



Blended Learning Procedure

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1. REVISION HISTORY AND APPROVAL

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

2. PROGRAMME DESIGN AND DELIVERY

- 2.1. In accordance with QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (March, 2018), 4: Programme Context, the teaching, learning and assessment strategies and delivery mechanisms adopted in blended and online learning delivery, should be specifically designed for this context. These design principles are available at the following link (staff/learner login details required) on the Institutional VLE platform - https://pcicollegestudents.sharepoint.com/Courses/Certificate_in_Counselling_And_Psychotherapy/Online/SitePages/Home.aspx
- 2.2. In accordance with QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (March, 2018), 4.1.1, PCI College will ensure that blended and online learning developments are learner centred and subject-led rather than technology-led. The organisational structure and processes will ensure that pedagogy takes precedence over technology.
- 2.3. PCI College will ensure its teaching, learning, and assessment practices are accessible to all learners, through the implementation of a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework to improve and optimise teaching and learning for all.
- 2.4. PCI College is committed to providing flexible, adaptive and personalised learning spaces through a blend of face-to-face and online strategies.
- 2.5. In accordance with QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (March, 2018), 4.1, subject specific and educational scholarship informs pedagogy and instructional design. PCI College recognises that contact hours may no longer be an appropriate indicator related to teaching. The programme design will specify the required effort for the activities of teaching, content creation and moderation in blended and online learning delivery.
- 2.6. PCI College will take all practicable steps to ensure security and reliability of its online learning and support systems in accordance with PCI College's Information and Data Management Policy and Procedure and Policy on Commitment to Privacy.
- 2.7. PCI College will control access to its online learning and support systems.
- 2.8. PCI College will take all practicable steps to ensure continuity of service delivery of its online learning and support systems as outlined in its service level agreement with the institutional VLE supplier. It will ensure that a contingency plan is available in the event of failure of the designated modes of delivery. 'Azure Backup' server in place as part of contingency plan, as well as provision of second broadband line in Head Office.
- 2.9. Roles and responsibilities of PCI College:
 - 2.9.1. Ensure that online components of its teaching provision and learning are supported by fit-for-purpose organisational infrastructure and processes.
 - 2.9.2. Provide appropriate Learning Resources, Facilities and Technology that supports blended learning.
 - 2.9.3. Ensure equality of opportunity for learners who are assessed, including the provision of evidence.
 - 2.9.4. Provide a Safe, Secure and Inclusive Environment for all members of the College's online community.
 - 2.9.5. Support teaching and learner support staff to increase and improve their use of digital technologies
 - 2.9.6. Support learners to increase and improve their use of digital technologies through providing scheduled training events and individual support
 - 2.9.7. Set up College-wide educational technology systems
- 2.10. PCI College recognises that blended learning design and implementation is an evolving sector within training and education, and needs to be grounded in the College's context and its learner community as well as the educational aims and objectives of its programme components. To achieve this:
 - 2.10.1. PCI College's Blended Learning Policy is shaped and guided by its Blended Learning

Strategic Plan.

- 2.10.2. Blended Learning approaches provided by the College are designed to enhance the learner's learning experience, cater to diversity among learners, optimise learner engagement, and lead to improved learning experiences and outcomes.
- 2.10.3. Blended learning always includes some elements of face-to-face tuition.
- 2.10.4. Blended learning will include a combination of, for example:
 - 2.10.4.1. Online learning resources developed for online delivery
 - 2.10.4.2. Access to learning technologies such as Virtual Learning Environment
 - 2.10.4.3. Tools to support virtual learning and off-campus learning – virtual learning spaces and discussion and other forums to support learners
 - 2.10.4.4. Online activities to support formative and summative assessment
 - 2.10.4.5. Assessment submitted, marked and returned to learners with feedback through electronic or other media.
- 2.11. PCI College endeavours to ensure that effective Blended Learning is achieved through:
 - 2.11.1. a process of systematic course design/redesign that takes account of the best features of the online and face-to-face learning environments.
 - 2.11.2. a focus on constructive alignment of learning outcomes, assessments, content and learning activities.
 - 2.11.3. ensuring that learners are adequately prepared to function in a blended learning environment.
 - 2.11.4. ensuring that all teaching and support staff are adequately trained and supported as appropriate to their role.
 - 2.11.5. Ensuring that assessments are rigorous and fit for purpose, and are safe and secure.
 - 2.11.6. Ensuring that learner supports are adequate and fit for purpose.

