the delivery of the blended learning strategy will continue in accordance with existing policy and practices. The nature of appointments will reflect the requirement for academic, pedagogic, design, pastoral and technical support and the applicable criteria for selection and appointment will be determined accordingly.

The sourcing of appropriate expertise can also include sub-contracting to third parties where specialist expertise is required. The ELT must approve any such proposal.

See also [Scholarship, Professional Development Innovation and Research Policy](#).

5. Intellectual Property, copyright and data protection

All staff involved in the provision of blended learning programmes are notified of the legal limitations and parameters associated with IP, copyright and data protection.

Intellectual property rights associated with materials developed for CCT programmes is clearly articulated in staff contracts and the staff handbook.

Support guides are issued to all staff designing materials for use on the VLE to assist in strengthening understanding of legal parameters and ensuring legal compliance.

The CCT College Library and the Centre for Teaching and Learning provides additional support to staff on matters of copyright, IP, open source and creative commons licencing.

See also [Staff Code of Conduct Policy](#), [Data Protection Policy](#) and [Privacy Statement](#).

ELT	CPD plans Approval records / contracts
ELT All staff	Staff contracts / handbook QA policy
CTL / Library	Learning space

6. Contingency Arrangements in the event of platform, hardware or software failure

The College has a contract with a specialist E-Learning provider and Moodle certified services provider for the management, maintenance and back-up of learner records and the VLE. The service provider implements industry standard offsite security and back-up arrangements to facilitate continuity in the event of frontline technology failure.

Network management and administration is undertaken in-house with the support of expert consultancy as required.

7. Learning Resources, Materials and Delivery Mechanisms

Programme and content developments will be a collaborative effort with input of discipline, technical and pedagogic expertise along with library and student services. The collaborative approach should seek ensure appropriate arrangements to reduce the potential for overburdening the student in the online elements of the programme.

All faculty are responsible for ensuring blended learning programmes for which they have responsibility will be delivered in the context of the learner centred approach advocated in the [CCT Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy](#) and in accordance with requirements outlined in “*Standards and Guidelines for the Design and Development of Blended Learning Programmes, Materials and Learning Resources*”

Faculty are supported by the Centre for Teaching and Learning and IT Services to ensure the suitability of teaching materials and learning resources and ensuring the use of CCT approved platforms and tools for the delivery of their modules.

The fitness of purpose and functionality of uploaded content is reviewed prior to issuing it to learners. A peer process is implemented to support this and considers academic, technical and instructional design requirements / recommendations.

Minimum standards are outlined in the CCT Standards and Guidelines for the Design and Development of Blended Learning Programmes, Materials and Learning Resources.

Where lecturers are engaging in synchronous learning such as webinars or virtual classroom activities, or undertaking recording of asynchronous content for uploading they are required to:

Dean for Admin and Finance

Contract

Dean of School Programme Leaders

Programme validation documents
Annual monitoring reports

Faculty

Student feedback
Annual monitoring reports

CTL / IT Services
Faculty
School Manager

Peer review
Student feedback
Monitoring outcomes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure they are in an environment free from potential interruptions / disruption or excessive background noise and • Secure the use of CCT approved equipment to ensure sound and picture quality of recordings / broadcasts or • Use CCT onsite facilities for recording / broadcasting <p>Lecturers are required to adhere to agreed timeframes for the upload of materials to facilitate effective application of the flipped classroom approach and completion of activities by learners without placing them under undue pressure in advance of the synchronous or on campus elements of the learning.</p> <p>In designing blended learning lessons, faculty are advised to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advance upload materials which include sufficient detail to adequately inform the learner of what is expected of them and what the purpose of the materials are • Incorporate formative activities to enable the learner to determine their own progress and level of understanding and provide a bridge to the synchronous element of the learning • Use the synchronous learning element to maximise opportunities for application, formative assessment activities, and clarification of challenging concepts theories and approaches. • Ensure the synchronous element is not simply a repeat of the asynchronous elements in a different format. <p>Technical support staff and the Centre for Teaching and Learning are available to provide instructional design and technical support as required.</p> <p>Programme leaders are responsible for the quality of the learning experience across the programme they lead and are accountable to Academic Council in this regard.</p> <p>The School Manager, supported by the Faculty Coordinators and the QA Officer, monitors adherence to minimum requirements in respect of tools, technologies and learning resources, upload times and compliance with validated programme requirements.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring and learner feedback mechanisms are in place. See CCT's Ongoing Monitoring and Review Policy.</p>	<p>Programme Leaders</p> <p>School Manager</p>	<p>Student feedback, external examiner feedback, annual monitoring reports, programme board minutes</p>
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<p>CCT uses the Moodle virtual learning environment (VLE). The Network Manager in conjunction with the Dean of School, informed by faculty and student feedback, is responsible for monitoring the ongoing fitness for purpose of the VLE and existing processes for programme development, monitoring and review provide opportunity for proposing enhancements and upgrades as may be required.</p> <p>The VLE is used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the development of communities of practice and enhance the learner community created n campus • Upload online content quickly and easily in a rage of formats • Enhance the learner experience • Provide access to support services and materials • Integrate with virtual classroom software, plagiarism detection software, library services and the student information system • Monitor learner engagement with online elements of programmes • Support assessments • Facilitate communication with learners <p>CCT has procured virtual classroom software which is used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the range of learning interactions available through the VLE • Facilitate live lectures / webinars/ tutorials • Enable multi-group breakout activities in the online environment • Promote and facilitate accessibility for all learners • Enable recording of live sessions for students to revisit. <p>The virtual classroom software also provides the means for secure, online meetings between learners and the college should physical attendance not be a feasible option.</p> <p>See also CCT's Learning Environment Policy and the <i>“Standards and Guidelines for the Design and Development of Blended Learning Programmes, Materials and Learning Resources”</i></p> <p>8. Information to Learners</p>	<p>Network Manager Dean of School</p>	<p>Network testing VLE enhancement reports Student and faculty feedback</p>
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Programme Development Teams are responsible for specifying information relating to any technical requirements, ICT capabilities and the nature of the blended learning elements of the programme.

