UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
CAVE HILL CAMPUS

Policy on
Blended Learning

APPROVED AT A MEETING OF ACADEMIC BOARD
(ACADEMIC BOARD PAPER 9)
Thursday, October 9, 2014
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INTRODUCTION

The Blended Learning Task Force was appointed by Academic Board and convened on May 6, 2013, to lead the development of a policy and implementation strategy for blended learning at the Cave Hill Campus, following a proposal from the Educational Technologist in the Learning Resource Centre, now Officer-in-Charge, the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

Membership of the Task Force

Chair

Patricia Atherley – Educational Technologist and Officer-in-Charge, Centre for Excellence in Teaching & Learning

Representatives of Faculties & Academic Units

School for Graduate Studies & Research – Prof. Eddy Ventose
Faculty of Humanities and Education – Dr. Ian Marshall
Faculty of Law – Dr. Tom Durbin
Faculty of Medical Sciences – Dr. Priscilla Richardson
Faculty of Science & Technology – Dr. Leah Garner-O’neale
Faculty of Social Sciences – Dr. Donley Carrington

Representatives of Academic Support & Student Support Units

Campus IT Services – Mr. Patrick Gill & Mr. Austral Estwick
Instructional Development Unit – Dr. Sylvia Henry
Sidney Martin Library – Ms. Margaret Ingrid Iton
Faculty of Law Library – Capt. Junior Browne
Office of Student Services – Ms. Robena Nicholls & Mrs Jacqueline Benn
Quality Assurance Unit – Mrs Koelle Boyce

Representatives of Administration

Representative of the Campus Registrar – Mr. Rommel Carter
Representative of the Campus Bursar- Mr. Armond Bourne
Student Representatives

The Guild of Students – Mr. Damani Parris
The Postgraduate Student Association - Mr. Dalano DaSouza

Terms of Reference of the Task Force

The Task Force was mandated to:

- Examine global trends in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and blended learning in higher education and within the context of the University’s Strategic Plan and in keeping with the framework approved by Academic Board, to propose a policy on blended learning for the Cave Hill Campus.
- Provide recommendations for achieving the following strategic goals:
  - Gradually expand the number of blended courses being delivered by the Campus in response to pedagogical and/or practical needs
  - Provide an enabling environment for efficient and effective development and delivery of blended courses
  - Adjust and/or establish relevant policies and quality assurance mechanisms to take account of blended learning
  - Establish mechanisms for assessing the financial and pedagogical impact of blended learning

Period of Deliberation/Work of the Task Force

The Task Force carried out its work during the ten-month period May 3, 2013 – March 31, 2014.

Methods Employed by the Task Force

Establishment of Sub-committees

The Task Force at its first meeting established sub-committees to advise on specific areas for policy development. Sub-committees were mandated to canvass the views of faculty and other stakeholders and research global trends and best practices to inform their recommendations for policy in their assigned areas. Areas of focus were as follows:
Management and Organisation
Institutional Support
Academic Policies
Faculty Issues
Student Issues
Evaluation strategies

Faculty Survey

A survey was carried out by the Chair on behalf of the Task Force to assess the level of blended learning currently taking place at the Campus and faculty views on blended learning. 42 persons responded to the survey, the majority (43%), from the Faculty of Science and Technology. All Faculties were represented. 64% of the respondents indicated that all (33%) or most (31%) of their teaching was enhanced/facilitated by use of the elearning technologies. 8% reported that they taught blended courses involving replacement of some face-to-face time by online work. Respondents were generally favourable towards the implementation of blended learning as an option for delivery and several noted the need for a formal policy to empower staff to move in this direction. There was a strong sentiment expressed that blended learning should not be compulsory for all courses and that the policy would need to take into consideration the nature of courses.

The need for training and orientation for staff and students, adequate investment in the supporting infrastructure, and the need for the redefinition of contact hours for faculty were among issues highlighted for attention in the implementation of blended learning.

