



# **Academic Quality Framework**

## **Digital Education Policy**

**Approved by Academic Council**

**28<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

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## 1. Introduction / Context

- 1.1 TU Dublin is committed to “creating transformational educational opportunities that inspire, support and develop the individual in reaching their full potential” (Strategic Intent 2030). Underpinned by the key sustainable development goal no.4 (SDG) ‘Quality Education’, our strategic objectives include developing and embedding a dynamic new model of education at TU Dublin; providing flexibility in structure, mode, and place of delivery to suit an evolving global landscape; and delivering a digitally enhanced student learning experience that will facilitate the development of our learners to become the most sought-after digitally literate graduates.
- 1.2 These objectives are in line with those set out in the European Digital Education Action Plan 2021-27 (European Commission, 2020), which states that recent worldwide events have shown “digital education is not a marginal issue but a central component of learning, teaching and assessment in the 21st century” (p.8) and that the sector needs to use the lessons learned over this period to “rethink how education and training, in all disciplines, are designed” (p.3). It also recommends that we “step up our efforts and gradually evolve from temporary, emergency-focused remote education to more effective, sustainable and equitable digital education, as part of creative, flexible, modern and inclusive education and training” (p.19).
- 1.3 The development of quality, flexible, accessible, and inclusive Digital Education at TU Dublin has a strategic part to play as we strive to become “an agile, technology-enabled, modern university, that facilitates learners in an advanced digital world” (Strategic Intent, pg.19).

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1 According to the European Digital Education Action Plan 2021-27, a strategic and longer-term approach to digital education should be defined if we are to serve the changing needs of our students, remain competitive both nationally and internationally, and achieve all we can to contribute to the global realization of the SDG 'Quality Education'. This policy is intended to set out the philosophy, scope, and principles for the integration of digital education and flexible modes of delivery at TU Dublin in order to achieve the aforementioned goals.

## 3. Scope

- 3.1 This Digital Education policy has been developed within the context of TU Dublin's Strategic Intent 2030. It covers all digitally enhanced learning, teaching and assessment practices in 'In-Person On-Campus Technology-enabled', 'Blended', 'Online' and/or 'HyFlex' modules. It is designed to safeguard both quality assurance and academic standards, encourage quality enhancement, and ensure the provision of appropriate support for staff and students engaged in digital education.

## 4. Definitions

The following are core definitions relevant to this document.

- 4.1 **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** provides an effective framework to improve the learning experience of all students within the educational environment. It is a set of principles for curriculum development to cater for the diversity of learners. Embedding these principles improves the educational experiences of all students by providing equal opportunities to learn. The integration of digital technologies in the execution of these principles can increase access and add educational value to learning experiences for all students. UDL is a part of the 10 Guiding Principles for the TU Dublin Education Model and is considered an experience that all learners should enjoy while at TU Dublin.
- 4.2 **Digital Education** is the use of digital tools and technologies during the teaching, learning, assessment and feedback process in In-Person OnCampus Technology-enabled, Blended, Online and/or HyFlex modalities to enhance and transform the student experience. Implicit in this definition is the need to increase digital capability at both organisational and individual levels.
- 4.3 **Digital Capability**, according to JISC, describes “the skills and attitudes that individuals and organisations need if they are to thrive in today’s world”. At an individual level it refers to the capabilities that “equip someone to live, learn and work in a digital society”, while at an organisational level it refers to “the extent to which the culture and infrastructure of an institution enables and motivates digital practices”. This policy is aligned to this definition.

- 4.4 **In-Person On-Campus and Technology-Enabled Modules:** Students attend all scheduled lectures, tutorials, and labs etc. in-person and on-campus only. No live instruction is delivered online but academic staff employ a range of different digital learning technologies before, during, and/or after the in-person on-campus activities to deliver an engaging technology-enabled teaching, learning and assessment experience.
- 4.5 **Blended Modules:** Blended Learning is the pedagogically-informed fusing of coherently sequenced, synchronous and asynchronous, teaching, learning and assessment experiences, that occur through a pre-planned mix of in-person oncampus, and online, contexts over the duration of a module. There can be varying degrees of in-person on-campus versus online teaching, learning and assessment experiences designed and delivered from module to module. Students cannot choose their modality, rather each experience is offered in one mode only and all of the students engage with each scheduled experience together.
- 4.6 **Online Modules:** All teaching, learning and assessment experiences are delivered in the online context only. Students and academic staff never meet inperson on-campus. The term 'online module' covers everything from a module where 100% of the instruction takes place in real time (synchronous) to a module where 100% of the instruction is pre-recorded and accessed by students at a time of their choosing (asynchronous), and every possible mix of synchronous and asynchronous teaching, learning and assessment experiences in-between.

