



UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH AND ALLIED SCIENCES



**BLENDED EDUCATION QUALITY
ASSURANCE POLICY**

UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH AND ALLIED SCIENCES
Directorate of Quality Assurance



BLENDED EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

March 2023

FOREWORD

The mission of the University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS) is to provide quality education, advance knowledge through scholarship and research that improves health and quality of life. This encompasses two critical sustainable development goals:

- 1.To ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- 2.To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

We are committed to achieving this mission and thus have defined 10 strategic objectives in our strategic plan to support research, teaching and engagement with society. This is informed by a culture of scholarship, academic and service excellence through innovative approaches.

Our Directorate of Quality Assurance has the mandate to guide the implementation of good quality assurance practices in UHAS: applying the standards and guidelines formulated by competent authorities in higher education, developing adequate internal quality assurance mechanisms that fit international best practices, and assisting the University to assess its own quality through self-assessment. As a result of the outbreak of COVID-19 as well as a strategy to meet the increasing demands for higher education globally, most higher education institutions, including UHAS, have adopted a blended education approach. To ensure that courses delivered through face-to-face and online modes are of the same quality, the development of a blended learning quality assurance policy has become necessary. Consequently, the Directorate of Quality Assurance has put together this Blended Learning Quality Assurance Policy to guide the provision of blended learning at UHAS.

This Policy outlines blended learning quality assurance standards and procedures that address issues relating to institutional supports, infrastructural needs, online course design, development, delivery, assessment, electronic security as well as technical support for the faculty, administrators and students. Furthermore, this Policy provides the faculty with the framework to design and develop courses with online and face-to-face components to offer the flexibility for addressing different learner preferences. I, therefore, wish to encourage all stakeholders to consult this policy often to become familiar with the blended learning quality assurance standards, guidelines and codes of practice for blended learning at UHAS.

Prof. Lydia Aziato
Vice Chancellor, UHAS

March, 2023

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the primary mode of course delivery at the University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS) was a face-to-face one. One of the strategies adopted by the University to ensure the continuity of academic work and, at the same time, minimize the spread of COVID-19 was the introduction of the blended mode of course delivery. To ensure that courses delivered through the blended and online modes are of the same quality as those delivered through the face-to-face mode, it is required that all tertiary education institutions providing online/blended learning programmes develop appropriate quality assurance policies that align with the overall vision and mission of their institutions. UHAS currently provides blended learning programmes without any cohesive blended learning quality assurance policy that aligns with the vision and mission of the University.

This policy aligns with the overall vision, mission, and the Strategic Objective 2 of the 2017-2027 Strategic Plan of UHAS as follows:

Vision: UHAS seeks to be a pre-eminent health research educational institution dedicated to community service.

Mission: UHAS will provide quality education, advance knowledge through scholarship and research that improves health and quality of life.

The Strategic Objective 2 on academic environment: Teaching and learning environment, as captured in the UHAS Strategic Plan (2017-2027), aims at establishing a conducive teaching and learning environment wherein the faculty and students feel physically, psychologically, socially and culturally secure to work independently and cooperatively to make the University experience stimulating.

The mandate of this Policy is to guide decisions and actions taken by stakeholders such as administrators, professional and technical staff, and Management. This Policy is designed to contextualise, regulate and operationalise the format, approach and strategic implementation of blended learning practices among all the role players including staff and students.

2.0 PURPOSE OF POLICY

What does this policy seek to achieve?

The purpose of this Policy is to guide the provision of blended education – courses and programmes – for UHAS students. Currently, this provision is envisaged as occurring primarily through the blended mode. The Policy, therefore, aims to ensure that, in the case of the blended provision, there is coherence between face-to-face and online aspects of any course/programme and that both modes of delivery are designed such that students are guided up to the exit level outcomes of a programme effectively and efficiently.

The policy of UHAS on curriculum development and review sets out the principles to be used in curriculum development for all courses/programmes offered by the University. All programmes involving any form of blended education provision will need to draw on these principles. One principle involves the need for ‘alignment’ whereby all elements of the programme (for example purpose, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, learning materials, pedagogical approaches, and assessment tasks) are congruent and that they support students’ attainment of learning outcomes. Assessment needs to be aligned with the policy of UHAS on the assessment of students’ learning outcomes. The online

provision should be evaluated in line with the principles contained in the policy on the evaluation of teaching and course design.

3.0 POLICY OBJECTIVES

What are the measurable objectives of this policy?

To ensure that:

- UHAS meets requirements for E-learning education provision.
- the University provides high-quality education (courses and/or programmes); consistent with its mission and vision, to students of diverse backgrounds in an environment where learning may take place both face-to-face and through various forms of online education provision which are appropriate to the level of study.
- the University meets the higher education and professional development needs of students through well-designed courses which are taught and assessed in ways that enable students to meet the set outcomes.
- students are equipped to fulfil their degree requirements through forms of provision which are appropriate to their level of study.
- the University provides ongoing support to both students and lecturers for online, face-to-face and blended learning.

4.0 SCOPE OF APPLICATION

This Policy applies to all schools, institutes, directorates, units, departments, management, faculty members, administrative/professional staff and students.

