

Uva Wellassa University

The adoption of the following policy is recommended by the Senate Standing Committee on Quality Assurance and the Senate of Uva Wellassa University.

Policy Title: Policy on Online Teaching, Learning and Assessment
Policy Number: UWU-P-020
Responsible Party/s: Deans of Faculties; Director-CODL, Director-PGU
Effective Date: 30.08.2024
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Content

Purpose

Statement

Policy Review and Confirmation

Scope and Applicability

Objectives

Key Policy Principles/ Policy Statements

Assessing Students Online and Requirements

Definitions

Related Acts, Rules, Regulations and Key Circulars:

Purpose Statement:

Uva Wellassa University is dedicated to providing top-tier education at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, ensuring a diverse multimodal learning experience. As a leading higher education institution in the country with numerous faculties, a Postgraduate Unit, and a well-established Center for Open and Distance Learning, the university is actively leveraging online and multimode educational delivery platforms internally.

At the core of this commitment is the Policy on Online Teaching, Learning, and Assessments, which serves as the foundation, establishing principles and guidelines for the development and coordination of related services throughout the institution. This policy is designed to promote activities that supplement those undertaken through other modes of educational delivery. Encompassing web-enhanced, blended, and online learning of courses—collectively termed 'online learning'—the policy extends to cover the online delivery of courses, even in situations necessitating 'Emergency Remote Teaching' (ERT).

Policy Review and Confirmation:

Policy on Online Teaching, Learning and Assessment undergoes a comprehensive review every two years to ensure its continued relevance and validity. The Council retains exclusive authority and discretion to interpret, modify, or amend any or all clauses of this policy as necessary,

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responding to evolving situations and needs. This process guarantees that the policy remains aligned with the institution's goals and adapts to changing educational landscapes.

Scope and Applicability:

This policy extends to all academic staff members, whether internal or external, engaged in teaching courses for students and staff within the university. It encompasses the following critical areas:

- a. Programme design, delivery, and requirements
- b. Academic Standards and Ethics
- c. Student Support and Ethics
- d. Online Assessment of Students and Associated Requirements
- e. Staff Training on Online Teaching and Learning

The outlined areas serve as integral components under the purview of this policy, ensuring comprehensive coverage and adherence across academic activities.

Objectives:

- a. Establish a framework facilitating the engagement of teaching staff in online course delivery.
- b. Ensure the learning environment is equipped with essential institutional supports for effective online course delivery.
- c. Guarantee the availability of the required technical infrastructure for seamless online course delivery.
- d. Provide necessary training and support for teaching staff and students involved in online course delivery.
- e. Offer guidance on instructional design principles for enhancing online course delivery.
- f. Ensure compliance with the legal and ethical responsibilities of the Institute concerning online course delivery.

These objectives collectively serve to enhance the effectiveness and quality of online course delivery within the institution.

Key Policy Principles/ Policy Statements:

Programme Design, Delivery, and Requirements

- Teaching, learning, and assessment strategies, as well as delivery mechanisms, shall be purposefully designed for online learning course delivery.
- The University is committed to ensuring that online learning courses are learner-centered and subject-led, prioritizing pedagogy over technology. Technology shall be appropriately used to support effective teaching.

- The course/programme design shall clearly outline the level of 'blending' between the online component and the regular face-to-face classroom-based component. It shall also specify the synchronous/asynchronous nature of planned activities.
- The course/programme design shall articulate the nature of the effort expected from students, encompassing activities such as teaching, content creation, and moderation in blended and online learning delivery.
- All newly developed and converted online and blended courses shall strictly adhere to and comply with the standards and guidelines outlined in the Policy on Curriculum Planning, Development, and Revision.
- The University shall undertake all feasible measures to ensure the security and reliability of its online learning and support systems. This commitment aligns with the information technology security policy of the University.
- In instances of 'Emergency Remote Teaching' (ERT), the University is dedicated to adopting and implementing best practices to ensure effective instructional delivery during crises.

