

# CRITERIA FOR BLENDED LEARNING INSTRUCTION IN ELT

## LEGEND

C: COMPULSORY

R: RECOMMENDED

E: EXTRA

### 1. Digital tools for the online learning component

*Effective online learning needs to use a set of digital tools. While a fully fledged Learning Management System or Virtual Learning Environment is not compulsory, such a platform should support teaching, learning and assessment through multiple modes of communication, both synchronous and asynchronous. If the providers do not need to invest in an LMS/VLE, this may be substituted by a suitable set of online services and software. The criteria below apply to an LMS/VLE or any set of digital tools used for teaching and learning.*

At application stage, does the provider meet each of these criteria? Fill-in with a 'Y' or 'N' as appropriate

Ability for multi-way video-conferencing between the educator and learners	R	
Screen casting – the educator and learners can share their computer screens	R	
Community Forums	R	
Automated Quizzes	E	
Online collaboration tools for co-creation and peer work, e.g. wiki	E	
Overview of Progress for each student	R	
File sharing facility	C	
Online message/e-mail system between the educator and the learners	C	
Anti-plagiarism software/service	R	

User authentication (login and password) for accountability	C	
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Factors for best practice include that the LMS/VLE:

- uses responsive design to be able to be used on a variety of devices;
- uses an attractive, intuitive interface;
- allows for use by persons with special needs;
- suggests further reading and/or next modules to students based on their previous performance/work and aptitude.

## 2. Human Resources

*All persons involved in e-learning should be adequately qualified, and provide adequate support to learners.*

Identified position of educators, complete with qualifications and experience	C	
Published availability & response times of tutors	C	
Identified position of online community moderators	R	
Published availability & response time of moderators	R	
Identified position of IT support	C	
Published availability & response time of IT support	C	

Contributing Factors / Best Practice Guidance

Factors for best practice include that:

- all Human Resources hold a qualification specifically in tutoring/community moderation /IT support for e-learning;
- response time for all queries is < 1 working day;
- availability of all staff is for all working days during the course;
- emergency availability of staff is 24 hours (especially for IT support);
- CPD opportunities in **e-learning** are made available to all staff annually.

### 3. Technical Infrastructure

*All technical infrastructure for e-learning should guarantee data security and availability.*

Real-time mirroring of all data on server

C

Daily Off-site backup of all data on server

C

Weekly Tape (or similar) backup of all data on server

R

The provider makes use of software and digital tools that are easily available on the market, are well-supported and based on open standards

C

IT continuity plan designed to ensure 99.8% uptime

R

Educators and learners do not need to make major financial investment in new hardware, software and online services to access the LMS/VLE and/or other digital tools used in teaching and learning

C

All resources in digital format given to the educators and learners should be compliant with accepted open standards that do not require an investment vendor-specific hardware or software

C

Minimum specifications in terms of the computer devices, software and Internet access speed needed to engage in teaching and learning are given to the educators and learners before the start of the course

C

Educators and learners have access to live IT support during office hours and e-mail support during other hours on a 24/7 basis

C

#### Contributing Factors / Best Practice Guidance

Factors for best practice include that:

- Technical infrastructure allows for students to access large amounts of the system even when offline;
- Continuity plans aim for 99.9% uptime;
- All data is stored in databases and/or formats which are based on open standards;
- All technical equipment should be energy-started rated and/or be A rated and higher.

#### 4. Privacy & Security

*The ELT organization should guarantee the privacy and security of all student data held within its premises*

All communications occur over encrypted connections

Y/N

Passwords are hashed in database

R

All digital access to student data is logged

C

Organization has policy on who can access which student data

C

Organization audits permissions periodically

C

Organization stores all student data in Malta, or receives waiver from Data Protection Commissioner for its storage arrangements

C

The data servers used to host the LMS, VLE and all other digital tools are adequately protected against malware and unauthorized access

C

The handling of all data is compliant with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

C

Contributing Factors / Best Practice Guidance

Factors for best practice includes that the organisation:

- Operates a data-minimisation policy;
- Pseudonymizes all student data it holds;
- Audits the data policies of all subcontractors and associated entities;
- Makes it technically impossible for staff to export data without permission.

#### 5. Contact Hours

*The institution has adequate procedures in place to ensure that all students receive direct instructions from tutors.*

Attendance to live (synchronous) online sessions is logged

C

Student activity in the LMS/VLE is tracked

C

Student engagement in the LMS/VLE is tracked

C

The organization publishes a methodology by which it estimates time which should be taken by students to complete discrete activities within the LMS

R

Contributing Factors / Best Practice Guidance

Factors for best practice include that the organisation:

- publishes a service level agreement outlining when and how students can contact staff;
- operates a formalized issue management system to track student requests;
- does analysis on which are the most frequent types of requests, and incorporates these into teaching & learning or support materials;
- incorporates special-needs technologies for students with special needs into communication software.

## 6. Assessment

*Assessment activities should support learning as well as verify learning achievement of learning objectives in a secure manner.*

At least 40% of the grade is assigned for activities where the student is under observation by the teacher

Y/N

Formative assessment follows each set of assigned learning activities

C

Formative assessment is equally balanced between the four skills

C

All methods of assessment contain methods of feedback to student performance and digital submissions need to receive feedback in digital format

C

All student assessment activity is recorded and tracked

C

Contributing Factors / Best Practice Guidance

- LMS allows for identification of low-performing students;
- Software is used to identify cheating;
- Learning analytics and assessment data are used to improve courses;
- Learning analytics and assessment data are used to measure teacher performance.

## 7. Verification of Identity

*The institution verifies the identity of all students in its courses, as well as that certificates are issued to individuals who have completed work and achieved the grades.*

All learner enrollments require verification

C

Educators have access to names and photos of all learners who should be in their classes

C

Organization has method to flag and investigate inconsistencies between supervised and unsupervised performance

R

Online examinations which count towards grades must include verification of identity

C

Contributing Factors / Best Practice Guidance

- Software is used to automatically flag course-work which may have been submitted by other persons;
- Virtual-invigilation software is used to supervise examinations;
- Identity-verification involves linking student identity to biometric passports.