



# VALLEY UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

“Education for Self Reliance”

## E-LEARNING POLICY

This E-Learning Policy was approved and adopted by the University Council at its meeting held on 08 March 2021 2020



SECRETARY TO THE COUNCIL





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## DEFINITIONS

**E-learning** may be referred to as the use of electronic information and communication technologies to effectively enhance teaching and learning.

**FT or Face-to-Face, Traditional:** Instruction occurs in real time (synchronously), with student(s) and faculty physically present in the same location.

**FO or Face-to-Face, On-line:** Instruction occurs in real time (synchronously), with student(s) and faculty present via technology (e.g. television, tele-conference, video-conference or chat).

**LO or Local, Online:** Instruction occurs over the Internet (asynchronously). Scheduled face-to-face meetings may be required for orientation and student evaluation.

**RO or Remote, Online:** Instruction occurs over the Internet (asynchronously). Students do not need to be on campus for any portion of coursework.

**HY or Hybrid:** A course offering that combines FT and FO/LO/RO. To be considered hybrid, a course will meet via FO/LO/RO for roughly 25%-75% of class sessions.

**FL or Flexible:** Course allows for more than one modality; students choose the modality (or modalities) suiting their needs from instructor identified options.

Synchronous- teaching a group of people learning the same things at the same time in the same place, as with video conferencing tools.

Totally Online- When a course is taught entirely in virtual space or cyberspace in regards to computer technology.

Web-base- The underlying structure is supported by the internet. i.e. “world wide web”

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Valley University of Science and Technology (VUST) seeks to participate in training high quality human resource in the areas of agribusiness, education, business management, science and technology for Uganda and the region. Furthermore, the university seeks to conduct research, consultancy, knowledge transfer partnerships so as to contribute to the economic development of Uganda and the East and Central African Region. Valley University of Science and Technology has established a policy on e-learning that will be implemented to guide the usage of the e-learning resources such that students achieve the expected course outcomes. The University is committed to enhancing quality flexible learning which has to be consistent with its strategic priorities, such as increased use of information and communication technologies in teaching and learning, flexible modes of learning and cost-effectiveness of courses and leads the University towards the realization of its Vision and Mission. The Vision of Valley University of Science and Technology is To be the Leading rural based university, providing practical knowledge and skills in new scientific methods of work for socio-economic development and transformation in a competitive environment; and The Mission of the university is To develop skills in Innovation and Modern Technologies in Science and Business for Economic Development and Societal Transformation.

E-learning comprises all forms of electronically supported learning and teaching. The information and communication systems, whether networked learning or not, serve as specific media to implement the learning process. E-learning is essentially the computer and network-enabled transfer of skills and knowledge. E-learning applications and processes include Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual education opportunities and digital collaboration. Content is delivered via the Internet, intranet/extranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV, and CD-ROM. It can be self-paced or instructor-led and includes media in the form of text, image, animation, streaming video and audio. In regard to the above context, the university intends to establish policy on e-learning that will be implemented to guide the usage of the e-learning resources such that students achieve the expected course outcomes. As part of this commitment, the Academic Office has responsibility for pedagogical leadership, coordination and alignment of the pedagogical and technical dimensions of e-learning and stakeholders' liaison.

## **2. RATIONALE**

The policy provides protocols and guidelines for all e-Learning courses programs offered. The policy encourages and enables faculty to develop quality hybrid and fully online courses. The policy also clarifies that an equal amount of teaching per credit hour is required for e-Learning designated and face to face courses. It is not the intent of this policy to supplant any existing policies set forth by the University, but where necessary, to define new or to expand

existing policies and procedures to ensure the most effective implementation and support of e-Learning courses and programs.

Therefore the policy for e-learning strives to realize the following vision: To effectively enhance the teacher to student teaching and learning experience, through the improvement of management and support of e-learning, by providing the opportunity to utilize the flexibility, accessibility and nature of educational environment that focuses on the needs of both the teacher and learner. VUST will undertake the role of making sure that all its programs are effectively enhanced through teaching approaches that utilize e-learning. These approaches used by academic staff will be critically reviewed to conform to utilization of technologies for teaching and learning.

### **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY**

The main objective of this policy is to facilitate and support e-learning through the use of information and communication technologies by guiding and coordinating all the stakeholders within and outside the university. Described below are the specific objectives of the policy.

- a. To use current and emerging flexible technologies to enrich e-learning experiences that can demonstrate added value for students and cost effectiveness. To achieve this, the university desires to adopt the new emerging technologies, to keep with the ongoing technological advancement in its operational areas which includes e-learning.
- b. To develop appropriate courses and units consistent with strategic planning, and are cost-effective. The university has skilled teaching staffs that are capable of developing such courses and units. They will do these in collaboration with other stakeholders.
- c. To adopt University-wide quality assurance processes to ensure the appropriate use of current and emerging technologies for teaching and learning, including planning, design and development, implementation, evaluation and feedback and revision. The university will achieve this through the unit of quality assurance where by the set standards will be used as the base to assess the quality of the resources used in e-learning.
- d. To support the professional learning of staff in the use of current and emerging flexible technologies; and support students to develop the abilities to use current and emerging flexible technologies to enhance their learning experiences. Technical supporting and teaching staff will support students in their needs so that they are able to use the available technologies to make their studies smooth.
- e. To play a leadership role in the social, economic and intellectual life of the local, regional and wider communities we serve. The university has been doing this; it's only going to extend the same to e-learning as one of its new services.

