

Policy and Procedure on E-Learning

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OPERATIONAL OWNER:	E-Learning Coordinator
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Version History

VERSION	DESCRIPTION	AUTHORS	APPROVAL	EFFECTIVE DATE
1	Initial version	Jonathan Micallef	2021	2021
2	Updated to reflect the MFHEA Guidelines effective from 2027; establishment of the E-Learning Board; alignment with ITS E-Learning Guidelines; and introduction of the E-Learning Board Terms of Reference.	Jonathan Micallef Martin Debattista	June 2026	June 2026

Related Policies

- AI Policy
- P022 – Intellectual Property
- P031 – Against Plagiarism
- P052 – Teaching and Learning
- P064 – Academic Freedom and Integrity
- P075 – Use of Artificial Intelligence by Students and Staff
- Terms of Reference for the Re-accreditation Committee

External References

- MALTA FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY (MFHEA), 2025. *New MFHEA Regulations for Higher Education Providers* (Communication No. 09/2025, 27 November 2025).

Definitions

Academic Freedom	The principle that freedom of inquiry for students and academic staff is essential to the mission of the Institute of Tourism Studies. It upholds the right of faculty to teach, research, and communicate ideas or methodologies without undue restriction.
Asynchronous Contact Hour	A student-centred method of teaching in which learners access online learning resources and engage with content at their own pace and at times of their choosing, without the constraints of a shared schedule. The instructor remains available to communicate with students and to assess their learning.
Blended Learning	A combination of traditional face-to-face classroom instruction and teaching and learning activities facilitated through digital technologies, including computing devices, internet connectivity, and relevant software. The full class or group attends either in person or online depending on the structure of the study unit or programme.
Delivery Mode	The approved method through which teaching and learning activities are delivered for a study unit or programme, including face-to-face, fully online, blended, or web-enhanced learning, as defined by ITS policies and guidelines.
Digital Learning Technologies	The digital platforms, software applications, and communication tools used to support teaching, learning, assessment, and academic interaction in online, blended, or web-enhanced learning environments. These may include the Virtual Learning Environment, video-conferencing platforms, digital assessment tools, and other approved educational technologies.
E-Learning Guidelines	The ITS E-Learning Guidelines approved by the Board of Studies, which establish the operational standards for online and blended learning, as amended from time to time.

Face-to-Face Learning	Traditional classroom-based learning where both the instructor and the students are present in the same physical space, usually on campus.
Hybrid Learning	A mode of instruction in which students attend a lesson either in the classroom or online simultaneously, with the instructor engaging both groups concurrently.
Learning Management System	A digital platform used to manage, deliver, and monitor teaching and learning activities, including enrolment management, course administration, and maintenance of student records.
Online Learning / Online Delivery	Instruction delivered through digital technologies when the instructor and learners are not in the same physical space, with communication and learning activities facilitated through online platforms.
Service Level Management	The management of IT services to ensure that agreed service levels are delivered when and where required. The Service Level Manager collaborates with all areas of service delivery to ensure that services are secure, efficient, and cost-effective.
Synchronous Contact Hour	Teaching that occurs in real time, with learners engaging simultaneously either in the same physical location or via video-conferencing or similar digital communication tools.
Virtual Learning Environment	A digital platform used to host teaching and learning activities, learning resources, assessments, and communication tools within an online or blended learning environment.
Web-Enhanced Learning	Face-to-face instruction that is supported by digital technologies such as email, online repositories of learning materials, and other digitally facilitated learning resources.

Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AUP	Acceptable Use Policy
BoG	Board of Governors

BoS	Board of Studies
COO	Chief Operating Officer
ELB	E-Learning Board
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
IT	Information Technology
ITS	Institute of Tourism Studies
LMS	Learning Management System
MFHEA	Malta Further and Higher Education Authority
MS Teams	Microsoft Teams
PQVB	Programme Quality Validation Board
RC	Re-accreditation Committee
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

Contents

A. Goals, Mission, and Objectives.....	7
B. Types of Online Education.....	8
C. Developing an E-Learning Course.....	10
D. Delivering an E-Learning Course	17
E. Responsibilities	17
F. Compliance.....	19
G. Evaluation / Assessment.....	19
H. Document Retention	19
I. Review	20
J. Document Control.....	20

A. Goals, Mission, and Objectives

1. ITS E-Learning Goals

The goal of e-learning at the ITS is to expand access to vocational and higher education opportunities for both local and international students through high-quality online and blended learning programmes.

