

Provider Name:	Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education & Training Board
Policy Area:	Teaching, Learning & Assessment

Policy & Procedure Title: Blended Learning	Policy Number: 1	Version: 2
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Introduction:
 This document specifies Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education & Training Board (MSLETB) policy for the delivery of programmes leading to an award or to specified credits towards an award through means which may not require the learner to attend on campus. This policy is intended to support MSLETB in developing flexible learning opportunities and providing access to further education for learners.

- Objectives:**
1. To ensure a learner-centred positive quality assured teaching and learning experience, with improvements and enhancements in accordance with national and international quality standards in the design, development, approval, resourcing, monitoring and review of blended learning programmes.
 2. To provide a framework for staff to engage with blended learning programme delivery.
 3. To ensure staff are provided with the necessary training and support for blended programme delivery.
 4. To manage the challenges and potential risks in blended provision to safeguard standards.
 5. To plan for and provide organisational infrastructure to support blended delivery.
 6. To ensure MSLETB complies with national legislation, agreements and regulations and where relevant in the [QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes](#).

Definitions:

Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL)
 TEL may be defined as any form of instruction where technologies are used and applied to facilitate and enhance teaching and learning. TEL is a broad term used to describe any kind of technology-supported learning whether in the context of a classroom, a blended learning environment or strictly online (Fleischmann, 2018).

Blended Learning
 “The integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences” (Garrison and Kanuak, 2004, p96). This definition has been adopted by QQI (2018, p3) in the Statutory Quality Assurance guidelines for blended learning.

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 et al., 2014, p17)

VLE (Virtual Learning Environment)

“A site that hosts online resources and activities to support students’ learning” (Ally, 2009, p291).

Learning Management System (LMS)

“Course management systems, also called learning management systems or virtual learning environments, are software systems designed to assist in the management of educational courses for students, especially by helping teachers and learners with course administration. The systems can often track the learners’ progress. While usually thought of as primary tools for distance education, they are also used to support the face-to-face classroom...” (Simonson, 2007).

Online Collaboration Platform

The purpose of an online collaboration platform is to support a group of two or more individuals to accomplish a common goal or objective (Lomas et al, 2008). It is based upon the principle that learners can enrich their learning experiences by interacting with others, typically done through live chats, message boards or instant messaging.

Scope:

MSLETB staff, external partnerships and second providers involved in blended learning programmes

Related Documents:

- QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes
- MSLETB Quality Assurance Guidelines for New Apprenticeship Programmes
- MSLETB Quality Assurance Policy Statement
- MSLETB Technology Enhanced Learning Policy
- MSLETB Quality Assurance Procedures
- MSLETB Social Media Policy
- MSLETB Data Protection Policy

Strategic Context

MSLETB’s mission is to deliver a high quality learning experience that will lead to better outcomes for all those who engage in Further Education and Training. One of their Key Strategic Priorities is the implementation of it’s TEL strategic goal. Throughout the duration of the [SOLAS MSLETB Strategic Performance Agreement 2018 - 2020](#) all learning in MSLETB FET will be supported and enhanced using electronic media (Section 4.1.7)

TEL has a key role to play in the achievement of the vision for MSLETB in providing an outstanding positive experience for all its learners in a professional, caring and collaborative environment. The TEL vision for MSLETB is to ensure that TEL becomes an intrinsic part of FET in MSLETB. Whereby, TEL and/or virtual learning environments are used in every classroom to enhance teaching and

learning. This, in turn, will produce learners who are skilled and confident in using technology as part of their work, study and home life. Blended learning is a TEL initiative.

The Further Education and Training Strategy 2020 – 2024 highlighted that future FET will be delivered using more blended and online approaches.

Policy Owner:

MSLETB FET Quality Council

Procedures:

Working towards the SOLAS Strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning in Further Education and Training 2016-2019, and in the context of, the learning experience, organisational structures and supports, and programme content development and assessment, MSLETB shall

