
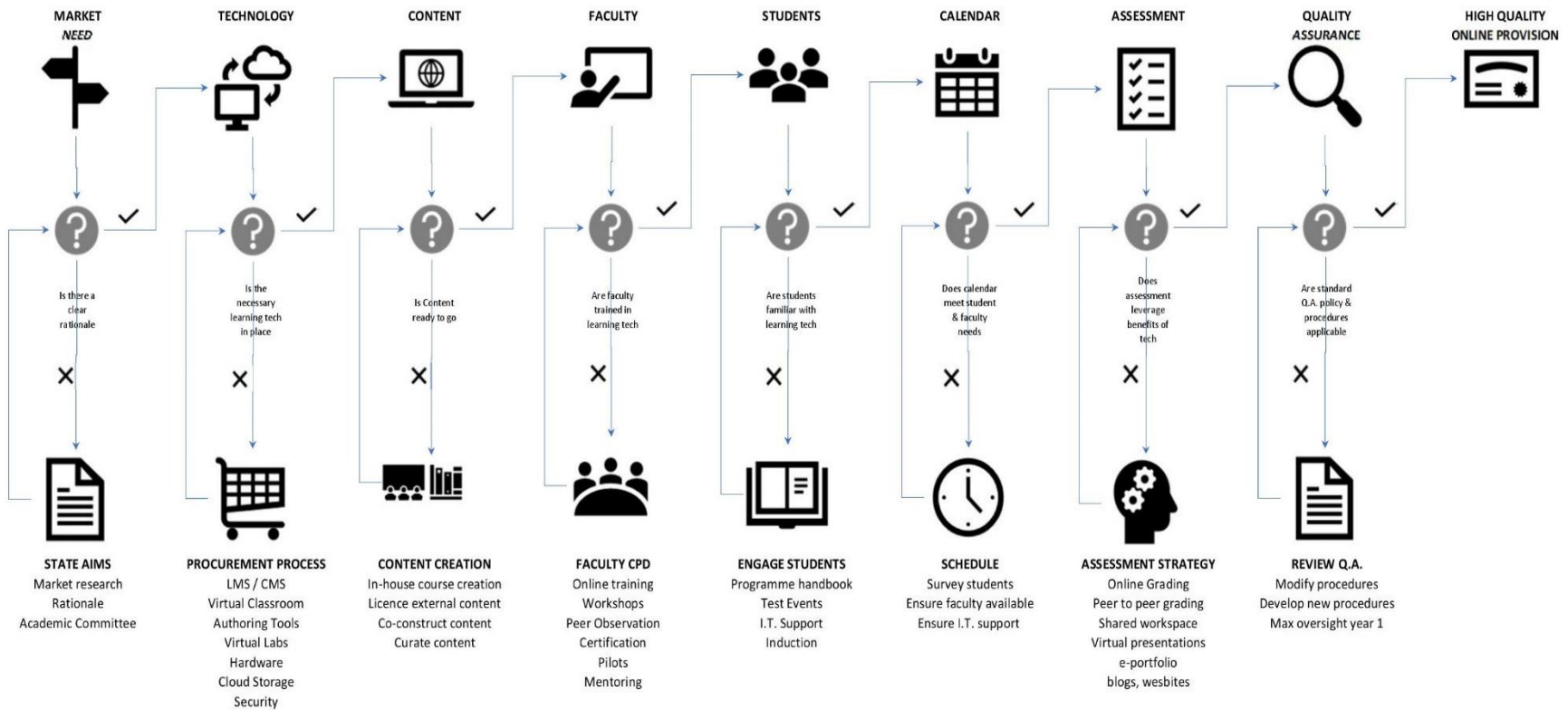


#	POLICY TITLE:	POLICY AREA:	VERSION:	DATE ADOPTED:
	<b>5.2 BLENDED AND ONLINE LEARNING</b>	5)TEACHING AND LEARNING	3.00	August 2020

### Overview Flowchart



### **Introduction and Context**

The purpose of this policy is to outline SNMCI's policy for the delivery of programmes, leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), where any component is delivered and assessed in blended format. It is written in consideration of maintenance of academic standards and is consistent with QQI's standards and guidelines.

The objectives of this policy are

- to ensure compliance with QQI guidelines for blended programmes;
- to ensure compliance with any legal, regulatory or statutory obligations required e.g. child protection legislation, GDPR, intellectual property legislation;
- to ensure integration and compliance with SNMCI's associated quality assurance policies and procedures;
- to provide a context for staff and learners re blended programme delivery;
- to provide a context for functional supports and the technical infrastructure needed to support blended delivery;
- to support SNMCI's strategic plan with regard to innovation in education and continued digital capacity.

### **Definitions**

**Online Learning** - "A form of educational delivery in which learning takes place primarily via the Internet. Online learning can serve those who are geographically distant and without access to traditional classroom education, so it includes 'distance learning'. However, distance learners are not alone in benefiting from online learning, which is also commonly part of e-learning in mainly campus-based study programmes. In such cases, it may be referred to as blended learning" (Gaebel et al., 2014, p17).

**Face- to -Face** – also known as traditional or classroom based learning, face-to-face learning is where "activity is organised around scheduled class meetings.....measured by the number of hours spent in required 'in person' class meetings in various formats, such as lectures, workshops or other traditional face to face activities" (Online Learning Consortium, 2020). In this delivery mode technology enhanced learning may be incorporated by the use of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), but the timetabling of face-to-face classes is not changed.

**Blended Learning** - "The integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences" (Garrison and Kanuak, 2004, p96) cited in QQI, *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning* (2018, p3).

