

**THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES**

**Office of the Board for Undergraduate Studies**  
**Quality Assurance Unit**

**POLICY ON QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ONLINE AND MULTIMODE-  
DELIVERY PROGRAMMES AT THE UWI**

**INTRODUCTION**

This Policy is predicated on the quality concepts of ‘Fitness for Purpose’ and ‘Fitness of Purpose’. The primary purpose of quality assurance in this context is to determine whether the programme under review is meeting its stated objectives, including the needs of stakeholders. The Policy addresses both synchronous and asynchronous delivery. Key Policy statements are shown in italics. This Policy uses the definitions of ‘online’ and ‘multimode’ delivery as set out in the *Policy for Online and Multimode Teaching and Learning* approved by the University Finance and General Purposes Committee (UFGPC P17D 2014/15). See Appendix I for a list of ‘Key Definitions’.

**SECTION 1:**

**Readiness For Online And Multimode-Delivery**

Readiness for online and multimode teaching and learning is a key consideration for both faculty and potential students.

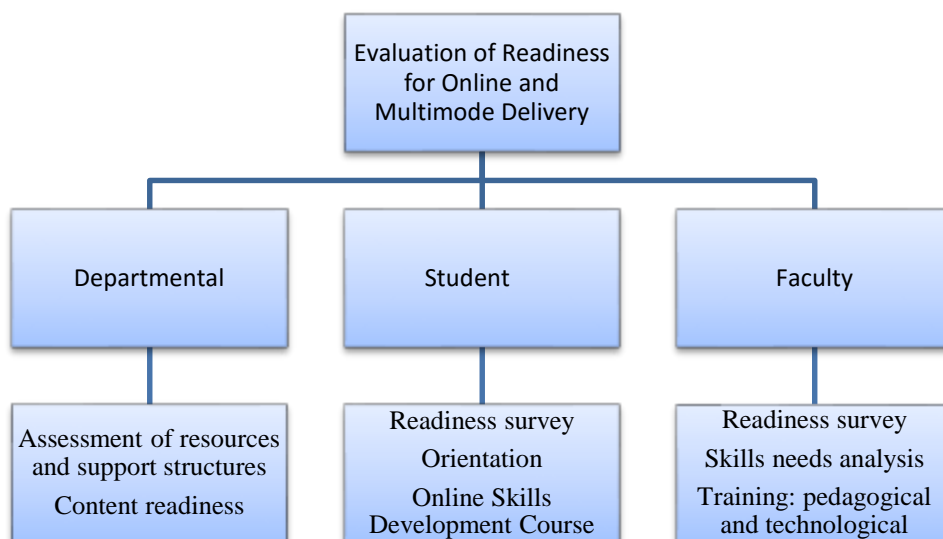
**Departmental Readiness:** *An assessment should be conducted within the Department to ascertain whether the necessary structures and resources exist to support students and faculty in an online or multimode environment. These support structures should include instructional, administrative and technical. The availability of adequate financial and human resources should also be assessed. Departmental readiness also includes ensuring that the content of courses and programmes has been adjusted for online delivery.*

**Faculty Readiness:** It is critical to ensure that online facilitators/e-tutors are equipped with the necessary skills and attributes to facilitate learners in an online environment. *Training is mandatory for all first-time online instructors. Faculty who have not undergone appropriate training should not be engaged in the delivery of online instruction. Re-training and orientation are required for members of faculty whenever new systems and tools are introduced.*

Training may be provided through the Open Campus (OC), Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) or - if not otherwise available - through the use of approved Open Source courses.

**Student Readiness:** The determination of student readiness for learning in the online and multimode environment is vital to student success. Therefore, students should be assessed for their readiness to engage in learning in this modality. A ‘*Student Readiness for Online Learning*’ or ‘*Student Readiness for Multimodal Learning*’ survey instrument must be completed by all students new to this format of delivery for diagnostic purposes. Students should be advised that the purpose of the survey is to assist the University in identifying any areas where they may require support to maximise their learning potential in an online/multimodal environment. *Those with identified weaknesses should be referred to a Study Skills course for Online/Multimode courses and programmes to be provided by CETL or the Open Campus.*

