

**POLICY**

<b>Document Title</b>	<b>Blended and Distance Learning</b>
<b>Version</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Executive Team</b>
<b>Date approved</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020</b>
<b>Effective date</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> November 2020</b>
<b>Date of next review</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> October 2022</b>
<b>Lead responsibility</b>	<b>Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality</b>

## **1. Purpose**

1.1. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Blended and (or) Distance Learning delivered by Derwentside College meets the guidelines set by the Awarding Organisation and that assessment methodology is valid, reliable and does not disadvantage any group or individual learners. Blended/ Distance Learning approaches provided by the College are designed to enhance the learning experience, cater to diversity among learners, optimise learner engagement, and lead to improved learning experiences and outcomes. Our specific objectives within this are to:

- Ensure that teaching/ delivery/ assessment staff are timetabled to support blended learning when learners are working remotely;
- Ensure there is a process to manage feedback on assignments, questions are constructively answered, and feedback is provided in a timely manner;
- Ensure the setting of assignments is undertaken in the face-to-face sessions and that deadlines are clear;
- Ensure that when learners submit work, measures are taken to ensure the work is authentic and has been completed by the learner;
- Maintain and store securely all assessment and internal verification records in accordance with Awarding Organisations.

## **2. Definitions**

2.1. Blended Learning is a formal approach to education that creates an integrated learning environment where face-to-face and online teaching and learning become complementary, with the purpose of giving learners a more diverse and engaging learning experience.

2.2. Distance Learning is a mode of delivering education and instruction, often on an individual basis, to learners who are not physically present in a traditional setting such as a classroom. An example could be learners studying independently using a virtual learning environment for example online packages, posted resources or telephone support.

## **3. Scope**

3.1. This policy applies to the delivery of programmes leading to a qualification through Blended/ Distance Learning and supports the College in developing flexible learning opportunities in professional and continuing education programmes.

3.2. Derwentside College is aware that not all its traditional programmes, policies and procedures are appropriate for Blended/ Distance Learning, and has reviewed its policies and regulations to ensure they are fit-for-purpose in context. It will not always be appropriate, or desirable, to classify provision as Blended/ Distance Learning and treat it as such for quality assurance purposes. For example, the use of the VLE (Canvas) as a repository for course materials on a module does not itself constitute an example of a Blended Learning module. This provision should be considered solely under standard quality assurance processes.

3.3. This policy also guides the identification and management of potential risks posed by challenges and complexities in the arrangements for blended and online learning programmes and to safeguard academic standards.

## **4. Roles & Responsibilities**

4.1. The College ensures that online components of its teaching provision and learning are supported by fit-for-purpose organisational infrastructure and processes.

4.2. The College has responsibility for:

- 4.2.1. Providing appropriate learning resources, facilities, and technology that supports Blended/ Distance Learning;

- 4.2.2. Ensuring equality of opportunity for learners who are assessed, including the provision of evidence;
- 4.2.3. Providing a safe, secure, and inclusive environment for all members of the College's online community;
- 4.2.4. Ensuring that eAssessments, ePortfolios and eVerification systems are secure, moveable and meet the required evidence needs;
- 4.2.5. Ensuring that appropriate recovery plans are developed for all eAssessments, ePortfolios and eVerification processes;
- 4.2.6. The Senior Management Team is responsible for supporting and facilitating the implementation of this policy and for fostering initiatives to build shared service platforms and technology infrastructure. The Senior Management Team will ensure that appropriate technologies, tools and products are available to support teachers in the design of technology enhanced programmes and assessments;
- 4.2.7. Ensuring the reliability of delivery systems and confirming that appropriate technical support and contingency plans are in place in advance of programme provision.

## **5. Effective Learning**

- 5.1. Derwentside College recognises that not all teaching and learning is appropriate to distance or blended approaches. These conditions are required to be addressed when designing, implementing and reviewing Blended/ Distance Learning programmes and components. Consequently, the College identifies the conditions for effective Blended/ Distance Learning, including:
  - 5.1.1. Effective 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;
  - 5.1.2. Effective learning is achieved through a focus on constructive alignment of learning outcomes, assessments, content and learning activities;
  - 5.1.3. Effective learning ensures that learners are adequately prepared to function in a Blended Learning environment;
  - 5.1.4. That teaching and support staff are suitable and have appropriate knowledge and skills in the provision of blended and online learning, as appropriate to their area of delivery.