From an **Organisational Context:**

- 1) Ensure that the use of blended learning is communicated clearly and shared with learners, staff members and all relevant stakeholders in a timely manner.
- 2) Invest appropriately in infrastructure and supports for the design and delivery of blended learning programmes
- 3) Recognise that teaching on a blended programme requires pedagogical and technological expertise and thus appoint, induct, train, offer professional development and appraisal arrangements for specialist, teaching and support staff relevant to a blended environment.
- 4) Offer continuous professional development training in the use of VLE/LCMS, developing online content, technological and pedagogical upskilling
- 5) Ensure staff are provided with opportunities to develop their academic and technology enhanced learning skills and digital competences in accordance with The European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (Redecker, 2017).
- 6) Create an engaging, motivating, and intellectually stimulating learning experience which enables a collaborative and participatory experience for the learner
- 7) Ensure that there is a parity of standards in relation to teaching, learning and assessment
- 8) Ensure policies, regulations and processes are fit for purpose for blended learning programme delivery
- 9) Design, develop, review and update resources to contribute to the achievement of the stated programme learning outcomes to ensure they are relevant, provide variety, and enhance the programme
- 10) Following the principles of Universal Design for Learning so that teaching, learning and assessment will be accessible, easy to navigate, well structured, readable, with sufficient variety to meet the needs of all learners, including learners with disabilities.
- 11) Comply with data privacy, GDPR, child protection, software licensing, copyright and legal obligations both nationally and transnationally
- 12) Ensure that all quality assurance policies and procedures accommodate remote learning
- 13) Ensure that arrangements are in place for online assessments including grading (all of which are robustly tested) if relevant to the blended learning programmes

- 14) Ensure that regulatory considerations are adhered to in the context of national and transnational provision for example Examination Board, EA, appeals and complaints, disciplinary arrangements if relevant to the blended learning programme
- 15) Guarantee robust systems and processes are in place to manage the submission, receipt, marking and return of assessments including if relevant those across different time zones
- 16) Ensure that processes are in place to verify the unique identity of learners
- 17) Pilot online classes (across different devices) and sign off in advance of the programme commencing
- 18) Ensure technical support and contingency plans are in place throughout the duration of the online learning component of the programme
- 19) Ensure that blended and online learning developments are learner centred and subject-led rather than technology led
- 20) Recognise that contact hours may no longer be a suitable indicator related to teaching. The programme design will specify the required effort for the activities of teaching and content creation in a blended learning delivery model
- 21) Ensure that the availability and life expectancy of technology is appropriate to the numbers of learners and duration of the programme and that relevant supports are in place to ensure a smooth transition to new technology
- 22) Moderate forums and online interactions, ensuring system security and access is in line with MSLETB policies and procedures including plagiarism, academic integrity and social media etiquette.
- 23) Elicit feedback from teaching, support staff and learners on an ongoing basis and at the end of a blended programme to monitor, evaluate and improve provision
- 24) Ensure that a strategic plan including appropriate investment in infrastructure and contingency arrangements to support all options for TEL and programme design and delivery are in place (this will be implemented by The TEL working group)

From a **Programme Context:**

- 1) Ensure that staff members keep up to date with emergent technologies and new pedagogical approaches through continuous professional development, attendance and participation at showcase events
- 2) Approve all online content to ensure it is current and relevant to the programme
- 3) Reinforce learning by offering remote formative assessment activities
- 4) Ensure that learner supports such as the e-mentor, administrators and tutors are available at scheduled times
- 5) Evaluate open education resources to ensure a quality provision
- 6) Provide controlled opportunities for staff to test new or evolving technologies
- 7) Provide a “Learner Contract” to the learner prior to the commencement of the programme to include information on online interactions, forums, netiquette and cyberbullying
- 8) Nominate an appropriate moderator who will intervene in cases of cyberbullying that may negatively impact the learner experience
- 9) Communicate to ensure that stakeholders are aware that all information designed for a blended learning programme are owned by MSLETB (even where development of same are outsourced)

- 10) Accurately and confidentially maintain learner records to monitor progressions and achievement and which will facilitate timely intervention for learners who may be struggling
- 11) Individuals developing online learning materials are bound by MSLETB policies, systems, hardware and processes
- 12) Facilitate the development of a community of practice to share knowledge and additional resources

From a Learner Perspective:

- 1) Ensure all relevant information pertaining to the online programme is made available in advance to the learner including but not limited to
 - Explanation of what constitutes a blended learning programme and necessary hardware, software and any other necessary requirements to participate on and complete this programme
 - Clarity on the expectations and levels of engagement of the learner and the education provider
 - All terms and conditions related to the blended learning programme
 - All relevant documentation pertaining to the programme including module descriptors, academic calendar, schedule of assessments and rubrics, QA processes and procedures and adequate learning resources commensurate to the level of the programme
 - Learners should be provided with an equitable, fair and realistic opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes to include but not limited to suitable teaching and learning material, adequate timeframes, opportunities for feedback, confidentiality, dignity, respect and courtesy.
 - Learners must comply with the MSLETB Community Rules for VLE Users; this ensure the MSLETB Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is used constructively and for the good use of our community of learning and practice.