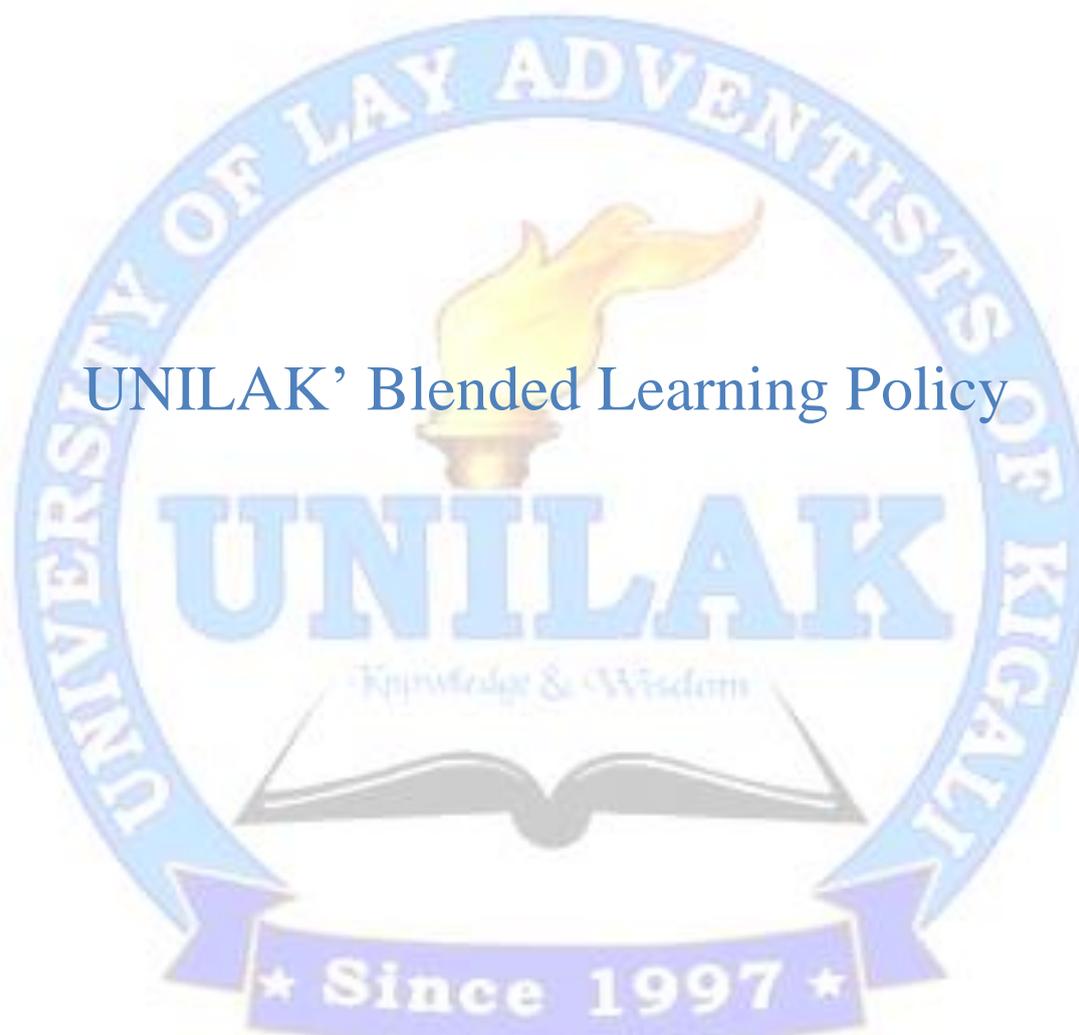




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UNILAK' Blended Learning Policy

Kigali, September 2020

1. Introduction

1.1. This policy is intended to support UNILAK in developing flexible learning opportunities and providing access to higher education. It will also guide UNILAK in managing the potential risks posed by challenges and complexities in the arrangements for blended and online learning programmes and to safeguard academic standards.