## **6. Learner Support and Preparation**

- 6.1. The College is responsible for supporting learners throughout their programme of study. In this regard, all programmes offered under Blended/ Distance Learning are subject to the College's QA processes. Attention needs to be given in Blended/ Distance Learning Programmes to ensure that learners have access to timely, appropriate information about their programmes of study and about their performance, including:
  - 6.1.1. Timely formative assessment on their academic performance in the online sections of the programme to provide a basis for constructive individual feedback and guidance;
  - 6.1.2. Information about the quality assurance processes in place;
  - 6.1.3. Clear, timely information on how they access learning resources from the start of their programme, and the mechanisms the provider has in place to test and confirm learner identity;
  - 6.1.4. Clear, timely information on how they access learning resources from the start of their programme, and the mechanisms the provider has in place to test and confirm learner identity;

- 6.1.5. Opportunities to give formal and informal feedback on their experience of the programme, including the effectiveness of blended and online learning arrangements, learning resources, learner support and learner representation.

## **7. Quality Assurance**

- 7.1. The QA processes underpin all the College's programmes. However, Blended/ Distance Learning programmes necessitate additional considerations. The College has responsibility for ensuring that the arrangements for the delivery of programmes and provision of support to and assessment of learners are appropriate, fit-for-purpose and maintain academic standards. This may require the adaptation of existing policies and/ or the development of programme-specific quality assurance procedures adapted to online and Blended/ Distance Learning programme components.
- 7.2. This section identifies the adaptations that need to be included in the design, development, approval, monitoring and review of Blended/ Distance Learning Programmes and components. The design of all Blended Learning programmes leading to an award or programme components leading to credits towards an award must ensure that:
- 7.2.1. The teaching, learning and assessment strategies and delivery mechanisms adopted are specifically designed for online and blended contexts, and subject specific and educational scholarship informs the pedagogy and instructional design;
- 7.2.2. Blended and online learning developments are learner centred and subject-led rather than technology led;
- 7.2.3. Teaching, learning, and assessment practices are accessible to all learners;
- 7.2.4. Ensures security and reliability of its online learning and support systems;
- 7.2.5. Takes all practicable steps to ensure continuity of service delivery of its online learning and support systems and has in place a programme-specific ICT Disaster Recovery Policy, which includes a contingency plan in the event of failure of the designated modes of delivery.

## **8. Related Documents**

- 8.1. The following related documents are relevant to this policy/ procedure:
- Improving Teaching and Learning Policy
  - Internal Quality Assurance Policy
  - Learner Support Policy
  - Information Security Policy
  - Equal Opportunities and Fair Treatment Policy

## **9. Accountability**

- 9.1. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality is responsible for the drafting and implementation of this policy.
- 9.2. He or she is also responsible for ensuring that this document is regularly reviewed and updated – and is the first contact point for managers seeking advice and guidance about Blended/ Distance Learning, or making enquiries about its interpretation.
- 9.3. All managers are responsible for ensuring that they and their team members follow the requirements set out in this document.

9.4. All employees are responsible for adhering to the requirements set out in this document.

**10. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

10.1. The College will pay due regard to equality considerations during the preparation and implementation of this Policy and Procedure.

10.2. These considerations should include and will continue to include the potential for any differential negative effect on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership.

10.3. The College’s judgement is that there is no such negative effect on those grounds and, consequently, no potential breach of the Equality Act 2010.

10.4. The operation of this Policy and Procedure will be monitored by the Head of Human Resources in order to establish that no unlawful discrimination is taking place and to identify opportunities for the College to enhance equality of opportunity and fair treatment.

**11. Review**

11.1. This document will be reviewed by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022.

11.2. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality will undertake this review, considering the outcomes of the monitoring process, legislative changes and developments in good practice.

11.3. As part of the review, the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality will seek and consider the views of the College’s employees and of the recognised trade unions.

11.4. The outcome of the review will be reported to the Executive Leadership Team.

**12. Document Identification**

<b>Category</b> [select ONE only]	<input type="checkbox"/> Programmes/courses <input type="checkbox"/> Partnerships <input type="checkbox"/> Finance <input type="checkbox"/> Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Governance <input type="checkbox"/> Health and safety <input type="checkbox"/> Facilities <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Services <input type="checkbox"/> MIS <input type="checkbox"/> Admissions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teaching and learning <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel
<b>Audience</b> [select ALL that apply]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employees <input type="checkbox"/> Learners <input type="checkbox"/> Partners <input type="checkbox"/> Suppliers