5.0 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Programme	refers to all the learning activities designed to enable a student to meet the outcomes necessary for the award of a qualification.
Online education provision	refers to the use of educational technologies which mediate the curriculum, and can refer to offerings where learning activities take place fully online as well as through the use of blended or mixed methodologies.
Contact mode or face-to-face provision	refers to a mode of teaching and learning that occurs on the institution's premises (or a site of the institution) where students interact face- to -face with teachers, tutors or supervisors, in lectures, tutorials, seminars, practical, etc.
Blended provision	comprises a combination of online education and face-to-face provision.
Mode	The mode of a course describes the dominant mix of methods of delivering, interacting, and mediating the curriculum. UHAS will define it as the basis for describing the mode of delivery.
Course	refers to one of the following: a credit-bearing component attached to a qualification, or a non-credit-bearing offering used for the purpose of continuing education and professional development. Accredited courses are identified by a course code in the University handbook. Courses can be broken down into smaller modules or units addressing specific topics taught by different individuals.
Online and on-site learning versus online and off-site learning	Online and on-site teaching and learning refers to the use of educational technologies to mediate the curriculum and can refer to offerings where learning activities take place fully online as well as through the use of blended or mixed methodologies within physical campus locations while online and off-site learning involves the above, but students access materials while off-campus.
Asynchronous	Asynchronous describes a student-centred teaching method that uses online learning resources to facilitate the sharing of information outside the constraints of time and place among a network of people.

Synchronous	Synchronous describes teaching a group of people learning the same things at the same time at the same place, as with video conferencing tools.
Content Management System (CMS)	Content Management System (CMS) allows publishing, editing, and modifying content as well as site maintenance from a central page. It provides a collection of procedures used to manage workflow in a collaborative environment. These procedures can be manual or computer-based.
Learning Management System (LMS)	Learning Management System (LMS) is a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, and reporting of training programmes, classroom and online events, E-learning programmes, and training content.
Academic Freedom	Academic freedom is the belief that the freedom of inquiry by students and faculty members is essential to the mission of the University, and that instructors should have the freedom to teach or communicate ideas or methodologies.
Service Level Management	Service level management is the primary management of IT services, ensuring that agreed services are delivered when and where they are supposed to be delivered. The service level manager is dependent on all other service delivery areas which provide the necessary support that ensures that the agreed services are provided in a secure, efficient and cost-effective manner.

6.0 PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THIS POLICY

UHAS strives, as far as reasonably practicable, to carry out the following:

- To ensure that the online provision complements face-to-face teaching in a coherent fashion so that the best aspects of both modalities are drawn upon, and risks are mitigated and managed within the framework of the overall programme
- To ensure that all programmes and courses offered which are intended to make use of various forms of online education provision are scrutinised and approved by the academic governance structures
- To ensure that support is available for staff members who want to design and teach courses/programmes using online and/or blended modes.

7.0 DIRECTIVES FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY

Actions and processes by which the objectives of the policy will be achieved.

7.1 Delivery of Blended Education Provision

- The design of a programme, including blended learning, will follow the principles laid out in the policy of the University of Health and Allied Sciences on curriculum design and review.
- Blended learning will be considered as an integral part of the design of the programme. The same academic standard for quality and other requirements for traditional courses applies to the courses that make use of the blended education provision.
- Support for programme design will be made available by the educational technology specialists located in the various schools/institutes.
- Permission to offer a new programme which incorporates online (both online - on-site and online-off-site learning) provision will be sought via school boards, the Academic Planning and Management Committee, and the Academic Board;

and will be subjected to scrutiny with regard to the availability of resources, which include information and communication technologies. A programme will only be submitted for accreditation once approval has been obtained via these structures. Furthermore, the application for approval and accreditation must be successfully processed before offering such new programmes.

- No special permission is required to change the provision of an existing course/programme from a fully face-to-face mode to a blended teaching and learning mode. It is important to ensure that online components of all courses are designed, facilitated, and assessed in educationally sound ways. Support for such a course/programme design will be provided by the educational technology specialists in the various schools and institutes.
- Correspondence and communication between faculty members and students should be on official platforms.

7.2 Expectations of the University, Staff and Students

Learning is a partnership between staff across the University and students. There is a shared set of expectations between staff and students, and the following expectations apply specifically to blended education:

7.2.1 Departments offering blended courses/programmes shall ensure that each student is provided with:

- Structured opportunities to learn to use the various online course delivery applications/tools before the official commencement of a course or programme
- Study materials that meet the expectations of UHAS in respect of the quality of teaching and learning of a course or programme
- An appropriate contingency plan, which would come into operation in the event of failure of the designed mode of delivery
- At the outset of the student's study, at least one identified contact person, either local or remote, through email, telephone and post, who can give constructive feedback on academic performance
- Information about when and how they may contact staff, a clear schedule for the delivery of their study materials and for assessment of their work
- Regular opportunities for communication and engagement with the faculty
- A clear and realistic explanation of the expectations placed on them for the study of the programme or module, and the nature and extent of the autonomous, collaborative and supported aspects of learning
- Details of the minimum technical knowledge required to access the computer facilities for the online materials in online course-related activities
- Appropriate opportunities to give formal feedback on their experience of the programme
- Access to all relevant academic policies, protocols, and guidelines including the Blended Education Policy of UHAS.

7.2.2 Schools/Institutes shall ensure that:

- Courses are offered by the teaching staff members who have the appropriate skills, and opportunities to receive appropriate training, development and support
- All aspects of assessment are provided in line with the institutional policy on the assessment of student learning.

