UGANDA TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY

E-LEARNING POLICY

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

Uganda Technology and Management University (UTAMU) seeks to participate in training high quality human resource in the areas of management, science and technology for Uganda and the region. Furthermore, the university seeks to conduct research, consultancy, knowledge transfer partnerships and business incubation in the area of management, science and technology so as to contribute to the economic development of Uganda and the East and Central African Region.

Uganda Technology and Management University has established a policy on e-learning that will be implemented to guide the usage of the e learning resources such that students achieve the expected course outcomes. The University is committed to enhancing quality flexible learning which has to be in consistent with its strategic priorities, such as increased use of information and communication technologies in teaching and learning, flexible modes of learning and cost-effectiveness of courses and leads the University towards the realization of its Vision and Mission.

The Vision of Uganda Technology and Management University is "*To be a global educational institution for management, science, technology and innovation*" and

The Mission of the university is "*To provide global quality education, Research and innovation critical to economic and human development.*

E-learning comprises all forms of electronically supported learning and teaching. The information and communication systems, whether networked learning or not, serve as specific media to implement the learning process. E-learning is essentially the computer and network-enabled transfer of skills and knowledge. E-learning applications and processes include Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual education opportunities and digital collaboration. Content is delivered via the Internet, intranet/extranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV, and CD-ROM. It can be self-paced or instructor-led and includes media in the form of text, image, animation, streaming video and audio.

In regard to the above context, the university intends to establish policy on e-learning that will be implemented to guide the usage of the e learning resources such that students achieve the expected course outcomes. The University is committed to enhancing quality flexible learning which has to be in consistent with its strategic priorities, such as increased use of information and communication technologies in teaching and learning, flexible modes of learning and cost-effectiveness of courses. As part of this commitment, the Director of e learning has responsibility for pedagogical leadership, coordination and alignment of the pedagogical and technical dimensions of e-learning and stakeholders' liaison.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

The University will use eLearning where appropriate to support the achievement of its goals which are in-line with the national ICT policy in providing e-learning experiences that are flexible, responsive and effective and meet the needs of all its learners and partners.

Policy aspects pertaining to eLearning will, where relevant, be embedded in all University policies and procedures to ensure a consistent and corporate approach to associated systems, processes and responsibilities.

For the e-learning to be effective and efficient, a student is expected to have an access to all required materials/resources so that she/he is able to meet the learning outcomes of the course and this includes the expertise.

Here, the word course is intended to cover both awards formal and informal courses at any level of granularity.   Where an offering provides eLearning components or content on which the achievement of the learning outcomes is NOT dependent, it does not fall within the scope of this policy but nevertheless, such provision is subject to the requirements of the University relating to electronic learning content, including its provenance, quality, and management.

3. VISION STATEMENT

E-Learning may be referred to as the use of electronic information and communication technologies to effectively enhance teaching and learning. In due respect to the University strategies on the provision of quality education for all, UTAMU envisages an e-learning vision that can be attained in collaboration with different stake holders (students, academic staff, management and government). There are key activities that will need to be realized by UTAMU on implementation of the policy. These include:

Fostering students from all sectors, communities by enabling them attain their learning goals through a flexible, effective and ubiquitous teaching and learning community, equip students with relevant ICT skills necessary for the industry through practical delivery methods and also to respond to students' and market drivers.

Therefore the policy for e-learning strives to realize the following vision:

To effectively enhance the teacher to student teaching and learning experience, through the improvement of management and support of e-learning, by providing the opportunity to utilize the flexibility, accessibility and ubiquitous nature of educational environment that focuses on the needs of both the teacher and learner.

UTAMU will undertake the role of making sure that all its programs are effectively enhanced through teaching approaches that utilize e-learning. These approaches used by academic staff will be critically reviewed to conform to utilization of technologies for teaching and learning. Irrespective of the embedded technologies

teachers and learners should be able to attain educational objectives that suit innovations, employability and increase maturity in self paced learning.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

Principle 1: The University ensures that its eLearning courses match to the curriculum. The pedagogy is matched with and aligned to the appropriate Uganda National Council of Higher Education guidelines through, clear objectives (at an appropriate level and form of specification), the relevance of content covered, the appropriateness of student activities, the nature of the assessment.