#### 4. SCOPE OF THE E-LEARNING POLICY

The University will use e-learning where appropriate to support the achievement of its goals which are in-line with the national ICT policy in providing e-learning experiences that are flexible, responsive and effective and meet the needs of all its learners and partners. Policy aspects pertaining to e-learning will, where relevant, be embedded in all University policies and procedures to ensure a consistent and corporate approach to associated systems, processes and responsibilities. For the e-learning to be effective and efficient, a student is expected to have an access to all required materials/resources so that she/he is able to meet the learning outcomes of the course and this includes the expertise. Where an offering provides e-learning components or content on which the achievement of the learning outcomes is NOT dependent, it does not fall within the scope of this policy but nevertheless, such provision is subject to the requirements of the University relating to electronic learning content, including its provenance, quality, and management.

#### 5. POLICY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**Principle 1:** The University ensures that its e-learning courses match to the curriculum. The pedagogy is matched with and aligned to the appropriate Uganda National Council of Higher Education guidelines through, clear objectives (at an appropriate level and form of specification), the relevance of content covered, the appropriateness of student activities, and the nature of the assessment.

**Principle 2:** The University ensures that the pedagogy engages and motivates learners. This engagement is evident in an ethos of being, motivating, such that it is both enjoyable for learners and makes them want to continue using ICT or want to carry on with learning the topic, such that it does not produce adverse emotional reactions that are likely to cause reduced motivation to learn in general, or to use ICT in particular;

**Principle 3:** The University ensures that students taking e-learning courses have a formative assessment. The university provides formative assessment, i.e. assessment that is primarily aimed at improving learning. This may be achieved in a number of ways:

- By providing rapid feedback that helps learners to see how they can improve and what they must do to improve,
- By providing opportunities for peer assessment, with appropriate understanding of the criteria or standards of performance required,
- By providing opportunities for self-assessment, with appropriate understanding of the criteria or standards of performance required.

**Principle 4:** The University ensures that e-Learning courses have coherence, consistency and transparency. The courses are internally coherent and consistent in the way the objectives, content, student activity and assessment, match to each other. It is open and accessible in its design.

**Principle 5:** The University ensures that its e-learning provision can meet the needs of a full range of flexible and independent learning experiences. This includes on and off campus learners in local, regional, national and international settings and cover both blended and fully e-learning courses ranging from full awards to informal and individual learning.

**Principle 6 :** The University ensures that students taking e-learning courses have equity of opportunity with those taking courses delivered in more traditional ways, and that its marketing, recruitment, administrative and support procedures and provision are fully aligned to the needs of the e-learner.

**Principle 7:** The University continually works towards ensuring that all systems, both manual and electronic, used in the e-learning context interoperate in the most effective way to provide learners with an effective and increasingly individualized learning environment encompassing all aspects of their experience as a student of the University, as part of a holistic managed environment for learners.

**Principle 8:** The University exploits the range of technologies used in the e-learning context to work with partner organizations, employers and individuals to assist it in meeting its goals of supporting the independent and lifelong learner and continuing professional development.

**Principle 9:** The University, through its quality processes, ensures that e-learning provision meets the standards expected by the University, funding bodies and relevant legislation, and that it is accessible, educationally sound, engaging and appropriate to its target populations, whilst ensuring that course developers and those facilitating learning have the scope to innovate and fully employ their professional skills and judgments.

**Principle 10:** The University ensures that, by using effective costing models and market research, the pricing of e-learning offerings is both competitive and appropriate to the target populations.

## **6. POLICY PROVISIONS**

### **6.1 Widening access to educational opportunity**

#### **Background**

A commitment to widening access to education, especially for non-traditional or external students, is a common goal of many university e-learning strategies.

#### **Policy Statements**

The university will put in place systems and mechanisms to widen access to educational opportunity

#### **Strategies**

1. **Access to university degrees:** Widening access to education is still commonly associated with providing a 'secondchance' opportunity for mature students to 'earn a degree', especially for individuals who did not have an opportunity to attend university.

2. **Scale of programme provision:** The speed and pervasiveness of E-learning spread among tertiary institutions is more important, and potential students – see e-learning as an appropriate and convenient means of engaging in tertiary studies.
3. **Enrolment growth:** The adoption, diffusion and exploitation of e-learning will increase student enrolment.
4. **Widening access to continuing education:** This extends beyond degree studies to embrace provision of extension studies – not least continuing education and the provision of programmes to develop the professional and occupational expertise of participants. Continuing education programmes of this kind are to take care of the in-service education programmes.
5. **Widening access to university resources:** This is motivated by a desire to use the power of new technology to widen access to academic resources, adopt variations on an indirect approach. Strategies again vary from one institution to another. Here, a co-operative approach to be implemented to allow partnerships with universities to widen access to academic resources –without the participating universities having to engage directly in provision of e-learning programmes.
6. **Widening access:** E-learning in part to be implemented due to the changing environment in which universities now discharge their traditional roles. The university to offer programmes in response to varied demands: for career-related qualifications, for professional development, for 'top-up' programmes that allow students to complete degree studies commenced years earlier, or more generally to provide opportunities for lifelong learning.

