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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF QUALITY ASSURANCE (DQA)

UoK Blended and Online Learning Policy

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1.0 PREAMBLE

1.1 Purpose

The University of Kigali's eLearning Policy is focused on guiding the delivery of top quality eLearning in all its aspects including instruction, learning and the imparting of valuable knowledge, skills and attitudes. Thus, learners will be enabled to attain their professional and career goals in a flexible and student-centered learning environment.

1.2 Definition of key concepts

- **Curriculum**

A curriculum is an organized programme of study for a given degree, diploma or certificate awards incorporating all matters such as academic requirement, duration of programme, admission requirements, programme content requirements and assessment process requirements.

- **Course/Programme of study**

A course or programme of study refers to the prescribed syllabus that students must be taught at each key stage.

- **E-Learning**

eLearning refers to the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance distance education, implement open learning policies, make learning activities more flexible and enable those learning activities to be distributed among many learning venues.

- **Blended /hybrid courses**

Hybrid classes provide an opportunity to take advantage of both eLearning and face-to-face interaction utilizing Video Conferencing and/or a LMS. Students must attend face-to-face class instruction or video conferencing courses and log in to their E-learning environment each week.

- **Blended /hybrid modes of instruction**

An approach to instruction where a learner can take some courses via eLearning and others through the traditional face-to-face mode.

- **Online Course**

An online course is defined as a course in which 80% or more of the course is conducted online via a variety of media.

- **Flexible delivery:** refers to how the timing, pace, content, assessment and location (in both virtual and physical environments) of learning can be varied, personalised and chosen by the student to suit their needs, whilst still meeting the desired learning outcomes. The extent of variability will be determined by course and/or subject requirements.
- **Digital literacy:** refers to the ability to locate, evaluate, choose, use and create technologies effectively, critically and safely for lifelong learning. Students require

digital literacy to locate, engage, interact, create, share and communicate with a range of learning technologies in order to access subject information, participate in learning activities, collaborate with peers and complete assessment tasks. Staff require digital literacy to communicate, support, motivate and inspire learning for students in contemporary learning environments.

- **Mode of delivery:** refers to whether a subject is delivered internally, externally or via limited mode. Blended learning can, and should be, integrated into any subject regardless of mode of delivery

1.3 Policy Scope and Related Policies

This policy applies to all members of staff and students of the UoK, related approved institutional policies include:

- The assessments-of-students-learning-policy
- The Revised Examination Policy
- UoK E-learning Guidelines

2.0 UOKs STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The eLearning mode of instruction has been designed in line with, and it is meant to contribute to the attainment of UoKs strategic direction as reflected in its vision and mission.

2.1 UoKs Vision

To be a pole of radiance and excellence nationally and internationally with its quality education, research and provision of innovative services to community.

2.2 UoKs Mission

To provide quality higher education programmes that match the labour market and development needs of Rwanda for graduates who are capable of contributing to national economic and social needs and who can compete on the international labour market.

2.3 Objectives of the eLearning of UoK

The objectives of UoKs eLearning are to:

- a) Provide an opportunity for learners who are not able to attend face-to-face classes to acquire quality education.
- b) To build internal capacity amongst staff for development of eLearning mode of instruction by promoting and providing guidelines for training in eLearning mode of instruction.
- c) To apply eLearning as a strategy to improve UoK market presence as well as improve the image of the University.
- d) Continually identify and address instructor and student needs in teaching and learning online so as to continually develop the eLearning instruction.
- e) Provide support services including informational resources for students enrolled in online courses.

- f) Promote and support the use of the Learning Management System (LMS) and other technologies in both face-to-face and online learning environments.
- g) Encourage the sharing of effective technology-enhanced teaching and learning practices among instructors.
- h) To identify, provide, expand, and coordinate the development of quality courses and programs to meet the needs of eLearners.
- i) Evaluate periodically and comprehensively every facet of the eLearning program and use these results to restructure and improve the program.
- j) To promote UoKs eLearning into a mode of instruction of choice locally and internationally.
- k) To assume a leading role in the economic, social, cultural, and intellectual transformation of the society through knowledge and skills acquired via eLearning.

