

<b>Policy Group</b>	Academic Programs	<b>Policy Number</b>	ACA-PRO-12	 جامعة زايد ZAYED UNIVERSITY
<b>Responsible Office</b>	Office of the Provost	<b>Distribution</b>	External	
<b>Date Approved</b>	31 March 2021	<b>Effective Date</b>	31 March 2021	
<b>Date Last Reviewed</b>	New Procedures	<b>Due Date for Next Review</b>	23 March 2024	

## **PROCEDURES**

### **E-Learning: Online and Blended Learning**

#### **1. Students**

##### **1.1 Course Information**

- 1.1.1 Students will be informed of the mode of delivery (including any on-campus meeting requirements, and technological requirements) of each course and program offered by the University.
- 1.1.2 Students will have access to this information before enrolling in a course section or program.
- 1.1.3 The syllabus will notify students of any software and hardware requirements for participation in online courses and activities.
- 1.1.4 The syllabus will state the delivery mode of the course (online, blended, on-campus).
- 1.1.5 The syllabus will state if and when the student will be required to use the webcam for assessments or verification purposes.
- 1.1.6 The syllabus will state if the section is co-educational or gender segregated.

##### **1.2 Training in Digital Skills for Learning**

- 1.2.1 As some learning contexts require greater independence and varying levels of digital competency, students need specific support for success.
- 1.2.2 Students participating in online or blended contexts will be provided with manuals, workshops and training to develop digital competency and skills for type of study.

##### **1.3 Support Services**

- 1.3.1 Technical support, instructional support, Student Affairs, counseling services (personal and career), student careers and alumni, Student Accessibility Services (SAS), advisors, library resources, and other support services shall be made available to all students regardless of the delivery mode.
- 1.3.2 If students experience technical issues with systems while participating in online or blended courses, they should report them directly to the course instructor and the Information Technology Department (ITD) for troubleshooting.

##### **1.4 Students of Determination Accessibility Support Services**

- 1.4.1 Effective and regular communication between faculty and the Student Accessibility Services (SAS) department is maintained to ensure the

provision of accessibility services and guarantee support services to Students of Determination.

- 1.4.2 Students of Determination accommodation requires an interactive process between students of determination, faculty and SAS. Students adhere to the same university processes and procedures when seeking accommodations through SAS, regardless of delivery mode.

## **1.5 Privacy**

- 1.5.1 Students may be required to use their webcams for verification for assessment purposes.
- 1.5.2 Students should be informed at the beginning of a class if it will be recorded. Video recordings should be securely stored and accessed only by course members and the faculty instructor.

## **1.6 Student Records**

- 1.6.1 Student records from courses in all delivery modes shall be managed in accordance with the usual approved policies and procedures
- 1.6.2 ITD and the Registrar's Office will regularly review the security and integrity of student records and online learning platforms, and upgrade information security practices as necessary to ensure that faculty and students can interact in a safe and secure online environment.
- 1.6.3 Unless by prior arrangement with the college dean, the Zayed University learning management system will be used for courses, and student grade records will be maintained in the official system.

## **2. Program/Course Development and Quality Assurance**

### **2.1 Program or Course Approval**

Programs and courses must be approved before they can be scheduled as online or blended as outlined in the policy.

### **2.2 Program Review**

Academic programs delivered in online or blended modes will be assessed at regular intervals using the same procedures as on-campus courses

### **2.3 Course Development and Approval**

- 2.3.1 A course planning template that covers responsibilities and milestones for developing and teaching an online or blended course will be completed for all new or redesigned courses.
- 2.3.2 ZU adheres to non-discrimination through reasonable adjustments of policies, practices and procedures to offer access and avoid discrimination on the basis of disability. In doing so, ZU follows guidelines regarding the design and development of blended and online courses in a format that offers equitable access to the opportunities and the benefits afforded by technology-based courses. ZU strives to provide electronic and information technology developed, maintained, or procured for its online programs that is accessible to students of determination.

### **2.4 Course Design Quality Review**

- 2.4.1 As new or re-designed online or blended courses are developed the Specific Review Standards from the Quality Matters (QM) Higher

Education Rubric can be used to self-assess the course quality. It reviews 4 aspects of the course:

- Course syllabus
- Instructional materials
- Learning outcomes
- Assessment and measurement

2.4.2 The QM rubric can also be used by academic administrators and the Curriculum Review University Standing Committee (CRUSC) as an additional tool for reviewing online or blended course quality.