Principle 2: The University ensures that the pedagogy engages and motivates learners. This engagement is evident in an ethos of being, motivating, such that it is both enjoyable for learners and makes them want to continue using ICT or want to carry on with learning the topic, such that it does not produce adverse emotional reactions that are likely to cause reduced motivation to learn in general, or to use ICT in particular;

Principle 3: The University ensures that students taking eLearning courses have a formative assessment. The university provides formative assessment, i.e. assessment that is primarily aimed at improving learning. This may be achieved in a number of ways:
- by providing rapid feedback that helps learners to see how they can improve and what they must do to improve,
- by providing opportunities for peer assessment, with appropriate understanding of the criteria or standards of performance required,
- By providing opportunities for self-assessment, with appropriate understanding of the criteria or standards of performance required.

Principle 4: The University ensures that   eLearning courses have coherence, consistency and transparency.
The courses are internally coherent and consistent in the way the objectives, content, student activity and assessment, match to each other. It is open and accessible in its design.

 Principle 5: The University ensures that its eLearning provision can meet the needs of a full range of flexible and independent learning experiences.   This includes on and off campus learners in local, regional, national and international settings and cover both blended and fully eLearning courses ranging from full awards to informal and individual learning.

Principle 6 : The University ensures that students taking eLearning courses have equity of opportunity with those taking courses delivered in more traditional ways, and that its marketing, recruitment, administrative and support procedures and provision are fully aligned to the needs of the e-Learner.

Principle 7: The University continually works towards ensuring that all systems, both manual and electronic, used in the eLearning context interoperate in the most

effective way to provide learners with a effective and increasingly individualized learning environment encompassing all aspects of their experience as a student of the University, as part of a holistic Managed Environment for Learners.

Principle 8: The University exploits the range of technologies used in the eLearning context to work with partner organizations, employers and individuals to assist it in meeting its goals of supporting the independent and lifelong learner and continuing professional development.

Principle 9: The University, through its quality processes, ensures that eLearning provision meets the standards expected by the University, funding bodies and relevant legislation, and that it is accessible, educationally sound, engaging and appropriate to its target populations, whilst ensuring that course developers and those facilitating learning have the scope to innovate and fully employ their professional skills and judgments.

Principle 10: The University ensures that, by using effective costing models and market research, the pricing of eLearning offerings is both competitive and appropriate to the target populations.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

The main objective of this policy is to facilitate and support e-learning through the use of information and communication technologies by guiding and coordinating all the stakeholders within and outside the university.

Described below are the specific objectives of the policy.

5.1 To use current and emerging flexible technologies to enrich e-learning experiences that can demonstrate added value for students and cost effectiveness.
To achieve this, the university desires to adopt the new emerging technologies, to upkeep with the ongoing technological advancement in its operational areas which includes e learning.

5.2 To develop courses and units that is consistent with strategic planning, and is pedagogically appropriate and cost-effective.
The university has experienced skilled teaching staffs that are capable of developing courses and units. They do these in collaboration with other stakeholders, but also they follow the strategic planning of the university.

5.3 To adopt University-wide quality assurance processes to ensure the appropriate use of current and emerging technologies for teaching and learning, including planning, design and development, implementation, evaluation and feedback and revision.
The university will achieve this objective through the unit of quality assurance where by the set standards will be used as the base to assess the quality of the resources used in e-learning.

5.4 To support the professional learning of staff in the use of current and emerging flexible technologies; and support students to develop the abilities to use current and emerging flexible technologies to enhance their learning experiences.
Technical supporting and teaching staff are enabled (conducive environment) such that they efficiently and effectively support students in their needs so that they are able to use the available technologies to make their studies smooth.

5.5 To take a national lead in offering learning opportunities to all those who can benefit, at a range of levels and in a variety of modes to suit individual needs.
The university achieves this objective by observing gender balance and marginalized groups to make sure that students from all communities around have got an equal chance of studying at UTAMU.

