

Policy and Procedure Title:

SETU CARLOW Policy for Blended Learning

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1. INTRODUCTION

South East Technological University Carlow is a long-established higher education provider, offering programmes across a wide range of disciplines and spanning all levels on the [National Framework of Qualifications](#) (NFQ) - Level 6-10.

There is a strong focus on collaborative, experiential and work-integrated learning, all of which form an integral part of our learner experience. In terms of teaching, learning and assessment strategies, strong emphasis is placed on reflective learning, formative assessment and feedback to support learners to develop their capacity for independent critical thinking and creativity. Technology also plays a critical role in SETU Carlow's teaching and learning strategies and staff and learners are fully supported with their use of technology as a means of enhancing the overall learner experience.

SETU Carlow's commitment to supporting the use of technology within teaching and learning is set out in its [Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#) (2018) in which a commitment is made to:

- Embrace new and emerging technologies and increase digital capacity and blended learning options on all relevant programmes and cross-campus;
- Develop and implement an integrated South East Technological University Carlow Roadmap for Blended, Flexible and Distributed Learning.

The current policy will support SETU Carlow in the design, development, provision and evaluation of existing and future blended learning programmes. It will guide SETU Carlow in the management and mitigation of any risks and challenges posed by the provision of blended learning programmes, whilst consistently maintaining the highest of academic standards.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are as follows:

- To enhance the learner experience of all students of SETU Carlow;
- To support staff with the design, implementation, delivery and evaluation of blended learning programmes;
- To ensure compliance with SETU Carlow's [Quality Manual](#) with regards the overseeing of blended learning implementation;
- To ensure that operational supports, as well as technical and physical infrastructure required for blended learning provision, are available;
- To ensure that appropriate and timely professional development is provided to staff engaging in the design, implementation and evaluation of blended and online programmes.
- To provide the necessary training and supports for learners registering on blended and online learning programmes;
- To provide guidance on pedagogy and instructional design for blended learning programme implementation;
- To ensure the legal responsibilities of SETU Carlow have been met for blended learning provision;
- To further develop the digital capacity of SETU Carlow.

3. DEFINITIONS

It is widely acknowledged that 'blended learning' is a contested term and can be interpreted in many ways (Hrastinski, 2019). However, for the purpose of the current document, the following definition is being adopted:

Blended Learning is 'the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences' (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004, p. 96). This is the definition adopted by QQI (March, 2018, p. 3) in its [Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes \(2018\)](#). By its nature, blended learning incorporates a reduction in face-to-face instructional time, the threshold of which should be decided upon by the particular institution (Sener, 2015). Face-to-face time is synchronous and can be on campus or online. Blended learning replaces a reduction in this face-to-face time with asynchronous learning activities, for example by using a flipped learning approach.

A more extensive glossary of related terms is presented in Appendix A.

4. SCOPE

This policy relates to all higher education programmes spanning NFQ Level 6 - Level 10, as awarded by SETU Carlow. It encompasses the teaching, learning and assessment of programmes with a blended mode of delivery. The policy will help to safeguard academic standards and ensure support for staff and learners who are engaged in blended learning provision. Blended learning always includes a face-to-face element. This policy covers overlapping aspects of provision which are fully online.

The current policy has been aligned and mapped to the QQI (2018) [Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes](#)¹. This mapping exercise (reflected in Appendix B), allowed for the identification of additional considerations, in terms of content and attendant procedures, all of which were consequently addressed in the current version of this policy.

As part of this exercise, other institutional policies, which were seen as impacting upon, or having an impact on, the current policy were identified, and these have been documented in Appendix C, alongside any future policies and procedures which may need to be developed to support the current policy. It is envisaged that, as each of these policies is reviewed and/or developed, consideration will be given to the implications of the present policy. Equally, the current policy will be reviewed in light of changes made within any associated policies and procedures.