1.2. Strategic and Institutional Context:

121. This policy is developed in the context of the UNILAK current published Strategic Plan (2019 – 2024) and Strategic Goals, as well as its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and its Access, Transfer and Progression Strategy. The development of this has included assessing the emerging risks and challenges to successful delivery of Blended Learning programmes and Programme components. The development of UNILAK's strategy on Blended learning is associated with the development of a Strategic Plan for 2019-2020.

1.3. Legal and Policy Context:

131. UNILAK complies with the requirements of Higher Education Council (HEC)' Quality Assurance Guidelines. When UNILAK intending to provide Blended Learning programmes, a provider must have regard to the HEC standards and UNILAK' Quality assurance guidelines in particular.

132. This policy takes account of emerging discourses in Professional Body regulations.

133. This policy addresses the legislative and regulatory requirements that govern the UNILAK' use of Blended Learning, in particular: Data Protection, Course Accreditation and Monitoring Regulations.

1.4. Definitions

Blended learning can be defined as a method of teaching that combines the most effective face-to-face teaching techniques and online interactive collaboration, both constituting a system that functions in constant correlation and forms a single whole. (Krasnova T. A Paradigm, 2015)

1.5. Purpose.

151. The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles and processes which apply to the development, delivery and monitoring of programmes of study

leading to an award or to specified credits towards an award which are to be delivered through Blended Learning.

152. UNILAK is committed to provide flexible, adaptive, and personalized learning spaces through a blend of face-to-face and online strategies. The principles and processes set out in this policy are intended to facilitate access to and participation in its higher education, and to ensure a high quality, consistent, learning experience for all learners taking part in Blended Learning programmes that Programmes.
153. This policy is also intended to guide UNILAK in managing potential risks and vulnerabilities posed by the arrangements for Blended Learning programmes and in particular to safeguard academic standards in such programmes.

1.6. Scope

161. This policy applies to the delivery of programmes leading to award or to specified credits towards an award on the National Qualification Framework through Blended Learning.
162. This policy supports UNILAK in developing flexible learning opportunities in professional and continuing education programmes.
163. UNILAK is aware that not all its traditional programs, policies and procedures are appropriate for Blended Learning, and has reviewed its policies and regulations to ensure they are fit-for-purpose in context. Most modules in UNILAK include some form of online learning and/or have mixed modes of delivery. It will not always be appropriate, or desirable, to classify this provision as Blended Learning and treat it as such for quality assurance purposes.
164. This policy also guides the identification and management of potential risks posed by challenges and complexities in the arrangements for blended and online learning programmes and to safeguard academic standards
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2. Roles and responsibilities.

UNILAK ensures that online components of its teaching provision and learning are supported by fit-for-purpose organizational infrastructure and processes.

2.1. UNILAK Senior Management has the responsibility for:

211. Providing appropriate Learning Resources, Facilities, and Technology that supports Blended Learning.
212. Ensuring equality of opportunity for learners who are assessed, including the provision of evidence.
213. Providing a Safe, Secure, and Inclusive Environment for all members of the UNILAK's online community.
214. Ensuring that eAssessments, ePortfolios and eVerification systems are secure, moveable and meet the required evidence needs.
215. Ensuring that appropriate recovery plans are developed for all eAssessments, ePortfolios and eVerification processes.
216. The Senior Management Team is also responsible for supporting and facilitating the implementation of this policy and for fostering initiatives to build shared service platforms and technology infrastructure.
217. The Senior Management Team will ensure that sufficient and appropriate technologies, tools and products are available to support teachers in the design of technology enhanced programmes and assessments.
218. It is expected that all involved will demonstrate a positive attitude towards using technology for teaching and learning. Faculty members are responsible for enhancing their own knowledge, skills and competence in educational technology.