Documents Prepared by the Task Force

1. Draft Blended Learning Policy for the Cave Hill Campus
2. Draft Minimum Standards for use of the Virtual Learning Environment

Consultation on the Draft Policy

The draft Blended Learning Policy for the Cave Hill Campus and draft Minimum Standards for Use of the Virtual Learning Environment prepared by the Task Force and dated March 7, 2014 were disseminated to Deans and Heads of Departments for comments on March 10, 2014, with a request for feedback by April 7, 2014. Comments were received as follows:

Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Education - Prof Pedro welch
The Dean expressed full support for the policy, but suggested the inclusion of a statement to the effect that the policy “is not intended to insist that course leaders may not use traditional methods of pedagogy in the design of courses”.

Consultation on the Draft Policy
• **Dean, Faculty of Science and Technology - Dr. Colin Depradine**
  The Dean expressed full support for the policy but highlighted areas of existing examination regulations and assessment practices that would need to be changed to accommodate blended learning.

• **Head, Department of Economics – Dr. Stephen Harewood**
  The Head of Department noted that the concept of blended learning as outlined in the draft policy appeared to be a good one, and to have some potential for improving teaching and learning. He however highlighted the need to ascertain the needs of the students to ensure that the university was not “just imposing on our students something that was developed and tested in another environment”.

Academic Board is asked to approve the *Draft Policy on Blended Learning at the Cave Hill Campus*, the *Minimum Standards for Use of the Virtual Learning environment*, and the *Draft Blended Learning Implementation Strategy 2014-17*. 
INTRODUCTION

1. Strategic Context: UWI

The UWI’s 2007-12 strategic plan highlighted the changing characteristics of the UWI student body as “increasingly diverse in terms of abilities, prior preparation, aptitude, interests and life experiences.” The plan also articulated the core skills and attributes required of 21st century university graduates, who must of necessity be, among other things, “problem solvers; team players; open and receptive to new information; advanced, higher order, cognitive thinkers; creators of new forms of knowledge which can advance the development of the human race; effective communicators; and responsive to social needs.” (Strategic Plan 2007-2012)

Also recognised was the global trend towards flexibility of access for students as universities all over the world have moved to harness the opportunities offered by the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to give students flexible, anytime, anywhere access to courses and programs, and to extend their reach in the global market. Indeed, the strategic planning process highlighted as a major weakness, the fact that the UWI had been slow to exploit the potential of new information and telecommunication technologies to extend its reach, and to offer a wide variety of programs in flexible and convenient delivery formats.

Against this background, initiatives outlined in the 2007-12 plan to enhance teaching and learning included a comprehensive curriculum renewal agenda, the search for innovative ways of developing the key 21st century skills in students, and the promotion of the use of ICTs to extend access, enhance flexibility, and create stimulating environments for learning.

The current Strategic Plan 2012-17, emphasizes further advancement and consolidation in this area, calling on Campuses to leverage ICTs to improve operational efficiency; enhance teaching, learning, research and innovation; and maximize resource use. Specifically, the Plan suggests that “blended learning, besides improving the quality of instruction, will free up physical classroom space thus reducing the need for additional capital expenditures on physical infrastructure.”
2. Strategic Context: International

Blended approaches to teaching and learning have emerged over the last decade as a successful and increasingly popular delivery model for higher education institutions. This has followed recognition in the 1990s that, in general, universities had not begun to realize the power of ICTs in higher education. In a much-cited article published in 1999 Twigg contended that higher education institutions the world over were caught in a “closing vise” between new demands for enrolment and declining rates of revenue growth, and needed to find ways to do more with less. She however noted that in response many institutions had “bolted on new technologies to a fixed plant, a fixed faculty, and a fixed notion of classroom instruction.” In such a situation, technology became part of the problem of rising cost, rather than part of the solution of cost containment. “By and large, colleges and universities have not yet begun to grab hold of technology’s promise to reduce the costs of instruction,” Twigg suggested.

A major blended learning research initiative involving 30 universities in the US in the 1990s demonstrated that the twin goals of improved student outcomes and efficiency can be simultaneously achieved in an approach characterized by systematic re-design of curricula and instruction. In reporting on that study, Twigg (1999) pointed out that the issue of containing costs in higher education, and in particular, using technology to do so, required a fundamental shift in thinking.