5. CONTEXT

5.1. Learner Context

Blended learning offers learners a flexible mode of study which supports autonomy within the learning process. Prior to enrolment on a blended learning programme, learners should have access to information as to how a blended learning approach operates, so that they are fully prepared for what it entails. The following information should be made available to learners before they commit to a blended or online learning programme, as offered by SETU Carlow:

- a rationale for the chosen mode of provision;
- a description of the digital skills and knowledge needed to fully engage in, and successfully complete, the programme;
- information detailing the required broadband specification and any specific hardware or software requirements needed for access to, and participation in, the programme;
- information regarding the contact time/independent learning required to successfully complete the programme;
- details of timings for synchronous learning or assessment and information regarding the provision of asynchronous learning resources;
- information on the requirements for collaborative participation in areas such as virtual classrooms, webinars and online discussions;
- details of procedures and regulations regarding the Student Code of Discipline within a blended learning environment;
- information on formative and summative assessments including feedback timelines;
- details of the level and nature of support services available to learners, including but not limited to academic, technical, peer and pastoral support.

5.2. Legal and Policy Context

SETU Carlow complies with the requirements of Ireland's national legislation, agreements and regulations, including with [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#). The 2012 Act requires providers to have due regard to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Quality Assurance guidelines in the development of SETU Carlow's QA procedures and in the development of programmes of education and training.

SETU Carlow's *Roadmap for the Implementation of Pilot Blended Learning Programmes* (2017) sets out a framework for the design and implementation of blended learning and should be considered in tandem with this policy.

Since the publication of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* in 2011, the [National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning](#) was established by the Higher Education Authority (HEA). The Forum has since published numerous reports and guidance documents with the aim of supporting digital learning environments within Irish higher education sector. These have informed the current policy development (see Appendix D for details).

In addition, SETU Carlow will be guided by QQI's [Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes \(2018\)](#) which states that blended learning will always include a face-to-face element.

5.3. Strategic Context

As stated in the [Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#), SETU Carlow is 'a higher education provider focused on excellence in all our endeavours; from teaching and learning to research and innovation, from internationalisation to governance and management' (2018, p. 5).

In accordance with QQI (2018), SETU Carlow's strategy, infrastructure and [policies](#) will systematically address and facilitate existing or planned arrangements for blended learning (QQI, 2018, Guideline 3.1, p. 8).

6. PRINCIPLES

The development of blended learning provision is established within the context of SETU Carlow's approved Strategic Plan and is guided by the values as stated within. The following statements reinforce the development and implementation of this policy:

- SETU Carlow recognises the importance of the digital wellbeing of students and staff within a blended learning environment;
- SETU Carlow will ensure that all processes and strategies for the appointment, induction, training and professional development for teaching and support staff are appropriate and specific to a blended learning environment (in accordance with QQI guideline (2018), section 3.1.3);
- SETU Carlow acknowledges that teaching on a blended learning programme requires technological and pedagogical expertise. SETU Carlow will ensure that staff are provided with the necessary professional development and support systems to operate effectively within a blended learning environment;
- SETU Carlow will provide the appropriate technical and physical infrastructure, and technical support for programmes adopting a blended learning approach;
- SETU Carlow will certify that any arrangements for collaboration in the development, delivery, assessment or evaluation of blended learning provision are approved by SETU Carlow and subject to appropriate and clear formal agreements;
- SETU Carlow is responsible for conformity with statutory and legal obligations including *inter alia* General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), applicable professional body requirements and transnational provision;
- SETU Carlow will ensure compliance with Intellectual Property, Software Licensing and Copyright obligations applicable to a blended learning context;
- SETU Carlow has a statutory obligation to ensure that its teaching, learning and assessment practices are accessible to students with disabilities. These are articulated in SETU Carlow's [Learner Disability and Learner Support Policy](#).

7. ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- SETU Carlow is responsible for the academic standards and quality assurance of programmes delivered through blended learning. All programmes offered by way of blended learning will be subject to quality assurance processes that underpin all of SETU Carlow's programmes, including development, validation, ongoing monitoring and revalidation. These are outlined in SETU Carlow's [Quality Manual](#);
- SETU Carlow is responsible for ensuring delivery of programmes and assessment of learners while ensuring that the academic standards of all awards are maintained as specified in [Academic Standards and Assessment Regulations](#) (ASAR);
- SETU Carlow will ensure that procedures and regulations as specified in [ASAR](#) are fit-for-purpose in a blended learning environment. For example, SETU Carlow will ensure that robust systems and processes are in position to confirm the identity of students, manage remote assessments and manage issues with respect to different time zones;
- SETU Carlow will ensure that quality assurance systems for the monitoring of standards are fit-for-purpose in a blended learning environment;
- SETU Carlow will ensure that processes and regulations for Access, Transfer and Progression as specified in the [Quality Manual](#) are fit-for-purpose in a blended learning environment;
- SETU Carlow will ensure that the VLE and related systems support blended learning programmes and the quality assurance of a flexible learning experience.

8. PROGRAMME DESIGN, DELIVERY AND ASSESSMENT

- In line with QQI (2018) Guideline 4, the teaching, learning and assessment strategies and modes, implemented as part of blended learning provision, should be specifically designed for this context;

- In accordance with QQI (2018) Guideline 4.1.1, SETU Carlow will ensure that learning developments are learner-focused and are subject-led rather than technology-led. Organisational structure and processes will ensure that technology acts to support pedagogy;
- SETU Carlow will ensure its teaching, learning and assessment practices are accessible to all students as articulated in its [Learner Disability and Learner Support Policy](#);
- In line with QQI (2018) Guideline 4.1, subject specific and educational scholarship informs the pedagogy and instructional design of all programme provision. Programme design will specify the required effort for the activities of teaching, content creation and moderation within blended learning provision, including the anticipated workload for students in the online components of the programme
- SETU Carlow will ensure the security and reliability of its blended learning and support systems and will manage access to same.
- In line with QQI (2018) Guideline 3.1.3, SETU Carlow will support “close collaboration between the academic and other support personnel and specialist staff, such as teams involved in designing learning technologies and other methodologies supporting online learning”.

9. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT

The development of this policy has been shaped by QQI’s [Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes \(2018\)](#), which supplements the QQI Core Statutory Guidelines published in April 2016 ([QQI, 2016](#)). The Core Guidelines provide the general quality assurance guidance required, while the topic-specific guidelines address ‘specific responsibilities regarding the quality assurance of blended programmes and related services’ (QQI, 2016, p. 3). The policy is also guided by the [European Standards and Guidelines \[ESG\]](#).

10. STUDENT SUPPORT

- SETU Carlow will ensure that all necessary supports are in place to support a blended learning environment, where practicable, with a wide range of resources available on SETU Carlow's VLE, through TLC Student Hub [\[login required\]](#)::
- SETU Carlow will ensure that procedures and regulations as specified in the [Student Code of Discipline](#) are fit for purpose in a blended learning environment;
- Students will be made aware of SETU Carlow Academic Supports and Student Services, which are provided in the [Student Handbook](#).
- SETU Carlow is cognisant of specific challenges which may pertain to learners in a blended/online environment. In line with existing Institute practice, appropriate interventions will be implemented, where necessary, to support all learners who may be experiencing difficulty with their learning.

11. LEARNER QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Assessments for blended learning programmes will be of a standard and quality equal to those employed for on-campus programmes;
- SETU Carlow will ensure that assessment outcomes for blended learning programmes meet the specific academic level of the award as defined by the [National Framework of Qualifications \(NFQ\)](#) and [Academic Standards](#) will be maintained;
- Information on methods and criteria of assessment will be provided in the [Student Handbook](#);
- Students will be made aware of SETU Carlow's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) and guidelines which are provided in the [Student Handbook](#), and for which support is provided through relevant policies and procedures;
- Academic Integrity and security concerns relating to the verification of a student's work will be taken into consideration when designing assessment processes;
- The provision of appropriate technical support and resources is essential for the provision of blended learning programmes. Students will be provided with

information on the relevant available support services so as to maintain a high-quality learning experience for all;

- Prospective learners should be made aware of all requirements (technical and otherwise) prior to commencing a blended programme, so that they can make an informed decision about the feasibility to participate and complete the specific programme. QQI recommends that the terms and conditions for accessing a programme such as 'bandwidth and any prescribed hardware or software are appropriate and are communicated well in advance' (QQI, 2018, p. 21);
- Learners should be made aware of what is expected of them in terms of time commitment for a blended learning programme. This would include scheduling details of all sessions, both onsite and online, including a clearly defined schedule of assessments. This aligns with QQI's (2018, p. 21) recommendation that 'learners have access to a clear schedule for the delivery of their online learning study material'.
- Learners should be provided with information on the use of their data.

12. STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN DIGITAL TEACHING AND LEARNING

SETU Carlow offers a comprehensive range of professional development opportunities for staff to enhance their teaching, learning and assessment practices. These are provided through SETU Carlow's [Teaching and Learning Centre](#) and are offered as both accredited and non-accredited provision. Staff involved in the design, implementation, assessment and evaluation of blended learning programmes will be fully supported by SETU Carlow to enhance their digital teaching competencies. All support offered will align with the [National Professional Development Framework](#).

13. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

SETU Carlow will ensure that it has the necessary infrastructure and software for the successful provision of blended learning. It will also ensure that all relevant equipment is available for staff and students. Institute staff will continue

to receive appropriate professional development and support in order to facilitate its provision.

SETU Carlow's [Lecture Recording Policy](#) provides a framework for lecturers to record lectures and share the recordings, thereby giving learners access to lecture recordings.

14. OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

SETU Carlow will ensure that the necessary equipment and software is available and that academic staff will be trained in its use.

Further information regarding hardware and software requirements can be obtained via SETU Carlow's [Computing Services Department](#). Additionally, SETU Carlow provides training to support teaching and learning via its [Teaching and Learning Centre](#).

15. REFERENCES

A list of references is presented in Appendix E.

16. APPENDIX A: Relevant Definitions and Interpretations

Blended Learning	'The integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences' (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004, p. 96). 'Typically, these are face-to-face programmes which incorporate remote online learning via a virtual learning environment' (QQI, 2018, p. 3).
Flipped Learning	Flipped Learning is "a pedagogical approach in which first contact with new concepts moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space in the form of structured activity, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter." (Talbert, 2017, p.20).
Flexible and Distributed Learning (FDL)	'A programme or module that offers a wholly at a distance, on-line, or blended learning experience, rather than requiring the learner only to attend classes or events at particular times and locations. Typically, it may not involve face-to-face contact between learners and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning at a distance' (QQI, 2015, p. 27).
Instructional Design	'The translation of pedagogical research into the design and testing of curriculum for Flexible and Distributed Learning (FDL) that is specifically centred on supporting the achievement of learning outcomes. Developing and implementing content (provided by academics) teaching and learning strategies and assessments for effective FDL delivery' (QQI, 2016, p. 28).
Synchronous Learning	Synchronous learning occurs when learners are participating simultaneously in a shared learning activity – either online or onsite. This is learning that is usually unified by time and space, in that all learners would tend to be in the same space at the same time.

Asynchronous Learning	Asynchronous learning does not require real-time interaction. Instead, it centres on learning which is available at a time that best suits the learner's own needs.
Online Learning	'A form of educational delivery in which learning takes place primarily via the Internet. Online learning can serve those who are geographically distant and without access to traditional classroom education, so it includes 'distance learning'. However, distance learners are not alone in benefiting from online learning, which is also commonly part of e-learning in mainly campus-based study programmes. In such cases, it may be referred to as blended learning' (Gaebel <i>et al.</i> , 2014, p. 17).
Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)	A virtual learning environment is a web-based platform for digital resources and information which is designed to support the student's learning experience.