2.2. Academic Technology Team Responsibilities:

221. In the case of the development of new programmes, providing technological expertise to the programme development team, and in particular providing a clear statement of:
 - Resources needed to complement any online technology
 - How the technology is to be used by teaching and other personnel involved both individually and collectively

- How it is to be used to confirm that the teaching and learning has occurred, including assessment and feedback.
222. In the case of the provision of validated programmes, providing technological expertise to faculty and learners, and in particular:
- 2.2.2.1. In advance of programme provision:
- Ensuring the reliability of delivery systems and confirming that appropriate technical support and contingency plans are in place in advance of programme provision,
 - Ensuring the availability and life expectancy of the technology is appropriate to the programme, including the numbers of learners and duration of the programme.
- 2.2.2.2. For the duration of programme provision:
- Providing administration and technical support
 - Testing the systems being used
 - Orienting and supporting learners in using technology in blended courses.
 - Ensuring staff and learners are comfortable with the systems being used
 - The induction and training of learners in the use of the technology

3. Policy

- 3.1. UNILAK recognised that Blended Learning design and implementation is an evolving sector within training and education, and needs to be grounded in the UNILAK' context and its learner community as well as the educational aims and objectives of any programme or programme component. To this end UNILAK' Blended Learning Policy is shaped and guided by its Blended Learning Strategy.
- 3.2. Blended Learning approaches provided by UNILAK are designed to enhance the learner learning experience, cater to diversity among learners, optimize learner engagement, and lead to improved learning experiences and outcomes.

3.3. Blended learning always includes some elements of face-to-face tuition. In addition, Blended Learning will include a combination of, for example:

- Online learning resources developed for online delivery;
- Access to learning technologies such as virtual learning environment;
- Tools to support virtual learning and off campus learning virtual learning spaces and discussion and other forums to support learners;
- Online activities to support formative and summative assessment;
- Assessment submitted, marked and returned to learners with feedback through electronic or other media.

3.4. UNILAK recognizes that not all teaching and learning is appropriate to blended or online approaches. Consequently, UNILAK identifies the conditions for effective Blended Learning. These conditions are required to be addressed when designing, implementing and reviewing Blended Learning programmes and components.

3.5. Effective Blended Learning:

- Effective Blended learning is achieved through a process of systematic course design/redesign that takes account of the best features of the online and face-to-face learning environments;
- Effective Blended Learning is achieved through a focus on constructive alignment of learning outcomes, assessments, content and learning activities.
- Effective Blended Learning ensures that learners are adequately prepared to function in a Blended Learning environment.
- Effective Blended Learning requires that all teaching and supports staff are adequately trained and supported as appropriate to their role.
- Effective Blended Learning ensures that assessments are rigorous and fit for purpose, and are safe and secure.
- Effective Blended Learning ensures that any learning material used supports effective teaching, learning and assessment
- Effective Blended Learning ensures learner supports are adequate and fit for purpose.

4. Procedures

Since UNILAK is engaged and committed to use Blended Learning, in articulating its expectations, UNILAK utilizes Wallace & Young (2010) themes of policy challenges for Higher Education Institutions implementing Blended Learning programmes:

- Institutional Supporting Framework,
- Academic Policy,
- Faculty Support and Recognition,
- Student Support and Preparation, and
- Quality Assurance and Evaluation.

4.1. Institutional Supporting Framework:

- 4.1.1. UNILAK recognizes that the relevance of existing arrangements originally designed for face-to-face provision may not always be appropriate and/or effective in the Blended Learning context. Therefore, UNILAK is responsible for ensuring that UNILAK governance arrangements, structures, policies, regulations and processes (including administration) articulated in its General Academic Regulations are adapted and extended appropriately in order to ensure that they are fit for-purpose in the context of Blended Learning.
- 4.1.2. Prior to providing Blended Learning programmes or programme components, UNILAK ensures that Institutional Strategies are in place that support Blended Learning, including a specific Blended Learning Strategy, policy and associated procedures.
- 4.1.3. Associated with this Strategy are:
- UNILAK financial plan that identifies appropriate investment in specialist, reliable and accessible Information Technology (IT), administrative systems and infrastructure
 - An Information Technology plan which ensures a planned approach to the procurement and maintenance of infrastructure and technical support for Blended Learning Programmes.
 - A technology enhanced Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy,