Academic Standards and Ethics

- Online courses shall either be newly developed or converted from existing courses while maintaining the academic standards of the University.
- The inclusion of online components shall prioritize accessibility to learning resources and activities for all learners, including those with special needs. Appropriate digital technologies shall be utilized to address diverse learning needs.
- The University is committed to ensuring that learning materials used in online teaching are free from plagiarism, and proper acknowledgement of ownership is emphasized.
- Online course developers shall engage in modifying and building on existing openly licensed resources, fostering the creation of new digital educational materials ethically and responsibly.
- The University shall encourage academic staff members to use appropriate licensing services, such as Creative Commons, to safeguard the rights of intellectual properties.
- Academic staff shall be provided with comprehensive guidelines on ethics related to the online environment. This includes aspects like online presence, ethical use of online information, responsible use of online materials in learning, and awareness of consequences for irresponsible use of digital materials.

Student Support and Ethics

- At the commencement of courses, students shall be comprehensively briefed on the specific requirements related to the online learning environment.
- The university is committed to organizing an orientation program on online learning at the inception of each degree program.
- Before enrolling in an online learning course, students shall receive comprehensive guidelines, covering aspects such as:

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- The nature and extent of independent learning involved.
- Collaborative and supported aspects of learning.
- Details of specific time slots assigned for synchronous learning or assessment.
- Regulations in place to provide a unique student identity and protect student information.
- Students shall be informed about the level and nature of support available, encompassing academic, technical, and mentoring assistance for online learning.
- The University shall ensure that procedures and regulations, as outlined in a Code of Conduct for students, are tailored to be effective in an online learning environment.
- Guidelines specifically crafted for the use of social media in the online learning environment shall be ensured to be fit for purpose.
- Adequate technical support shall be provided to students as and when necessary.
- Students shall receive all necessary guidelines on ethical conduct in an online environment. This shall include, but not be limited to:
 - Online presence.
 - Ethical use of online information.
 - Responsible use of online materials in learning.
 - Consequences of the irresponsible use of digital materials.

Assessing Students Online and Requirements

- All online assessments shall strictly adhere to and comply with the University Policy on Assessment and Award of Qualification.
- The Office of the Dean in each faculty, Director-CODL or PGU in collaboration with the Computer Centre (CC), shall ensure that courses/programs have access to the necessary/appropriate assessment software.
- The individual faculty/ CODL/PGU shall determine the level of proctoring required during online assessments, and students shall be informed of such conditions and requirements at the beginning of the course.
- The CC shall be responsible for ensuring cyber-security and providing backup facilities for student assessments.

Staff Training on Online Teaching and Learning

- The University is committed to ensuring that academic staff involved in teaching on an online learning program receive appropriate training and support.
- Through the Staff Development Centre, the University shall provide opportunities for members of the academic staff to develop their academic, technology-enhanced learning skills, and digital competence.
- The University shall actively assist faculties, institutes, and centers in creating high-quality online learning environments and innovative teaching and learning programs and methods.

Definitions:

- Face-to-face classes: The traditional classroom learning environment where no online technologies are used.
- Web-enhanced learning: Combining traditional face-to-face classes with usually 1-30% of online technologies.
- Blended learning: Combining traditional face-to-face classes with usually 30-80% of online technologies.
- Online learning: Learning takes place using more than 80% of online technologies.
- Synchronous learning: Learning taking place at a fixed time slot 'real-time' using online technologies.
- Asynchronous learning: Students learn at their own pace and time using online technologies.
- Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT): A temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate mode, perhaps online, due to a crisis, involving the use of fully remote teaching solutions or some blended learning as a hybrid.

Related Policies, if any:

- Policy on Curriculum Planning, Development and Revision
- Policy on Assessment and Award of Qualification
- Policy on Teaching and Learning
- Policy on Distance Education
- ICT Policy

Related Acts, Rules, Regulations and Key Circulars:

- Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF)
- Provisions of the Establishments Code relating to copyright
- Electronic Transaction Act No. 19 of 2006
- UGC circulars on assessment/re-correction/credit policies
- Examination Rules & Regulations and By-laws of the University
- Examination Procedure manual-Uva Wellassa University

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