7.2.3 Students shall ensure that:

- They have regular and reliable access to the internet with appropriate firewall protection and computers that meet the minimum technical requirements set by the programme
- When not in attendance, they make their own arrangements for IT support to resolve technical failures relating to their internet service provider, firewall protection and their computer hardware and software as the University can only answer queries or provide support for the University-owned equipment
- When not in attendance, they seek support such as that normally provided by their lecturers and units such as Students' Affairs Unit when necessary. Such support will be provided wherever possible and practicable.
- They understand the basic terms and descriptions used in computing so that they can follow instructions about how to use their computer to study and communicate
- They engage with the learning materials and mode of delivery
- They conform to the schedule for the programme delivery and assessment, monitor the receipt of materials, and alert the University if materials cannot be accessed
- They take responsibility for developing their IT skills when appropriate
- They regularly check their email accounts to which essential information may be sent by the University.

7.2.4 The Directorate of Information Communication Technology shall ensure that:

- Institutionally supported systems have the capabilities for the design of educationally sound online courses and programmes
- They resolve technical failures relating to institutional internet provision and firewall protection
- Delivery systems for the online and blended provision of courses/programmes are secure, reliable, fit for their purpose, and have an appropriate availability and life expectancy
- A help-desk facility is available to students, whether they live and learn on-campus or conduct a large part of their studies while off-campus.

7.2.5 Academic Departments and the Directorate of Quality Assurance will ensure that:

- They provide professional development opportunities for the online and blended education provision, including consultation about course design, assessment and evaluation of teaching and courses

- They provide opportunities for consultation and advice regarding the development and use of specialised digital materials and other media appropriate to various forms of online education provision
- Educational technology specialists provide technical assistance to lecturers and students who make use of institutionally funded and supported educational platforms and tools.

7.2.6 The library will ensure that:

- Academic materials are accessible by authorised students through the web from anywhere at any time
- Simultaneous access to the same electronic documents is available when necessary
- Access to content in different formats (text, audio, video, and animation) as required for teaching and learning is available
- Preservation of electronic study materials/documents is facilitated.

8.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARDS & GUIDELINES FOR BLENDED LEARNING

8.1 INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

UHAS has adequate technical support and facilities to provide quality blended course delivery. UHAS will provide adequate technology for its blended course offerings through the Directorate of Information Communication Technology (ICT) as well as other facilities that are required and accessible to both the faculty and students. The Directorate of ICT is equipped with technology (i.e., software equipment and facilities) appropriate to the faculty and students' interactions. The Directorate of ICT provides the appropriate facilities to accommodate curricular commitments. The technical assistance available for students and faculty members in their use of the Learning Management System (LMS) of the University in the blended-learning initiative at UHAS is supported through:

- 8.1.1 Financing:** UHAS will ensure adequate budgetary support for a sustainable blended-learning initiative.
- 8.1.2 Accessibility:** The Directorate of ICT and the libraries will provide adequate facilities and services to support students, including those with disabilities.
- 8.1.3 Infrastructure: Information Communication Technology (ICT):** Through the Directorate of ICT, UHAS will establish and maintain robust ICT infrastructure capable of efficiently supporting a university-wide blended-learning initiative. The Directorate of ICT will ensure the delivery of a 24/7 technical support service.
- 8.1.4 Infrastructure: Library:** UHAS will expand the services of the main campus library to include a copyright advisory and clearance service to support the university-wide blended-learning initiative. Through its libraries, UHAS will ensure that there is 24/7 access to electronic information resources to support teaching and learning.
- 8.1.5 Infrastructure: Course Development & Delivery Support:** The Management of UHAS will equip the faculty to provide quality services in instructional design for blended learning, training to the faculty on blended course development and

delivery, and multimedia material development. The Blended Learning Committee, which, in collaboration with Deans, will coordinate the blended learning initiative, shall be constituted. The composition of the Blended Learning Committee shall include the Pro-VC as Chair, Deans, course/programme experts, curriculum specialists, instructional designers, librarians, multimedia specialists and information technologists.

8.1.6 Oversight & Planning: The Academic Planning and Management Committee (APMC) will oversee the planning and implementation of the blended-learning initiative. The Dean of each School will implement the initiative to ensure that there is an alignment between the blended-learning initiative and the strategic plans of each School or Department.

8.2 COURSE DEVELOPMENT

The curriculum and instruction of online courses will be fully comparable in rigour to the same curriculum delivered face-to-face on the campus of UHAS. The existing policies of UHAS on curriculum design and development shall be applied in the blended-learning curriculum development activities, and staff will be trained. In developing online courses, the following aspects shall be covered:

8.2.1 Curriculum Design

The curriculum design encompasses issues such as course content, teaching and learning methods, assessment strategies, aims and objectives or intended outcomes of the course and how these objectives tie in with the national imperatives; and the people involved in the curriculum design process.

The starting point of curriculum development in the blended-learning initiative is the profile of the student, and then followed by the intended outcomes of the course, and then the teaching and learning (including assessment) strategies that are embedded in the learning material. The process also includes converting the face-to-face- based learning of the existing courses to an online version. The curriculum should help students to get what they learn and how they are assessed at the place where they are. It should provide a learning programme that includes independent self-study, in-text activities, assignments and feedback provided.

The blended-learning curriculum development activities should be done in line with the UHAS teaching and learning guidelines.

8.2.2 Development of Learning Materials

The online learning materials must be designed, written, produced in advance and be ready for delivery to learners as soon as they register.