- An approval process that requires teaching and learning plans for each Blended Learning programme or programme component that provides all learner with an equitable, fair and realistic opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
- An adaptation of UNILAK' learner record system to support Blended Learning programmes and learners and their quality assurance.
- Programme Design, Development and Approval policies that ensure that the teaching, learning and assessment strategies and delivery mechanisms adopted in blended and online learning delivery are specifically designed for and appropriate to this context.
- Benchmarks and indicators, including specifically contact hours that are fit-for-purpose in a blended learning environment.
- Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review policies that ensure that the necessary pedagogical and technological expertise is available to any Blended Learning programme, and that academic staff are provided with the necessary development and support systems to function effectively in the delivery of blended and online learning programme provision.
- Staff Development policies take account of pedagogical and technological upskilling needs.
- Academic Policies that interface with UNILAK Quality Assurance and are appropriate to Blended Learning.
- A staff recruitment, induction, support and development framework that ensures that staff are appropriate and specific to blended learning.
- A learner support framework that is fit for purpose, clear and supports learners to develop the necessary independent study skills to successfully progress through the programme.
- An information provision policy that ensures that prospective learners receive clear information about the blend of learning in programmes, and the prior knowledge and skills required of them, so that they can make informed choices prior to committing to the programme.
- A compliance framework that ensure that UNILAK complies with its legal and statutory obligations in a blended and online learning context, in including Data Protection legislation; applicable professional body

requirements and Intellectual Property and Copyright legal obligations.

- 4.14. Approval processes and criteria for Blended Learning programmes and programme components appropriate to blended delivery are in place and integrated with face-to-face Approval Processes.
- 4.15. UNILAK Blended Learning strategies, policies, procedures, are clearly supported by governance arrangements, and integrated into quality systems.
- 4.16. Arrangements for assuring compliance with any legal or regulatory obligations are appropriate to the Blended Learning and online learning context

4.2. Academic Policies.

- 4.21. UNILAK is responsible for the academic standards and quality assurance of programmes. UNILAK is responsible for ensuring that Academic policies, regulations and processes articulated in its General Academic Regulations are adapted and extended appropriately in order to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose in the context of Blended Learning.
- 4.22. UNILAK ensures that the Academic policies and procedures specified in its General Academic Regulations are fit for purpose in a blended learning environment. In most instances this will require programme-specific quality assurance procedures.

4.3. Faculty Support and Recognition

- 4.31. UNILAK must ensure that teaching and support staff are suitable and have appropriate knowledge and skills in the provision of blended and online learning, as appropriate to their area of delivery.
 - In Blended Learning programmes or programme components the Recruitment and Selection of Core Teaching and Teaching Support Staff must specify the knowledge and skills required for the delivery of blended and online learning components within a programme.
 - Staff Development opportunities must provide planned opportunities for programme staff to develop their expertise in and to test programme technologies and new or evolving technologies
 - Programme staff must have access to appropriate specialist staff to support their Blended Learning provision, and the monitoring, review and change of that

provision. This will include technological expertise, which is provided by an Academic Technology Team.

- Blended Learning Programme design teams must have access to expertise in designing a programme, as well as academic, technical and professional expertise in the pedagogy and assessment appropriate to blended learning.

4.4. Learner Support and Preparation

441. UNILAK is responsible for information provision to learners and prospective learners.

442. Prospective Learners must have access to appropriate and sufficient information about programmes of study and about the institution to make an informed decision about their choice of programme, including:

- Descriptions of the online components of the Blended Learning programme or programme component or aspect of study;
- Technical requirements for participation in any online component of the programme, including requirements for access, bandwidth and any prescribed hardware or software in order to ensure that they can meet technological requirements to participate;
- The intended learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment methods of the programme and component modules;
- A clear timetable, including a schedule for the delivery of their online learning study materials, learner support (local and/or remote) and for the submission and assessment of their work;
- Learner responsibility in blended learning assessment;
- Information on the ways in which their achievements will be judged, and the relative weighting of online and other remote parts of the programme in respect of assessment overall
- Clarity on the specific level of engagement expected for different elements of the blend of online and face-to-face learning, in particular mandatory workplace learning, supervision and personal therapy, if any.
- Attendance requirements for each component such as face-to-face learning, workplace learning, synchronous and asynchronous activities. Any professional registration requirements should be clearly indicated.