17.APPENDIX B: Mapping Against QQI Guidelines

Note: guidelines highlighted in red below are currently not explicitly referred to within the proposed BL Policy – the inclusion of these can be further considered by the working group prior to the policy being considered by the TLSS committee

No.	QQI Guideline	No.	Details of Guideline (interpretation of same)	SETU Carlow Blended Learning Policy	SETU Carlow Existing Practices / Evidence in Quality Manual / Strategic Plan
3	Organisational Context				
3.1	Strategy and planning for BL	3.1.1	Strategic approach to be made explicit to all stakeholders, including details of investment in resources and role descriptors. Strategy to be supported by HEI strategic plan and cross-referenced with Institute policies.	Evidenced in the Introduction of the BL Policy.	Reflected in the Introduction of the BL Policy 'SETU Carlow's commitment to supporting the use of technology within teaching and learning is set out in its Strategic Plan 2019-2023 (2018) in which a commitment is made to:
		3.1.2	Policies, procedures fit-for-purpose, particularly in online context, e.g. recruitment and admissions procedures; fees processes, arrangements for external examining, etc.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embrace new and emerging technologies and increase digital capacity and blended learning options on all relevant programmes and cross-campus;
		3.1.3	Appointment, induction, onboarding, CPD for teaching and support staff, including planned approach to staff collaboration, guidance and support.	Reflected in the Objectives of the BL Policy which address the provision of '...appropriate and timely professional development is provided to staff engaging in the design, implementation and evaluation of blended and online programmes'.	
		3.1.4	Evidence of compliance with legal/regulatory obligations, e.g. intellectual property and copyright; transnational provision, etc.	Objectives of the BL Policy include ensuring that '...the legal responsibilities of SETU Carlow have been met for blended learning provision'.	
		3.1.5	Processes fit-for-purpose for learners outside of Ireland. Collaborative arrangements clearly set out and additional responsibilities specified.		

				<p>Also reflected under Section 12: Staff Professional Development in Digital Teaching and Learning - 'SETU Carlow offers a comprehensive range of professional development opportunities for staff to enhance their teaching, learning and assessment practices. These are provided through SETU Carlow's Teaching and Learning Centre and are offered as both accredited and non- accredited provision. Staff involved in the design, implementation, assessment and evaluation of blended learning programmes will be fully supported by SETU Carlow to enhance their digital teaching competencies. All support offered will align with the National Professional Development Framework.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement an integrated SETU Carlow Roadmap for Blended, Flexible and Distributed Learning'. <p>Academic Induction in the area of digital pedagogy is currently provided through SETU Carlow's Teaching and Learning Centre.</p>
3.2	Infrastructure and resources	3.2.1 3.2.2 3.2.3 3.2.4 3.2.5	Planned approach to procurement of services/hardware/software. Contingency arrangements in place for 3.2.1 Robust procedures for submission/receipt/markings and return of assessments. Maintenance of student record system to support BL.	Reflected under Section 6: Principles - 'SETU Carlow will provide the appropriate technical and physical infrastructure, and technical support for programmes	

			<p>Institutional arrangements in place for e.g. reliability of delivery systems/intellectual property rights; availability of technology/transitional arrangements for possible migration to new technologies; verification of authenticity of learners' work.</p>	<p>adopting a blended learning approach'.</p> <p>Reflected under Section 6: Principles - 'SETU Carlow will ensure compliance with Intellectual Property, Software Licensing and Copyright obligations applicable to a blended learning context'.</p> <p>Reflected under Section 8: Programme Design, Delivery and Assessment – issues around security and reliability of systems highlighted for consideration.</p> <p>Reflected under Section 10: Student Support - 'SETU Carlow will ensure that all necessary supports are in place to support a blended learning environment, where practicable, with a wide range of resources available on SETU Carlow's VLE, through TLC Student Hub'</p> <p>And in the same section - 'Students will be provided with information on the relevant available support services so as</p>	
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				<p>to maintain a high-quality learning experience for all’.</p> <p>Reflected under Section 13: Technical Support - ‘SETU Carlow will ensure that it has the necessary infrastructure and software for the successful provision of blended learning. It will also ensure that all relevant equipment is available for staff and students. Institute staff will continue to receive appropriate professional development and support in order to facilitate its provision.</p> <p>SETU Carlow’s Lecture Recording Policy provides a framework for lecturers to record lectures and share the recordings, thereby giving learners access to lecture recordings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See also Section 14: Operational Considerations 	
3.3	Published expectations on BL	3.3.1 3.3.2	Published benchmark documentation relating to monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness of learning resources and the learning environment.	<p>Reflected under Section 11: Learner Quality Assurance - ‘Prospective learners should be made aware of all requirements (technical and otherwise) prior</p>	