The study materials are developed by a team which is comprised of academics, curriculum and course designers, language specialists and relevant stakeholders where possible. However, the curriculum design and development are predominantly done by academics and they are the owners of the content of the material.

The study material should prepare the student for learning, develop the necessary skills, attitudes and knowledge that the student needs, guide the student through the learning process, and include sufficient and appropriate learning activities to enhance their knowledge.

Open Education Resources (OER) can also be used to enhance the content of the study material. OER can include full courses/programmes, course material, modules, student guides, teaching notes, textbooks, research articles, videos, assessment tools and instruments, interactive materials such as simulations and role plays, database, software, apps (including mobile apps) and any other educationally useful materials. OERs are available under an open license that specifies that resources can be used, re-used and repurposed for educational purposes. OER can be used to supplement contact sessions, existing text-based resources with other media such as audio and video resources that can be accessed through computers or cell phones.

In developing materials for blended learning, the academic and administrative components are seen as equally important and dependent on each other.

Study materials including assessment (assignment), a calendar, and a programme of study should be made available when a student applies for a course and registers.

Training and Reskilling: The University will develop and provide demand-driven-skill- based courses to address the need for upgrading people in knowledge and skills which they need in order to excel in their work environment.

8.3 TEACHING AND LEARNING

8.3.1 Teaching and Learning Methods

The teaching and learning methods used will be determined by the nature of the programme, the profile of the students and their access to resources.

The methods will include an independent study of learning materials, completion of various activities, formative assessment tasks, tutorials, practical work, and opportunities to interact with others as well as research activities.

The methods will also include work-integrated learning as a planned component of the curriculum when outcomes can only be achieved through work-based experience.

8.3.2 Delivery Channels

To support teaching and learning, faculty members should use a wide range of delivery channels. Ideally, they should use the best possible mix of media as listed below:

Print Media: Print media remains the practical choice since it is inexpensive and reliable, and is accepted as a medium for studying purposes. Study materials should be well designed to facilitate access to information. A good quality course design and study materials will provide effective in-text student support.

Technology-Enhanced Learning Modes of Delivery

Information Technologies: Information technologies such as audio, podcast, CDs, DVDs, satellite broadcasting and online distribution are used to provide content and information. Websites, audio and video podcasting and streaming, and possibly radio and television can also be used to facilitate the process of providing content and learning purpose.

Communication Technologies: Communication technologies such as telephone, multimedia CDs and DVDs, video and audio conferencing, SMS and

MMs via cell phones, e-mail and discussions forums/chat facilities via learning management systems offer interaction in supporting print- based study materials. Highly interactive technologies that are asynchronous such as wikis, blogs, social networking facilities and e-portfolios can be used effectively to support teaching and learning.

Learning Management Systems: Learning Management Systems can be used. Any ICT tool to be used also needs to integrate with other institutional systems (e.g., student registration systems).

Mobile learning is defined as the provision of education and training using mobile devices such as tablets, smartphones and mobile phones. While learning is not mobile, teaching and learning activities can be done through the use of mobile devices, anywhere, anytime.

E-learning: E-learning provides a wide range of possibilities for delivering learning programmes. E-learning programmes can be categorized into internet-supported, internet-dependent, and fully online programmes.

In the *internet-supported programmes*, participation in an online programme is optional. Students can use the internet to access additional information or resources to enhance learning.

In the internet-dependent programmes, students use the internet to access their study materials or they participate in discussions with their peers and their lecturers online through discussion fora.

In the full online programmes, interactions between staff and students, educational content, learning activities, assessment and support services are delivered online.

Blended Programmes: Blended programmes use a wide range of delivery channels that use the best possible mix of media including online and/or digitally supported offline technologies such as CDs/DVDs/flash drives and mobile devices where course contents are pre-installed. These different channels can also be supported through face-to-face instruction or via print-based material.

8.4 COURSE STRUCTURE

- The structure of courses for online learning will follow the same course structure for face-to-face learning courses as laid out in the policy of the University of Health and Allied Sciences on curriculum design and review.
- The Heads of Department in consultation with Deans of School have the responsibility to determine the percentage of face-to-face courses to be replaced with online learning. For example, in a semester, between 20% and 80 % of face-to-face time could be replaced by online learning depending on the programme and the credit load (regular/sandwich).

8.5 STUDENT SUPPORT

- Prior to enrolment in a blended-learning programme, students are provided with an e- Handbook on the programme. This should include, but not be 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, regulations in place to provide a unique student's identity, and the protection of student's information.

- The student programme e-Handbook will also specify requirements for access to the online learning environment, detailing the required broadband specification and any specific hardware or software requirements, for example.
- The student programme e-Handbook will provide information on the level and nature of support available, including, but not limited to, academic, technical and pastoral support.
- The University will ensure that procedures and regulations as specified in the student handbook are fit for purpose in a blended learning environment.
- The University will ensure that guidelines as specified in the social media policy (not yet developed) are fit for purpose in a blended learning environment.
- The University will ensure that implementation strategies are fit for purpose in a blended learning environment.

8.6 FACULTY SUPPORT WITH COMPULSORY E-LEARNING TRAINING FOR NEW MEMBERS OF STAFF

8.6.1 New Faculty Blended Learning Environment Orientation

Policy

The Faculty of UHAS will be provided with resources and information – syllabus, course outline, book resources and pertinent course information/resources – with regard to blended-learning LMS delivery.

