UNILAK BLENDED LEARNING POLICY

Kigali, 2022

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1. Policy Statement

This policy aims to mainstream Blended Learning into academic programmes of University of Lay Adventists of Kigali (UNILAK) so as to increase flexible and quality technology supported learning as is emphasized in institution Strategic Plan which recognizes Blended Learning as one strategy among others for increasing access to flexible education for all prospective students.

The policy intends to support UNILAK in developing flexible learning opportunities and providing easy 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 Guiding Principles and Values

This Policy is built on the following ten (10) principles and values:

1. **Accessibility**: The education system shall ensure that programmes on offer and the mode of learning and facilities used can be accessed by all learners.

2. **Collaboration and Partnership:** Blended Learning providers shall promote collaboration and establish partnership for programme development, acquisition of resources, teacher and learner support, exchange programmes, quality assurance and certification.

3. **Cost Effectiveness and Sustainability**: Blended Learning providers shall seek to promote cost effective access to learning opportunities in the development and deployment of Blended Learning and, shall consider the long term nature of diverse experiences needed.

4. **Equity:** Blended Learning programme shall ensure the enhancement of the conditions for optimum achievement by every individual or groups, including the gifted, the slow learner and the learning disabled; and for both genders to succeed.

5. **Flexibility:** Blended Learning shall promote flexibility in the provision of Blended Learning and ensure that the related institutional structures are dynamic and respond to the ever changing demands and needs of the learners.

6. **Learner Centeredness:** Blended Learning providers shall ensure that the learner is at the center of all the activities ensuring that the environment is conducive to learning and that basic resources are at his/her disposal.

7. **Openness:** Blended Learning providers shall ensure reduction of barriers to entry/access to programmes they offer.

8. **Quality and Relevance:** Programme development and delivery shall be characterized by the highest standards and relevant to the context of national economic development and human resource needs.

9. **Harmonization and Standardization**: Blended Learning opportunities shall be provided through harmonized national policies and guidelines and in an environment of acceptable standards, ethics, and measures for the protection of learners.

10. **Ethics and Professionalism:** Blended Learning providers shall ensure that the services are provided efficiently, with honesty, transparency, integrity and professionalism.

1.3. Strategic and Institutional Context

      1.3.1. 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.

1.4. Legal and Policy Context

1.4.1. 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.

1.4.2. This policy takes account of emerging discourses in Professional Bodyregulations.

1.4.3. 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.

1.5. Definitions

Blended learning can be defined as a method of teaching that combines themost 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)

1.6.   Purpose

1.6.1.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.

1.6.2. 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.

1.6.3. 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.

1.7. Scope

1.7.1. 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.

1.7.2. This policy supports UNILAK in developing flexible learning opportunities in professional and continuing education programmes.

1.7.3. UNILAK is aware that not all its traditional programs, policies and procedures are appropriate for Blended Learning, and has reviewed its policies andregulations 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 assurancepurposes.

1.7.4. 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

2. Policy Implementation/ Roles and Responsibilities

All individuals in the university and all those associated with the University have a responsibility to adhere to this policy and apply it in their day-to-day activities and in all dealings with, or on behalf of the institution. The overall responsibilities in relation to this policy are as follows:

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 secured moveable and meet the required evidence needs. This is done in its security system owned by UNILAK management.

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. To ensure that there is adequate bandwidth provided to each academic staff to support blended mode of learning

219. It is expected that all staff 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. The University Senate

The university Senate as a custodian of all academic programmes in the university is responsible for ensuring that all the provisions of this Policy are adhered to in order to ensure quality in all

aspects relates to the provision of blended mode of learning at UNILAK

2.3. Faculty Support and Recognition

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.

o 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.

o 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

o Programme staff must have access to appropriate specialist staff to support their Blended Learning provision, and the monitoring, review and change of thatprovision. This will include technological expertise, which is provided by an Academic Technology Team.

o Blended Learning Programme designs 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.

More specifically the faculty responsibilities are summarized but no limited to:

2.3.1. Ensure that academic staff are trained and ready to adopt blended mode of teaching

2.3.2. Ensure that all modules designed to be uploaded online are verified through quality assurance team

2.3.3. Ensure that academic staff exploits the platform at the desired rate

2.3.4. Ensure that students are aware and ready to use blended mode of teaching

2.3.5. Ensure that online content is regularly updated for quality purpose

2.3.6. Report any challenge, obstacles or gaps observed during blended implementation

2.4. Academic Technology Team Responsibilities:

2.4.1. 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:

2.4.2. Resources needed to complement any online technology

2.4.3. How the technology is to be used by teaching and other personnel involvedboth individually and collectively

2.4.4. How it is to be used to confirm that the teaching and learning has occurred, including assessment and feedback.

2.4.5. In the case of the provision of validated programmes, providing technological expertise to faculty and learners, and in particular:

2.4.6. 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.

- To ensure that all educational technologies and tools are up to date and in good and sound working condition.

2.4.7. For the duration of programme provision:

- Providing administration and technical support

- Testing the systems being used

- Orienting and supporting learners in using technology in blendedcourses.