3.0 POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 The University will provide all the required eLearning infrastructure as well as the materials and technical support.

3.2 All students are expected to have an access to all the relevant eLearning resources to enable them to meet the learning outcomes of the eLearning courses.

3.3 Staff should have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude to facilitate learning via online strategies. Faculty and other staff will be provided with training as well as guidelines which govern the teaching, learning, and support services for eLearning.

4.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

4.1 The UoK eLearning policy shall endeavour to align eLearning activities of the university with the Higher Education Council (HEC) of Rwanda's 'Standards and Guidelines for Open and Distance Learning.

4.2 At UoK, the courses that are offered through eLearning meet the same quality standards as those that offered via to face-to-face instruction. The structure of the programs shall always be tailored to meet the specific needs of off-campus learners wherever they are.

4.3 The design of the curriculum and teaching/learning resources shall conform to the acceptable standards of eLearning.

4.4 The pedagogy applied, the type of content covered, the appropriateness of learning activities, and the nature of the assessment will be designed in a way that should enhance effective learning to impart the desired knowledge, skills and attitudes.

4.5 The University shall undertake all forms of assessment (formative and summative) for all the students taking eLearning courses. Formative assessment will seek to inter alia, ensure the following:

- Enabling rapid feedback by both instructors and students that helps learning to be effective.
- Providing opportunities for self-assessment through assignments, quizzes, further reading, research, etc.

- Creating opportunities for peer assessment

4.6 The University shall ensure that students taking eLearning courses have easy access and equity of opportunity with those undertaking campus-based courses, and that its marketing, recruitment, administrative and support procedures and provision are fully aligned to the needs of the e-Learner in local, national and international contexts.

4.7 The University shall partner with other stakeholders to ensure that appropriate technology and skills used in the eLearning are at the disposal of the learners and are effective for the attainment of both individual and corporate objectives of eLearning.

4.8 The University shall ensure high quality eLearning that meets the expectations of the learners; as well as the quality standards set by the University and other regulatory agencies.

4.9 The University shall apply international best practice in the pricing of eLearning courses so as to be competitive and appropriate to the learners.

4.10 eLearning courses will be offered exclusively and will also be blended with face-to-face courses. The University will work with the regulatory authority for approval of these approaches.

5.0 GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

As it is the case for Campus-based learning, eLearning at UoK shall be administered and managed under the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academics (DVCA). The Curriculum Development Committee (Comprising of all academic deans) shall oversee the design and development of eLearning curriculum under the guidance of DVCA and Director of Quality Assurance (DQA)

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ELEARNING POLICY

6.1 eLearning Curriculum

a) Customizing an Existing Course to an eLearning Course

eLearning material developers will follow the following process for customizing an existing course into an eLearning one:

The instructors (faculty) will convert the course based international best practice eLearning guidelines. Faculty are also required to fulfil other departmental and school standards. It is recommended that faculty members work with the university's instructional designer throughout the development process to ensure the course meets the University's and appropriate national accreditation standards for online courses.

The instructional designer will evaluate the online course for the required standards as recommended in the eLearning curriculum and notify the faculty member, the appropriate department head and dean, and the DVCA when all the online course design criteria have been met.

In case the course does not meet UoK's eLearning course standards and is not aligned with the underlying principles and quality standards, the proposed course shall be returned to the faculty member with recommendations for amendments.

It is mandatory that all online courses meet requirements established by this policy, other university academic policies, the Higher Education Council (HEC) of Rwanda and other accrediting bodies.

b) Creating a New Course for the Online Program

If a faculty member desires to create a course specifically as an online course, the course must first conform to the requirements of developing eLearning courses. It should then be subsequently approved following the UoK procedures for curriculum development as well as those of HEC.

Faculty will be responsible for developing eLearning materials in their Schools. If faculty are developing the materials as part of their duties at UoK, the authorship shall fall to UoK as the copyright owner.