## 6.2 Enhancing the quality of teaching and learning

### Background

In some universities, enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in on-campus programmes, through the use of new technology, is a primary goal. A commitment to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, especially for students on-campus, is a recurrent aim of university e-learning strategies – especially in traditional, research-intensive universities.

### Policy Statements

The university will put in place measures to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

### Strategies

- **Supplementing teaching on-campus;** the approach is to use e-learning to supplement traditional teaching by providing an additional component in the teaching-learning process. In programmes of this kind, the primary focus is on the teaching of regular courses to conventional, on-campus students, enrolled in courses developed and taught by whole-time faculty, that lead to the normal degrees and awards of the university.
- **Hybrid and blended strategies on-campus:** We shall adopt this blended strategy, to replace some part of the traditional teaching with online sessions. The university will offer



some courses "that meet half the time in classrooms and half online. This strategy may provide students with a wider choice of learning strategies, but also alleviate pressure on teaching space.

- **Accessing external resources:** the university shall adopt more structured strategies to access external resources, or to widen the range of options available to students. We shall co-operate with other institutions in developing or sharing academic resources, enabling infrastructures, or other resources.
- **Introducing innovative pedagogy** Interest in the quality of teaching, and the adoption of innovative pedagogy, is not confined to teaching on-campus. The university shall facilitate the adoption of an innovative pedagogy, attuned to the pedagogical and curricular challenge of the particular subject matter and student group. In achieving this, we shall seek support from external companies that may require the output of the innovative products and services and work with industry representatives in developing a programme that is academically demanding, and responsive to the challenges confronting the industry in a competing global market.
- **Enhancing the quality of teaching:** Lecturers will be facilitated to prepare materials and subsequently deliver them without including facilitator in between, effectively precluding critical ongoing interaction between students and lecturers.

### **6.3 Reducing the cost of higher education**

#### **Background**

While reducing the cost of higher education is sometimes advanced as an objective of university e-learning strategies, much of the initial investment by universities in elearning seems to have had scant regard to considerations of cost, perhaps because of the innovative character of the development and the proximate factors promoting investment.

#### **Policy Statements**

1. The university shall ensure Cost-effectiveness of e-learning:
2. "The measurement of educational quality is ... at the bottom of all controversies over university productivity." The university will endeavour to ensure Academic productivity.
3. The university will Implement Institutional strategies for cost containment
4. Cost-containment is a viable strategy in the implementation of some e-learning strategies. The university will implement measures for Replicating scale economies and related potential for extensive provision – of more traditional modes of distance teaching.
5. In some cases, e-learning strategies have a less direct, but no less important, influence on the cost of higher education. The university shall facilitate change and the adoption of new technology.

#### **Strategies**

- Implement Technology-based teaching to reduce the cost of education.

- Ensure good savings on physical infrastructure usage, relative to traditional, contiguous teaching;
- Implement E-learning that will facilitate a higher student/faculty ratio without impairing the quality of instruction or students' learning experience.
- Ensure E-learning will produce real efficiency gains in courses without sacrificing the quality of instruction – provided a sensible pedagogic approach is embraced that afford students avenues to communicate about their learning.
- The University to provide resources to support the development of e-learning programmes.
- Programmes generally to respond to identified educational needs, and career-related and targeted at familiar market sectors.
- Students additionally to have online access to library services and bibliographic databases.
- Put in place an administrative unit is responsible for the operational management of the e-learning programme as a whole, with technical support services. Online technologies tend to be used in a relatively simple mode, with the primary emphasis on easy access for students.
- Replicating courses taught to students on-campus should, other things being equal, reduce the cost of course development and administration.
- Additionally, the employment of part-time staff (as an alternative to allocating full-time faculty to course development and teaching) can be less costly; experience elsewhere has shown that direct and overhead unit costs of part-time staff, are generally lower than for full-time faculty.
- Produce high quality course materials,
- Provide effective tutorial support,
- Put in place efficient administration systems, and a related research base.
- An inter-university agreement on student-mobility allows students to study, and earn credit for, courses taken at other Finnish universities.

## **7. IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE POLICY.**

### **7.1 E-LEARNING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

E-learning policy is not the only factor necessary for successful e-learning institutional adoption; bottom up change driven by e-learning champions or innovators and early adopters is important and strategies which create a climate of collaboration can also drive organizational change. As the expression of senior leadership commitment, policy statements articulate the top management commitment and strategic ownership needed at the highest level for the uptake and rapid diffusion of e-learning in institutions. In some ways staff may consider themselves explicitly constrained in their ICT use by lack of institutional support and vision, this policy is not necessarily the driving force for change and ICT take-up, but it is also a response to the on-going national activities which will scale up VUST departments. For a smooth implementation the following guidelines have to be put in place to reinforce any existing:

## **Institutional Policy**

### **Developing an E-Learning Course**

E-Learning Development & Support Policy: The E-Learning Coordinator will assist the university in the development and support of course modules.

#### **Procedures**

- Registration of Students
- Validate student accounts and permissions
- Coordinate with Registrar's Office to add students to online class offerings based on student program requirements
- Student Ongoing Support
- Ensure understanding of Weekly Schedule
- Ensure understanding of the E-Learning Module Resources.
- Faculties are to create course syllabi as per requirements set by the Curriculum Committee.
- Students are to refer to course syllabus for course requirements, conditions and contract information.