5.6 To play a leadership role in the cultural, social, economic and intellectual life of the local, regional and wider communities we serve and are known for our expertise in supporting economic and social regeneration.
The university has been doing this; it's only going to extend the same to e-learning as one of its new services.

6. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER POLICIES/DOCUMENTS

E-learning demands closer working relationships between academic units and the institution's administrative and operational divisions. School and departmental plans indicate the demands that they place on services provided by other departments. Discussions on variations that may be needed to standard institutional services should be identified in departmental planning, and plans should allow appropriate time scales for the resolution of difficulties.
The implementation of this policy will be along with the following policies:

6.1 Policy on Infrastructure:

The introduction of an e-learning program imposes new requirements for the institution to provide on-line administrative services and a technical infrastructure designed to provide secure services accessed by users operating outside an institutional firewall. A new infrastructure should be put in place and only designed persons will be authorized to have access and provide support as described below:

6.2 Technical Assistance

The following personnel will provide technical assistance for e-learning staff and users at the three main stages i.e. production, delivery and access.
Production: Media Specialists consisting of E-Learning specialist, Graphic Designers, Web Designers and Editors
Delivery: IT Specialists
Access: IT Helpdesk Officers
See Appendix A for description of the above-named technical personnel.

6.3 Software/Hardware

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

Appendix B explores various schemes of procurement.

6.4   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 campus.

In addition, UTAMU works towards providing a more efficient intranet system with wider coverage within the university territory including the non-residential student areas to cut down on bandwidth usage using wireless technology. The local intranet will provide a platform for distribution of e-learning materials to any students or School members who wish 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 university's ICT policy will also augment this e-learning policy.

6.5   Role of Communication Design, ICT Directorate and Library
The University encourages a teamwork approach to curriculum and materials development to bring together different kinds of expertise available across the university e.g. disciplinary, pedagogic, design, systems, ICT, etc.

6.6   Sharing
UTAMU fosters open sharing of educational materials with other institutions if needed. This sharing policy mandates the placement of e-learning materials produced at the University on the UTAMU intranet, and the complementary placement of UTAMU - developed materials on a similar site. This policy helps avoid duplicative efforts and expand the base of materials for all involved parties.

6.7   Policy on Virtual Mobility:
Delivery of programs via e-learning offers new opportunities for achieving the objectives of student mobility programs through virtual mechanisms

7. IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE POLICY.
7.1 E-LEARNING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION
E-learning policy is not the only factor necessary for successful e-learning institutional adoption; "bottom up" change driven by e-learning champions or innovators and early adopters is shown to be important and pedagogical strategies which create a climate of collaboration can also drive organizational change.

As the expression of senior leadership commitment, policy statements articulate the top management commitment and strategic ownership needed at the highest level for the uptake and rapid diffusion of e-learning in institutions.

In some ways staff may consider themselves explicitly constrained in their ICT use by lack of institutional support and vision, this policy is not necessarily the driving force for change and ICT take- up, but it is also a response to on the ground activities which scale up across UTAMU departments.

For a smooth implementation the following guidelines have to be reinforced:

7.1.1 School

School that originates materials reserves the right to decide the conditions under which the material will be shared except in the following cases:

- The material is specifically paid for or commissioned by the university or the university provides an unusual contribution either financial or material. In this case, the university will determine the conditions under which the material will be shared.
- The material is developed as a result of a specific collaboration, in which case the guidelines governing that collaboration will prevail.

Materials produced which do not indicate any specific conditions for sharing will automatically be considered to have been shared according to UTAMU regulations.

7.1.2 Non-School Staff

Materials created by staff as part of their job responsibilities will be owned by the university unless they are the creative force behind the work and/or have made a substantial intellectual contribution. In that case the same guidelines that pertain to School shall apply.

7.1.3 Students

This policy presumes that students will not be creators of e-learning material. Students who assist with creating or producing e-learning shall be acknowledged as collaborators. In the event that students are involved in developing e-learning as part of their university education, the authorship rights should fall to the University but the students will be appropriately attributed.

All students who register to study at UTAMU will be required to have a laptop for use during study as a must. UTAMU will allow students to join its scheme which allows them to acquire a brand new internet connected laptop at very minimal prices.

