



<b>POLICY:</b>		Digital Teaching and Learning Policy
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<b>ADOPTED:</b>		UR 2021#01
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<b>AMENDMENTS:</b>		
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<b>REVIEW:</b>		February 2024
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## 1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 Mary Immaculate College is committed to excellence in teaching, learning and research at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, which is demonstrated in the MIC Strategic Plan (2019-2024) (Pillar 2, high level goal 2.2). It is within this context that the following policy aims to leverage from digital learning and teaching to achieve the strategic objectives of, excellence, inclusion, and a flourishing learning community.<sup>1</sup> The policy is informed by the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) guidelines on blended learning programmes, the National Forum Digital Teaching and Learning Strategy and the Irish National Digital Experience (INDEx) Survey.<sup>2</sup> The policy has been developed by a working group comprising academic and professional services staff engaged in the process of teaching, assessment and administration, and MISU (Mary I Student's Union).
- 1.2 Digital technologies offer multimodal approaches to learning and teaching which provide students with opportunities to learn in a variety of ways. Embedding technology in teaching and learning also offers the opportunity to develop students' digital literacies and skills such as problem solving, communication and collaboration. Digital learning and teaching at MIC shall promote inclusive, authentic learning environments underpinned by quality and excellence. In particular, digital learning and teaching should empower students as agents of their own learning and foster a sense of community.

## 2.0 DEFINITIONS

**Digital learning** is defined as integrating digital tools and technologies using digital pedagogies to enhance learning and teaching and is often referred to as technology enhanced learning.

**Blended learning** as adopted by QQI (2018, p.3) in the *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning* is defined as "the integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences" (Garrison and Kanuak, 2004, p.96).

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<sup>1</sup>MIC: Strategic Plan 2023: A flourishing learning community <https://www.mic.ul.ie/about-mic/office-of-the-president/strategic-plan?index=0>

<sup>2</sup> QQI (2018) Statutory QA Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes <https://qaguidelines.qqi.ie/topic-spec-blended.html#ts-blended-issuu>

**Online learning** is defined as “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’ (Gaebel *et al.*, 2014, p.17).

### 3.0 SCOPE OF APPLICATION

- 3.1 This policy applies to the adoption of digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment at MIC. It applies to students and staff engaged in, or supporting digital learning, teaching and assessment on face-to-face, blended and online programmes.
- 3.2 This policy does not apply to the adoption of digital technologies for the administration of teaching such as timetabling and academic administration.
- 3.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with the [Handbook on the University of Limerick Regulations](#), [MIC Academic Integrity Policy](#), [MIC Assessment and Feedback Policy](#), [MIC Data Protection Policy](#) and other policies, as appropriate.

### 4.0 PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 Digital teaching, learning and assessment at MIC will be underpinned by the highest academic standards<sup>1</sup>, supporting evidence and best practice.
- 4.2 To ensure quality in instructional design and to ensure compliance with accessibility, copyright and data protection regulations, digital content and approaches to teaching, learning and assessment shall be designed in consultation with the Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Centre (LEAD), where appropriate.
- 4.3 Blended and online modules and programmes shall be designed in consultation with the Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Centre and in conjunction with the MIC Standard Operating Procedure for programme development.
- 4.4 Digital learning, teaching and assessment resources will be underpinned by [The Universal Design for Learning Framework and Principles](#).

- 4.5 The College will ensure that academic staff are enabled to acquire the necessary digital skills to perform their role, whether teaching face-to-face, blended or online and are provided with appropriate induction and ongoing professional development.
- 4.6 Students will be provided with clear guidelines and support regarding their required level of engagement in blended and online activities, where appropriate, by their lecturer.
- 4.7 Staff will be responsible for the sharing, storage and updating of their digital content on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Staff will be responsible for retaining a local back up of course content on College-approved ICT systems.
- 4.8 Student online assessment records and content will be managed according to the [MIC Records Management Retention Schedule](#).
- 4.9 MIC will ensure that staff involved in teaching in online and blended programmes are adequately supported through the provision of professional development informed by the *European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators* (Redecker, 2017).
- 4.10 Prior to the development and delivery of a blended or online module or programme, faculty will be provided opportunities to attend training and induction provided by the Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Centre (LEAD). Induction will also be provided to newly appointed faculty.
- 4.11 To ensure the ethical and safe use of digital technologies for learning, students shall be provided with clear guidelines for communication and acceptable behaviour in online activities.
- 4.12 The level of engagement and attendance in online activities (where applicable on blended and online modules or programmes) will be made clear to students by academic course leaders at the commencement of a module or programme.
- 4.13 All blended and online programmes will be subject to the same quality processes that underpin all academic programmes of the College.