### **Instructional Development Training, Training Opportunities, and Services Policy**

- Faculty will receive regular training for proficient delivery and management of course modules.
- Faculty will receive regular training for proficient management and facilitation of student-faculty interaction.
- Students will receive regular training for efficient use of student-faculty interaction services.
- After completion of course registration, students will be referred to the E-Learning Coordinator.
- Each student without previous E-Learning experience will be scheduled for a mandatory E-Learning environment orientation.
- First-Year Students are required to attend the E-learning environment training during the first week of orientation.
- Students can attend on-going E-learning orientation throughout the semester.

### **University Course Development**

- The Curriculum Committee develop and maintain programmatic and course development in relation to National Council for Higher Education accreditation requirements.
- The E-Learning Department works with the Curriculum Committee to achieve accreditation for academic programs in an ELearning environment.

## **Types of Online Education**

### **E-learning courses**

1. E-learning classes are offered with all work being completed on-line.
2. Students access primary content and instruction from an e-learning environment using a variety of tools including, but not limited to, e-mail, text and voice chat, discussion boards, web pages, and multimedia technologies.
3. Specific technologies employed will vary by course and instructor. Depending on the teaching style of the instructor and the course content, instruction can take place synchronously (all participants in the course log in at the same time) or asynchronously (participants log in and participate as their schedule permits), or some combination of the above.

### **Online Education**

- A form of distance learning providing an opportunity for learners to use a computer network (internet) to distribute educational content via two-way communication among teachers and learners in an educational institution.

### **Distance Learning**

- Is carried out remotely by using electronic communication and is not bound by geographical locations.
- Distance learning provides a more flexible course schedule for those that have a family and/or are working students.
- Hybrid/Blended courses Hybrid classes provide an opportunity to take advantage of both online learning and face-to-face interaction.
- Students must attend face-to-face class instruction or video conferencing courses and log in to their E-learning environment each week.

### **Web-Enhanced Courses**

- Web-enhanced classes are traditional face-to-face courses that use tools in the Elearning environment to expand student learning beyond the boundaries of the classroom.
- These students access some course content from an E-learning environment using a third party web based software and or access through E-learning system.
- Depending on the teaching style and or subject matter of course content the instructor will teach and facilitate classes synchronously for all participants in the course who log-in at the same time).

### **E-Learning Environment Policy**

- E-Learning faculty are strongly encouraged to use approved E-learning system for any course online or on-ground.
- Student Code of Conduct - Refer to the Student Handbook
- Academic Code of Conduct - Refer to the Academic policy and the Human Resource Manual.
- The E-Learning Coordinator is responsible for posting training agendas, steps, and topics for student or faculty training sessions.

**Content Ownership:** Faculty/Department that originates materials reserves the right to decide the conditions under which the material will be shared except in the following cases: The material is specifically paid for or commissioned by the university or the university provides an unusual contribution either financial or material. Any materials and content developed by faculty to deliver instruction for the University becomes property of the University. In this case, the university will determine the conditions under which the material will be shared. The material is developed as a result of a specific collaboration, in which case the guidelines governing that collaboration will prevail. Materials produced which do not indicate any specific conditions for sharing will automatically be considered to have been shared according to VUST regulations.

**Non-Faculty Staff:** Materials created by staff as part of their job responsibilities will be owned by the university unless they are the creative force behind the work and/or have made a substantial intellectual contribution. In that case the same guidelines that pertain to Faculty shall apply.

**Students:** This policy presumes that students will not be creators of e-learning material. Students who assist with creating or producing e-learning shall be acknowledged as collaborators. In the event that students are involved in developing e-learning as part of their university education, the authorship rights should fall to the University but the students will be appropriately attributed.

#### **Content Re-Use**

- Any materials and content developed by faculty for the University, can be used in other course modules.
- Students cannot re-use work from previous courses for subsequent course modules unless approved by the course instructor.
- Disclosure: The University will follow any non-disclosure agreements necessary for internal/external projects.
- Royalties and Proceeds: Content that generates royalties or proceeds will be owned and managed by the University

#### **E-Learning Communications**

- Students are responsible for ensuring that they have the minimum technology requirements to complete online courses, including access to a computer and printer and Internet connection.
- Students may check with the E-Learning Department to ensure that they have access to accessible technology.
- Students and faculty will answer all forms of communications in a timely fashion. Faculty must communicate with students in the time of instructor's absence.

### **Assignments and Feedback**

- Faculty will post assignment content and due dates the first class day of the workweek.
- Students will post assignments on time according to posted due dates.

### **E-Learning Administrative Policy**

#### **Institutional Support for e-Learning Courses**

- Many times, faculty must serve as the de facto front-line support resource for e-Learning technologies. It is because of this that technology-enhanced learning along with its technology-driven delivery more often than not requires an increased skill set to contend with the multitude of challenges that arise.
- Technological readiness is extremely important to the success of any online course. Inadequate technological readiness disrupts student learning and e-Learning efforts and generally manifests itself in course evaluations. It is therefore required that faculties interested in pursuing e-Learning education become familiar with the standards and best practices associated with e-Learning.

