



# ICHAS

## Section 3 - Policies and Procedures associated with Quality in ICHAS

Subject:	Policy on assuring the Quality of the Blended Learning Environment.		
Applicable QQI Core Standard	Teaching and Learning		
Date Approved by Board of Directors:			February 2021
Policy Version	1/2021	Date due for Revision	February 2024

### CONTEXT

QQI (2018) accepts the definition of Blended Learning as proposed by Garrison and Kanuka (2004), stating that blended learning is “the integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences”<sup>1</sup>, but very explicitly assert that “Blended learning will **always** involve face-to-face learning”<sup>2</sup>. Consistent with that understanding, Blended Learning at ICHAS involves the integration of online learning approaches (including synchronous collaborative virtual classrooms, asynchronous learning resources, online assessment tools and various student support resources) **with** traditional learning approaches (including on-site and face-to-face lecturing, tutorials, and placement (work based) learning experiences).

### POLICY STATEMENT

The College commits to ensuring the quality of the blended, synchronous learning environment (virtual classroom) and aims to minimise technical disruptions to teaching, support students to engage in the virtual classroom setting and to solve problems quickly and efficiently.

### Principles for Assuring the Quality of the Blended Learning approach

#### Monitoring and Review:

All blended learning programme materials are regularly reviewed for effectiveness using monitoring and feedback mechanisms including:

- Ongoing monitoring and review of virtual classroom sessions for pedagogical quality
- Student and Lecturer feedback during and after modules
- Reports by the Educational Technology Manager and Information Systems Manager for the Quality & Standards Committee concerning the effectiveness, maintenance, usability, enhancement and security of the technologies underpinning blended learning.

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<sup>1</sup> Garrison, D.R. & Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended Learning: Uncovering Its Transformative Potential in Higher Education. *Internet and Higher Education*, 7(2), 95-105, p. 96

<sup>2</sup> QQI (2018) Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes, p6.

The purpose of monitoring and review is to acknowledge and respond to issues that may arise; enable incremental improvement to the blended learning approach over time; enhance innovation using learning technologies as part of the college's commitment to open learning; and to capture student and lecturer interactions with learning technologies for the ongoing improvement of same.

#### SCOPE

Applies To	Staff	Students	Both	
			✓	
Responsible for Implementation	Educational Technology Manager. Information Systems Manager			
Responsible for Monitoring & Review	Vice President (Corporate Affairs)	Vice President (Academic Affairs)	Registrar	Quality Assurance & Enhancement Officer
				✓

#### DEFINITIONS

**Synchronous Blended Learning:** A blended learning teaching event, resource or interaction that is delivered synchronously; i.e. in real-time, with participants present and engaging simultaneously.

**Blended Synchronous Learning Environment (BSLE):** a mode of synchronous blended learning where students may choose to attend a class either face-to-face or via a virtual classroom. A lecturer in the BSLE approach teaches to both F2F and virtual classroom students simultaneously.

**Virtual Classroom:** The online environment that allows students and lecturer to collaborate, ask questions, view presentations, share documents, complete polls or work in groups in real-time.

**Asynchronous Blended Learning:** A blended learning teaching event, resource or interaction that is delivered asynchronously; i.e. over a defined period, with participants engaging as instructed. E.g. engaging with online discussion forums, completing interactive online learning activities, maintaining an online reflective journal or e-portfolio, completing online MCQs or assessments and submitting assignments.

**Learning Management System:** The virtual learning environment where ICHAS students find notes, learning resources, collaboration tools, student email & Office 365, libraries and upload assessment material.

#### RELEVANT GUIDELINES/ POLICIES INFORMING THIS POLICY

- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2018) Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2016) Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers

- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) et al (2015) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2016) Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines Developed by QQI For Independent/Private Providers Coming To QQI On A Voluntary Basis
- Government of Ireland (2012) Qualifications & Quality Assurance (Education and Training Act).
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2016) Policies & Criteria for the Validation of programmes of Education.

#### **Linked Policies & Procedures**

Linked Policies	Policy on supporting students to engage with Blended Learning.
Linked Procedures	Procedures associated with assuring the Quality of the Physical Learning Environment. Procedures associated with assuring the Quality of the Blended Learning Environment. Procedures associated with supporting students to engage with Blended Learning.