## **2.5 Student Evaluation of Online Courses**

2.5.1 Students will be given the opportunity to complete the Student Evaluation of the Learning Environment (SELE) form for the specific mode of delivery (online or blended).

2.5.2 The forms should be fully accessible to all students.

## **3. Program/Course Delivery**

### **3.1 Scheduling and Enrollment**

3.1.1 After courses or programs have been approved, the chair schedules the appropriate number of sections as online or blended mode.

3.1.2 Registration and enrollment for an online and blended course shall follow the same process as on-campus courses. Students must be advised of the delivery mode at the time of registration.

### **3.2 Class Size and Composition**

3.2.1 It is imperative to retain appropriate class sizes in order to maintain interaction between faculty and students and to allow for feedback to students about their progress. Class size recommendations should be the same for all delivery modes.

3.2.2 Class sizes for online and blended courses in some cases, such as courses needing significant interaction between faculty and student, may require a lower number of students for every instructor.

3.2.3 In some cases teaching assistant(s) may be assigned to support the instructor to ensure student participation and learning.

### **3.3 Verification of Student Identity**

Faculty will verify student identity by comparing the student webcam photo in assessment proctoring systems with the image in the student record.

### **3.4 Attendance**

3.4.1 Guidelines for undergraduate attendance should be adhered to.

3.4.2 In addition, online and blended class attendance can be taken based on:

- a) Student attendance and active participation in scheduled synchronous sessions (via webinar technology e.g. Zoom).
- b) Student active participation and completion of appropriate assigned asynchronous learning activities.

### **3.5 Assessment and Academic Integrity**

3.5.1 Students are expected to submit assessment tasks that demonstrate their own work.

- 3.5.2 Faculty teaching in online or blended courses should brief students on academic integrity at the beginning of each course and refer to the Zayed University Honor Code.
- 3.5.3 Faculty should design assessment tasks that are equivalent rigor to the on-campus course but also support the unique challenges of academic integrity in an online environment. Preferrably assessment tasks should be planned to be taken as open-book assessments or vivas. No publisher test banks may be utilized.
- 3.5.4 Faculty should use university provided tools to support academic integrity, such as plagiarism detection tools (e.g. SafeAssign) to check for originality in written assignments, and online proctoring software (e.g. Respondus Monitor) for online tests and exams.
- 3.5.5 The evaluation mode of students of determination should be based on SAS examination recommendations that are provided by SAS based on each individual student need, taking into account available assistive technology and means.

### **3.6 Appeals**

- 3.6.1 Academic appeals follow existing university policy.
- 3.6.2 If the student is appealing because of a technical issue, they need to have officially reported the issue to ITD and include the records of the report as evidence in the appeal. There needs to be a demonstrated and sustained effort to resolve the problem during the teaching period.

## **4. Faculty (Teaching)**

### **4.1 Faculty Qualifications**

- 4.1.1 Any full-time or adjunct faculty teaching in online or blended courses or programs should satisfy the usual credentialing requirements. In addition, the university will offer specialized training for faculty in order to prepare them to successfully teach their courses online.
- 4.1.2 The Department Chair and Dean may require additional specific professional development for a faculty member to teach or develop courses in online or blended programs.

### **4.2 Faculty Workload**

- 4.2.1 Online or blended courses are part of the faculty member's regular teaching load, with the same workload credit as on-campus courses.
- 4.2.2 Faculty members may be assigned additional workload credit for the design and development of an online or blended offering mode with the recommendation of the Dean and approval of the Provost.

### **4.3 Presence and Office Hours**

- 4.3.1 Faculty presence is an integral component of quality instruction and a leading indicator of student satisfaction.
- 4.3.2 Faculty must make clear to students in online or blended courses the days and times that students can expect the instructor to be active or present in the course, as well as the method of holding office hours listed in the syllabus.

- 4.3.3 Online or blended courses must meet the institution's usual required number of office hours.
- 4.3.4 Faculty must specify their expected response time to student queries, usually within two (2) working days, in their syllabus.

#### **4.4 Advising**

- 4.4.1 Advising of students enrolled in blended or online programs will be done with online tools.
- 4.4.2 Faculty are provided with the necessary online tools to maintain contact with their students for advising purposes.
- 4.4.3 Faculty will provide their online availability to their advisees.

#### **4.5 Faculty Evaluation**

- 4.5.1 Faculty evaluation will be in accordance with standard university practice.
- 4.5.2 Chairs and Deans will take into consideration the different norms and standards for student evaluation scores for online and blended delivery modes.
- 4.5.3 The Office of Institutional Research will split online, blended and on-campus delivery modes in its aggregated student evaluation reporting.