“It requires one to challenge the fundamental assumption of the current instructional model: that faculty members meeting with groups of students at regularly scheduled times and places is the only way to achieve effective student learning. Rather than focus on how to provide more effective and efficient teaching, colleges and universities must focus on how to produce more effective student learning. Faculty are only one of many resources that are important to student learning. Once learning becomes the central focus, the important question is how best to use all available resources – including faculty time and technology – to achieve certain learning objectives.” (Twigg 1999, pg 4)

It is in this context that blended learning has emerged over the past decade as a viable strategic response to the multi-pronged challenges of expanding access and flexibility, enhancing quality in teaching and learning and reducing costs in higher education.

A study carried out by the Stanford Research Institute (SRI International) Center for Technology in Learning, on behalf of the US Department of Education, and involving a meta-analysis of over 1000 empirical studies of online learning from 1996-2008, found that students in blended learning settings performed better than students in fully online and fully face-to-face environments. However, the differences were found to be the effect of redesigning the learning experience to make the most of the face-to-face and online learning environments. (SRI 2010, http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf)
3. The Cave Hill Context: Strategic Imperatives

Over the past decade the Cave Hill Campus has made a significant investment in information and communication technologies (ICTs) for learning and teaching in support of its mission to provide a modern, supportive learning environment for its students. This policy seeks to support the institutional learning and teaching priorities identified in the UWI Strategic Plan 2012-17 as relates to the use of ITCs, while building on and advancing the Campus’ record of achievements and supporting growing interest across Faculties in harnessing technology to enhance and facilitate learning.

It is in this local and international context that the Cave Hill Campus proposes to launch a formal initiative to support blended learning. This policy provides the framework within which Faculties and Departments can make decisions with respect to blended learning at the Cave Hill Campus, defines the scope and spheres of adoption and the processes and institutional infrastructure required to support it.

The policy contributes to the actualization of this initiative by establishing the following as imperatives:

- Blended learning will be a feature of program delivery in all Faculties, as deemed appropriate, by 2017;
- A campus environment, broadly defined, designed to support blended learning will be established and maintained; and
- The Campus’ operational policies and processes, quality assurance and monitoring mechanisms will be adjusted to support a blended learning initiative.

A draft implementation strategy to actualize these goals is outlined in the Draft Blended Learning Policy Implementation Strategy 2014-17.

4. Definition of Blended Learning

The Cave Hill Campus adopts the term ‘blended learning’ to represent broadly the use of ICTs for the enhancement of learning, teaching and student engagement, and uses the following definition as the framework for policy and practice:

“Blended learning is realised in teaching and learning environments where there is an effective integration of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning as a result of adopting a strategic and systematic approach to the use of technology combined with the best features of face-to-face interaction.” (Krause, 2007)
5. **Benefits of Blended Learning**

The following are recognized as potential benefits of blended learning, as gleaned from the literature:

- Enriches the student experience and learning outcomes
- Meets the expectations of students for utilizing technology and fosters the development of important new skills for work in the global networked environment
- Caters to individual needs, learning styles and schedules
- Encourages the development of independent learning skills
- Fosters among faculty the development of new skills and knowledge to transform teaching
- Fosters connections between the classroom and the “real world”
- Supports flexibility and convenience of access to course resources and activities for persons with jobs, family or distance barriers
- Helps reduce educational costs for students by reducing travel and accommodation costs
- Helps reduce the costs of delivering instruction and facilitates more efficient use of resources
- Makes optimal use of physical and virtual resources
- Increases competitiveness in building new student markets enabled by innovative program delivery

6. **Policy Scope and Related Policies**

This policy applies to all members of staff and students of The University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus. Related approved institutional policies include:

- The UWI Policy for Online, Distance and Multimodal Learning (2009) [http://www.uwi.edu/projects/policies/onlinepolicy](http://www.uwi.edu/projects/policies/onlinepolicy) (currently under review);
- The Cave Hill Student Charter
- The Cave Hill Campus Disability Policy

7. **The Cave Hill Campus Blended Learning Policy Framework**

The blended learning policy for the UWI Cave Hill Campus is intended to promote the use of ICTs to enhance teaching, learning and student engagement, achieve competitive advantage, increase opportunities for flexible access, and increase productivity and efficiency through optimum use of human, fiscal and physical resources as mandated in the UWI Strategic Plan 2012-17. The blended learning initiative at the Cave Hill Campus will have the following major goals:
• Strategic and systematic use of technology in a quality face-to-face environment to provide a more diverse and flexible learning experience, offering students flexibility with respect to time, place, pace and devices for learning
• Enhanced interaction among students and between students and instructors, and engagement with industry and community where appropriate
• Fostering of collaboration, reflection, problem solving and critical thinking in students
• Supporting increased capacity for self-regulated learning
• Reducing costs through maximizing the use of human and physical resources