Digital technologies shall be utilised to provide relevant and timely coursework, knowledge, and training, thereby enhancing the learning experience by removing barriers of time and place. The ITS shall provide students with the necessary digital tools to enrol in its programmes and to participate in learning both remotely and on campus.

All e-learning provision shall be implemented in full compliance with the regulations and guidelines issued by the Maltese authority responsible for higher and further education, namely the **MFHEA**.

2. ITS E-Learning Mission

The mission of ITS e-learning is to provide high-quality instruction through electronically delivered, accredited courses that enable students to achieve their educational goals.

An **E-Learning Coordinator** shall be appointed from amongst the academic staff as per the collective agreement in force and shall be responsible for supporting student success by ensuring that high-quality online education and support services are available through a range of technological resources.

The E-Learning Coordinator, together with the relevant units of the Institute, shall ensure the effective implementation of this Policy.

3. Objectives

The objectives of ITS e-learning are to:

- Support and encourage the internal development of study units and programmes that utilise fully online and blended learning modes by promoting and providing guidance on instructional design, staff training, administrative support, investment in relevant digital and instructional technologies, and technical support.
- Provide informational resources and support services for students enrolled in online and blended study units and programmes.
- Identify and address the needs of both academic staff and students in the delivery and participation of online and blended programmes.
- Encourage and support the use of the **VLE** and other technologies in face-to-face, blended, and online learning environments.
- Promote the sharing of effective technology-enhanced and technology-supported teaching and learning practices amongst academic staff.
- Identify, provide, expand, and coordinate the development of high-quality study units, programmes, awards, and qualifications in order to meet student needs, achieve the Institute's mission and objectives, and respond to industry requirements.
- Periodically and comprehensively evaluate the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning as part of institutional review cycles.

B. Types of Online Education

The operational definitions, minimum standards, and approval requirements for each delivery mode are specified in the **ITS E-Learning Guidelines**, as amended by the BoS from time to time.

4. Online Contact Hours

Scope: This Policy applies to study units and programmes delivered fully online and/or in a blended mode at **MQF Levels 5–7** and, in exceptional cases, at **MQF Levels 1–4**, where directed by the **BoS**, in line with the **ITS E-Learning Guidelines**.

E-learning classes are delivered using digital learning technologies. Learners access primary content and instruction through the **VLE** using a variety of tools. The specific technologies employed may vary in accordance with ITS rules, regulations, and policies, as well as the options available to students and academic staff.

Instruction may take place **synchronously** or **asynchronously**, or through a combination of both. The ratio between asynchronous and synchronous learning shall be determined in accordance with ITS rules, regulations, and policies, as guided by the **MFHEA**.

5. Full Online Learning

Study units or programmes are delivered entirely online using a **VLE** or other approved digital technologies. Students and instructors do not meet in person but communicate exclusively through online means. Online contact hours may be **synchronous** or **asynchronous**.

6. Blended Learning

Blended learning provides an opportunity to benefit from both online instruction and face-to-face interaction. Students are required to attend either in-person classes or online sessions as specified in the study unit or programme description. Online contact hours may be **synchronous** or **asynchronous**.

7. Web-Enhanced Learning

Web-enhanced classes are traditional face-to-face courses that utilise digital tools, such as the **VLE**, to extend learning beyond the physical classroom. This model is not considered blended learning, as all contact hours take place face-to-face.

All study units (**MQF Levels 1-7**) offered at ITS, with the exception of **ITS Training School short courses**, are required to utilise the VLE as part of web-enhanced learning. This includes the uploading of:

- the **Module Descriptor**
- the **Scheme of Work**
- the **Learning Outcome Matrix**
- the **Grading Rubric Sheet**
- the **Practical Assessment Sheet**, where applicable (for practical modules)
- **Learning resources** (e.g., lesson notes, PDFs, and other instructional materials)

As the VLE serves as the central repository for learning materials and related information, notes, links to websites or videos, and other supporting resources should be uploaded to the VLE. Links to the VLE may then be shared through other official ITS platforms (e.g., **Microsoft Teams**).