#### **4.6 Ownership of Materials and Copyright**

- 4.6.1 Zayed University has a commitment to comply with all pertinent copyright laws in accordance with internationally accepted principles of educational fair use.
- 4.6.2 Common copyright practice concerning materials held in the ZU library is followed.
- 4.6.3 Online and blended course material produced by faculty is considered instructional work product and is owned by the creator and university.

### **5. Resources to Support Online and Blended Learning**

#### **5.1 Library**

- 5.1.1 Adequate and relevant online resources are made available by the library with the university budgetary support to meet the demands of online and blended learning.
- 5.1.2 The ZU library provides effective online services to guide students through learning processes, including online access to e-books, journal articles and other electronic resources subscribed to by the library.
- 5.1.3 These are accessible anytime anywhere by students and faculty to meet their teaching, learning and research needs.

#### **5.2 Learning Management System (LMS)**

- 5.2.1 Unless by prior arrangement with the College Dean, the Zayed University learning management system will be used for courses, and student grade records will be maintained in the official system.
- 5.2.2 The CEI and ITD will provide technical support for all online and blended course instructors and students.
- 5.2.3 ITD will conduct a periodic review of the LMS to ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the information stored on the platform.

### **5.3 Digital Tools**

- 5.3.1 ZU will provide access to digital tools for faculty to use to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous learning.
- 5.3.2 Synchronous digital tools allow realtime teacher/student interaction across different geographical contexts (e.g. interactive videoconferencing, online chat).
- 5.3.3 Asynchronous digital tools allow anytime or specified-time engagement by students to complete tasks and learn at their own pace (e.g. discussion boards, blogs, journals).
- 5.3.4 Faculty may employ other digital tools to support collaborative learning in their online or blended course, as long the tool is properly licenced.
- 5.3.5 ITD and CEI will evaluate options for digital tools to ensure they are providing faculty and students with the most appropriate platform in terms of functionalities and performance.
- 5.3.6 Faculty can also choose from other high quality interactive tools to support student interaction and learning that are accessible to all students inclusive of Students of Determination. SAS will provide information on the accessibility features on chosen tools.

### **5.4 Hardware and Software Support**

- 5.4.1 Faculty and students are responsible for their own off-campus internet connections.
- 5.4.2 ITD provides onsite and remote technical support, services and technical resources to ZU employees and students.
- 5.4.3 ZU has dedicated internet bandwidth available to host the online environment which is actively monitored during the teaching hours.
- 5.4.4 The Remote Desktop Service is available for employees and students to support online access for student labs.

### **5.5 Accessibility Standards**

- 5.5.1 ZU strives to adhere to and assure delivery is accurate, in an appropriate accessible format for Students of Determination and in sufficient time to make the same use of the content or software.
- 5.5.2 The LMS and digital tools such as conferencing should be accessible to all students.
- 5.5.3 Online courses should be developed and maintained in conformance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines-Version 2.

## **6. Faculty (Development)**

### **6.1 Preparation for Online Delivery**

- 6.1.1 As online and blended learning contexts require varying levels of digital competency, faculty may need specific support and development for success.
- 6.1.2 All faculty engaging in designing and developing, instructing and facilitating, and/or reviewing and evaluating online or blended courses should evaluate their digital competency to guide their professional development plans.

- 6.1.3 The CEI support faculty in achieving the digital competencies by providing various resources, including but not limited to the following:
- a) specific modules, workshops and materials on innovative teaching practices;
  - b) certification courses;
  - c) training and resources to support faculty and administrators in conducting evaluations of digital competency;
  - d) self-access Online Teaching Resource Library provided through the university LMS;
  - e) manuals and guidelines to support a wide range of technical, pedagogical and research activities.

## 6.2 Refresher and Updating Qualifications

To refresh and update online teaching skills, knowledge and/or qualifications, faculty are encouraged to evaluate their digital competency and then addressing gaps by completing professional development opportunities through online modules, CEI sessions, workshops, coaching and consultations, and/or external online course delivery training.

## 7. Revision History

<b>Date</b>	<b>Revision</b>
31 March 2021	Vice-President's Decision issued (VPD#11 of 2021).
10 February 2021	Approved by the Academic Council.
11 January 2021	Endorsed by a joint session of the Deans' Council and Provost's Council.
9 November 2020	New procedures drafted.