Levels of Blended Learning (The Blended Learning Continuum)

This policy recognizes that there is a continuum of levels of technology integration with respect to blended learning. The policy however focuses on three major levels:

Level 1 (also called web-enhanced teaching and learning):

Technology is used to facilitate course management, communication and provision of materials and resources for learner support but does not involve significant reduction in face-to-face time. This policy proposes this level of provision as a minimum standard for all courses at the Cave Hill Campus, as outlined in the companion document Minimum Standards for use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Level 2:

Technology is used to transform teaching and learning, enrich the quality of the student learning experience and enhance learning outcomes by facilitating interactive learning activities that extend beyond what is attainable through face-to-face classroom interactions. Alternatively, technology is used to address practical needs that might be met by flexibility with respect to time and place for learning. This level involves reduction in face-to-face time to take account of the demands of online and experiential learning activities. This is referred to as the “Replacement Model” of blended learning. The policy seeks to provide a framework to encourage and support systematic growth in the number of courses at this level by 2017. Courses falling under this model are courses that “…integrate online with face-to-face instruction in a planned, pedagogically valuable manner, and do not just combine, but trade off face-to-face time with online activity…” (Vignare, 2007, p.38).

In defining a blended course based on the Replacement Model, this policy adopts the definition proposed by the US-based Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C), a leading professional online learning society devoted to advancing quality e-education into the mainstream of education. The Sloan Consortium defines a blended course as a course in which between 30% and 80% of required face-to-face time is replaced by online activity.
Level 3:

Technology is used to support learning that is almost totally self-directed. Courses and programs at this level can be categorized as “online” and will be developed in response to the strategic needs of the Campus. These courses and programs are not currently covered under this policy, but are governed by the UWI Policy for Online, Distance and Multimodal Learning (2009) [http://www.uwi.edu/projects/policies/onlinepolicy](http://www.uwi.edu/projects/policies/onlinepolicy) (currently under review).

**Quality Elements**

This blended learning policy recognizes the following quality elements for blended and online learning identified by the Washington-based Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), and also reflected in *A Guide to Quality in Online Learning* published by the US-based online learning support company Academic Partnerships: institutional support; course design; course development; teaching and learning; student support; faculty support; evaluation and assessment (IHEP, 2000). It is also informed by published accounts of experiences and policy frameworks at other institutions of higher education, in particular, the work of Wallace and Young (2010) based on a case study of the University of Manitoba, Canada. That study, published in a paper entitled *Implementing Blended Learning: Policy Implications for Universities*, has influenced the addition of elements related to management and organization and human resource issues. This policy brings these major elements together under the five broad themes of **Institutional Supporting Framework, Academic Policy, Faculty Support and Recognition, Student Support and Preparation, and Quality Assurance and Evaluation**. This policy seeks as far as possible to align with the *Blended Learning Policy of the St Augustine Campus* (May 2013), in the interest of institutional consistency and regionality.

**Definitive Policy Statements**

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<th>1. Institutional Supporting Framework</th>
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<td><strong>1.1 Vision for Blended Learning</strong>: The Cave Hill Campus will be an institution in which Faculties, Departments and individuals are empowered to be bold and innovative in harnessing available and appropriate ICTs to create teaching and learning environments that are pedagogically sound, learning-centred and engaging, offer flexibility in time, place and pace of learning; and facilitate the most efficient and effective use of human, technological and physical resources.</td>
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<td><strong>1.2 Mission for Blended Learning</strong>: Level 2 blended learning will be systematically integrated in programs in all Faculties at the Cave Hill Campus by 2017.</td>
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<td><strong>1.3 Principles of Blended Learning</strong>: The Blended Learning initiative at the Cave Hill Campus will be an institution in which Faculties, Departments and individual...</td>
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Campus will be guided by the following Principles:
- Effective Blended learning is achieved through a process of systematic course design/redesign that takes account of the best features of the online and face-to-face learning environments
- Pedagogy represents the principal consideration in blended course design and development
- Effective blended learning thoughtfully integrates face-to-face and online learning
- Effective blended learning is achieved through a focus on constructive alignment of learning outcomes, assessments, content and learning activities
- Blended approaches are designed to improve the student learning experience, optimize student engagement, and lead to improved learning outcomes
- Blended approaches cater to diversity among students
- Students must be adequately prepared to function in a blended learning environment
- Faculty must be adequately trained and supported in the science and art of blended course design, development and delivery