#### **Faculty Support:**

- Academic units are encouraged to make appropriate resources available for these faculty in order that they might achieve e-Learning-related goals. Workload calculations should be uniform and consistent with guidelines currently used to determine assigned time for excess enrollment, for differences in course classification, and for faculty to make use of support available for both technology and pedagogy. Faculty who teach or plan to teach e-Learning courses are encouraged to attend those training sessions necessary for them to acquire the pedagogical knowledge and technological skill set required for quality e-Learning.
- Office Hours Policy: Department hours for administrative needs are between 8:00am to 5:00pm.
- Procedures: The E-learning Department will address any concerns or issues in a timely fashion, except on weekends and holidays.

**Technology Support:** In order to facilitate instruction that is appropriate for selected technologies, professional support in the use of the technology shall include:

- Training in the use of tools, applications, and transport
- Development and production of online materials

**E-Learning Support:** In order to facilitate instruction that is pedagogically effective, faculty members teaching e-Learning courses shall have access to pedagogy support from faculty and staff involved in e-Learning. Such support shall include:

#### **Student Support Services:**

Support for online courses must be available both on campus and online. All regular University students receiving instruction through e-Learning shall be provided equivalent access to the basic student support services offered on campus for which they are eligible. These may include admission, course registration services, academic advising and orientation, career development and other programs as applicable. For faculties that are proposing to offer an existing degree/certificate programs in an e-Learning format in which more than half of the major course requirements are offered online, the University shall provide support so that the following programmatic services are available before the program is implemented. These shall:

- Include the means for ensuring the academic integrity of student
- Include the means for providing the required academic support services and resources (including library, general advising, counseling, social support services).
- Include the means whereby faculty and students will access needed technical

**Library Support:** The Library shall provide equivalent support for e-Learning courses and programs. Effective and appropriate library services and access to library collections for e-Learning may differ from those services offered on campus but they should be designed to meet a wide range of information and research needs. The requirements of academic programs should guide the Library in its response.

**Evaluation/Assessment Policy:**

- The Department/ faculty to which the E-learning course and/or program belongs will conduct faculty evaluations based on the schedule provided by the E-learning Coordinator.
- Procedures: All faculties are required, as part of their normal duties, to assess their students, meeting the objectives of the University's Assessment Plan produced and approved.
- Assessment is a key authentication tool. Accordingly, the following assessment tools are to be used:
  - Take home assignments
  - Online tests and/or quizzes
  - Team projects /papers

The requirements of the policy are in addition to normal University policies, procedures and regulations relating to assessment. E-Assessment may be used for formative or summative purposes.

- All staff members involved in the E-assessment process must be familiar with the on-line environment and have attended the appropriate training course prior to gaining access to the system.

- The Assessment committee is responsible for ensuring that E-assessment does not compromise the assessment methodology and the integrity of what is being assessed.
- The Committee will update Policy and Procedures during appointed meetings and review the operations of the E-Learning in light of the University's E-Learning goals and objectives and work to implement any changes necessary to improve the functioning of the E-Learning effort.
- E-Learning Coordinator assists and supports faculty in the design, implementation, and support for E-Learning courses. The E-Learning coordinator is the liaison between students, the lecturers, and IT support staff. It is the incumbent's responsibility to ensure faculty and students are supported in their efforts to deliver effective E-Learning courses and programs.
- The Committee has the power to make changes to the Policy and Procedures as deemed necessary, but shall submit such changes to the relevant university organs for ratification.

**A Policy Implementation Group.** This group will oversee the implementation of the e-Learning policy and will report to Academic Committee and other relevant University groups. The Group will oversee the development of an evaluation plan to assess the impact of the policy. Central to this will be a commitment to include feedback from students and staff on all aspects of e-learning.

E-learning policy implementation group Terms of Reference

1. Represent Faculty's strategies and priorities in relation to the implementation of e-learning Policy
2. Advise on the priority and nature of eLearning Policy implementation activities
3. Promote and disseminate e-learning Policy implementation
4. Advise on the ongoing development of University e-learning policy membership representatives from the following areas of the University and its partner members of each Faculty who can represent the activities relating to the strategic focus of the Faculty including: course design and delivery; administration; quality and the student experience.

**Student Office.** The students' guild office will be central in the implementation of the e-learning policy. Students' leaders are to be engaged to place a critical role in sensitization, mindset change of students to adjust to the new ways of learning. Necessary support shall be provided to the students leaders for the achievement of this objective.

**IT office.** Since a significant number of e-learning activities have IT bearing, the IT office will provide the technical support in the implementation of e-learning policy.

E-Learning Policy Implementation Acceptance Group Terms of Reference



1. Consider the recommendations of the eLearning Policy Implementation group with respect to approval.
2. Make recommendations on the prioritization and implementation of approved developments.
3. Consider and assess University Plans and make recommendations for the consideration of the e-learning Policy Implementation Group with respect to the e-learning Policy development or implementation.
4. Consider and assess innovations in e-learning and make recommendations for the consideration of the eLearning Policy Implementation Group with respect to the e-learning Policy development or implementation.
5. Consider e-learning Policy developments on progression for ratification by Academic committee.