In case students assist with creating or producing e-learning courses, they shall be acknowledged as collaborators. In the event that students are involved in developing e-learning as part of their university education, the authorship rights should fall to the University but the students will be appropriately acknowledged.

c) Course Review

The responsibility for ongoing assessment of online courses rests with the appropriate department and department heads. The department heads will work with the Directorate of Quality Assurance and/or any other appropriate assessment tools. Course review for eLearning courses shall be done annually because of the dynamic nature of eLearning environment.

6.2 Instruction and general administration of eLearning Courses

Faculty (Instructors)

Faculty shall prepare course materials to be ready ahead of the offering of such a course. Once the course is on offer, faculty shall be at hand to guide the students at every stage of the course.

Students

- A student will be required to fulfil all the requirements for admission into eLearning Programme to gain admission. All students who are admitted to study at UoK will be required to have a laptop (mandatory) for use during the course of study. They will also be required to undertake all scheduled the online lessons.
- Attendance and Participation:
Students attendance for eLearning courses requires at least one posting to the course module per week. To encourage effective attendance, two weeks of missed attendance shall lead to an automatic drop of course, and the instructor will submit an *Instructor Initiated Withdrawal* to the Registrar's office copied to the DVCA.

Participation is separate from attendance requirements, which requires students to follow participation rules as stated by the instructor in the course syllabus.

Faculty participation and appropriate facilitation requires weekly posting of feedback to students.

For substitutions and Guest Lecturing, departmental heads must approve guest lecturing and substitution for course facilitation in advance and inform all the parties accordingly.

Faculty Member Interaction with Online Students:

The critical role of communication should be appreciated, given that communication is essential to the success of all courses. The requirements for planned interaction and timely feedback between students and faculty are detailed in online course guidelines. Faculty may apply methods of interaction such as email, phone, fax, chat, discussion boards, or audio/video conferencing.

Feedback to students:

Feedback for student assignments will be delivered in a timely manner by the instructor. Recent research shows that delay in returning feedback to students makes elearning courses to be less effective; so that the longer the delay the less effective the course becomes. Online faculty should provide interaction between the student and faculty member on a regular basis. They should also respond to all submitted work within one week of submission.

Faculty Member Responsibilities:

The faculty member is responsible for the course content, delivery of instruction, evaluation of student progress in online learning courses, and timely communication with students. The faculty member will evaluate course content on a continuing basis to ensure currency of materials.

School responsibility:

Access: Schools should ensure students have access to the following:

- Information that sets out the respective responsibilities of the school and University for the delivery of the programme, module, or element of the course.
- Module descriptors, to show the intended learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment methods of the module(s).
- A clearly defined schedule for the delivery of their study materials and for assessment of their work.

Study materials: Schools should ensure that students can be confident that:

- All the requisite study materials, whether delivered through staff of a programme presenter or through web-based or other distribution channels, meet the expectations of the University in respect of the quality of teaching and learning-support material for a programme or element of study leading to one of its awards.

Assessment:

Schools via its various departments shall be responsible for planning and administering all forms of student assessment. Assessment will conform to the requirements as stipulated in the various eLearning curricular. Other University academic policies shall also apply accordingly.

- Schools will ensure that learners have access to the following:
- Relevant information on the ways in which their progress will be judged, and the relative weighting of units, modules or elements of the course.
- Timely formative assessment on their academic performance to provide a basis for individual constructive feedback and guidance.
- Timely summative assessment and to illustrate the awarding institution's expectations for the summative assessment.

- Grades for student progress through the course will be posted a week after the assignment is done.
- University policy regarding examinations shall apply
 - **Written Assignment Requirements:**
 - Written work includes formal research papers, business writing, technical writing, and journal entries.
 - All written work shall follow the guidelines for academic honesty, copyright, and intellectual property policies.
 - All assignments will be given as scheduled. The instructor is not obligated to repeat or remind students of tests and assignment dates. This is because each student is responsible for acquiring notes and assignments online. There shall be no makeup tests unless approved by the faculty member.
 - **Continuous Assessment Test and Final Examination:**

Procedure for taking CATs and final examinations will be in line with UOKs examinations rules and regulations. The following are key highlights:

