



## Blended Learning Policy

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**1. REVISION HISTORY AND APPROVAL**

<b>Revision</b>	<b>Nature of change</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.0	First Issue	JL	27/07/21

## **2. CONTEXT**

- 2.1. This document outlines PCI College's policy for delivery of programmes leading to an academic award under the National Qualifications Framework (NFQ), which is delivered, supported or assessed in an online or blended modality.
- 2.2. This Blended Learning policy document is applicable to transnational, collaborative and joint award provision.
- 2.3. This policy supports the development of flexible learning opportunities using non-traditional delivery methods, for access to higher education.
- 2.4. PCI College Blended Learning Policy occurs in the context of its Blended Learning Strategy, which in turn is grounded in and supports PCI College's Institutional Mission, Vision and Goals.
- 2.5. PCI College has in place a suite of policies that specifically focus on what is distinctive in the blended learning context. These policies operate alongside its QA guidelines. In accordance with QQI (2018)1, Guideline 3. 1, the College's approved and published strategy takes account of the existing and planned development of blended learning provision.
- 2.6. This policy is developed in the context of the College's current published Strategic Plan (2021) and Strategic Goals, as well as its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. The development of this has included assessing the emerging risks and challenges to successful delivery of the Blended Learning Programme offered at PCI.
- 2.7. This policy covers teaching, learning and assessment of programmes with a blended or online delivery component and is designed to safeguard the academic standards associated with PCI courses, and for staff and learners engaged in blended and online learning programme provision.
- 2.8. This policy is focused on learner centred learning, teaching and assessment, and engagement of learners in the learning process per se. PCI's policy on blended and online learning provision is consistent with Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) standards, guidelines, policies.

## **3. PURPOSE**

- 3.1. The objectives of this policy are:
  - 3.1.1. To provide a framework for staff to engage with blended and online programme delivery.
  - 3.1.2. To ensure that PCI's learning environment has the appropriate operational supports to allow blended and online learning programme delivery.
  - 3.1.3. To ensure that PCI's technical infrastructure can support blended and online programme delivery.
  - 3.1.4. To provide guidance on instructional design for blended and online programme delivery.

#### **4. BENEFITS**

4.1. This policy supports the ongoing development of technology-enhanced learning across both online and face-to-face teaching environments that will assist in enhancing the learner experience and supporting innovative teaching strategies.

4.1.1. The following assumptions underpin the development and implementation of this policy in accordance with QQI Topic-Specific Guidelines for Blended Learning Programmes (March, 2018):

- 4.1.1.1. PCI College will ensure that all strategies and processes for the appointment of induction, training and professional development for teaching and professional staff are appropriate and specific for a blended or online learning environment.
- 4.1.1.2. PCI College recognises that teaching on a blended/online programme requires pedagogical and technical expertise.
- 4.1.1.3. PCI College will ensure that academic staff are supported to function effectively in their delivery of blended/online content.
- 4.1.1.4. PCI College recognises that benchmarks and indicators (e.g., contact hours) designed for face-to-face provision may have to be adapted in a blended/online learning environment and can be revised according to the flexibility provided by available digital technologies.
- 4.1.1.5. PCI College will ensure that the appropriate technical infrastructure and technical support for programmes are in place, to support blended and online modes of delivery.
- 4.1.1.6. PCI College will ensure its teaching, learning and assessment practices are accessible to learners with disabilities. As such, the principles of 'Universal Design for Learning' will apply to blended and online learning provision offered by PCI College.
- 4.1.1.7. PCI College will ensure its teaching, learning and assessment practices are learner centred, with a focus on engaging learners in the learning process through face to-face learning or online delivery of courses.  
PCI College will ensure arrangements are in place for compliance with any legal, regulatory, or statutory obligations required for a blended or online learning context. These include, but are not limited to:
  - Child Protection Legislation;
  - Intellectual Property and Copyright Legislation;
  - General PCI College Data Protection Regulations and parameters therein;
  - Protections for Enrolled Learners, whether enrolled by PCI College or self-enrolled/registered on the institutional Virtual Learning Environment (VLE);
  - Local regulatory considerations in the context of wider, transnational provision, outside Irish and EU jurisdictions.

## **5. DEFINITIONS**

- 5.1. The use of two key terms in this policy are defined:
  - 5.1.1. Definition of Blended Learning “The integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences” (Garrison & Kanuak, 2004, p. 96). The definition was adopted by QQI (2018, p. 3) in their Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning and is reproduced here.
  - 5.1.2. Definition of 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 part of e-learning in campus-based study programmes. In such cases, it may be referred to as blended learning” This definition was also adopted from the QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, as referred to above.