Procedures

1. Faculty members who are new to blended-learning environment will receive training given by the Head of Department/Programme Coordinator as directed by the Dean of the School.
2. Adjunct lecturers located away from the campuses or instructional sites of UHAS may have this requirement waived by the Head of Department/Programme Coordinator if they have prior teaching experience using LMS systems. If they have not had LMS experience, the Head of Department/Programme Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that they receive such training before teaching an online course.

8.6.2 Technology Support

Policy

The coordinator of the blended-learning initiative of UHAS/the Head of Department assists and supports faculty members in the design, implementation, and support for blended-learning courses. The School Officer/Programme Coordinator is the liaison between students, the Instructional Department, and the IT support staff. It is the School Officer's responsibility to ensure that faculty members and students are supported in their efforts to deliver effective blended-learning courses and programmes. The Head of Department collaborates with the ICT Director to develop requirements/expectations for blended-learning systems.

Faculty members must own the technology and have adequate internet access if they are not working for the University on its main campus or at the instructional sites.

Procedures

Design: The coordinator of the blended learning initiative assists in the course development, the online upload of content, the placement of content and the on-going management of course modules.

Implementation: Course offerings and course cancellations will be coordinated by the Dean of the School, the Head of Department, the School Officer and the Programme Coordinator.

Support: Management and coordination of course offerings are done in conjunction with the faculty and the Student Resource Department.

8.7 TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The introduction of the blended-learning programme imposes new requirements on the University to provide on-line administrative services and technical infrastructure designed to provide secure services to be accessed by users operating outside the institutional firewall. New infrastructure should be put in place and only persons with authorisation will have access to it. The Government of Ghana has provided support as described below:

The University has been supported by the Government to strengthen the existing ICT infrastructure. As part of the Government of Ghana Wi-Fi project, the University has received some ICT equipment to support the LMS, which includes, but not limited to, Servers.

8.8 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The following personnel will provide technical assistance for blended-learning staff and users at the three main stages i.e., production, delivery and access.

8.8.1 Production Stage

Production: Media specialists will include blended-learning specialists, graphic designers, web designers and editors.

The graphic designer (artist) will be a professional within the graphic design and graphic arts industry who assembles 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 blended-learning project of UHAS. 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 accessible and aesthetic.

The editor is responsible for digital production of the content with regard to checking copyright issues and other digital publishing-related matters.

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 blogging clients and RSS readers.

8.8.2 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.

8.8.3 Access Stage: IT Helpdesk Officers

The IT helpdesk officers provide support for hardware and software issues related to the blended learning. They also handle phone support for the campus and provide support for the other staff members in relation to the blended-learning programme. The primary requirements for the helpdesk officers are good interpersonal skills and a broad-based knowledge of computing.

8.8.4 Software/Hardware

The University will provide software and hardware options that are suitable for e-learning users where possible.

8.8.5 IT Network Management and Infrastructure

The University provides good internet bandwidth (at least 5 Mbps) and this facilitates an improved and efficient access throughout the University campuses.

In addition, UHAS works towards providing a more efficient intranet system with a wider coverage within the territory of the University, including the non-residential student areas. This will cut down on bandwidth usage using wireless technology. The local intranet will provide a platform for the distribution of e-learning materials to any student or university community member who wishes to use them. The IT network will support the e-learning website that shares selected materials on the world wide web. The effective implementation of the ICT policy of the University will also augment this Blended-Learning Policy.

8.9 STUDENT ASSESSMENT (LEARNER AUTHENTICATION, WORK AUTHORSHIP AND EXAMINATION SECURITY) AND CERTIFICATION

8.9.1 Assessment of Students and Requirements

- Assessment for blended-learning programmes will be similar to that used for face-to-face delivery with parity of standards being paramount.
- Information on methods and criteria for assessment will be provided in the programme handbook. In programmes featuring online assessment, the students will receive orientation sessions in advance to ensure that students feel supported in engaging in this type of programme delivery and assessment.
- Security issues relating to the authentication of students' work will be considered when designing assessment processes.

8.9.2 Originality of Students' Course Work

Policy

The coordinator of the blended-learning initiative, ICT specialists, the School Officer and the Head of Department assist and support the faculty in ensuring that the original work of a student is submitted by the student through the identification of the student via their blended-learning profile.

Procedures

Profiles of Students

- The ICT personnel help students to create valid E-learning profiles each one of which has a student identification number, a student identification card photo, and verification of registered courses.

Submission of Original Work

- The coordinator of the blended-learning initiative helps students to upload their original work.
- The faculty regularly monitors submission of work and such work should include verification of the student signature block, patterns of writing styles, and student's interaction styles.
- The faculty is responsible for checking for plagiarism or substitution of work via tool sets and patterns of work by students.

Proctoring of Course Interim Assessment (IA)

- In order to ensure students' identities, faculty members are encouraged to use assessment proctoring whenever possible or feasible.
- Proctors monitor a student's identity at the time of the test by verifying that the student identity card with their name, their ID number, and picture confirms that the student is doing the work of the exam.

Authentication

- Students must complete their own tests/quizzes given online. Failure to do their own work will result in students receiving a letter grade of "F" for that course.
- Any student found to have used any kind of identification fraud in an online course where they are not the one who is doing the required work and/ or has signed-up for the course will automatically be dismissed from the University of Health and Allied Sciences.
- The coordinator of the blended-learning initiative and the webmaster will set up a secondary identification question for each student to use during registration to ensure their identity.
- Faculty members are encouraged to verify students' identities through varying techniques. As a requirement in the syllabus, electronic cameras should be used during discussions, at least on a random basis. Again, there should be random phone calls to students, and close attention should be paid to the quality and style of communication with faculty members.
- Assessment is a key authentication tool.