			Published assessment practices and processes for consistent and equitable arrangements for assessment, including confidentiality of feedback to learners.	to commencing a blended programme, so that they can make an informed decision about the feasibility to participate and complete the specific programme. QQI recommends that the terms and conditions for accessing a programme such as 'bandwidth and any prescribed hardware or software are appropriate and are communicated well in advance' (QQI, 2018, p. 21)'.	
3.4	Learners outside Ireland	3.4.1 3.4.2 3.4.3 3.4.4	<p>Internal approval processes to confirm regulatory/legal requirements are met, e.g. cultural considerations that may inhibit group interactions; regs that prohibit charging of fees.</p> <p>Processes to consider and approve business models and risk management to ensure quality.</p> <p>Appropriate legal advice sought to ensure learners' needs are met.</p> <p>Tested BL delivery systems prior to offering BL to learners outside Ireland.</p>	Reflected under Section 7: Academic Standards - 'SETU Carlow will ensure that procedures and regulations as specified in ASAR are fit-for-purpose in a blended learning environment. For example, SETU Carlow will ensure that robust systems and processes are in position to confirm the identity of students, manage remote assessments and manage issues with respect to different time zones'.	
3.5	Collaboration and other partners	3.5.1 3.5.2 3.5.3	<p>Written agreements in place specifying rights and responsibilities of second/collaborative partners.</p> <p>Awareness with staff and learners as to legal responsibilities of provider.</p> <p>Quality management arrangements in line with QQI guidelines.</p>	Reflected under Section 6: Principles - 'SETU Carlow will certify that any arrangements for collaboration in the development, delivery, assessment or evaluation of	

		3.5.4	Arrangements between supplementary providers to be made explicit.	blended learning provision are approved by SETU Carlow and subject to appropriate and clear formal agreements’.	
4	Programme Context				
4.1	Programme outcomes	4.1.1	Learning and teaching practices to be informed by best practice in BL. Scholarship to inform pedagogy and instructional design.	Reflected under Section 6: Principles - ‘SETU Carlow will ensure that all processes and strategies for the appointment, induction, training and professional development for teaching and support staff are appropriate and specific to a blended learning environment (in accordance with QQI guideline (2018), section 3.1.3); SETU Carlow acknowledges that teaching on a blended learning programme requires technological and pedagogical expertise. SETU Carlow will ensure that staff are provided with the necessary professional development and support systems to operate effectively within a blended learning environment’.	
		4.1.2	Resource planning at programme level and resource implications considered. All aspects of programme development and curriculum design to undergo continuous evaluation.		
		4.1.3	Assessment strategies in place which promote formative assessment activities.		
		4.1.4	Curriculum development processes to include all stakeholders, e.g. support services, library staff, etc. and that developments are learner-centred, underpinned by pedagogical practice, and subject-led not technology-led. Design and delivery of interactive learning experiences.		
		4.1.5	Guidance for individuals developing online learning		
		4.1.6	modules, e.g. around use of learning platform, policies, systems and processes.		
		4.1.7	Planned opportunities for staff for testing and CPD in emergent technologies.	Reflected under Section 8: Programme Design, Delivery and Assessment - ‘SETU Carlow	

				will ensure that learning developments are learner-focused and are subject-led rather than technology-led. Organisational structure and processes will ensure that technology acts to support pedagogy’.	
4.2	Learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms	4.2.1	Materials and resources subject to peer review to allow for development of quality learning resources. Modules to have module owners and clear information provided to all learners in relation to modules. Modules to be designed in scaffolded manner and communication procedures to be made explicit in modules where learners are expected to interact.	Reflected under Section 10: Student Support - ‘SETU Carlow is cognisant of specific challenges which may pertain to learners in a blended/online environment. In line with existing Institute practice, appropriate interventions will be implemented, where necessary, to support all learners who may be experiencing difficulty with their learning.	
4.3	Approval and programme validation processes	4.3.1 4.3.2 4.3.3 4.3.4	Robust programme development procedures in place, including consideration of staff expertise, use of appropriate external expertise to inform development and arrangements for induction and CPD for staff to be made explicit. Processes which support sustainable timescales for resourcing, including staff and, where required, external assessors. Robust arrangements for QA of learning resources.	Reflected under Section 7: Academic Standards - ‘SETU Carlow is responsible for the academic standards and quality assurance of programmes delivered through blended learning. All programmes offered by way of blended learning will be subject to quality assurance processes	