Students:

- Deposit textbooks, book bags, notes, etc. in an area designated by the examination supervisor.
- Sit in the designated testing register.
- Do not take food or drink into the testing area.
- Present a valid picture I.D to the instructor/off-campus center site manager/computer lab manager or other approved examination supervision personnel.
- Sign the test register before receiving the test/exam.
- Have in their possession only the test and no additional materials, unless otherwise indicated by the supervisor.
- Complete the test in one session by managing time well so as to finish the test in the appropriate designated time period.
- Present questions, concerns, or needs to the supervisor for assistance.
- Do not talk to other students during testing.
- Do not leave the test area during testing, unless approved by the supervisor.
- After finishing, hand in the completed test and any other materials approved by the proctor.
- Sign out in the official testing register.
- Receive a receipt acknowledging test submission.

Students at the same level as those being examined will not become supervisors. However, graduate students may be allowed to act as supervisors at the undergraduate level.

CAT/Examination supervisors:

- Supervisors shall be allocated by the head of department.
- Supervisors shall make all efforts to maintain an environment in the examination room that is conducive to concentration and the taking of exams.
- The use of electronic communication devices (eg digital watches, cell phone) is strictly prohibited for all people in the room.
- It is incumbent upon the Supervisor to prohibit loitering or socializing in the exam room by persons not taking the exam. Other acts of socializing during the time of the exam that might disturb the environment in the exam room are prohibited.
- When monitoring a CAT/exam, a supervisor shall remain in the room where the exam is being taken for the entire duration of the exam, unless relieved by another supervisor.

- Supervisors may not authorize others to serve as temporary substitute supervisors unless those individuals acting as substitutes are authorized by the institution to be supervisors.
- It is not permissible for supervisors to leave the room unless important safety and health situations require it.
- Supervisors shall not be a social acquaintance or relative of a student taking the exam.
- Supervisors shall not be a subordinate who operates within the line of authority of the person taking the exam.
- Supervisors shall be cognizant of the proper role of a test administrator; such training shall include familiarity with UoK policies that guide the administration of CATs/exams in a Supervised environment.
- Supervisors shall report in writing to the Head of Department any cheating and all other forms of academic misconduct known to them as a result of the role of exam supervisor.
- Supervisors shall not assist students in any way during the exam with regard to understanding, interpreting or answering questions on the exam.
- Supervisors and all others in the exam room may be monitored via a camera, with the approval of the site administrator.

The School shall ensure monitoring of the above processes in order to deliver quality eLearning to the learners.

7. ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- UoK will ensure that procedures and regulations as specified in academic policies are fit for purpose in a blended learning environment. For example, UoK will ensure that reliable and scalable systems and processes are in place to verify the identity of students and to manage remote assessments, even across time zones.
- UoK will ensure that quality assurance systems to monitor and/or moderate standards are fit-for-purpose in a blended and online learning environment.
- UoK will ensure that the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) system supports blended and online learning programmes and the quality assurance of a flexible learning experience.

8. INFRASTRUCTURE:

- **ICT**

The UoK, through the ICT department will establish and maintain a robust ICT infrastructure capable of efficiently supporting UoK -wide blended and eLearning learning initiative.

The UoK, through the ICT department and eLearning team will ensure the delivery of a 24/7 technical support service.

- **Library**

The UoK through the ICT department and Library service will expand the services of the library to include a copyright advisory and clearance service to support the UoK -wide blended and eLearning initiative.

The UoK through its libraries services will ensure that there is 24/7 access to electronic information resources to support teaching and learning.

- **Course Development & Delivery Support**

The UoK through the ICT department will equip the ICT services to provide quality services in instructional design for blended learning and eLearning, faculty training for blended course development and delivery, and multimedia materials development. The ICT team and eLearning team shall in turn coordinate Blended and eLearning Learning Instructional Design in collaboration with stakeholder units, to include subject matter experts, curriculum specialists, instructional designers, librarians, multimedia specialists and instructional and information technologists.