C. Developing an E-Learning Course

8. E-Learning Development and Support

The **BoS** is responsible for issuing and approving the **ITS E-Learning Guidelines**, which govern the design, development, accreditation, implementation, and review of all study units and programmes, in accordance with this and other relevant ITS policies, rules, and regulations. The ITS E-Learning Guidelines may be reviewed and updated by the BoS from time to time.

Academic staff, the ELB, and Academic Managers are responsible for ensuring that all e-learning provision aligns with ITS policies, rules, and regulations established by the relevant ITS units. The Curriculum and Accreditation Department, under the direction of the COO – Academia, is responsible for ensuring that the accreditation and/or re-accreditation of such provision is conducted in accordance with these policies, rules, and regulations.

Where the delivery mode of an accredited module or programme is proposed to change to fully online or blended delivery, such proposals shall be subject to internal re-accreditation in accordance with the Terms of Reference of the RC and the procedures established by the Curriculum and Accreditation Department.

9. E-Learning Board

The **ELB** supports the **Curriculum and Accreditation Department** and the **RC** in the development, accreditation, and cyclical review of study units, programmes, awards, and qualifications delivered in blended or fully online modes, prior to submission for endorsement by the **BoS**, the **PQVB**, and the **BoG**. The ELB shall act in an advisory capacity on matters related to online and blended learning at the ITS and shall recommend updates and amendments to the **ITS E-Learning Guidelines** to the BoS.

The **E-Learning Coordinator** shall act as the primary liaison between academic staff and the BoS on matters related to e-learning.

The **Registrar's Department** shall make no distinction between fully online, blended, and face-to-face instruction, study units, or programmes when fulfilling its administrative responsibilities.

9.1 Purpose / Remit

The purpose of the ELB is to support the consistent and quality-assured implementation of this Policy and to maintain institutional standards for online and blended delivery by supporting the development, accreditation, delivery, and review of e-learning content used by the Institute.

9.2 Functions

The ELB shall:

- Review the effectiveness and currency of the **ITS E-Learning Guidelines** and propose amendments to the **BoS**.
- Provide advice to the **COO – Academia**, the **Curriculum and Accreditation Department**, and relevant ITS units on the implementation of the ITS E-Learning Guidelines.
- Nominate a representative and an alternate to sit on the **RC** when the delivery of a module in blended or fully online mode is proposed.
- Support internal quality assurance by reviewing patterns of non-compliance or implementation risks and proposing corrective or developmental actions, in accordance with the mechanisms set out in the ITS E-Learning Guidelines.
- Where requested, contribute to staff development priorities in **digital pedagogy, accessibility, and assessment integrity**.
- Support academic staff in their use of e-learning technologies, including guidance on the analysis, review, and responsible use of **AI tools** by both staff and students.
- Provide support to students, where necessary, in the responsible use of ITS e-learning tools.

9.3 Membership and Procedures

- The ELB shall consist of **a minimum of five voting members and a maximum of seven voting members**, appointed from amongst ITS academic staff following a call for **expressions of interest**.
- The **E-Learning Coordinator** shall sit **with full voting rights** and shall coordinate the business of the ELB. The Coordinator shall convene and chair meetings.
- The **Director – Centre of Contemporary Tourism** shall sit **with full voting rights**.
- The **COO – Academia** shall appoint a person with expertise in **academic strategy and curriculum development** to sit **with full voting rights**.
- The **IT Department** shall appoint a representative to sit **with full voting rights**.
- **Academic Managers** may attend meetings **as observers**. No other observers shall be permitted.
- **ITS Management** shall appoint a **Secretary** to the ELB from amongst the administrative staff.
- The **quorum** for meetings shall be **50% of the voting members**, reached **10 minutes after the scheduled start time** if necessary. Decisions shall be taken by **simple majority**.
- The ELB shall meet **at least six times per calendar year**. Minutes shall be taken and forwarded to **ITS Management specifically COO-Academia and IQAC** and, where relevant, to the **BoS**.
- The ELB may establish **working groups** to progress specific tasks within its remit.