1.4 **Financing:** The Campus will ensure adequate budgetary support for a sustainable Blended Learning Initiative

1.5 **Accessibility:** The Campus through CITS and the campus libraries will provide adequate facilities and services to support students with disabilities. See also section 2.2.9.

1.6 **Infrastructure: ICT** – The Campus, through CITS, will establish and maintain a robust ICT infrastructure capable of efficiently supporting a Campus-wide blended learning initiative.

1.7 The Campus through CITS will ensure the delivery of a 24/7 technical support service.

1.8 **Infrastructure: Library** – The Campus will expand the services of the main campus library to include a copyright advisory and clearance service to support the Campus-wide blended initiative.

1.9 The Campus through its libraries will ensure that there is 24/7 access to electronic information resources to support teaching and learning.

1.10 **Infrastructure: Course Development & Delivery Support** – The Campus will equip the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) to provide quality services in instructional design for blended learning, faculty training for blended course development and delivery, and multimedia materials development. The CETL shall in turn coordinate Blended Learning Instructional Design Teams (BLIDT) in collaboration with stakeholder units, to include subject matter experts, curriculum specialists, instructional designers, librarians, multimedia specialists and instructional and information technologists.
1.11 The Campus through its libraries will establish a Learning Objects Community in UWISPACE which will become a central repository for all learning objects created by faculty and learning objects available in the global Open Education Resource (OER) pool.

1.12 **Oversight & Planning:**
1.12.1 The Principal shall establish a Blended Learning Implementation Team to oversee the implementation of the Blended Learning Initiative
1.12.2 The Campus, through the Office of Planning, will implement initiatives to ensure alignment between the Blended Learning Initiative and the strategic plans of Faculties and Departments as well as support units.

## 2 Academic Policy

### 2.1 Scope of Blended Learning and Approval Processes:
2.1.1 All courses at the Cave Hill Campus shall accord with the stipulated minimum standards for use of the elearning course management system as outlined in the draft *Minimum Standards for use of the Virtual Learning Environment*.
2.1.2 Courses in which less than 30% of face-to-face meeting time is replaced by online activity will not require approval under this policy but will be designed, developed and delivered in accordance with established policies for face-to-face courses.
2.1.3 Courses in which 80% or more of face-to-face meeting time is replaced by online activity will be recognised as online courses and will be governed by the UWI Policy for Online, Distance and Multimodal Learning (2009) [http://www.uwi.edu/projects/policies/onlinepolicy](http://www.uwi.edu/projects/policies/onlinepolicy).
2.1.4 **Previously approved/existing courses** in which between 30% and 80% of face-to-face time is to be replaced by online components shall require review by the CETL and AQAC for onward submission to Academic Board for approval. The review and approval process will require that courses are designed in accordance with policies under 2.2 of this document.
2.1.5 **New blended courses and programmes** will be governed by existing policies for the approval of new face-to-face courses and programme. However, the approval process will require that courses are designed in accordance with policies under 2.2 of this document.

### 2.2 Course Design, Development and Delivery
2.2.1 The Campus, through the CETL, shall provide specific quality standards for blended courses.
2.2.2 Course design, development and delivery will be in accordance with the Campus’ general Principles for Teaching and Learning, and the specific Principles for Blended Learning
2.2.3 Courses in which between 30% and 80% of face-to-face time is to be replaced by online activity shall be designed as a process of consultation with the BLIDT under the coordination of the CETL

2.2.4 The Campus, through the CETL, shall provide, on an ongoing and systematic basis, appropriate training in course design for blended learning for faculty and relevant staff.

2.2.5 Any faculty member scheduled to teach a blended course shall be required to complete a stipulated programme of training prior to the start of the course.