8.10 ELECTRONIC SECURITY MEASURES

The three (3) pillars of information security namely: confidentiality, integrity, and availability will be vigorously employed as an electronic security measure for the Learning Management Systems (LMS) of UHAS. The pillars of security will be applied in the following aspects of the LMS of UHAS as detailed below:

- Confidentiality:** The information contained on UHAS LMS will be kept strictly confidential. This means that the information will not be compromised by third parties, and that confidential data will not be disclosed to people who do not need or should not have access to them. Confidentiality means that information is systemized in terms of who needs to see it and how important it is.

- ii. **Integrity:** The LMS of UHAS will provide a high level of certainty that the data are not tampered with or degraded during or after submission. It will ensure that the data have not been changed, either intentionally or unintentionally.
- iii. **Availability:** The information on the LMS of UHAS will be available to authorised users when it is needed. Such a critical system will have properly functioning computing systems, security controls, and communication channels. The LMS of UHAS will be resilient against cyber threats and have safeguards against power outages, hardware failures, and other events that might affect the system availability.

9.0 CODE OF PRACTICE: THEMATIC AREAS

- Teaching Methods
- E-Learning Resources
- Teaching Staff
- Student Support
- Access by Disadvantaged Students
- E-Assessment Methods
- Monitoring and Review of Programmes

9.1 Intellectual Property Rights and Ownership of Materials

This blended-learning programme and course delivery policy will be consistently applied and interpreted in accordance with the Intellectual Property Policy set forth and adopted by UHAS and all policies and provisions regarding ownership of intellectual property as established and/or accepted by UHAS.

9.2 Security of Personal Information during Assessment and Evaluation

Security of personal information is protected in the conduct of assessment and evaluation through the use of online proctored assessment and on-site examinations.

Students' data are stored securely in the UHAS ICT system for retrieval and assessment. As with traditional courses, it is the duty of a department to ensure that not only the integrity of the online course content and its alignment to the whole degree programme are checked but also, credit for the course is awarded based on the quality of work by a student and the collection of data that support the student's learning outcomes.

9.3 Secure Login and Security of Assessment and Course Activities

Through the online registration system, each student who registers for a course is assigned a unique identification. Pursuant to this process, before a student enters the system, they must logon using their USER ID (or "S" number) and password that is unique to only that student. Furthermore, the Learning Management Systems (LMS) of UHAS, i.e., Blackboard and/or Moodle requires an additional login and password in order to access course work. Also, as UHAS phase in Respondus Monitor software, along with the currently utilized Respondus Lockdown Browser, the student's identification and integrity are further strengthened.

9.4 Student Services to Address Challenges of Blended Learning

It is apparent that the very nature of blended learning creates challenges for the online student. UHAS recognises some, if not all of these challenges, and therefore, provides appropriate services to address those challenges, many of which may be found at the website of UHAS under the student resources page link. In addition, students will be provided with an academic advisor to assist them with various pertinent academic issues. Also, UHAS will provide assistance to students with special needs via the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs.

9.5 Fraudulent Conduct and Offenses

Fraudulent conduct and offenses specified in the student handbook and the statutes of the University shall be applied in the implementation of this Policy.

9.6 Communication and Reporting Channels

Communication and reporting channels in UHAS student handbook shall be applied in the implementation of this Policy.

9.7 Data Protection

This Policy shall work in tandem with the National Data Protection Policy and other related policies at UHAS.

10.0 TEACHING METHODS

It is important for the Policy to pay attention to the process by which the teaching staff will determine the best teaching methods for students in a specific context. It should consider pedagogical practices, innovation, and the specific goal of each programme. This will ensure that the needs of students are factored into the whole process in the design of the curriculum, the delivery and assessment. This Policy will ensure the following:

- The teaching, learning and assessment strategies and delivery mechanisms adopted in the blended learning programme should be specifically designed for this context.
- UHAS will ensure that blended learning developments are learner-centred and course-led rather than technology-led. The organisational structure and processes will ensure that technology is the servant of pedagogy.
- UHAS will ensure that its teaching, learning, and assessment practices are accessible to all students.
- Course-specific and educational scholarship inform the pedagogy and instructional design. The programme design will specify the required effort for the activities of teaching, content creation and moderation in the blended- learning delivery.

11.0 E-LEARNING RESOURCES

UHAS will provide and make available to blended-learning students non-proprietary (i.e., open source or free) software, tools and related resources. These will include:

- operating systems
- applications

- contents

Schools delivering blended learning programmes will ensure timely communication of the following to students: courses by level, subject content, relationship with other courses, mechanisms for dissemination of course materials, assignments, assessment, IT requirements, and the estimated time that students will need to dedicate to a course.

In addition, at every step, continuing and prospective students will be informed about requirements concerning equipment, e-learning and digital skills, pre-knowledge and prerequisite subjects, and attendance.

12.0 TEACHING STAFF QUALIFICATION

The University will ensure that faculty members delivering the blended courses are comparable in qualification and competence to those in face-to-face course delivery.