4.7 **HyFlex Modules:** A HyFlex module is offered in-person on-campus; synchronously online; and asynchronously online, at the same time. The students are usually\* free to choose their modality from week to week or topic to topic, therefore a student can choose to be an in-person on-campus learner only, a synchronous remote learner only, an asynchronous remote learner only, or a flexible learner who exercises a degree of choice of modality each week or topic. All teaching, learning and assessment experiences are designed and delivered in an equitable manner.

\*There may be individual module requirements to attend mandated practical sessions as appropriate\*

## 5. Policy Overview

5.1 Quality Digital Education at TU Dublin is founded on a set of agreed general principles that are reflective of our university's priorities - these are outlined below. Specifics regarding: Quality Assurance and Enhancement; Programme Design and Delivery; Student Assessment; Accessibility; Sustainability Enhancement; and Staff and Student Training, Professional Development, and Support are also provided. These headings, and the content therein, are subject to review following the implementation of the University Education Model.

5.2 This policy document also sets out the governance arrangements for the approval of this policy as well as the approach that will be taken to reviewing and updating the document. Process and procedural aspects of implementing the policy are detailed in the referenced 'Procedures for implementing digital education' procedures document.



## 6. General Principles

The ten general principles below, around which this policy centres, are grounded in four of the Guiding Principles for a TU Dublin Education Model (June 2020), namely:

- 6.1 GP 1 Student-centred and student-engaged for student success: Promote, encourage and support student initiative and agency in determining their own learning path, to allow flexibility in accessing their education through diverse and innovative modes of engagement.
- 6.2 GP 2 Connected, engaged, internationalised curriculum: Integrate research-led innovative teaching; enquiry-based collaborative learning and research skill development; workplace, community and international experiential learning; career development learning; and the full range of formal, informal and technology-enhanced learning experiences in the formation of the graduate.
- 6.3 GP 4 Excellent, flexible, agile teaching & learning: Make full use of innovative teaching, learning and assessment practice, utilising multiple modes of delivery and interaction. Adopt enhanced agility, flexibility and sustainability of provision, supported by imaginative and judicious use of technology.
- 6.4 GP 10 Access & equal opportunity: Energetically and proactively facilitate equitable access to education and opportunities for all students and potential students, particularly those from underrepresented communities, regardless of economic or social background, disability, gender, racial or cultural background or belief. Support and promote a culture of equality, inclusion and respect for all in the TU Dublin community.

6.5 The ten general principles below, around which this policy centres are:

1. TU Dublin fosters individual talents in an ever-changing world through creating pathways for all by ensuring flexibility in structure, mode and place of delivery.
2. Digital education will play a pivotal role in increasing equality and inclusivity at TU Dublin.
3. TU Dublin will deliver a digitally enhanced student learning experience that will facilitate the development of our learners to become the most soughtafter digitally capable graduates.
4. In-person On-campus Technology-enabled, Blended, Online, and HyFlex modules should be designed with reference to Learning, Teaching and Assessment resources; aligned to the University's Education model; guided by the university's good practice virtual learning environment (VLE) Baseline and Baseline Plus checklists; EU accessibility guidelines; and underpinned by Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.
5. Validation of modules to be delivered through multiple modalities does not commit to provision in all validated modes. The decision on the provision of the validated mode(s) of delivery lies with the School.
6. Modules will adhere continuously to the agreed and advertised mode of delivery throughout the duration of the module (notwithstanding the need for flexibility to adapt to unforeseen and significant circumstances such as a mandated university closure).
7. The principle of academic freedom will be preserved and promoted in teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

8. TU Dublin will put in place the resources required for students and academic staff to enable a quality digital educational experience. Examples of these resources include, but are not limited to, technical infrastructure, academic software, and pedagogical and technical support.
9. Academic staff will be provided with the guidance, resources, and training and professional development opportunities necessary to develop their own digital capabilities and those of their students, to enable them to offer quality digital experiences using the resources in place.
10. Staff and students will be cognisant of, and adhere to, General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the TU Dublin Data Protection Policy while engaging in digital education.

## 7. Quality Assurance and Enhancement

- 7.1 The University will, through its Quality Framework, assure the quality and academic standards of programmes and modules.
- 7.2 The Quality Framework will ensure that this policy, its principles, related processes, and checklists will be adhered to, and due cognisance given to guidelines in module design. For example, the validation and review processes will ensure that all modules are delivered through at least one of the modalities identified above.
- 7.3 The University will assure the quality and parity of the student experience, in terms of module delivery and student support, regardless of the modality of delivery.