10. Instructional Development Training, Training Opportunities, and Services

Academic staff shall be offered regular training to support the effective design, delivery, and management of fully online and blended courses. Only those members of academic staff who, in the opinion of the Institute, possess the necessary skills and competences shall be authorised to design, deliver, and manage fully online or blended study units and programmes. Web-enhanced learning may be offered by all academic staff without restriction, in line with the Institute's policies, rules, and regulations.

The **COO - Academia**, together with **Academic Managers** and **Programme Coordinators**, shall regularly review academic staff needs related to emerging instructional technologies. The **ITS IT Department** shall acquire and implement such technologies, subject to approval of the executive office. Their use, and their impact on teaching and learning, shall be reflected in updates to the relevant ITS policies, rules, and regulations.

11. Putting an E-Learning Course on the Schedule

The ITS aims to promote specific study programmes delivered fully online or in a blended format. Such programmes shall be included in the official contact-hour schedules for both academic staff and students.

The ITS shall provide the necessary digital infrastructure and tools to academic staff to support the delivery of fully online or blended study units and programmes, as specified in the relevant programme or study unit descriptions.

The **ELB** shall facilitate any required training and support for academic staff and students to ensure the successful delivery of fully online or blended learning. The **E-Learning Coordinator** shall also provide training to newly enrolled students who are unfamiliar with the **VLE** or other official digital tools during the first semester of their programme.

12. Course Development

The **Curriculum and Accreditation Department** is responsible for developing and maintaining programme and course documentation in accordance with internal and external accreditation requirements.

The **ELB** shall collaborate with the Curriculum and Accreditation Department and the relevant ITS boards to support the accreditation of fully online or blended study units and programmes.

13. Course Accreditation, Approval, and Cancellation Policy

The same policies, rules, and regulations that apply to traditional face-to-face programmes shall also apply to fully online and blended programmes, with additional input from the **ELB**, where relevant.

14. Student–Faculty Interaction / Communication with Students

The **BoS** shall establish guidelines governing academic interaction between instructors and students to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved and that students are able to complete their programmes successfully within a positive and supportive learning environment.

15. E-Learning Environment

The **COO – Academia**, through the **BoS** and in consultation with the **E-Learning Coordinator**, shall ensure that ITS policies, rules, and regulations are regularly reviewed and updated to support effective and meaningful online learning. These policies shall remain consistent with the **ITS Collective Agreement for Academics**, **MFHEA regulations**, and the **Laws of Malta**.

Such policies shall cover areas including plagiarism, intellectual property, online conduct, equity, accessibility, privacy, security, acceptable use of digital equipment, and other factors that contribute to a positive and engaging online learning environment.

16. E-Learning Communication Expectations

Students are responsible for ensuring that they meet the minimum technology requirements for online learning, including access to a suitable computer and a reliable internet connection. Students may consult the **E-Learning Board** to confirm that their technology meets the required standards.

The ITS shall ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that students are not required to purchase high-end or specialised digital equipment in order to complete their online studies.

Students and academic staff are expected to respond to all forms of communication in a timely manner. Academic staff must maintain communication with students during any period of lecturer absence, in accordance with ITS procedures. Minimum standards for response times and online or blended communication are set out in the **ITS E-Learning Guidelines**.

17. Students with Disabilities

Academic staff and instructional designers developing online courses must comply with ITS policies relating to students who require special arrangements.

Course developers and academic staff shall work closely with the **E-Learning Coordinator, ELB** and **Wellbeing Services**, particularly **Learning Associates**, to ensure that the needs of such students are appropriately addressed within the e-learning environment.

The ITS is committed to meeting the specific needs of students with disabilities and complies fully with the relevant provisions of the **Laws of Malta**.

D. Delivering an E-Learning Course

18. E-Learning Coordinator and Academic Staff Communication

The **COO – Academia** is responsible for ensuring high-quality service-level management for student learning. The **ELB** and academic staff shall work together to maintain clear, professional, and effective communication between students and academic staff.