		4.3.5	Processes around feedback in terms of timelines, expectations, and availability of same.	that underpin all of SETU Carlow's programmes, including development, validation, ongoing monitoring and revalidation. These are outlined in SETU Carlow's Quality Manual .	
		4.3.6	Processes for learner records to be maintained and updated – student records should support learner flexibility.		
		4.3.7	Privacy laws on data protection deemed appropriate for online provision.		
		4.3.8	Staff support for assessment processes, including online submission and assessments set by a third party. Moderation processes in place which maintain consistency and support of a community of practice in the area of BL.	Reflected under Section 6: Principles - 'SETU Carlow is responsible for conformity with statutory and legal obligations including <i>inter alia</i> General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), applicable professional body requirements and transnational provision'. Reflected under Section 9: Quality Assurance and Enhancement – the BL policy has been informed by the QQI Core Statutory Guidelines (2016) and 'guided by the European Standards and Guidelines [ESG]'. 	
5	Learner Experience Context				
5.1	Support available to learners	5.1.1	Learners to make informed choices about online courses and are fully aware of the expectations upon them,	Reflected in the Objectives of the BL Policy which addresses the provision of 'the necessary	

		<p>5.1.2 including hours, commitment, nature of learning (autonomous/collaborative/face-to-face attendance requirement/synchronous and asynchronous activities), level of engagement, software/hardware requirements, etc.</p> <p>5.1.3 Explicit terms and conditions re deadlines, academic integrity procedures.</p> <p>5.1.4 Requirement for bandwidth/software/hardware and advanced testing of same.</p> <p>5.1.5 Secure and reliable course material delivery mechanisms.</p> <p>5.1.6 Effort to encourage learners to understand their own learning responsibilities.</p> <p>5.1.7 Opportunities embedded for learners to self-monitor progress.</p> <p>5.1.8 Interventions to support at-risk learners.</p> <p>5.1.9 Provision of detailed material for learners, including ILOs, teaching, learning and assessment strategies, schedule of sessions and timelines for assignment submissions, QA information, access to learning resources, opportunities to provide feedback, etc.</p> <p>Explicit information on use of student data.</p>	<p>training and supports for learners registering on blended and online learning programmes’.</p> <p>Reflected under Section 7: Academic Standards - ‘SETU Carlow will ensure that the VLE and related systems support blended learning programmes and the quality assurance of a flexible learning experience’.</p> <p>Reflected under Section 11: Learner Quality Assurance - ‘Learners should be made aware of what is expected of them in terms of time commitment for a blended learning programme. This would include scheduling details of all sessions, both onsite and online, including a clearly defined schedule of assessments. This aligns with QQI’s (2018, p. 21) recommendation that ‘learners have access to a clear schedule for the delivery of their online learning study material’.</p> <p>Reflected under Section 8: Programme Design, Delivery</p>	
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				<p>and Assessment - 'SETU Carlow will ensure the security and reliability of its blended learning and support systems and will manage access to same'.</p> <p>All reflected under Section 5.1: Learner Context</p> <p>Reflected under Section 10: Learner Support - 'SETU Carlow is cognisant of specific challenges which may pertain to learners in a blended/online environment. In line with existing Institute practice, appropriate interventions will be implemented, where necessary, to support all learners who may be experiencing difficulty with their learning'.</p> <p>Reflected under Section 11: Learner Quality Assurance - 'Academic Integrity and security concerns relating to the verification of a student's work will be taken into consideration when designing assessment processes'.</p>	
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5.2	Equality of opportunity	5.2.1	Teaching, learning and assessment strategies which support equality, accessibility and inclusivity and support autonomous learning.	Reflected under Section 6: Principles	
		5.2.2	Mechanisms to monitor standards of teaching and of learning outcomes.	Reflected under Section 6: Principles - 'SETU Carlow recognises the importance of the digital wellbeing of learner and staff within a blended learning environment'.	
		5.2.3	Arrangements around support mechanisms to ensure quality of staff involved in BL provision.		
		5.2.4	Mechanisms to support safe, reliable BL environment for all learners, supporting dignity, respect and gender sensitivity.		
		5.2.5	Accessibility of all BL experiences to all learners.	Reflected under Section 7: Academic Standards - 'SETU Carlow will ensure that quality assurance systems for the monitoring of standards are fit-for-purpose in a blended learning environment'. Reflected under Section 6: Principles - 'SETU Carlow has a statutory obligation to ensure that its teaching, learning and assessment practices are accessible to students with disabilities. These are articulated in SETU Carlow's Learner Disability and Learner Support Policy .'	