13.0 ACCESS BY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

The University adheres to non-discrimination in online course delivery through reasonable adjustments of policies, practices and procedures to offer access and avoid discrimination on the basis of disability. In doing so, the University follows guidelines regarding the design and development of online courses in a format that offers equitable access to the opportunities and the benefits afforded by technology-based courses. UHAS strives to provide access to blended courses for all students. The University is committed to ensuring individuals with disabilities the ability to independently acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same benefits and services with substantially equivalent ease of use including information processes and services provided through online platforms within the same time frame as other students.

This Policy provides information on accommodations for specific functional areas of disadvantaged students as follows:

Impairment Type	Considerations	Possible Accommodations
Vision	Students may have limited (or no) vision and be unable to view online or printed materials in the same way as others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen Reader Software • E-text reader • Braille Refreshable Display • Text-only browser • Text alternatives for graphics/non-text • Adjust contrast • Information on CD or MP3 • Braille print
Hearing	Students will have difficulty with audio inputs on video or with participating in online or telephone discussions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text captioning or transcripts for audio/video (rather than subtitles-which do not convey all information) • Sign language interpreters • Relay service (& TTY) • Printed material
Mobility	Students may not be able to operate a mouse or keyboard. They may also have difficulty accessing buildings (if required) for any face-to-face course component.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative keyboard (including onscreen keyboards) • Modified mouse or stylus • Speech recognition software • Accessible buildings (ramps, wide doorways, disabled toilets)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switch interfaces • Page turners • All-function keyboard accessible
Learning Disability	Students may have difficulty with reading, writing, and processing information quickly or retaining information in the same way as others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books on CD, Tablet or USB • Speech output on computer • Speech input to assist with writing • Extra time to read and use materials • Text at an appropriately readable level
Speech	Students may have difficulty contributing to interactive sessions (e.g., video conferences).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use email or a chat room (where the student can type a response) to convey thoughts and ideas
Other/General		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not use content that may cause seizures • Clearly locate content • Ensure users can operate particular platforms • Content must be able to be 'read' by all software (including assistive technologies)

14.0 E-ASSESSMENT METHODS

Blended courses will be evaluated according to the standards utilized for face-to-face courses. Evaluation and assessment of electronically delivered courses, the faculty and programmes take place in the context of the policies and procedures of all existing academic programmes. It is not the intent of this Policy to supplant any existing policy set forth by UHAS, but when necessary, to define new or to expand existing policies and procedures to ensure the most effective implementation and support of blended courses and programmes. Multiple assessment methods, including frequent interactions between the professor and students through electronic means, or in-person channels will be highlighted. These assessment methods can include participation in discussion boards and chat rooms, on-line group projects, progress reports, peer assessment or other interactive assessment techniques.

14.1 Assessment Strategies

Assessment is integral to teaching and learning and has the capacity to not only measure learning but also develop learning. Therefore, it is important that assessment for blended-learning courses/programmes is well planned. It is imperative that online assessment and feedback practices are conducted in principled ways that are in line with the policy of UHAS on the assessment of student learning. Course designers and faculties should consider ways in which educational technologies can be used to design formative assessment tasks that contribute to students' development of knowledge and practices with regard to a particular discipline.

Strategies for authentication of students' identities (such as personal logins on RU connected) for assessment purposes should always be in place and enhanced when necessary. Oral assessment (via Skype, Zoom or any other emerging technology) with internal and external examiners should be arranged where feasible or necessary as a way of authenticating students' identities and to complement written submission(s).

14.2 Assessment of Activities and Students' Achievements Compared to Intended Learning Outcomes

The ability of a student to succeed in a blended education class depends on their ability to understand the class structure, the technology and the assessment measures. Informing students of what skills and technology are needed for a particular blended education course and using formative and summative measures to inform them on how they are progressing in the blended course will offer them the opportunity to do self-assessment of their capability to succeed in the course. This will improve students' retention and success in the blended-learning course or programme.

14.3 Evaluating the Level of Student Learning

Evaluating student learning depends on defining measurable learning outcomes and assessing students against the expected outcomes. Course content and learning outcomes are well aligned and appropriate to the level of the course and the levels of the learners. Student learning is assessed at the formative level using semester testing and quizzing but also summative at the end of courses or programmes. These quantitative data are closely analysed and used as gauges in assessing how to improve the overall quality of the courses or programmes.

15.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibility
ROLE 1 Heads of Department	Heads of department are responsible for gaining permission from school boards, the IPMC, and Academic Board before a programme is submitted to GTEC for accreditation.
ROLE 2 Course Coordinators	Course coordinators are responsible for following the principles outlined in the Curriculum Development and Review Policy of UHAS as they design programmes incorporating blended learning provisions. They are also responsible for ensuring that the assessment plans of programmes are in line with the principles of the policy on the assessment of student learning and that courses are reviewed on a regular basis.
ROLE 3 Faculty	Faculties are responsible for the design of courses, the facilitation of courses and the provision of assistance to registered students.
ROLE 4 Directorate of Human Resources	The Directorate of Human Resources is responsible for ensuring that the University employs sufficient academic, administrative and professional staff to ensure the optimal, continuous and consistent delivery of quality blended education to students.
ROLE 5 Directorate of ICT	The Directorate of Information Communication Technology shall ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● institutionally supported systems have the capabilities for the design of educationally sound online courses and programmes ● students have regular and reliable access to the internet with appropriate firewall protection when on campus ● they resolve technical failures relating to the institutional internet service provider and firewall protection on campus ● the tools and technologies used in centralised teaching venues are up to date and functional ● the tools and technology used in remote sessions are operational and accessible ● a student help-desk facility is available to both face-to-face and online learning students via the team of student support technicians ● in conjunction with the subject specialists who will facilitate the adoption of strategies and training in the use of technology, and in line with established protocols, they research and support the latest technology.