### **Blended Learning at SNMCI**

Blended learning combines classroom teaching with online learning. SNMCI believes that 'blended learning' has the capacity to:-

- draw on the strengths of each learning space;
- give learners control over some aspects of time, place and pace during their studies;
- optimise learner engagement and to increase flexibility of delivery in an academically effective way.

The nature and details of the 'blend' depends on:-

- the nature of the programme;

- the nature of the teaching and learning activities;
- the capacity of the organisation;
- the engagement of learners;
- the ability and willingness of lecturers to develop their technology enhanced teaching and learning skills.

**Scope:** College wide

**Policy Statement:**

- Blended learning will be developed and delivered when this mode of delivery adds value within an organisational, programme and learner experience context;
- Blended learning will be subject to the same quality assurance policies and procedures as other modes of learning and will also take account of additional policies and procedures which are specific to blended learning as outlined in *Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*. (QQI 2018);
- Blended learning will seek to enhance flexibility of delivery for learners in line with the recommendations of a number of HE initiatives such as *The Higher Education System Performance Frameworks* (HEA, 2016,2018), *The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Roadmap for Digital Skills* (2015) and in particular the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* which states, 'In the coming decades, the delivery of higher education in Ireland must be characterised by flexibility and innovation.' (DES, 2011, p.61);
- SNMCI will ensure that processes and regulations related to Access, Transfer and Progression are appropriate to blended learning;
- Blended learning will be supported by a high quality and user-friendly Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) with the necessary operational supports and technical infrastructure to ensure a high-quality learning experience;
- All staff and students who engage with blended learning will be provided with the necessary training and support for blended and online learning programme delivery, and development where applicable, according to the relevant academic standard for programmes and awards.

**Programme Design and Delivery: (QA SECTION 3: QA 3.1/3.2/3.2A)**

- SNMCI is committed to the development of learner centred rather than technology led programmes; 'using' technology to further educational excellence;
- SNMCI is committed to providing transformative learning experiences, equipping learners with both academic and professional skills for life and for future professional roles;
- SNMCI is committed to providing an educational experience that is responsive to ever changing social and economic contexts;
- SNMCI is committed to ongoing programme development that is specifically designed for the blended space, with appropriate delivery systems and relevant teaching, learning and assessment strategies;

- SNMCI will continue with its on-going commitment to ‘universal design’; optimising accessibility for all in its teaching and learning mechanisms;
- SNMCI will take all measures to ensure, privacy, security and reliability in the delivery of blended learning; **(QA: 8.1-8.3)**

**Staff Recruitment and Professional Development: (QA SECTION 4)**

- SNMCI recognises that both technical and pedagogical expertise is required of staff who teach on blended learning programmes and is committed to supporting staff in this environment;
- SNMCI will ensure that all staff are appropriately qualified (new staff) or are supported to achieve the required level of digital competencies (existing staff) and that all staff have opportunities for Professional Development specific to their roles. **(QA 4.1-4.4)**

**Learner Support and Communication: (QA SECTION 3: QA 3.8: SECTION 7)**

- Information for prospective learners will include:-
  - The nature of the blend; independent learning, collaborative activities, synchronous and asynchronous timings; privacy policy and relevant regulations;
- An induction programme for blended learning will provide learners with
  - Requirements in relation to Information Technology; hardware, software etc.
  - Academic, technical and pastoral support mechanisms in the College;
  - QA policies and procedures of the College;
  - Specific QA related to use of IT.

**Assessment: (QA SECTION 6)**

- SNMCI is aware that while some assessment for blended learning will be similar to that for face-to-face delivery, issues related to submission processes , academic integrity and authentication of learners work will need to be considered in the design of blended programmes;
- SNMCI will ensure that all assessments (on –site or online) will meet the specified mlo’s and the academic standards of the validated awards;
- Learners will be prepared and supported in advance of submission of online assessments to ensure that they are prepared for such submissions;
- Information will be supplied to all learners and staff re the College’s policy on Academic Integrity **(QA7.8)**, procedures for dealing with breaches of academic integrity and the consequences of academic impropriety.

**Staff Involved –The policy has College wide implications. Organisational:** CEO; Director of Quality and Academic Affairs (DQAA). **Functional:** IT Manager; Instructional Designer; Programme Managers; Examinations Office; **Academic:** DQAA; Instructional Designer; Programme developers; Programme Directors; Lecturing staff;

### Policy Control Sheet

<b>Policy</b>	<b>QA 5.2 Blended and Online Learning</b>
<b>Version</b>	Version 3.0
<b>Adopted/Effective</b>	August 2020
<b>Supersedes</b>	Version 2.0
<b>Monitoring/Next Review Date</b>	June 2021
<b>Responsible Officer(s) Designated Reviewer(s)</b>	CEO/ DQAA/Instructional Designer/IT Manager
<b>Scope</b>	College Wide

### References

<b>SNMCI Policy area</b>	<b>5) Assessment of Learners: QA Vol 2</b>
<b>Developed with reference to</b>	<p>QQI <i>Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines</i> (2016)</p> <p>QQI <i>Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes</i></p> <p><i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area</i> (ESG 2015)</p> <p><i>The Higher Education System Performance Frameworks</i> (HEA, 2016,2018)</p> <p><i>The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Roadmap for Digital Skills</i> (2015)</p> <p><i>The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030.</i> (2011)</p>
<b>Related SNMCI Policies / Forms</b>	QA 5.3: Development of Online Learning Resources

### Revision

<b>Revision Number</b>	<b>Revision Description</b>	<b>Originator</b>	<b>Approved By</b>
<b>1.0/Sep 2019</b>	Revised following Sep 2018 pilot. Pilot 2 from Sep 2019		Academic Board
<b>2.0/August 2020</b>	Revised for application for Blended Learning Status August 2020	Office of DQAA	Academic Board