Subsequent to validation, this detail should be made available to learners in advance of enrolling on a programme, as per the requirements of the [CCT Public Information Policy](#)

Specifically, learners must be advised of:

- i. The minimum requirements outlined in the CCT Public Information Policy
- ii. Detail relating to the online element of the programme and any specific requirements relating to participation times online and attendance requirements and timings onsite
- iii. The anticipated independent learning commitment
- iv. The technical equipment / hardware/ software / internet and skills essential for participation in the programme
- v. Learner responsibilities and obligations in respect of the online and onsite elements of the programme;

The document “*Standards and Guidelines for the Design and Development of Blended Learning Programmes, Materials and Learning Resources*” specifies the information requirements that should be satisfied for registered learners.

9. Supports for Learners

Academic, technical and support staff are responsible for the provision of and access to supports in the online environment.

All learners are provided with a dedicated online induction programme which is scaffolded with a range of easy to access video and text support materials.

CCT employs a range of digital support tools including online interactive guides, integrated online reading list software, library support classes, careers guidance support services and live chat and discussion forums across a range of departments. “*Communication and Interaction in the Online Environment: A Guide for Students*” outlines the expected standards and norms of behaviour and communication in the online environment.

Programme Development Teams
Admissions
Head of Marketing

Validation documents
Sign off records
Publicity materials

Head of Student Services

Minutes of student services meetings
Class rep feedback
Student survey

<p>Faculty and staff are required to operate within the stated requirements of existing policies specific to student support. In addition, the quality standards documented in <i>“Standards and Guidelines for the Design and Development of Blended Learning Programmes, Materials and Learning Resources”</i> should be addressed.</p>		
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Monitoring		
Monitor (Job Title)	Frequency	Monitoring Method(s)
Academic Council / ELT	Annual	Annual Monitoring Reports
QA Officer	Annual	VLE review for compliance with Quality Standards
Head of Student Services	Annual	Annual Monitoring Report

POLICY CONTROL SHEET

Policy Title	Blended Learning Policy
Responsible Officer(s)	Dean of School, Dean of Academic Affairs
Issuance Date	August 2020
Effective Date	September 2020
Last Review Date	N/A
Supersedes	N/A
Next Review Date	August 2021 and then within 5 years thereafter
Designated Reviewer	QA Officer with Dean of School, School Manager, Programme Development Lead and Head of Student Services
Scope	All blended learning provision

Revision History

Revision	Approval Date	Revision Description	Originator	Approved By
1.0	March 2020	Pre- QQI draft for approval	ELT	Academic Council
1.1	Sept 2020	Edits to reflect changes arising from QQI Blended Learning approval panel report	Dean of Academic Affairs	Academic Council

References upon which the Policy section is based

CCT Policy area	Programme Validation, Monitoring and Review
Statutory & System Wide Basis	The Irish Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012; QQI Core Statutory Guidelines for Quality Assurance QQI Statutory Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes
Related CCT Policies / Forms	CCT Quality Assurance Manual CCT Standards and Guidelines for the Design and Development of Blended Learning Programmes, Materials and Learning Resources