3. LEARNER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

- 3.1. Prospective learners must have access to appropriate and sufficient information about programmes of study and about the College to make an informed decision about their choice of programme, including:
 - 3.1.1. Entry requirements, including technological competence requirements.
 - 3.1.2. Descriptions of the online components of the Blended Learning Programme or Programme Component or aspect of study.
 - 3.1.3. Technical requirements for participation in any online component of the programme, including requirements for access, bandwidth and any prescribed hardware or software in order to ensure that they can meet technological requirements to participate.
 - 3.1.4. The intended learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment methods of the programme and component modules.
 - 3.1.5. A clear timetable, including a schedule for the delivery of their online learning study materials, learner support (local and/or remote) and for the submission and assessment of their work
- 3.2. Prior to enrolment on a blended and/or online learning programme, learners are provided with an induction to the programme. This should include: Blended and Online Learning and Quality Assurance Policy Page 7 of 8 limited to – the nature and extent of autonomous learning, collaborative and supported aspects of learning, details of specified timings for synchronous learning or assessment, rules governing flexibility for learners, and regulations in place to provide a unique learner identity and protect learner information.
 - 3.2.1. The College provides each learner with a username and password to log on to Microsoft 365. It is recommended that Microsoft Edge or Mozilla Firefox is the web browser used when accessing the Portal. The minimum system requirements are available from Microsoft at the following links:

- 3.2.2. Portal
- 3.2.3. MS Teams
- 3.2.4. The login page for the Portal is available at <https://www.office.com/>
- 3.2.5. Learners may contact studentservices@pcicollege.ie if they face any issues in accessing the Student Portal.
- 3.3. The following resources are also available on Microsoft 365 for all PCI College students:
 - 3.3.1. Student Portal (Module materials, eSubmissions, access to SAGE online library, etc.).
 - 3.3.2. College email account and calendar (Outlook)
 - 3.3.3. Microsoft suite of products (Word, Excel, PowerPoint etc.)
 - 3.3.4. OneDrive (cloud based document storage)
- 3.4. The learner induction will also specify requirements for access to the online learning environment – giving details of the required broadband specification and any specific hardware or software requirements, for example.
- 3.5. The learner induction will provide information on the level and nature of support available, including but not limited to academic, technical and pastoral support.
- 3.6. PCI College will ensure that procedures and regulations as specified in the Programme Handbook and within the College's QA System are fit for purpose in a blended and/or online learning environment.
- 3.7. PCI College also provides support to learners on all aspects of face-to-face and online delivery through an IT Support Helpdesk. A designated IT staff member will be available in the first hour of any online session, and will address and attempt to resolve any technical issues staff or learners may face in accessing or joining any synchronised online class.
- 3.8. Learners will also be briefed on the following:
 - 3.8.1. Learner responsibility in online assessment.
 - 3.8.2. Information on the ways in which their achievements will be judged, and the relative weighting of online and other remote parts of the programme in respect of assessment overall.
 - 3.8.3. Clarity on the specific level of engagement expected for different elements of the blend of online and face-to-face learning, in particular mandatory workplace learning, supervision and personal therapy, if any.
 - 3.8.4. Attendance requirements for each component such as face-to-face learning, workplace learning, synchronous and asynchronous activities. Any professional registration requirements should be clearly indicated.
- 3.9. PCI College is responsible for supporting learners throughout their programme of study, in particular:
 - 3.9.1. Timely formative assessment on their academic performance in the online sections of the programme to provide a basis for constructive individual feedback and guidance
 - 3.9.2. Information about the quality assurance processes in place
 - 3.9.3. Clear, timely information on how they access learning resources from the start of their programme, and the mechanisms the provider has in place to test and confirm learner identity
 - 3.9.4. The mechanisms in place to identify and respond to learners who may be struggling with online remote learning
 - 3.9.5. Support structures in place for different programme components, such as clinical work, academic writing, research, technological issues and personal circumstances that impact on learning and attendance.
 - 3.9.6. Identified and available support staff (academic, administrative, technical)
 - 3.9.7. It is the responsibility of learners to ensure they have the required local access and technical facilities when they are participating off-campus.