## **8. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER POLICIES/DOCUMENTS**

E-learning demands closer working relationships between academic units and the institution's administrative and operational divisions, Faculty and departmental plans indicate the demands that they place on services provided by other departments. The implementation of this policy will be along with the following policies:

- 8.1 Policy on Infrastructure:** The introduction of an e-learning program imposes new requirements for the institution to provide on-line administrative services and a technical infrastructure designed to provide secure services accessed by users operating outside an institutional firewall. A new infrastructure to be put in place and only designed persons will be authorized to have access and provide support as described below:
- 8.2 Technical Assistance.** The following personnel will provide technical assistance for e-learning staff and users at the three main stages i.e. production, delivery and access. *Production:* Media Specialists consisting of E-Learning specialist, Graphic Designers, Web Designers and Editors. *Delivery:* IT Specialists. *Access:* IT Helpdesk Officers. See Appendix A for description of the above-named technical personnel.
- 8.3 Software/Hardware.** The university will provide software and hardware options that are suitable for e-learning users where possible. Appendix B explores available option of procurement.
- 8.4 IT Network Management and Infrastructure.** The University provides good internet bandwidth and this facilitates an improved and efficient access throughout the university campus. In addition, the IT network will support the e-learning website that shares selected materials on the World Wide Web. The effective implementation of the university's ICT policy will also augment this e-learning policy.
- 8.5 Role of Communication Design,** ICT unit and Library. The University encourages a teamwork approach to curriculum and materials development to bring together different

kinds of expertise available across the university e.g. disciplinary, design, systems, ICT, etc.

**8.6 Open sharing of educational materials with other institutions if needed.** This sharing policy mandates the placement of e-learning materials produced at the University on the VUST intranet, and the complementary placement of VUST - developed materials on a similar site. This policy helps avoid duplicative efforts and expand the base of materials for all involved parties.

**8.7 Policy on Virtual Mobility:** Delivery of programs via e-learning offers new opportunities for achieving the objectives of student mobility programs through virtual mechanisms.

## **9. E-LEARNING POLICY EVALUATION.**

In order to facilitate innovation and motivation, the university will organize periodic evaluation of e-learning materials. This enhances the reputation of those that excel in e-learning implementation and make their accomplishments more visible to the university at large. In addition, the university can promote the e-learning culture by organizing certificate-awarding seminars, hands-on workshops, etc for Faculty/Department and staff. University e-learning Policy and its implementation plan overtly address Quality, including Quality processes and their enhancement.

## **10. SECURITY AND QUALITY OF E-LEARNING COURSES**

The goal is to establish campus-wide guidelines on academic integrity and quality of e-learning courses as well as to articulate the responsibilities of all parties involved (faculty, staff, students, and administration) at Valley University. This document also affirms the University's commitment to enforce such procedures and practices to support faculty and staff in handling academic integrity matters pertaining to e-learning courses. There are no perfect ways to prevent student cheating in either traditional, face-to-face (f2f) or e-learning classes. Under these circumstances, the following are required procedures and recommended practices for faculties to consider when designing and implementing e-learning courses, assignments, and assessments. These procedures and practices have been developed based on recommendations from the review of the literature on best practices, and experiences of faculty members with teaching experience in online courses. This information will be made available on various websites, such as VUST notice board, Valley University website. A copy of this document will be provided so that these ideas are reinforced at multiple levels. Appropriate action for alleged instances of academic misconduct, as spelled out in the university's Student Code of Conduct and procedures, should be undertaken by individual Faculty members, instructors, department chairpersons, or University Deans, in accordance with the circumstances. This document shall be revised with input from all parties involved at least once every three years by the Admissions and academic Committee and the Electronic Learning Committee who will be joint owners of this document.

**Security Features.** The following are required procedures for the implementation of all eLearning courses, or courses with eLearning as a module or component.

1. At the time of registration, students enrolling in these courses are to be photo-identified in the system. This is intended to eliminate impersonation and to ensure that the same student enrolled in the course is attending the online lectures and taking the exams. This requirement will put Valley University in compliance with security measures proposed. Additional considerations include:
  - i. When a student's picture is not available, the student has the option to provide a biographical statement and picture, as a preliminary assignment.
  - ii. Where applicable (e.g., exams), alternate picture IDs, such as a National ID or driver's license cards, could be presented to the faculty, in lieu of campus ID card. This can be done through scanning and sending to the university to compare with the student details provided at registration.
2. A High-stakes test is defined as any test contributing substantially ( 25%) to the final grade. The test must be held on campus. Students who are unable to take such a test on campus will consult with the e-learning committee or Academic office for off-campus options and reach an agreement with the instructor for alternative testing arrangements prior to the exam. There may be a fee associated with off-campus testing, for which the students will be responsible. Student picture IDs must be checked prior to administering exams such as final tests. In addition to the required procedures outlined above, these are general guidelines and up to the faculty member's discretion to implement based on course requirements, needs, and outcomes. These practices have been grouped into three separate categories for clarity.

**a. Testing:**

- i. Randomize questions in a test so that each individual student gets the questions in a different order. This would minimize collaboration of two or three students who might try to take the test together, in a computer lab.
- ii. Use of timed tests requires students to know the information prior to beginning the exam, and reduces the chance that they will discuss questions with distant or nearby "consultants." This also prevents students from looking up answers in their notes, textbook or on the internet.
- iii. Use testing software that keeps track of the time a student takes to answer each question. At the end of the exam, instructors should be able to identify the outliers and patterns in the amount of time it takes to answer each question.
- iv. Narrow the testing window (the test will be administered on a specific date and time only), so that plagiarism can be minimized.
- v. Check the document "properties" for the "creation date, time and author" of submitted documents (e.g., Word, Excel, pdf files).