- 7.4 The modalities through which new modules are to be delivered will be identified at validation stage. Any changes post-validation will be subject to approval per policy (through module changes, or through the programme validation/review process).
- 7.5 Student statistics, including recruitment, performance and progression data, as well as student feedback on their programmes and modules, will be considered as part of the evidence in the context of annual programme enhancement and programme review.
- 7.6 The Quality Framework encourages and supports pedagogical innovation, while recognising the uniqueness and context of disciplines, programmes and students. Therefore, associated quality review will consider requisite supports in the design of modules using these modalities of delivery.

## 8. Programme Design and Delivery

- 8.1 The TU Dublin approach to module design, in the context of the four modalities of delivery defined above, will be grounded in evidence-based research and the QQI (2018 & 2021) statutory guidance for online and blended delivery. TU Dublin will support the design, development, validation, and offering of modules, as the constituent parts of programmes under the four modalities.

### Evidence informed programme and module design:

- 8.2 Designing for the TU Dublin four modalities of delivery (In-person On-campus & Technology-enabled, Blended, Online and HyFlex) will be centred on a robust, consultative, module development process using appropriate, learnerfocused, evidence-informed, learning design principles.

- 8.3 The design, delivery, and evaluation of modules through all modalities will be led by stakeholders with expertise in the area, supported by education technology, based on innovative, evidence-informed and learner-centred pedagogical principles, and focused on the student learning experience.

### Building digital skills & pedagogical capability:

- 8.4 Infrastructure, information technology, administrative systems, resources, expertise and appropriate training and professional development will be available to all stakeholders that support digital teaching and learning and to students to prepare and support them, where modules employ one or more modalities of delivery.
- 8.5 Staff will be involved in decision-making regarding the adoption of new digital technologies.
- 8.6 Stakeholders will be supported by the University to trial new technology that has been risk assessed and reviewed from a student and staff data protection perspective.

### Student learning experience and ongoing lecturer/student dialogue:

- 8.7 Students will be supported to have a consistent, safe, reliable and accessible learning and assessment experience regardless of the mode of delivery.
- 8.8 Regardless of modality, academic staff will provide clear communications through appropriate communication channels to students on the mode of delivery in advance of the module start date.
- 8.9 A student-centred partnership approach will enhance and assure the quality of the total student experience.

## 9. Student Assessment and Feedback

- 9.1 There should be parity in standards, experience, challenge, security and integrity of all assessments conducted wholly online and/or those that rely on the use of digital technologies in their creation, and traditional assessments conducted inperson on-campus. A student should neither be advantaged nor disadvantaged by the assessment/feedback method associated with their module.
- 9.2 Robust and consistent systems and processes will be provided across the University to manage the submission, receipt, marking, academic integrity and return of assessments, as required.
- 9.3 Proctoring software (selected with regard to requirements for equality, diversity and inclusion and the University assessment regulation) can be employed where a credit bearing invigilated assessment needs to be taken online so that both the identity of the learner and the integrity of the assessment can be assured.
- 9.4 Appropriate tools, including online tools available through the VLE and elsewhere, should be used for the provision of feedback to students.

## 10. Accessibility

- 10.1 TU Dublin is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive digital/online learning and working environment that ensures all campus information resources, technologies and communications are fully accessible to all staff and students.

- 10.2 [Assistive Technology](#): Technology, or resources with accessibility features, that meet the needs of the diverse student population for teaching, learning and assessment purposes, will be provided.
- 10.3 [Documentation and Publications](#): In line with the EU Web Accessibility Directive (Directive (EU) 2016/2102), all learning materials (web, video, audio and/or text based) should meet minimum accessibility standards.
- 10.4 [Staff Awareness](#): All new staff should be acquainted with TU Dublin accessibility standards relevant to their role. This would include preparing and producing electronic documentation such as pdfs, word processing, presentations and other formats.
- 10.5 [Implementing UDL](#): Staff will consider methodologies to use when implementing UDL to ensure all digital education is accessible and inclusive.

## 11. Staff & Student Training, Professional Development, & Support

- 11.1 Staff digital capabilities, and professional development guidance and support, will be recognized as essential for the creation of quality digital, and digitally enhanced, accessible content, assessments, and learning activities. TU Dublin will ensure that staff involved in teaching in the online environment are appropriately knowledgeable and experienced.
- 11.2 Opportunities will be provided for students to develop their digital capabilities so that they can engage throughout their studies in the digital space and with wider university digitally-enhanced activities.

- 11.3 The well-being of staff and students in relation to technology use for work and/or study purposes is important to TU Dublin. Appropriate training and support will be made available.