18. APPENDIX C: Gap Analysis with Existing Policies and Procedures

Note: Existing policies as mentioned below may need to be reviewed in light of blended learning provision. These have been provisionally allocated to themed areas as below. However, it should be noted that there is a degree of overlap and certain policies will have relevance in a number of areas.

Policy Area	Title of Policy / Procedure
Assessments	Online assessments
	Online examination integrity
	Curating (storing) learners' exams and assessments
	Access of external examiners to assessment material
	External Examiners Policy
	Non written assessments, learner videos, code etc.
	Policy on Designing, Implementing and Assessing Group Work
	Academic Integrity Policy and Guidelines
	Policy and Procedures on Use of Technology in Examination Processes
	Academic Standards and Assessment Regulations (specific BL inclusions required)
Data Protection/GDPR	Lecture recording
	Privacy issues for teachers and learners
	Fair Use of resources
	Copyright and intellectual property
	Policy on Learner Data Protection/Data Protection Policy
Teaching & Learning	Teaching and Learning Policy
	Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy
	Learning design approaches
	Procedures on induction of new staff prior to teaching in BL context
	Staff Induction and CPD needs
	Learner Analytics Policy and Procedures
	Policy and Procedures for Recognised Prior Learning
Learner-focused	Student Wellbeing, Conduct and Participation
	Student Code of Discipline
	Learner Disability and Learner Support
	Learner Engagement and Progression Framework
	Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure
	Mapping student workload and ECTS in BL context
	Procedures on Supporting Learner Engagement in Blended Learning Environments
	Policy on Learner Involvement in Quality Enhancement
	Policy and Procedure on Late Submission of Assignments

Programme Development & Quality Assurance/Enhancement	Programme Proposal 1 & 2
	Policy for Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes
	Policy for Joint Awards (in the case of BL provision)
	Policy and procedures related to linked providers (specific BL inclusions required)
Technology and systems-related	Equipment specification, procurement and use
	Digital Content Creation Policy
	Procedures on Digital Wellbeing
	Procedures in relation to Management Information Systems
	Access, Transfer and Progression Strategy
	Procedures on student admission specific to BL programmes

19. APPENDIX D: Supporting Guides Relating to Blended/Online Learning

These include, inter alia:

- [Guide to Developing Enabling Policies for Digital Teaching and Learning in Higher Education \(National Forum, 2018\);](#)
- [Teaching and Learning in Irish Education: A Roadmap for Enhancement in a Digital World 2015-2017 \(National Forum, 2015a\);](#)
- [Ireland's Higher Education Technical Infrastructure: A review of current context, with implications for teaching and learning enhancement \(National Forum, 2017a\);](#)
- [Using Learning Analytics to Support the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education \(National Forum, 2017b\);](#)
- [National Professional Development Framework for All Staff Who Teach in Higher Education \(National Forum, 2016b\);](#)
- [Understanding and Supporting the Role of Learning Technologists in Irish Higher Education \(National Forum, 2016a\);](#)
- [Learning Resources and Open Access in Higher Education Institutions in Ireland \(National Forum, 2015b\).](#)

20. APPENDIX E: References

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