2.2.6 The Campus, through the CETL, shall provide readily accessible information and resources on best practices in blended learning to inform approaches to course design and development.

2.2.7 Each Faculty will appoint a blended learning support specialist/instructional designer to provide support for their faculty in the development and delivery of blended courses and to serve as a member of the BLIDT.

2.2.8 The Campus through the CETL shall provide guidelines for calculating student workloads in blended courses.

2.2.9 Blended course design, development and delivery, including the preparation of learning materials shall take account of the needs of students with disabilities.

2.3 Student Assessment

2.3.1 The institution’s assessment policies will support the use of assessments and examinations appropriate to blended learning.

3 Faculty Support & Recognition

3.1 The Campus shall offer incentives to faculty for the development of Level 2 blended courses that meet identified institutional or departmental needs and priorities. Such incentives might include grants, honoraria, access to departmental research funds, or time off/special leave for course development.

3.2 Institutional HR policies shall make provision for recognition of faculty’s work in designing and developing blended courses, for assessment and promotion.

3.3 The Campus shall establish guidelines for determining parity/equivalency of staff workloads between face-to-face and blended courses.

3.4 The Campus, through the CETL, will provide training for faculty on an ongoing and systematic basis, in course design, development and delivery strategies for blended learning (2.2.4 above).

3.5 The Campus, through the CETL, will provide readily accessible information and resources for faculty on best practices in blended learning (2.2.5. above).

3.6 Each Faculty will appoint a blended learning support specialist/instructional designer to provide support for faculty in the development and delivery of blended courses at both
Levels 1 & 2 as defined earlier in this document (2.2.6. above)

3.7 The Campus Information Technology Services/CITS shall provide timely and effective technical support for staff on a 24/7 basis via email, telephone, FAQ archives and other appropriate channels.

4 Student Support & Preparation

4.1 All Level 2 blended courses, and programmes that include Level 2 blended courses, must be clearly identified as such in student handbooks, promotional materials, and departmental websites.

4.2 Students must be made aware prior to entering the University of the technological and other special requirements of a blended learning environment.

4.3 The Campus, through CITS and the Campus Bookshop and other relevant service areas, shall offer schemes to assist students in the acquisition of hardware and software necessary for study in a blended learning environment.

4.4 The Campus’ induction and orientation programmes for new students, including programmes and services offered by Faculties, the OSS, the Library and CITS, such as advising and orientation activities specific for course or degree programs, information literacy or study skills workshops, electronic resources or help desks, shall be designed to assist students in becoming familiar with the different teaching methods, new technologies and independent learning skills needed for the blended learning environment.

4.5 The Campus’ admission and registration policies and processes shall ensure that all students have access to the elearning tools for learning in the blended environment from the first day of teaching and learning or before.

4.6 The Campus Information Technology Services/CITS shall provide timely and effective technical support for students on a 24/7 basis via email, telephone, FAQ archives and other appropriate channels.

4.7 The Campus shall make available to students online tutorials on the use of elearning tools and strategies for success in a blended learning environment.

5 Quality Assurance and Evaluation

5.1 Course Approval and Review

5.1.1 The Campus’ QA policies, systems and processes shall take account of any special requirements with respect to blended courses. This will include requirements under 2.1.

5.1.2 The instruments used for student evaluation of teaching shall take account of elements unique to blended learning.

5.1.3 The Campus, through the Quality Assurance Office shall routinely conduct student,
faculty and staff evaluations of blended courses and assess the impact on learning outcomes, performance and the student experience

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<td>5.2.1</td>
<td>The Campus Bursary and Office of Planning shall conduct periodic financial impact assessments.</td>
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**Indicators of Success**

There are several ways in which the Cave Hill Campus will know that it has succeeded in fulfilling its vision, mission and strategic goals for blended learning. These include the following:

- Blended learning will be integrated in the programmes of all Faculties and Departments by 2017
- The majority of courses will be delivered utilizing at least the minimum stipulated standards for use of the VLE/elearning course management system
- Academic staff will confidently integrate ICTs into curricula in a manner consistent with course and program learning outcomes and in accordance with set standards and protocols
- Student evaluations will consistently rate their blended learning experiences positively and will indicate wide exposure to blended learning.
- Students will report high levels of confidence in using ICTs for life-long learning
- Course and programme reviews will indicate improved levels of student performance in blended courses
- Stakeholders will comment positively on the technological competence of graduates
- Infrastructure and services will be supporting ease of access to courses and programmes