- vi. Require students to turn off their cell phones and other communication devices during the exam.
- vii. Display test questions one at a time. This makes it more difficult to copy the test and forward it to others.
- viii. Assign a password right before the test. The password would be changed for those students who are taking the test on a different date and time. A new password should be assigned for each test.
- ix. Don't post grades or provide feedback to students until all testing is done.
- x. Prompt all students to complete the exam so that they can't re-enter the test.
- xi. If possible, develop and administer numerous tests throughout the semester. This would not only help curb cheating in online tests, but it also helps instructors to regularly assess student performance and intervene with those who are falling behind.
- xii. If possible, faculty should offer more open-book exams to build positive relationships with students, enhance learning outcomes, and make subject material meaningful.
- xiii. Develop tests containing higher-order level questions that require analysis, synthesis, evaluation and application, rather than simple recall or comprehension. Similarly, assignments and exams that emphasize written work and problem-solving should be encouraged to minimize plagiarism and enable critical thinking and originality of ideas. Examples include essays, and/or online discussions.

**b. Course Syllabus:**

- i. The syllabus for the course should contain the following statement: Educational access is the provision of classroom accommodations, auxiliary aids and services to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of their disability.
- ii. Instructors should establish a culture for academic integrity in online courses just as they would in an onsite course. Faculty can include an academic honesty statement for every assignment and exam. For example, include a "Yes/No" statement in online assessments: I pledge that I have not violated the Valley University Code during this examination." Alternately, have the students include that statement in their assignments.

**c. Writing:**

- i. Assignments that build upon each other (e.g., corrections to assignment 1 are included in assignment 2) can help the instructor look for consistency in writing, the student's method of addressing feedback, and consistency in performance.
- ii. All previous drafts of writing assignments should be submitted with the final draft and could include edited comments from the lecturer for students who have gone there for assistance. The name of the tutor, date, and the time that student met with the lecturer should be included.
- iii. Faculty can ask students to submit (or at least cite) copies of reference articles or books, annotated bibliographies, or previous drafts of their submission, to encourage authenticity of the written work.

- iv. Plagiarism can be addressed in distance education in ways similar to onsite courses. Instructors should compare various assignments from the same student to look for changes in writing style, format, etc., if they are long answer or discussion-oriented questions.

## **11. GENERAL GUIDELINES TO INSTRUCTORS:**

1. In the course outline, clearly define Plagiarism and what constitutes plagiarism for that particular course, so that there is no ambiguity or confusion on part of the student or instructor. Include University plagiarism policy in eLearning course outline. It is the responsibility of the instructor to let the students be aware of the consequences of plagiarism in any form. Finally, the instructor should be aware of the various options available for checking plagiarism, and let the students know in advance that such options will be exercised as necessary.
2. If assignments are weighted more heavily (participation in live or threaded discussions, group projects, or presentations) than tests, the impact of cheating on a high stakes test is reduced.
3. A pre-test can be useful to establish baseline knowledge of each student vs. performance later in the course.
4. New student orientation programs, the Introduction to eLearning course, admissions documents, and student handbooks should emphasize that academic dishonesty in online or onsite courses will not be tolerated, and examples of academic dishonesty in online courses should be included in these documents or orientation sessions.

## **12. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT**

We recommend the following for e-learning courses:

1. The Committee for e-learning encourages new (and existing) faculty to take the Faculty Online Teaching and Design (FOTD) course, which covers teaching in an online environment as well as best practices in course design. All of the content is consistent with Quality Assurance (QA) standards. Each online course at VUST should use the VUST template designed by the Committee for e-learning in order to comply with QA standards and to ensure inclusion of pertinent university policies.
2. All faculties are encouraged to engage in additional learning about distance education by participating in classes, online learning modules, or other methods of instruction provided by the committee for eLearning and the Faculty to constantly update and improve their online courses. Documentation of a minimum of one activity per year is required of faculty who teach completely online courses or blended courses. Eventually we would like to see faculty complete an on-line certificate and maintain this certificate by attending at least one event per year.

3. Faculties are encouraged to collaborate with the committee for e-learning to earn certifications for their distance courses as provided by the QM Program. Courses should be developed to meet QM standards and encourage the review process for courses.

### **13. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY STATEMENT**

Valley University of Science and Technology has adopted a policy (approved by the Council on 8th March 2021). The statement takes as its guiding assumption that the faculty member (or members) who create the intellectual property, own the intellectual property. It has been the prevailing academic practice to treat the faculty member as the copyright owner of works that are created independently and at the faculty member's own initiative for traditional academic purposes. Although that assumption applies to the patent area as well, there is in the academic context a practice of arranging for agreements between university administrations and faculty inventors that provide in some detail a means of sharing income from commercial application of patented inventions.

Intellectual property created, made, or originated by a faculty member shall be the sole and exclusive property of the faculty, author, or inventor, except as he or she may voluntarily choose to transfer such property, in full, or in part.

The university shall own copyright only in the following 3 circumstances:

- The university expressly directs a faculty member to create a specified work, or the work is created as a specific requirement of employment or as an assigned institutional duty that may, for example, be included in a written job description or an employment agreement.
- The faculty author has voluntarily transferred the copyright, in whole or in part to the institution. Such transfer shall be in the form of a written document signed by the faculty author.
- The university has contributed to a "joint work". The institution can exercise joint ownership when it has contributed services and facilities to the production of the work that goes beyond what is traditionally provided to faculty members generally in the preparation of their course materials. Such arrangement is to be agreed to in writing, in advance, and in full conformance with other provisions of this intellectual property agreement.