ROLE 6 Directorate of Quality Assurance	The Directorate of Quality Assurance, in collaboration with the School Quality Assurance Sub-Committees and the Administrators' Quality Assurance Sub-Committee, is responsible for providing support for the accreditation of programmes and the quality assurance of courses and programmes.
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16.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES

16.1 Measuring Programme Effectiveness

The overall programme effectiveness is determined by using different measures. Blended education course fact sheets will be created for each blended education programme at UHAS based on information submitted by the faculty at the course and programme levels. These will be the primary data that will be used for evaluating online learning and for reporting.

Blended education course fact sheets will contain general information about the class, what specific skills a student should possess, and the hardware and software requirements for participation in a blended-learning course. The fact sheets will also provide the faculty's name, e-mail, and phone number so students can contact the faculty with questions regarding requirements for registering for a blended-learning course.

Students are encouraged to review the fact sheets for blended education courses before registering. Registration will constitute the student's acceptance of the requirements necessary to participate in the course.

Academic departments will evaluate the blended education courses and programme proposals for:

- appropriateness within the degree programme or as a stand-alone-service course
- suitable course content and sufficient rigour
- appropriate use of technology in course delivery
- the extent to which student learning matches intended outcomes
- including both the goals of general education and the objectives of the major degree programmes
- cost effectiveness of the programme to its students, as compared to campus-based alternatives
- results from students' routine end-of-course and programme evaluation
- documentation concerning access provided to students who were not previously served, through a combination of enrolment records and student surveys
- documentation of the institution's analyses that relate costs to goals of the programme.

16.2 Institutional evaluation of blended-learning programmes will be consistent with the evaluation of all academic programmes of UHAS.

UHAS will review the effectiveness of its blended education programmes to ensure that the programmes align with the institutional mission and priorities of the University. The University considers well-developed blended courses as building blocks for developing quality blended-learning programmes. Accordingly, applying current standards and best practices for course design is critical. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. As a result, any action planned or taken should be communicated to all those concerned.

16.3 Evaluating Satisfaction with the Content and Delivery of the Course Experience

Evaluating the course content and delivery effectiveness in improving online students' learning outcomes (OSLO) involves getting honest and direct feedback from students on what worked well for them and what needs improvement. While such feedback should always be tempered by the judgment of the teaching professional, this feedback, when constructively considered, can be invaluable in re-thinking course components.

Academic regulations require that students evaluate every university lecture or lab course, including blended education courses. The Directorate of Quality Assurance is responsible for developing and coordinating the quality assurance system of the University. Currently, traditional student evaluation of teaching forms is administered online once every semester.

17.0 BLENDED-LEARNING POLICY EVALUATION

In order to facilitate innovation and motivation, the University organises periodic exhibition of blended-learning materials. This enhances the reputation of those that excel in the blended-learning implementation and make their accomplishments more visible to the University at large. In addition, the annual departmental rankings can help in identifying the best department in blended-learning implementation, Additionally, the University can promote the blended-learning culture by organizing certificate-awarding advocacy seminars, hand-on workshop, etc. for faculties. The Blended Learning Policy of the University and its implementation plan overtly address quality, including quality processes and their enhancement.

17.1 Blended-Learning Evaluation Criteria

Blended-Learning Evaluation Criteria	
Technical support to academic staff	Call for statistics and feedback from staff
Quality and excellence	a) Institutional review reports b) Reports on student evaluation of teaching c) Reports from professional bodies d) Publications
IT reliability	a) Statistics of uptime b) Statistics of unscheduled downtime c) Students' survey comments
<p>While the research can inform future policy directives and help guide practices, the faculty and students' voices can help shape policy and steer blended learning activities. The following are some of the research questions that can help in that regard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can technologies support new forms of pedagogy? • What is the relationship between technologies, physical and virtual spaces, and pedagogy? • How do we take account of a digital divide that is ever narrower but deeper? • What new digital literacy skills will learners and teachers need? • Blended learning innovation will require a radical rethinking of the curriculum • Blended learning challenges existing norms about assessment. 	

18.0 REVIEW OF POLICY

The Blended-Learning Quality Assurance Policy shall be reviewed as and when the need arises.

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LOCAL POSTAL ADDRESS

University of Health and Allied Sciences
Pmb 31 Ho, Volta Region, Ghana

Phone: +233 (0) 36-2196136

Phone: +233 (0) 50-8534404

Phone: +233 (0) 24-5125359

Email: info@UHAS.edu.gh

Web: www.UHAS.edu.gh

UHAS WEBSITE

www.UHAS.edu.gh

UHAS ALUMNI WEB PAGE

www.UHAS.edu.gh/en/alumni

UHAS COVID – 19 INFO

www.UHAS.edu.gh/coronavirus.html

OVERSEAS ADDRESS

The Overseas Representatives
Universities of Ghana Office
321 City Road, London EC1V 1LJ
England

Phone: +44 (0) 207-2787413

Fax: +44 (0) 207-7135776

E-mail: ugoouk@aol.com

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Handle: [@UHASGHANA](https://twitter.com/UHASGHANA)

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