- Ensuring staff and learners are comfortable with the systems beingused

- The induction and training of learners in the use of the technology

2.5. *Learner Support and Preparation*

2.5.1. UNILAK is responsible for information provision to learners and prospectivelearners.

2.5.2. 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:

2.5.2.1. Descriptions of the online components of the Blended Learning programme or programme component or aspect of study;

2.5.2.2. 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 meet technological requirements to participate;

2.5.2.3. The intended learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment methods of the programme and component modules;

2.5.2.4. 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;

2.5.2.5. Leaner responsibility in blended learning assessment;

2.5.2.6. 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 overall assessment;

2.5.2.7. 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.

2.5.2.8. 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.

2.5.3. 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:

    2.5.3.1. Timely formative assessment on their academic performance in the online sections of the programme to provide a basis for constructive individual feedback and guidance.

    2.5.3.2. Information about the quality assurance processes in place.

    2.5.3.3. Clear, timely information on how they access learning resources fromthe start of their programme, and the mechanisms the provider has in place to test and confirm learner identity.

    2.5.3.4. The mechanisms in place to identify and respond to learners who maybe struggling with online remote learning.

    2.5.3.5. Support structures in place for different programme components, suchas clinical work, academic writing, research, technological issues and personal circumstances that impact on learning and attendance.

    2.5.3.6. Identified and available support staff (academic, administrative, technical).

    2.5.3.7. Learner reportative system in their programme and in the College;

    2.5.3.8. Opportunities to give formal and informal feedback on their experienceof the programme, including the effectiveness of blended and online learning arrangements, learning resources, learner support and learnerrepresentation.

2.6. Students' Responsibilities

Students are responsible for the following:

2.6.1. To be equipped with appropriate devices to follow online instructions

2.6.2. To attend virtually every module delivered online and whoever fails to attend shall not be allowed to sit for exam

2.6.3. To perform all tasks, activities and assignments provided by the instructor as module requirements, whoever fails to upload the tasks required, this may lead to miss marks which may results into module failure.

2.7. *Quality Assurance and Evaluation.*

2.7.1. The Quality Assurance processes that underpin all of UNILAK's programmes, apply equally to all UNILAK programmes. However, Blended Learning programmes necessitates additional considerations. UNILAK responsibility to ensure 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.

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

2.8. Quality assurance responsibilities

The primary role of the quality assurance unit has a day to day role of monitoring and ensure the provision of quality learning through the blended mode of learning. Specifically the office of quality assurance at UNILAK is responsible for the following:

2.8.1. To make a regular follow up on blended implementation

2.8.2. To carry out internal quality assessment to ensure that the system performs as expected

2.8.3. Participate in development and review of the content designed to be uploaded online

2.8.4. To ensure that online assessment is conducted quality wise

2.8.5. To collect users(lecturers and students) feedback about the platform performance

2.8.6. To ensure authenticity and effectiveness of delivery and learning activities uploaded online and how they are adopted by all users

2.8.7. Initiate policies and regulations for the usage of blended mode study materials and resources by third parties, in conformity with institutional regulations and national laws.

2.9. Program administration

2.9.1. This programme shall be delivered in consideration of the following aspects:

2.9.2. Blended learning shall be delivered by the use of online materials and encourage active participation from students in the classroom to create a deeper understanding of the topics instructors shall strive to provide activities beyond the classroom to improve interactions between teachers and students.

2.9.3. Student participation shall be ensured through various interactive features embedded in the system such as forum, group discussion, potatoes etc.

2.9.4. Pedagogical dimension shall be considered to analyze the consistency between course content and the learners 'needs. In addition, the appropriate method to deliver the content is chosen.

2.10. Assessment

2.10.1. As per the definition, the common goal of assessment is to evaluate and improve student learning
2.10.2. Formative assessments occur within an online course or lesson and are used to determine how well a student is learning the material. This should be ongoing, consistent, and provide critical feedback to learners. Particularly at UNILAK blended learning, student assessment shall be done on daily basing to ensure effective progress of student during online sessions.

2.10.3. Assignments, small quizzes and test shall be used to assess students'achivement. As per UNILAK general academic regulations 60% will is counted on continuous assessment whereby 40% is reserved for final exam.
2.10.4. Assessment of blended Learning will count 30% of the total assessment including.

2.10.5. Summative assessments are sometimes referred to as a final exam and measure what the student has learned after completing a course. They can validate how well your content supports the course's overall learning goals.

2.11. Programme Review and Revalidation.

2.11.1. 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.

2.12. UNILAK Reviewing the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance:
UNILAK *Review* sets out the institutional approach to reviewing theeffectiveness of:

2.12.1. its institution-wide quality assurance procedures,
2.12.2. the manner in which it ensures compliance with regulatory requirement
2.12.3. its quality enhancement approach. Institutional review mustinclude a review of the effectiveness of its Blended Learning Strategy and Policy.

2.13.New Programme Policy

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

- o 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.
- o 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;

2.14. *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 digitized 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

3. *Policy Commencement*

This Policy became effective on _____ when it was approved by Academic Senate and signed off by:

_____ _____

Prof.NGAMIJE Jean
University Vice Chancellor