

Name of Policy	Policy on Quality Flexible Teaching and Learning
Description of Policy	Following a process of review, the new <i>Policy on Quality Flexible Teaching and Learning</i> replaces the former policy on <i>Quality Online Teaching and Learning</i> (approved by Academic Board on 7 December 2005) and provides a wider focus encompassing a flexible and integrated approach to student learning needs.
<input type="checkbox"/> New Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revision

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Approved By	Academic Board
Officer Responsible	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs)
Contact Officer:	Director, Institute for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning

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1 Preamble

This document complements and is to be read in conjunction with the University's Strategic Plan, Teaching and Learning Plan, Strategic Plan for Online Teaching and Learning and related policies and procedures (see Section 9). Importantly, this document also draws on the eight eLearning benchmarks for universities developed by the Australasian Council of Open, Distance and eLearning (ACODE). This policy needs to be read in conjunction with the *Procedures for Quality Flexible Teaching and Learning*.

The University has an established policy framework and specific roles directed towards achievement of its goals in flexible learning or, as it is often called, eLearning. The University is also committed to enhancing quality flexible learning. This commitment is consistent with its strategic priorities, such as increased use of information and communication technologies in teaching and learning, flexible modes of learning and cost-effectiveness of courses. As part of this commitment, the Director of Flexible Teaching and Learning has responsibility for pedagogical leadership, coordination and alignment of the pedagogical and technical dimensions of online teaching and learning, and stakeholder liaison.

The University recognises that the benefits of flexible learning are not automatic. Its approach to the adoption of flexible learning pedagogies and technologies is a collaborative and integrated one. To ensure that both staff and students have the skills to teach and learn effectively in the e-learning environment, the University's strategy draws on collaborations between the extensive skills base of its staff including ACUonline Project Officers, Academic Skills Advisers, Librarians, Educational Designers, Online Advisers and academics highly skilled in flexible teaching and learning. The expertise of these professionals will be used to support both students and staff in their development of the additional skills necessary to promote learning within the complex, rapidly evolving environment of higher education.

2 Background

In 2005 Academic Board approved the *Policy on Quality Online Teaching and Learning* to provide a framework to support the development of online education. Following a process of review, the new *Policy on Quality Flexible Teaching and Learning* replaces the former policy and provides a wider focus encompassing a flexible and integrated approach to student learning needs.

3 Flexible Approaches

The broad term 'flexible' encompasses different approaches to learning including, but not restricted to, online learning, distance learning and eLearning. Accordingly, it is envisaged that this policy will be amended as teaching and technology innovations and developments occur. The University will:

- use current and emerging flexible technologies to enrich learning experiences where the mission of the University can be extended, value added for students, and cost-effectiveness demonstrated;
- develop courses and units in fully online mode where this is consistent with strategic planning, and is pedagogically appropriate and cost-effective;
- adopt University-wide quality assurance processes to ensure the appropriate use of current and emerging technologies for teaching and learning, including planning, design and development, implementation, evaluation and feedback, and revision;
- support the professional learning of staff in the use of current and emerging flexible technologies; and
- support students to develop the abilities to use current and emerging flexible technologies to enhance their learning experiences.

4 Scope

This policy applies to all award and non-award courses offered by the University.

5 Key Principles

Quality flexible teaching and learning is achieved when people are expert, enthusiastic, skilled and well-supported, and learning experiences are designed to engage the learner by means of multimodal approaches. The University endorses the following principles in support of such quality flexible teaching and learning.

5.1 The University will provide a stable platform for current technologies in flexible teaching and learning, including ongoing technical support for staff and students that is of consistently high quality, and strategically consider emerging flexible technologies.

5.2 The University will provide student professional development on the effective use of technologies that is:

- aligned with teaching and learning policies and approaches;
- adequately resourced;
- coordinated with other student support services;
- flexible and focused on the needs of students;
- inclusive of a range of current technologies; and
- reflective of good practice.

5.3 Professional learning will be provided by the Institute for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning through the coordination of online and face-to-face professional development in flexible teaching and learning.

5.4 Relevant University directorates (Student Administration, IT, Library) will adopt policies and procedures that support flexible teaching and learning via the access to and support for environments and resources:

- Student Administration will have appropriate systems and procedures to support the enrolment in and administration of flexible teaching and learning activities;
- IT will adopt policies and procedures to design and support virtual and physical learning spaces;
- The Library will adopt policies and procedures to support the acquisition of and access to flexible teaching and learning materials.

These procedures will incorporate consultation with teaching staff.

5.5 Students will be responsible for:

- regularly engaging in online activities and providing feedback to the University on improvements to these via formal and informal evaluation processes;
- informing themselves of expectations for their use of the Learning Management System (LMS), including the requirements of their units and appropriate online behaviour; and
- complying with the University's *Policy on Computer and Internet Acceptable Use* and *Information Technology Conditions of Use*.

5.6. Staff will be made aware of and have access to comprehensive educational and technical support for the use of technologies in teaching and learning prior to the full implementation of the technology, in formal training sessions, on a just-in-time basis, and for trouble-shooting purposes.

5.7 Teaching staff have responsibility for:

- designing, developing, implementing and evaluating units and courses to enhance flexible teaching and learning;
- providing moderation and informal online interactive environments; and
- undertaking professional learning activities appropriate to their role.

5.8 Faculties will ensure that:

- online resources are aligned to institutional strategy, informed by good practice and research, and up-to-date, deployed and promoted effectively and evaluated from a number of perspectives;
- staff workload practices are appropriate to the flexible learning environment;
- all flexible materials developed abide by the University's requirements for quality assurance, W3C and accessibility guidelines; and
- staff have the opportunity to improve scholarship in flexible teaching and learning in an ongoing manner.

5.9 The University's Director of Flexible Teaching and Learning will coordinate the pedagogical and technical aspects of flexible teaching and learning.

5.10 The University's Online Education Coordinator will coordinate timely quality assurance processes for fully online units.

6 Communication of this Policy

Information about the *Policy on Quality Flexible Teaching and Learning* will be incorporated into staff and student training, printed materials and related online resources.

7 Policy Review

The University may make changes to this policy from time to time to improve the effectiveness of its operation. In this regard, any staff member who wishes to make any comments about this policy may forward his/her suggestions to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs).

8 Further Assistance

Any staff member who requires assistance in understanding this policy should first consult his/her nominated supervisor who is responsible for the implementation and operation of these arrangements in the work area. Should further advice be needed, the staff member should contact the Director, Institute for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning.

9 Related Policies and Procedures

This policy relates to the following:

- *Strategic Plan*
- *Teaching and Learning Plan*
- *Policy on Quality Teaching and Learning*
- *Strategic Plan for Online Teaching and Learning*
- *Online Learning System Technical Documentation and Guidelines*
- *Framework for Online Pedagogical Development: Principles and Guidelines*
- *Policy on Evaluation of Teaching and Learning*
- *Policy and Procedures on Access to, and Support for, the Learning Management System.*

10 Terms and Definitions

<i>Flexible learning</i>	expands choice on what, when, where and how people learn. It supports different approaches to learning, including online learning/eLearning. [Adapted from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, accessed 19 February 2008 at http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/nts/dap/framework.htm].
<i>LMS</i>	University's Learning Management System, currently Blackboard.
<i>Physical learning spaces (PLS)</i>	include classrooms, lecture rooms, tutorial rooms, laboratories, computer rooms and other University-approved teaching environments, both inside and outside the University.
<i>Virtual learning space (VLS)</i>	is a combination of software systems and webpages designed to support teaching and learning in an educational setting.