**Review of Policy**

The Blended Learning Policy and Minimum Standards for the use of the Virtual Learning Environment shall be subject to review on an annual basis.
REFERENCES


St. Augustine Campus Blended Learning Policy (May 2013)

The University of the West Indies Strategic Plan 2007-12

The University of the West Indies Strategic Plan 2012-17


Minimum Standards for Use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)  
(Level 1: Web-enhanced, Technology as a General Resource)

Currently at Cave Hill, every course section that is listed on the Banner administration system to be taught in a given semester automatically has a course shell created on the VLE. At present, use of these shells is left to the inclination of the person assigned to teach the section. As a result, it is possible for students in different sections of the same course to have very different experiences of the course with respect to the use or non-use of elearning technologies. Cave Hill off-campus students in the TLIs are also allocated separate sections on elearning, which are at the moment not utilised.

Where multiple sections exist in a course, a metacourse can be created to which all the sections can be linked. It is therefore possible for a course coordinator or facilitator to use this metacourse feature to provide a common core of resources, learning activities and/or communication gateways for students in all sections of a given course.

Between March and May 2013 the Educational Technologist in the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning conducted a survey of student access to and use of the VLE/elearning system to which 858 students responded. The responses revealed overwhelming support for the use of this system, and suggestions that use should be compulsory for all courses.

- Ninety-six (96) percent of respondents reported that they were currently using the VLE/elearning system, or had used it in the previous semester, in at least one course.
- Ninety-six (96) percent reported a preference for courses that utilised elearning.
- The most common uses of the system reported by students was for accessing lecture notes, links to Web resources including videos, online discussion forums, quizzes and online submission of assignments.
- A majority of respondents reported that the elearning system:
  - improved their learning (65%),
  - helped them to stay on track with their courses (84%),
  - made it easier to complete learning activities (78%), and that
  - they were more actively involved in courses that used elearning (55%).

The responses from students support the findings that elearning systems provide a potentially powerful resource for organizing courses for the benefit of students, while providing access to resources and activities not otherwise easily accessible. (Rabinowitz and Ullman, 2004).

When asked to suggest “the worst thing about elearning...” the most popular free-response answer given by respondents to the survey was “not all instructors use it”.

Against this background, the Cave Hill Campus adopts the following policy on minimum standards for the use of the VLE.

**Required Use**

All courses taught at Cave Hill shall use the VLE at least as a general resource for course administration and learner support. Minimum level of use includes the following:

1. The posting of an up-to-date course outline
2. Contact information for instructors and tutors, including office hours
3. Details of Coursework and Assignments, including deadlines
4. Ground Rules/Policies for the course including how the elearning site will fit into delivery, how often students are expected to log on, what communication channels will be used in the course and policies guiding their use, including the instructor’s policy/timeframe for responding to student email or online discussion posts (if forums are being used in the course).
5. Course notices and announcements

**Recommended Use**

In addition to the above required elements, the following are recommended as additional elements for inclusion.

1. The posting of an up-to-date syllabus and teaching calendar
2. A Q&A Forum where students can post questions related to the course
3. Rubrics for all assignments
4. Topic/unit overviews including unit objectives/learning outcomes and assessments
5. Lecture notes and handouts
6. Release of course work grades
7. Where multiple sections exist in a course, the coordinator or facilitator responsible for the course should coordinate the designation and use of a metacourse to provide a common general resource for students in all sections (the components and management of which should be decided in collaboration with instructors).