443. In addition, UNILAK is responsible for supporting learners throughout their programme of study. Particular attention needs to be given in Blended Learning Programmes to ensure that learners have access to timely, appropriate and sufficient information about their programmes of study and about their performance, including:

- Timely formative assessment on their academic performance in the online sections of the programme to provide a basis for constructive individual feedback and guidance.
- Information about the quality assurance processes in place.
- Clear, timely information on how they access learning resources from the start of their programme, and the mechanisms the provider has in place to test and confirm learner identity.
- The mechanisms in place to identify and respond to learners who may be struggling with online remote learning.
- Support structures in place for different programme components, such as clinical work, academic writing, research, technological issues and personal circumstances that impact on learning and attendance.
- Identified and available support staff (academic, administrative, technical).
- Learner reportative system in their programme and in the College;
- Opportunities to give formal and informal feedback on their experience of the programme, including the effectiveness of blended and online learning arrangements, learning resources, learner support and learner representation.

4.5. Quality Assurance and Evaluation.

451. The Quality Assurance processes that underpin all of UNILAK's programmes, apply equally to all UNILAK programmes. However, Blended Learning programmes necessitate additional considerations. UNILAK is responsible for ensuring that the arrangements for the delivery of programmes and provision of support to and assessment of learners are appropriate, fit-for-purpose and maintain academic standards. This may require the adaptation of existing policies and/or the development of programme-specific quality

assurance procedures adapted to Blended Learning programme components.

452. This section identifies the adaptations that need to be included in the design, development, approval, monitoring and review of Blended Learning Programmes and components.

453. ***New Programme Policy***

4.5.3.1. The design of all Blended Learning programmes leading to an award or programme components leading to credits towards an award must ensure that:

- The teaching, learning and assessment strategies and delivery mechanisms adopted are specifically designed for online and blended contexts, and subject specific and educational scholarship informs the pedagogy and instructional design.
- blended and online learning developments are learner centred and subject-led rather than technology led;
- teaching, learning, and assessment practices are accessible to all learners;
- ensures security and reliability of its online learning and support systems;
- takes all practicable steps to ensure continuity of service delivery of its online learning and support systems and has in place a programme-specific Disaster Recovery policy, which includes a contingency plan in the event of failure of the designated modes of delivery;

454. ***Programme Monitoring.*** As stated in UNILAK revised General Academic Regulations, a programme, including design and delivery, course materials, and intended learning outcomes, must be regularly reviewed, updated and improved using feedback from stakeholders.

The following additional criteria must be considered during reviews by stakeholders of Blended Learning Programmes or Programme Components, and included in the Annual Programme Quality Report:

- The effectiveness of integration between online and face-to-face components;
- Learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms delivered online or with an online component;
- All materials and media such as audio-visual, printed or digitised assets) used to deliver online learning:

- Blended and online-specific learner supports
- The effectiveness of the technology and technological infrastructure, including its ease of use and adequacy.
- The effectiveness with which the programme actively engages learners with faculty, each other and with their learning

455. ***Programme Review and Revalidation.***

4.5.5.1. UNILAK Programme Review and Revalidation sets out the UNILAK's approach to its 5-yearly cycle of programme review and revalidation. The additional criteria stipulated in this policy must be considered during programmatic review of Blended Learning Programmes or Programme Components, and included in the Programme Evaluation Report.

4.5.5.2. ***UNILAK Reviewing the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance:***

UNILAK Review sets out the institutional approach to reviewing the effectiveness of:

- (i) its institution-wide quality assurance procedures,
- (ii) (ii) the manner in which it ensures compliance with regulatory requirements
- (iii) its quality enhancement approach. Institutional review must include a review of the effectiveness of its Blended Learning Strategy and Policy.