Oversight & Planning:

The UoK should establish a Blended and eLearning Learning Implementation Team to oversee the implementation of the Blended and eLearning Learning Initiative

The UoK strategic plan should implement initiatives to ensure alignment between the Blended Learning Initiative and the strategic plans of Faculties and Departments as well as support units.

9.0 STUDENT SUPPORT

9.1 Prospective students should receive a clear and realistic explanation of University expectations on them for study of the programme or elements of study, and for the nature and extent of autonomous, collaborative and supported aspects of learning.

9.2 Learners should have access to:

- Clear and up-to-date information about the learning support available to them locally and remotely for their programme or elements of study.
- A schedule for any learner support available to them through timetabled activities, for example tutorial sessions or web-based conferences.
- Documents that set out their own responsibilities as learners, and the commitments of the University and school for the support of a programme or element of study.

9.3 Learners should have:

- As facilitated by the School from the outset of their study, an identified contact either local or remote through email, telephone, fax or post, who can give them constructive feedback on academic performance and authoritative guidance on their academic progression.

- Where and when appropriate, regular opportunities should be available for inter-learner discussions about the programme, both to facilitate collaborative learning and to provide a basis for facilitating their participation in the quality assurance of the programme.
- Appropriate opportunities to give formal feedback on their experience of the programme.

9.4 Schools should ensure that learners can be confident that:

- Adequate staff are available to support their eLearning.
- All staff who provide support to learners on these programmes have appropriate skills, and receive appropriate training and development.
- Support for learners, whether delivered through staff of a support provider or through web-based or other distribution channels, meets the expectations of the University for the quality of learner support for a programme of study leading to one of its awards.

9.5 The University shall endeavour to establish support centers to enable the learners easily access necessary support services.

10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF eLEARNING POLICY

- The HoD and School Dean shall be responsible for continuous monitoring and control of all aspects of the eLearning curriculum. At the end of every academic year, the HoD and School Dean shall evaluate performance of the eLearning process and advise the DVCA and DQA accordingly. The DQA bears the overall responsibility for monitoring and evaluation processes.
- The Director of ICT with support from Heads of Department and Deans, are responsible for the implementation of this Blended Learning policy under supervision of DVC/AR

11 PRIVACY, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, SECURITY AND COPYRIGHT

The policy is that intellectual property, disclosure procedures, royalties and proceeds participation, equity and management, infringement, and production of properties by students follow standards set by the University.

To actualize this foregoing, the following procedures shall be observed:

- **Content Ownership:** Any materials and content developed by faculty to deliver instruction for the University becomes property of the University.
- **Content re-use:** Any materials and content developed by faculty for the University can be used in other course modules.
- **NB:** Students cannot re-use work from previous courses for sub-sequent course modules unless approved by the course instructor.
- **Disclosure:** The University will follow its non-disclosure agreements necessary for internal/external projects.
- **Infringement:** UoK will follow its intellectual property policy and other applicable regulations.
- **Royalties and Proceeds:** Content that generates royalties or proceeds will be owned and managed by the University.
- The UoK, eLearning course development will require lecturers to borrow artifacts and intellectual material from the Internet all the time to linking to external resources. But,

they should use them by attributing the original author or the materials they have borrowed.

- The ability to edit and control the presentation of their work, and to exercise a right of first refusal in the preparation of subsequent versions
- The ability to change and update materials over time, reflecting new research, evidence, or developments
- The right to take educational materials they create when they leave for another institution, for their own teaching and research purposes
- The right to share their work with peers in their disciplines (e.g., to check their work or to build upon it)
- E-Learning MIS platform should be protected with valid SSL certificate

12. Review of Policy

- The eLearning policy and minimum standards for the use of the virtual learning environment shall be subject to be reviewed on the three year basis.

13. Quality Assurance and Evaluation

- The instruments used for student evaluation of teaching shall take account of elements unique to eLearning.
- The Campus, through the Quality Assurance Office shall routinely conduct student, Faculty and staff evaluations of blended courses and assess the impact on learning outcomes, performance and the student experience

Approved by the UoK Academic Senate on April, 2020

For the Academic Senate