Existing courses transitioning to the use of the VLE in accordance with these minimum standards will not require formal approval at any level of the quality assurance process.
### Blended Learning Policy Implementation Strategy 2014-17

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<th>Goals &amp; Objectives</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. To gradually expand the number of blended courses being delivered by the Campus</strong></td>
<td>1.1. Faculties and Departments to engage in critical re-examination of courses, including learner and course content and context analysis; the assessment of the adequacy of traditional approaches and the potential of blended learning in meeting course and learning goals and objectives, the needs of the learners, institutional goals with respect to the UWI graduate attributes, and potential for cost savings.</td>
<td>Faculty Boards</td>
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<td>1.2. Faculties to identify areas within their disciplines for strategic focus in the application of blended learning. Pilot projects for course redesign for blended learning should be selected from these areas. These might include foundational courses or other large enrolment courses; courses with high failure rates; courses with large percentages of part-time students; courses that could be enhanced by learning experiences and activities that are not satisfactorily met by traditional delivery.</td>
<td>Faculty Boards</td>
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<td>1.3. Conduct an institutional audit to determine the current status with respect to courses that might be classified as replacement model blended courses (Level 2) as defined in the BL Policy and conduct an assessment of the effectiveness of any such courses.</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Office</td>
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<td>1.4. Establish the framework for the operation of a professional course design team to work on the re-design of courses identified for strategic focus, as phase one of the implementation plan.</td>
<td>CETL, Faculties</td>
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### Goals & Objectives | Actions | Responsibility
--- | --- | ---
1.5. Provide training for faculty in blended learning course redesign and delivery, including use of online modalities for training | | CETL

2. To provide and sustain the supporting environment for efficient and effective development and delivery of blended courses | 2.1. Establish an implementation team to monitor implementation - identify needs; address issues, challenges and opportunities | Principal

| | 2.2. Begin a focused conversation on the institutional vision for the application of blended learning as a strategic initiative to improve teaching and learning, enhance flexibility of access and potentially to reduce cost | Academic Board
Faculty Board
Teaching and Learning Committee/s

| | 2.3. Expand the resources of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and the Faculties to provide instructional designers skilled in instructional design methodologies for blended and online learning | |
| | 2.4. Provide/identify resources to research and document the effectiveness of blended learning initiatives | Create a blended learning community in UWISPACE to support access to<br>these - Sidney Martin Library
AQAC

| | 2.5. Establish an adequately resourced instructional technologies unit within CITS to assess the current status of the elearning technology infrastructure, identify needs and ensure the further development and maintenance of the infrastructure needed to | CITS |
### Goals & Objectives

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| support a sustained Campus-wide elearning/blended learning initiative | 2.6. Establish the necessary staff and student support infrastructure including helpdesks; provision of online guides and resources for designing and implementing blended learning courses and studying in a blended learning environment; user/help guides on a range of tools and technologies; technology skill development programmes | • CITS, CETL
• Include in OSS suite of developmental programmes - Study/Learning skills session. |
| | 2.7. Establish a campus repository of Open Education Resources and other freely available learning objects that might be utilised in the development of blended courses | • Sidney Martin Library - Create a Blended Learning Community in UWISPACE and Blended Learning Object Community for the deposit of learning objects developed by Faculty for use in course delivery |
| 3. To adjust the Campus’s quality assurance mechanisms to take account of blended learning and facilitate continuous improvement in the design and delivery of blended courses | 3.1. Develop and incorporate quality assurance mechanisms and standards for blended learning within the quality assurance framework | • AQAC - Revise/update handbook and templates - to be approved by Academic Board.
• Revise/update Graduate Studies course proposal guidelines – to be approved by Board for Graduate Studies approval |
<p>| | 3.2 Include questions related to blended learning in the student evaluation of teaching instruments and other course | • Implement as part of AQAC revision of course evaluation |</p>
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<td>evaluation mechanisms</td>
<td>instrument</td>
<td>- Discuss/explore implementation for graduate courses with School for Graduate Studies &amp; Research.</td>
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<td>3.3. Institute a system of peer review of blended courses to identify opportunities for quality enhancement, and provide a forum for sharing good practice</td>
<td>Faculties, CETL, Quality Assurance Office</td>
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| 4. To development mechanisms for assessing the financial and pedagogical impact of the implementation of blended learning and the effectiveness of institutional support? | 4.1. Establish mechanisms for systematic assessment of the financial and pedagogical impact of blended learning initiatives | Pedagogical Impact-  
  - Incorporate into programme revisions conducted by the Quality Assurance Unit  
  - Planning Office  
  - QAO  

Financial Impact  
- Faculties and Departments  
- Bursary  
- Planning Office |

Prepared by the Task Force on Blended Learning