The **BoS** shall issue the necessary guidelines to support effective communication between academic staff and students in relation to online teaching and learning.

19. Verification of Student Identity

The **BoS**, in collaboration with the **Registrar’s Department** and the **IT Department**, shall issue guidelines and **SOPs** to ensure the proper verification of students participating in online learning. This is particularly relevant for roll calls, assessments, and ensuring safe and secure access to the digital tools required for teaching and learning. Operational procedures and any supporting SOPs shall follow the **ITS E-Learning Guidelines**.

Academic staff delivering online contact hours have the same responsibilities as when delivering face-to-face instruction, taking into account the specific characteristics of online communication. Students are expected to maintain appropriate standards of behaviour, as they would in a physical classroom.

E. Responsibilities

All users of the ITS **VLE** and other digital tools owned or provided by the Institute are responsible for maintaining the security of their usernames, passwords, and any other access credentials assigned to them. All relevant ITS policies, rules, and regulations shall also apply.

The **ITS IT Department** is responsible for service-level management and for ensuring Institute-wide compliance with the provisions of this Policy relating to the technical aspects of online learning. The Department shall liaise with the **COO – Academia** and the **E-Learning Coordinator** to support the smooth operation of online learning, including the testing and acquisition of new digital equipment and services. The Department is also responsible for the procurement, maintenance, and uptime of ITS-owned digital equipment and services. To fulfil these responsibilities, the IT Department may publish the necessary **AUPs** and **SOPs** following consultation with the COO – Academia and the E-Learning Coordinator.

The IT Department shall not be held responsible for digital equipment or services that are personally owned by academic or administrative staff and not by the ITS, even when such equipment is used for teaching and learning. Whilst the use of personal equipment may be permitted where it does not contravene ITS policies, rules, and regulations, the IT Department is responsible only for providing safe and secure access to the official VLE and to ITS-owned or ITS-sanctioned digital equipment and services.

Academic staff and students engaged in online teaching and learning are responsible for securing their own internet access when off campus. Students must ensure that they have the necessary computing devices and digital tools required to fulfil their academic responsibilities. The ITS may provide access to some of these tools, such as the VLE, free of charge, and shall endeavour to avoid placing undue pressure on students to purchase expensive digital equipment.

For the purpose of this Policy, part-time ITS academic staff delivering online learning shall not be discriminated against in relation to the digital licences, services, training, and support provided by the ITS to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes of their study units and/or programmes.

F. Compliance

The **COO – Academia, Academic Managers, ELB, Programme Coordinators**, and the **IT Manager** are responsible for ensuring that all academic and administrative staff within their respective areas comply with this Policy.

The **IQA Unit** shall ensure that this Policy remains aligned with ITS IQA policies and with the policies and regulatory requirements of the **MFHEA**.

Compliance with this Policy shall be monitored and evidenced in accordance with the **ITS E-Learning Guidelines**, including any verification mechanisms used by the **Curriculum and Accreditation Department** as part of the ITS IQA framework.

G. Evaluation / Assessment

The **COO – Academia** shall evaluate the extent to which academic staff and students adhere to this Policy, as well as its implementation by the relevant ITS units, including the **Curriculum and Accreditation Department**, the **BoS**, the **Registrar's Department**, and the **IT Department**. Evaluation of online and blended delivery shall take into account the **ITS E-Learning Guidelines** as the operational standard.

The **ITS Examination Board**, the **Curriculum and Accreditation Department**, and the **BoS** are responsible for ensuring that the implementation of online assessment complies with ITS policies, rules, and regulations and contributes positively to student success.

H. Document Retention

Category	Retention Period
N/A	N/A

I. Review

This policy shall be reviewed every five years, or earlier if required due to regulatory or institutional changes.

J. Document Control

Version	Purpose of Review / Changes	Date Published	Date of Next Review
1	Initial version	2021	2026
2	Updated to reflect the MFHEA Guidelines effective from 2027; establishment of the E-Learning Board; alignment with ITS E-Learning Guidelines; and introduction of the E-Learning Board Terms of Reference.	2026	2031