## 12. Roles and Responsibilities

- 12.1 The Digital Education Policy will be of relevance to academic managers, staff who teach, students, and the professional services managers and staff who work closely with academic staff and students supporting teaching, learning and assessment activities. Each of these categories of roles has specific responsibilities for the procedures involved in enabling the successful implementation of the Digital Education Policy. These roles and responsibilities are outlined in the accompanying Procedures document.

## 13. Sustainability Enhancement

- 13.1 This digital education policy will support the achievement of TU Dublin's Strategic Intent 2030. In particular, the policy will support Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 'Quality Education' which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Digitally enhanced learning has the potential to support SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) by facilitating universal design for learning; SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) by reducing the need for commuting; and SDG 12 (Responsible production and consumption) by reducing the need for printing. In support of SDG12, due regard needs to be given to environmental impact when procuring digital technology.



- 13.2 In order to ensure digital education is supporting SDG10, care should be taken to ensure students are not disadvantaged by lack of access to digital technologies.

### 14. Approval process

- 14.1 This policy will be reviewed by the Academic Affairs Senior Management Team before being tabled for discussion and review at the Academic Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (AQAEC) and subsequently Academic Council. Once approved, this policy will be published within the Academic Affairs area of the Policies and Forms section on the TU Dublin website.

### 15. Change Process

- 15.1 Academic Affairs is the owner of this document.
- 15.2 This document will be reviewed by AQAEC and Academic Council at least every three years to assess if any change is required.
- 15.3 Minor changes such as document layout changes, change of document owner, document numbering changes etc. will be made to the document by the Digital Education Manager, Academic Affairs.
- 15.4 Where a major change will be required such as changes to the scope, intent or policy details of the document, the Head of Academic Affairs or their nominee the Digital Education Manager, will reconvene a working group who will follow the processes set out in section 7 of the *Procedure for Policy and procedure Development at TU Dublin*.

15.5 The updated document will be reapproved following the approval process set out in section 10.1 above.

## 16. Related Documents

- AHEAD. Universal Design for Learning <https://www.ahead.ie/udl>
- [Blended Working at TU Dublin](#)
- Code of Governance for the Technological University Dublin (2019, rev. 2021)
- Current QA policies, procedures and regulations in City, Tallaght and Blanchardstown.
- Digital Education Procedures at TU Dublin (*In development*)
- [Directive \(EU\) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies](#)
- European Commission (2020). [European Digital Education Action Plan 2021-27 Resetting Education and Training for the Digital Age](#)
- [Guiding Principles for Recording of Lectures at TU Dublin](#)
- JISC. What is Digital Capability? <https://digitalcapability.jisc.ac.uk/whatisdigital-capability/>
- QQI (2018). [Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes](#)
- Technological Universities Act 2018
- TU Dublin [Data Protection Policies and Procedures](#)
- TU Dublin [IP Policy \(2022\)](#)
- TU Dublin [Quality Framework](#)
- TU Dublin [Strategic Intent 2030](#)

## 17. Conclusion

17.1 The development of this policy has been informed by staff and student experiences during the pivot to emergency remote teaching, learning and assessment necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic, 2020-2022. Through the effective implementation of this policy, our university will be able to embrace and support the modalities defined above and new pedagogical responses that have emerged worldwide post-Covid.

## 18. Document Management

### 18.1 Version Control

VERSION NUMBER	VERSION DESCRIPTION / CHANGES MADE	AUTHOR	DATE
<i>Draft 1.0</i>	<i>Initial Draft</i>	<i>Frances Boylan</i>	<i>21/11/22</i>
<i>Draft 1.1</i>	<i>Second Draft</i>	<i>Frances Boylan</i>	<i>20/02/23</i>
<i>Draft 1.2</i>	<i>Third Draft</i>	<i>Frances Boylan</i>	<i>11/04/23</i>

18.2 Document Approval

VERSION NUMBER	APPROVAL DATE	APPROVED BY (NAME & ROLE)
<i>Rev 1.0</i>	<i>09.05.2023</i>	<i>AQAEC</i>
<i>Rev 1.0</i>	<i>28.06.2023</i>	<i>Academic Council</i>

18.3 Document Ownership

Accountability for defining, developing, monitoring and updating the content of this document rests with Academic Affairs.

18.4 Document Review

Academic Affairs is accountable for the review of this document in consultation with relevant stakeholders. This document should be approved by AQAEC and Academic Council.

18.5 Document Storage

This document will be stored on the TU Dublin content management system within the Academic Affairs area of the Policies and Forms section of the TU Dublin website.

18.6 Document Classification

This policy will be classed as TU Dublin Public and is available to all staff, students and members of the public who need to view it.