Figure 1: Assessing Readiness for Online and Multimodal Delivery



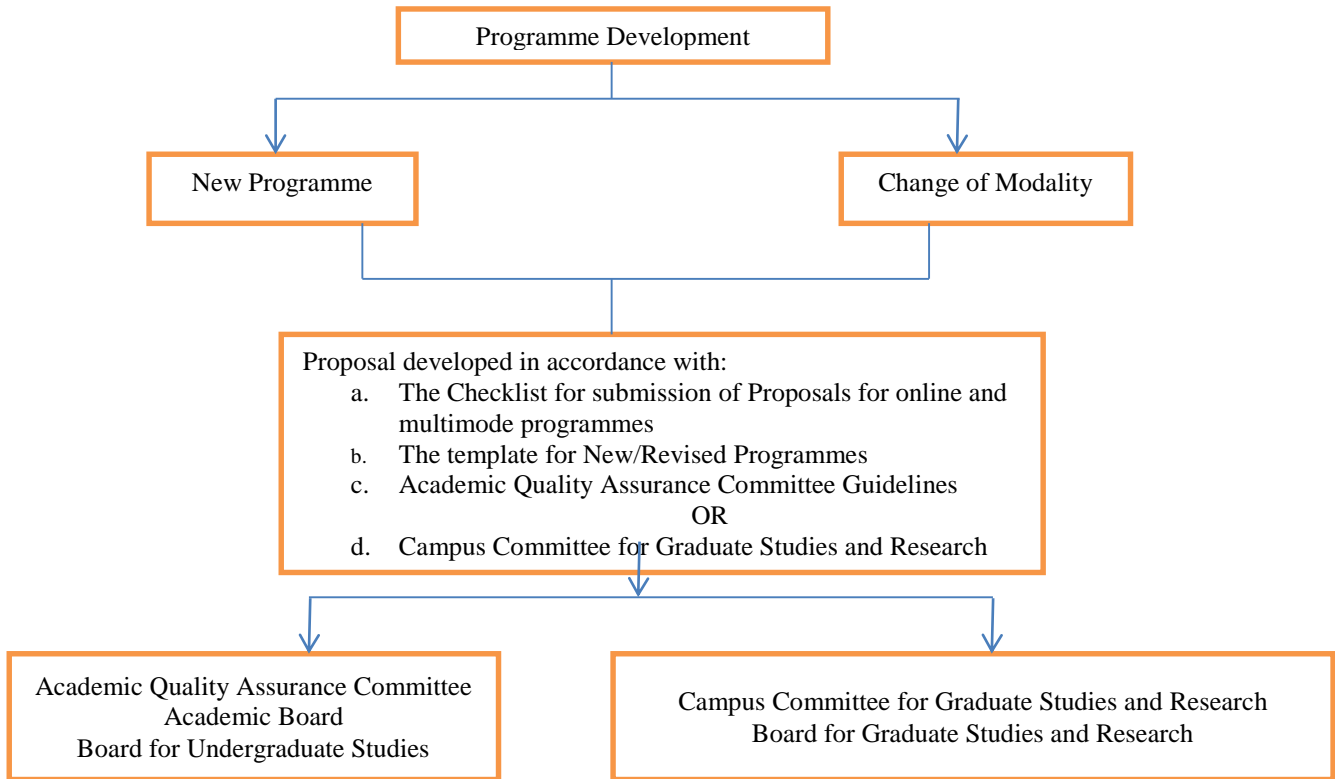
## **SECTION 2:**

### **Programme Development For Online And Multimode-Delivery**

*All new and revised programmes, including those with changes in the mode of delivery, MUST be submitted for formal approval via the Campus Academic Quality Assurance Committee and/or the Campus Committee for Graduate Studies and Research to the relevant University Board. A Checklist for Submission of Proposals for Online and Multimode Programmes has been approved by the Board for Undergraduate Studies and Graduate Studies and Research (BUS/BGSR, Feb, 2015/2016) which should be used in addition to the ‘Template for New/Revised Programmes’ when submitting such programmes for approval.*

The *Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric*, Fifth Edition, 2014 is a set of General Standards and Specific Review Standards used to evaluate the design of online and blended courses. The Rubric includes ‘Learning Objectives’, ‘Assessment and Measurement’, ‘Instructional Materials’, ‘Course Activities and Learner Interaction’, and ‘Course Technology’. The Rubric is recommended for use by those developing Online and Multimode programmes. It can be accessed in the Toolkit section of the Quality Assurance Unit website.

