National Commission for Further and Higher Education
Malta

NCFHE COMMUNICATION
NCFHE/09/2020

Title: Definitions of Terms in Online Learning

To: All Licensed Providers

From: CEO, NCFHE

Date: 24/06/2020

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Dear colleagues,

In view of the increase in the need for online learning and online education, the National Commission for Further and Higher Education is issuing this communication to clarify the most common terms that are used in relation to online learning for ease of use and distinction. The definitions below will be adopted as the official definitions NCFHE will refer to when it comes to online and blended learning[1].

The programmes must satisfy the following criteria for the provision to be classified as **"100% online or blended":**

1) The learning process is directed and supervised by at least one suitably qualified and competent tutor; and

2) 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; and

3) 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.

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[1] _NCFHE reserves the right to update these definitions as deemed fit._

Different Types of Learning:

Asynchronous Learning	The learning that occurs when the educator and the learners are not communicating and engaging in real time - More commonly known as self-study.
Blended Learning	A formal education programme in which learners engage at least in part through **online delivery** of content and instruction with some element of learner control over time, place, path and/or pace, and at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location with face-to-face interaction away from home. The ration between online and face-to-face learning is decided by the educator and/or the programme on the basis of the related pedagogical principles and the programme's needs but both modes are complementary in the programme.
Computer-based Learning	Learning where computing devices constitute the main tool for the transfer of knowledge, skills and competences; assessment; and the general administration of learning.
Digital Learning	Learning where electronic devices such as computers that work process data are the main tool used in teaching and learning (similar to computer-based learning).
Distance Learning	Also known as e-learning or online learning, it is a form of education in which teachers and students are physically separated. Communication between the educator and the learner occurs via telecommunication or such services as mail. In the 21st century the term has been replaced by e-learning as almost all distance learning is being based on electronic communication such as the internet. This electronic communication needs to lead to learning based on pedagogical principles to be accepted as learning, otherwise it is simply a means of communication. E.g. email correspondence between a supervisor and learner doing research is not e-learning but simple communication using the Internet. However, a video/audio conference call between the two to discuss research methods and provide feedback does constitute e-learning over distance.
e-Learning	Teaching and learning supported by information and communication technologies (ICT) through electronic devices.
Face-to-face Learning	Learning where the educator and the learning are in the same physical space and thus face each other during interaction. This is the traditional mode of learning where educators and learners need to agree on a fixed time and place to engage in teaching and learning.
Mobile Learning	Teaching and learning that is delivered primarily through mobile computing devices such as smartphones and tablets.
Online Learning	Teaching and Learning supported by the internet.
Synchronous Learning	When the educator and the learners engage in real time.
Ubiquitous Learning	Anywhere, anytime teaching and learning is made possible with technology that eliminates the barriers of physical space.
Web-enhanced Learning	Teaching and learning that makes use of the World Wide Web (Internet), to support face-to-face learning to create opportunities for online collaboration and the executing of tasks that lead to learning. This includes giving learners the opportunity to instructional watch videos online, research websites and access other resources on the World Wide Web that provides learners

	with another opportunity to enhance their learning with traditional non-digital means such as reading printed texts.

Other terms related to online learning:

Digital Literacy or Competence	The ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate and create information safely and appropriately through digital technologies for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. It includes competences that are variously referred to as computer literacy, ICT literacy, information literacy and media literacy.
Digital Technologies	Any product or service that can be used to create, view, distribute, modify, store, retrieve, transmit and receive information electronically in a digital form. In this framework, the term "digital technologies" is used as the most general concept, comprising computer networks, hardware, software and content.
Digital Skills	The ability to handle, operate, set-up and/or programme digital devices.
Digital Tools	Digital technologies used for a given purpose or for carrying out a particular function of e.g. information processing, communication, content creation, safety or problem solving.
e-Portfolio	Collections of (students') work that can advance learning by providing a way for them to organize, archive, display and reflect on their work. E-portfolios are both demonstrations of users' abilities and platforms for their self-expression.
e-Skills	Same as Digital Skills
Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)	Computers, mobile phones, digital cameras, satellite navigation systems, electronic instruments and data recorders, radio, television, computer networks, satellite systems or almost anything that handles and communicates information electronically. ICT includes both the hardware (the equipment) and the software (the computer programmes in the equipment).
Learning Analytics	Learning analytics is the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of data about learners and their contexts, for the purposes of understanding and optimizing learning and the environments in which it occurs.
Learning Management System	A software application for web-based technology used to plan, implement and assess a learning process, allowing a teacher to create and deliver content, monitor student participation, and assess student performance. Also referred-to as Virtual Learning Environment.
Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)	A free, web-based distance learning programme aimed at enrolling many people from around the world.
Open Educational Resources	Teaching and educational resources that are openly licensed and available free of charge.
Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)	A software application or web-based technology used to plan, implement and assess a learning process, allowing a teacher to create and deliver content, monitor student participation, and assess student performance. Also referred to-as Learning Management System (LMS).

These definitions are to be applied by every provider who will be including online learning in their licensing and programme accreditation as per Communication NCFHE 07/2020 - Provision of Online Learning.

For further information about accreditation of online learning kindly email us on accreditation.ncfhe@gov.mt .

Regards,

CEO, NCFHE