7.1.4 A Policy Implementation Group

This group will oversee the implementation of the e-Learning policy and will report to Education Committee and other relevant University groups. The Group will oversee the development of an evaluation plan to assess the impact of the policy. Central to this will be a commitment to include feedback from students and staff on all aspects of e-learning.

7.1.5 E-learning policy implementation advisory group

Terms of Reference

1. Represent Schools' strategies and priorities in relation to the implementation of eLearning Policy
2. Advise on the priority and nature of eLearning Policy implementation activities
3. Promote and disseminate eLearning Policy implementation
4. Advise on the ongoing development of University eLearning Policy

Membership

Representatives from the following areas of the University and its partner

- 2 members of each School who can represent the activities relating to the strategic focus of the School including: course design and delivery; administration; quality and the student experience.
- Student Office
- IT office

7.1.6 E-Learning Policy Implementation Acceptance Group
Terms of Reference
1. Consider the recommendations of the eLearning Policy Implementation Advisory group with respect to approval.
2. Make recommendations on the prioritization and implementation of approved developments.
3. Consider and assess University Plans and make recommendations for the consideration of the eLearning Policy Implementation Advisory Group with respect to the eLearning Policy development or implementation.
4. Consider and assess innovations in eLearning and make recommendations for the consideration of the eLearning Policy Implementation Advisory Group with respect to the eLearning Policy development or implementation.
5. Consider eLearning Policy developments on progression for ratification by Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee.

7.2 E-LEARNING POLICY EVALUATION.

In order to facilitate innovation and motivation, the university organizes periodic exhibition of e-learning materials. This enhances the reputation of those that excel in e-learning implementation and make their accomplishments more visible to the university at large. In addition, the university can promote the e-learning culture by organizing certificate-awarding advocacy seminars, hands-on workshops, etc for School and staff.

University eLearning Policy and its implementation plan overtly address Quality, including Quality processes and their enhancement.

TABLE 1: E-LEARNING EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Evaluation criteria	
Technical support to academic staff	**Call centre statistics and Feedback from staff**
Quality and excellence	a) QAA reports b) Professional body reports c) Subject review reports d) Publications c) Strategy and policy documents
IT reliability	a) Statistics of uptime b) Statistics of unscheduled downtime c) Student survey comments

As the research can inform future policy directives and help guide practice. The teacher and student voices can help shape policy and steer e-learning activities. Following are some of research questions that can help in that:

- 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?
- E-learning innovation will require a radical rethinking of the curriculum,
- E-learning challenges existing norms about assessment

Appendix A: Description of Technical Assistance
Production Stage
Graphic Designer
The graphic designer (artist) will be a professional within the graphic design and graphic arts industry who assembles together 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 UTAMU – e-learning project. 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 both accessible and aesthetic.

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

Web Designer
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.

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.

Access Stage
IT Helpdesk Officers
The IT Helpdesk Officers provide support for hardware and software issues related to the e-learning. They also handle phone support for the campus and help out with general support of the other staff in relation to the e-learning. The primary requirements for Helpdesk workers are to be good in interpersonal skills and a broad base of knowledge on computing.

Appendix B: Scheme for Hardware and Software Procurement
The success of e-learning is largely dependent on the ability to disseminate and access the e-learning materials. This means the availability of computers as well as

an efficient and reliable network. With the current student numbers at the University, it recommends the following:

- Although UTAMU follows through with its usual plans for continuously improving the number of computers for students use, it is not saddled with the burden of acquiring extra computers solely for e-learning access. This also eliminates the need to maintain such machines so acquired.
- UTAMU negotiates with Computer or Software manufacturing Companies – not their agents – to supply laptops and PC computers or software with basic specifications to students and staff at much reduced prices for educational purposes (most of the manufacturing companies have special prices for educational institutions and UTAMU takes advantage of such arrangements.

UTAMU petitions the Ministry of Education to allow such computers to come into the country as duty free educational materials, to further reduce the cost for students and staffs of UTAMU who wish to acquire a computer or software to be able to pursue their education using e-learning.