Figure II: Programme Development Approval Process



### SECTION 3

#### Monitoring and Quality Evaluation of Courses

The *Best Practices for Teaching Online Rubric* developed by You (2010) and licensed under Creative Commons, sets out six categories of best practices in online teaching which are rated either as 'baseline', 'effective' or 'exemplary'. These categories are:

1. Learner support and resources
2. Online organisation and design
3. Instructional design and delivery
4. Assessment and evaluation of student learning
5. Innovative teaching with technology
6. Faculty use of student feedback

All of these elements should be monitored on a regular basis by the Faculty during the development and delivery of courses/programmes. This monitoring should include assessment by the Faculty of pass/fail rates and student assessment of teaching for all new online and multimode offerings on a semester basis. *Student assessment of teaching must include an end-of-course assessment*, but may also include a mid-course assessment, as will enable to the faculty to readily address areas requiring immediate attention for example functionality of the technology.

*A Quality Evaluation should be conducted by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) during the first two offerings of any new online/multimode programme/courses.*

#### **SECTION 4:**

##### **Security**

Two major security concerns regarding online and multimode courses and programmes are the need to minimize opportunities for cheating and the related need to authenticate student identity.

In order to address these concerns, *at least fifty per cent (50%) of all courses in an online programme must have a traditional face-to-face proctored examination, except for courses where an approved electronic proctoring system is employed.* It is also recommended that

Faculties make use of the *Strategies for Minimising Cheating in Online and Multimodal Courses and Programmes*, found in the Toolkit section on the Quality Assurance Unit website.

#### **SECTION 5:**

##### **Quality Assurance Review**

The UWI has a well-articulated QA review process for academic programmes. However, *for programme reviews which involve online and multimode delivery, the review team should include a discipline-specific online expert* and the review process should allow time for the team to interface with the online learning environment.

## **TOOLKIT FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ONLINE AND MULTIMODE DELIVERY PROGRAMMES**

The resources listed below are available to assist in the application of this Policy. They can be found on the Quality Assurance Unit Website at this address:

**URL:** [www. http://www.uwi.edu/qau/](http://www.uwi.edu/qau/)

*Checklist for Submission of Proposals for Online and Multimode Programmes* (BUS/BGSR, Feb, 2015/2016)

*Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric*, Fifth Edition, 2014

*The Best Practices for Teaching Online Rubric*, 2010

*Strategies for Minimising Cheating in Online and Multimodal Courses and Programmes*

Sample Survey Instruments:

*Student Readiness for Online Learning*

*Student Readiness for Multimodal Learning*

*Student Assessment of Online/Multimode Teaching (end of Course)*

*Student Assessment of Online/Multimode Teaching (mid-Course)*

**Quality Assurance Unit  
September 2016**

## APPENDIX I

### Key Definitions

**Face-to-Face Course:** A course in which teaching takes place mainly in the physical classroom based on course contact hours standards.

**Online course:** A course in which all instruction takes place online in a virtual classroom or virtual learning environment. An online course may be delivered synchronously or asynchronously.

**Blended course:** A course that combines physical classroom-based instruction and learning activities with online instruction.

**Online programme:** A programme in which all the courses are delivered online. An online programme may be delivered synchronously or asynchronously.

**Blended programme:** A programme which consists of a planned mix of course delivery modalities, including face-to-face, blended and/or online courses as defined above. Any programme in which less than 100% of courses are online is categorised as a blended programme.

**Synchronous delivery:** With synchronous delivery information exchange takes place in real time. An example of synchronous delivery is the use of video-conferencing or web-conferencing with the support of tools such as Blackboard Collaborate to deliver “live” lectures to students in a remote location.

**Asynchronous delivery:** With asynchronous delivery, a virtual learning environment, such as Moodle, is used to facilitate information exchange without the constraints of time and place. This approach combines self-study with time-independent interactions to promote learning.