- 4.14 Digital learning will be used to foster a sense of community for learners by engaging students in collaborative and social learning approaches (for example through pair or group collaborations using applications such as discussion fora, wikis or chat facilities).

## 5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

The successful implementation of the *Digital Teaching and Learning Policy* depends on a variety of stakeholders with the following responsibilities:

Stakeholder	Responsibilities
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively engage in digital learning in an ethical and responsible manner and in adherence with MIC's Academic Integrity Policy.</li> </ul>
Academic Staff*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support students' digital learning experience.</li> <li>• Attend induction and professional development in digital pedagogies and use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).</li> <li>• Ensure that digital learning content is designed in line with instructional and pedagogical best practice.</li> </ul>
Academic Leaders (Programme Leaders/Heads of Department)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that induction, training and professional development in technology enhanced learning is availed of by teaching staff.</li> <li>• Ensure Department-wide coherence in how digital learning is used and assessed.</li> </ul>
Deans/VPAA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that induction, training and professional development in technology enhanced learning is attended by all staff who teach on blended and online programmes.</li> <li>• Ensure Faculty-wide coherence in how digital learning is used and assessed.</li> <li>• Ensure that professional development in technology enhanced learning is included in workloads allocation models and recognition frameworks.</li> </ul>
Library Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support students' digital learning experience through the provision of appropriate digital resources and informal spaces.</li> <li>• Work with students to develop digital information literacies.</li> </ul>

Learning Enhancement & Academic Development Centre (LEAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise on best practice in digital pedagogies and instructional design.</li> <li>• Provide professional development and support to staff in technology enhanced teaching, learning and assessment.</li> </ul>
Senior Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversee the resourcing of ICT infrastructure for digital teaching and learning.</li> <li>• Embed professional development in digital teaching and learning in induction, workloads and promotion processes.</li> </ul>

\* Academic Staff include those teaching/supervising at Undergraduate and Postgraduate level

## 6.0 POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed at 3-year intervals, except where statutory provisions or other regulatory measures introduced by the College require review and amendment to take place sooner.

## 7.0 EQUALITY STATEMENT

All policies, guidelines and protocols of Mary Immaculate College, will reflect the Colleges commitment to the promotion of equality in accordance with law.

## 8.0 REFERENCES

Centre for Applied Special Technology. (2008). UDL Editions by CAST. Available at <http://udleditions.cast.org/> Centre for Applied Special Technology. (2009a). CAST

Gaebel, M., 2014. MOOCs: Massive open online courses. EUA.

Garrison, D.R. and Kanuka, H., (2004) Blended learning: Uncovering its transformative potential in higher education. *The internet and higher education*, 7(2), pp.95-105.

Government of Ireland (2019) [Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice](#).

Gustafson, K. L., & Branch, R. M. (2002). Survey of instructional development models (4th ed.). Syracuse, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information & Technology.

QQI(2018) [Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes](#).

Redecker, C., Punie, Y. (2017) [European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators](#).

## APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Digital pedagogy** is the study of how digital technologies are critically examined and used to enhance the learning experience by fostering community and collaboration across diverse contexts and communities (Howell 2012; Strommel, 2014).

**Instructional design** is a system of procedures that consider the inter-relationships between various components to ensure effective development of digital education and training resources (Gustafson and Branch, 2002).

**Universal design for learning** is an educational framework that advocates the development and design of learning environments to meet the needs of diverse groups. It is based on three principles: 1) Multiple forms of representations; 2) Multiple forms of expression; 3) Multiple forms of engagement (Cast, 2008).

**Wellbeing** is defined as *'when a person realises their potential, is resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their life, takes care of their physical wellbeing and has a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to a wider community. It is a fluid way of being and needs nurturing throughout life.'* (Government of Ireland, Wellbeing Policy Statement, 2019).