- 3.10. Learners will be given opportunities to give formal and informal feedback on their experience of the programme, including the effectiveness of blended and online learning arrangements, learning resources, learner support and learner representation.

4. ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS AND REQUIREMENTS

- 4.1. PCI College will ensure that the outcomes of assessment for a blended and/or online learning programme meet the specified academic level of the award as defined by the NFQ.
- 4.2. Information on methods and criteria of assessment will be provided in the programme handbooks. In programmes featuring online assessment, the learners will receive orientation sessions in advance to ensure that learners feel supported in engaging in this type of programme delivery and assessment.
- 4.3. Learner will be made aware of PCI College's Procedure for Preventing and Responding to Cases of Suspected Plagiarism, which is provided in the regulations issued to all learners and in the programme handbooks.
- 4.4. Security issues relating to the authentication of a learner's work will be considered when designing assessment processes.
- 4.5. PCI College will ensure that eAssessments, ePortfolios and eVerification systems are secure, moveable and meet the required evidence needs.
- 4.6. Appropriate recovery plans are developed for all eAssessments, ePortfolios and eVerification processes.
- 4.7. The Board and the Academic Council are responsible for determining the fit of blended learning within the stated goals and priorities of the College.

5. STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING

- 5.1. Educators need a set of digital competences specific to their profession in order to be able to seize the potential of digital technologies for enhancing and innovating education. PCI College will ensure that staff involved in teaching on a blended and/or online learning programme are appropriately qualified and supported.
- 5.2. PCI College will also ensure staff are provided with opportunities to develop their academic and technology-enhanced learning skills and digital competences
- 5.3. As per the definition outlined in the Blended Learning Policy document, PCI College recognises that blended learning combines face-to-face sessions with online learning, allowing strengths to be drawn from each learning space. PCI College's blended learning process takes into consideration learner needs, disciplinary requirements, and pedagogic practices.
- 5.4. PCI recognises that the use of the VLE (Microsoft Teams/Sharepoint) as a repository for course materials on a module does not itself constitute an example of a blended learning module. This provision should be considered solely under standard quality assurance processes.
- 5.5. Training will encompass design and provision of appropriate Learning Resources, Facilities and Technology that supports blended learning.
- 5.6. Training will include ensuring equality of opportunity for learners who are assessed, including the provision of evidence.
- 5.7. Change to any module or development and validation of any new programme is grounded within procedure document for New Programmes:

6. QUALITY ASSURANCE, MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 6.1. The current QA processes will continue to underpin the Blended Learning Strategic Plan and Policy:

- 6.2. PCI College is responsible for ensuring that the arrangements for the delivery of programmes and provision of support to and assessment of learners are appropriate, are fit for purpose and maintain academic standards.
- 6.3. PCI College will regularly review design and delivery, course materials, and intended learning outcomes, update and improve using feedback from stakeholders.
- 6.4. The following additional criteria must be considered during reviews by stakeholders of the Blended Learning Programme or Programme Components, and included in the Annual Programme Quality Report:
 - 6.4.1. The effectiveness of integration between online and face-to-face components
 - 6.4.2. Learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms delivered online or with an online component; iii. All materials and media such as audio-visual, printed or digitised assets used to deliver online learning; iv. Blended and online-specific learner supports
 - 6.4.3. The effectiveness of the technology and technological infrastructure, including its ease of use and adequacy
 - 6.4.4. The effectiveness with which the programme actively engages learners with faculty, with each other and with their learning.
- 6.5. Monitoring of the Blended Learning programme must include peer review of online and blended learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms.
- 6.6. A Cyclical Review includes a review of the effectiveness of the College’s Blended Learning Strategy and Policy, and incorporates a review of its effectiveness in quality assuring its online and blended learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms.

7. LINKED POLICIES & 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 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
Linked Procedures	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