## **6. SCOPE**

- 6.1. This policy applies to all Blended Learning components at PCI College.
  - 6.1.1. This policy extends and clarifies Codes of Practice and Codes of Conduct applicable to PCI College’s blended learning environment.
  - 6.1.2. Blended learning provides multiple opportunities for collaboration within and between class groups, including sharing of resources and information.
  - 6.1.3. The use of information in a blended learning environment carries with it a responsibility to ensure that this use is legal and ethical and is in accordance with the PCI College’s Quality principles, policies and procedures  
This policy highlights additional considerations for ethical use of information in a blended learning environment in PCI College.
  - 6.1.4. PCI College standard QA policies apply with respect to:
    - 6.1.4.1. Development and validation of new programmes. In Policy document: Refer to section 5.4 for references to Blended Learning; section 6.4 for references to an e-learning expert; section 8.3 for references to blended learning resources.
    - 6.1.4.2. Recruitment of staff
    - 6.1.4.3. Teaching staff qualifications
    - 6.1.4.4. Teaching staff development
    - 6.1.4.5. Delivery of programmes
    - 6.1.4.6. Ongoing monitoring and review of programmes (annual reporting, programme review, etc.)
    - 6.1.4.7. Governance and reporting
    - 6.1.4.8. Learner supports
    - 6.1.4.9. Learner conduct

## **7. POLICY ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

- 7.1. Programme Components: The development of the College’s Strategy on Blended Learning is associated with the development of a Strategic Plan for 2021.
- 7.2. Legal and Policy Context:
  - 7.2.1. PCI College complies with the requirements of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Quality Assurance Guidelines in the development of QA procedures and in the development of programmes of education and training. This policy addresses the QQI regulations applicable to the College as an independent or private provider of higher education.

- 7.2.2. This policy on blended learning provision is consistent with QQI standards, guidelines, policies and criteria relating to programmes and awards.
- 7.3. PCI is responsible for the academic standards and quality assurance of programmes delivered through blended and online learning.
  - 7.3.1. All programmes offered under blended and online learning will be subject to the core quality processes identified in QA-related documentation.
  - 7.3.2. It is the responsibility of PCI College to manage the arrangements for the delivery of programmes and provision of support and assessment of learners while ensuring that the academic standards of all awards are in accordance with PCI College’s academic standards as set by PCI College under its academic policies.
- 7.4. PCI College will ensure that procedures and regulations as specified in academic policies are fit for purpose in a blended and online learning environment:
  - 7.4.1. For example, PCI College will ensure that reliable and scalable systems and processes are in place to verify the identity of learners and to manage remote assessments
  - 7.4.2. PCI College will ensure that quality assurance systems to monitor and/or moderate standards are fit-for-purpose in a blended and online learning environment.
  - 7.4.3. PCI College will ensure that the VLE system supports blended and online learning programmes and the quality assurance of a flexible learning experience.
- 7.5. Academic and Professional Integrity Policy:
  - 7.5.1. Learners own the Intellectual Property (IP) they create in their role as Learners
  - 7.5.2. Learners who create IP that is eligible for protection and submit it as work to the university in fulfilment of a requirement of an academic programme (degree or non-degree) solely own the IP. This includes data sets, exams, tests, computer software, cases, projects, theses, dissertations, lab reports, cognate essays, research papers, musical scores, plays, lyrics, artwork, poems, or video recordings.
  - 7.5.3. Learners who create IP that is eligible for protection with another learner or a group of learners and submit it as work to the college in fulfilment of a requirement of an academic programme jointly own the IP with all other learners who made a significant intellectual or creative contribution to the IP creation. No learners enjoy sole ownership of IP created with the significant intellectual or creative input of other learners.

## 8. LINKED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Linked Policies	Assessment of Learners Policy Blended Learning Strategy Completion Rates Policy Confidentiality Policy Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards Policy Ethical Guidelines for Assessors Policy External Consultant Policy Internet, Social Media and Email Policy New Programme Design, Development and Validation Policy Ongoing Programme Monitoring Policy Revalidation Policy Programme Assessment Strategy Policy Privacy Policy
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	<p>Data Collection, Information and Management Policy  Revalidation Policy  Staff Recruitment, Management and Development Policy  Support for Learners Policy  Teaching and Learning Strategy  QA Management Policy</p>
<p>Linked Procedures</p>	<p>Assessment of Learners Procedure  Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards Policy  Ethical Guidelines for Assessors Procedure  New Programme Design, Development and Validation Procedure  Ongoing Programme Monitoring Procedure  Annual Programme Monitoring Procedure  Annual Module Review Procedure  Programme Assessment Strategy Procedure  Programme Handbooks  Data Collection, Information and Management Procedure  Revalidation Procedure  Staff Recruitment, Management and Development Policy  Support for Learners Procedure</p>