



National Commission for  
**Further and  
Higher Education**  
Malta

**NCFHE COMMUNICATION  
NCFHE/07/2020**

**Title: Provision of Online Learning**

**To: All Licensed Providers**

**From: CEO, NCFHE**

**Date: 17/06/2020**

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Dear colleagues,

In view of the recent rise in the interest in online/blended learning, the NCFHE shall be issuing the following instructions to all education institutions to follow when introducing online/blended learning. If an accredited education institution or a prospective education institution would like to introduce online/blended learning, they would need to provide NCFHE with the following:

- The programmes must satisfy the following criteria for the provision to be classified as “100% online or blended”:
  - a. The learning process is directed and supervised by at least one suitably qualified and competent tutor; and
  - b. Students have the freedom and flexibility to access the course at a time which is most convenient to them (student control) in addition to the engagement required with the tutor as stipulated by the course description;
  - c. An integral part of the programme or the whole programme should utilise pedagogical methods which deliver new skills, knowledge and competences to students through a virtual learning environment.

Furthermore, all providers that are intending to deliver an online/blended course, kindly note that you need to provide the NCFHE with the following:

1. Access to the online platform both as a lecturer and a student.
2. Answers to the list of questions listed below in Annex 1 and answer accordingly.

3. A completed provider application form (or updated provider application form in the case of licensed institutions) to reflect the online/blended provision (and provide the necessary documentation). The application form (Provider Licensing) can be downloaded from the following link - <https://bit.ly/2zkhzGR>.
4. The programme application of the programme of studies that you intend to offer through online / blended learning must reflect this. If you are going to do such amendments to an already accredited programme please do so with track changes. The application form to submit a new programme can be downloaded from the following link - <https://bit.ly/2XPt56q>
5. Any contractual agreement you may have with the hosts / owners of the online platform if applicable.
6. The education institution must provide/ update its Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) policy/document to reflect the online/blended learning by addressing all the 11 Standards outlined in the National Quality Assurance Framework Standards Amended to also cover Online/Blended Learning. Please refer to the following link for further information: <https://bit.ly/2MNgn8p>

The NCFHE reserves the right to issue more detailed and updated guidelines on online/blended learning from time to time.

For further information in this regard, please do not hesitate to contact us on [accreditation.ncfhe@gov.mt](mailto:accreditation.ncfhe@gov.mt).

Regards,

CEO, NCFHE

## **Annex 1: Questions for provision of online/blended learning to be answered by education institutions**

All education institutions that wish to provide online / blended learning as part of their education institution must provide NCFHE with an answer to **all the below questions**. The answers of these questions together with the above documentation will be passed on to our digital evaluator for feedback approval. The answers for these questions must be provided in a separate document.

**Questions related to quality assurance shall be considered as guiding questions and answers should be reflected in IQA policy.** The IQA policy will be evaluated by the Quality Assurance Unit at NCFHE.

### **Questions: Accreditation:**

1. Kindly indicate the office in Malta which will be used for the management and implementation of the online (virtual) aspect of the programmes.
2. Please indicate how the programme satisfies the criteria indicated above (point 1a-c).
3. Will the virtual learning environment (VLE) be used as a means of direct contact hours (learning new content)?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b>
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If yes, how will you track the number of hours (as per definition of the ECTS/ECVET) and activities which are carried out in the virtual learning environment?

4. If online videos are used as a mode of delivery, how do you ensure that the overall quality of the product is achieved and maintained?

### ***Virtual Learning Environment:***

1. Name the virtual learning platform and explain why it is being used in this programme.
2. Indicate and describe the technical features which will be used and the technical requirements for students to be able to access the virtual learning environment.
3. How is data on students' interaction in the virtual learning environment going to be collected and used for the development of both the programme and the virtual learning environment?
4. Provide your mechanisms for student security and privacy both online and offline.
5. Does the virtual learning environment have automated back-up systems? This is a requirement in terms of quality assurance. Please indicate the back-up systems (not archiving but redundancy systems such as mirroring) that are used and how you would ensure continuity of service in case of failure of hardware, software and online services.

### **Questions: Quality Assurance:**

*The questions below shall be considered as guiding questions and answers should be reflected in IQA policy.*

1. **ADMISSION:**  
What are the administrative processes for student admissions and their authentication? (i.e. What is the process for giving them access to the online platform used?)
2. **TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE:**  
At programme design stage, how do you ensure that the virtual learning platform or other online tools used can deliver the programme or part thereof, and it facilitates teaching and learning? Please specify any tools/ technologies used to assist students with special needs.
3. **TUTOR SUPPORT:**  
How do tutors receive academic, administrative and technical support on the provision of the programme both in person and online / remotely?
4. **STUDENT SUPPORT:**  
How will the education institution provide technical, administrative and academic support including counselling to students in a virtual or blended environment?
5. **TUTOR COMPETENCIES:**  
How will you ensure that tutors have the necessary ICT and pedagogical skills to use the virtual learning environment and other digital tools? Also describe any technical support which can be provided to staff in using this and other digital tools.
6. **PEDAGOGY:**  
What pedagogical methods do you use for teaching and learning? Explain your selection with reference to virtual learning or both virtual and traditional in case of a blended provision.
7. **INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION:**  
How do students and tutors interact with each other? Please explain with reference to virtual learning or both virtual and traditional in case of a blended provision.
8. **ACCESS:**  
What technical resources provided by the entity are needed by tutors and students to access the virtual learning environment and engage in teaching and learning?

9. INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCING:

Please state the type of resources that will be made available to tutors and students, including resources which are both in virtual and physical format. How will the quality of the resources be ensured?

10. ASSESSMENT:

What is your approach to minimize plagiarism and cheating? Please explain the what arrangements are in place for assessment in the virtual learning environment. How is the identity of the students checked when they submit their coursework, engage in virtual communication or sit for online assessments? (e.g: verification methods)

11. ARCHIVING:

Indicate how records (including students' records, assignments, assessments, employment rates and career paths when the course states an orientation towards employment etc.) are going to be archived in Malta.

12. REVIEW:

Explain how you will monitor, review and update programmes to benefit from the latest technologies available for virtual teaching and learning.