#### **Use the Intellectual Property**

A collective bargaining agreement or institutional policy may also allow for institutions to use works created by faculty members without charge for educational and administrative purposes within the institution. These uses are to enable the institution to operate more efficiently for such purposes as complying with accreditation agency requests, not to infringe on legitimate faculty rights.

Material created for ordinary teaching use in the classroom and in department programs, such as syllabi, assignments, and tests, shall remain the property of the faculty author, but institutions shall be permitted to use such material for internal instructional, educational, and administrative purposes, including satisfying requests of accreditation agencies for faculty-authored syllabi and course descriptions.

### **Copyright, Patent and Ownership Policy**

Ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, e-Learning courses, or other media products shall be agreed upon by the faculty and the University in accordance with the University's Policy and guidelines.

As a university system and creators of intellectual property, the University system has interest in ensuring that all copyrighted material is protected and that the rights of copyright holders and creators of intellectual property are respected and maintained."

## **14. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Implementation of the policy will require some actions that may involve changing existing procedures, while others will require financial support that would come from reallocating existing budgets or increasing them.

In light of the above, the University Council pronounced itself, not to approve any policy that exerts extra financial burden to the university, until a time when it will be deemed necessary. By implication, all policies are to utilize the existing services, facilities and human resources.

## **14. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Monitoring will be cardinal to the effective and efficient implementation of this Gender Policy. This entails the collection, analysis and use of the data and information to determine the progress of implementation. Additionally, periodic evaluation of programme processes with a view to using the findings for programme improvement and planning, and impact assessment will be an integral part of the design, development and implementation of the Policy. Consequently, gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be instituted. Activities in this area will include identification of gender-responsive indicators and targets, training of implementing personnel on monitoring and evaluation concepts and procedures, conducting the monitoring and evaluation, and using the findings for planning interventions.

## **15. CANCELLATION OF E-LEARNING COURSES POLICY**

- Course offering and cancellation will be coordinated by the Registrar, the faculty, and E-Learning Coordinator.

- The Registrar will coordinate with the Dean of faculty to review course enrollment. The Dean will decide on cancellation of courses. Cancellation will be executed by the Registrar's Office.

## **16. REVIEW OF POLICY**

- **E-Learning Policy Review Process:** Commencing with the approval of this policy, every three years the Curriculum Policy Committee of the Faculty, Senate shall initiate and carry out a review process to ascertain the need for updates or modifications to the e-Learning policy. The review is to take into account emerging issues and trends.
- **Review of e-Learning Practices:** For the purposes of providing pedagogical and technological support, the coordinator will conduct, in coordination with the Academic office, periodical institutional-wide multi-dimensional e-Learning satisfaction surveys of courses that make use of such technologies. This information will be in aggregative form and used for planning and programmatic consultation. The survey will focus on practices associated with the online tools themselves as well as their satisfaction and usage level of the tools (e.g. how often students interact with the online tools).



## **APPENDIX A: DESCRIPTION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

- **The graphic designer** (artist) will be a professional within the graphic design and graphic arts industry who assembles together images, typography or motion graphics to create a piece of design. The graphic designer will create the graphics primarily to be published for the purposes of the VUST e-learning project. They may also be responsible for typesetting, illustration and web design. The core responsibility of the designer will be to present information in a way that is both accessible and aesthetic.
- **Editor.** The Editor is responsible for digital production of the content with regard to checking copyright issues and other digital publishing related matters.
- **Web Designer.** The Web designer designs presentation of content (usually hypertext or hypermedia) that is delivered to an end-user through the World Wide Web, by way of a Web browser or other Web-enabled software like Internet television clients, micro.
- **Delivery Stage IT Specialist.** The IT specialist is a multifaceted IT person who has knowledge of information systems and is able to apply several IT technologies including software and web programming to deliver e-learning content as appropriate.
- **Access Stage IT Helpdesk Officers.** The IT Helpdesk Officers provide support for hardware and software issues related to the e-learning. They also handle phone support for the campus and help out with general support of the other staff in relation to the e-learning. The primary requirements for Helpdesk workers are to be good in interpersonal skills and a broad base of knowledge on computing.

## **APPENDIX B: SCHEME FOR HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE PROCUREMENT**

The success of e-learning is largely dependent on the ability to disseminate and access the e-learning materials. This means the availability of computers as well as an efficient and reliable network. Although VUST follows through with its usual plans for continuously improving the number of computers for students use, it is not saddled with the burden of acquiring extra computers solely for e-learning access. This also eliminates the need to maintain such machines so acquired. Where necessary, VUST will negotiate with Computer or Software manufacturing Companies not their agents to supply PC computers or software with basic specifications to students and staff at much reduced prices for educational purposes and VUST takes advantage of such arrangements.

**APPENDIX C: E-LEARNING EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

	Evaluation criteria	YES	NO
a)	Quality Assurance reports		
b)	Professional body reports		
c)	Subject review reports		
d)	Publications		
e)	Strategy and policy documents		
f)	IT reliability		
g)	Technical support to academic staff		
h)	Statistics of uptime		
i)	Statistics of unscheduled downtime		
j)	Feedback from staff		
k)	Student survey comments		