



BLENDED LEARNING POLICY

BHIKSU UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

Approval authority	The Council of Bhiksu University of Sri Lanka
Policy Number	01/2025
Date of Approval	14.11.2025
Date of Revision	
Description in Brief	This policy specifies an introduction for blended learning at Bhiksu University of Sri Lanka as a strategic initiative to support innovative learning and teaching.

SECTION 1

Rationale

This policy provides relevant guidance on the approach to blended learning for staff and students and aims to ensure an equitable, consistent approach across the University and to stimulate informed innovations.

This policy sets out the expectation for integrating blended learning and teaching approaches within existing University-based provisions at undergraduate, postgraduate, and extension Courses. It will highlight the guidance for academic staff in the design, development, delivery, and assessment of provisions in a blended learning mode. In addition, this paper ensures that a balance is maintained between the autonomy for staff to actively adopt innovative blended learning approaches in their teaching and the need to adhere to the quality assurance processes for course changes and the equity of the learning and teaching experience.

SECTION 2

Scope

This policy applies to all students and academic staff involved in undergraduate, postgraduate, and extension courses at Bhiksu University of Sri Lanka, as well as to both online and face-to-face delivery modes and spaces where technology is used to support and enhance the student learning experience.

SECTION 3

Definitions

Active learning means any learning activity in which the student participates in a proactive, responsive and motivated manner.

Asynchronous learning means when the students learn at their own pace and time using online technologies.

Blended learning means the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences enabled by technologies. When the traditional face-to-face classes are combined with usually 30-80% of online technologies.

Digital literacy means the ability of both students and academic staff to locate, evaluate, and use a range of technologies (including AI) to support lifelong learning.

Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) means a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode, perhaps online, due to a crisis situation, which involves the use of fully remote teaching solutions or some blended learning as a hybrid.

Face-to-face classes mean the usual classroom learning environment where no online technologies are used.

Flipped classroom means a shift in the focus of the intensity of student engagement. A flipped class requires students to take more initiative and responsibility for their learning before formal classes or interaction with peers.

Learning environment means the environment where learning occurs. This includes physical or virtual platforms and different physical, social and psychological variables that influence learning in these platforms.

Learning Management System (LMS) means a software application or web-based technology used to facilitate learning and teaching processes.

Online learning means that the learning takes place using >80% of online technologies.

Synchronous learning means that learning takes place at a fixed time slot 'real-time' using online technologies.

"University" means the Bhiksu University of Sri Lanka (BUSL).

SECTION 4

Purpose and Objectives

Purpose

With digital evolution in mind, this policy outlines the types and methods of blended learning; provides guidance on the approach to blended learning that should be taken by academic staff and students; and aims to ensure consistency of approach across all departments here at the University.

Objectives

1. To establish a structured framework for academic staff to effectively engage in the delivery of online courses.
2. To guarantee that the learning environment is equipped with the essential institutional supports for effective online course delivery.
3. To guarantee the availability of the technical infrastructure necessary for the effective delivery of online courses with digital literacy.
4. To ensure that both academic staff and students receive comprehensive training and support for successful online course delivery.
5. To provide comprehensive guidance on the principles of instructional design for effective online course delivery.
6. To uphold the institute's legal and ethical responsibilities in the delivery of online courses.

SECTION 5

Blended Learning Principles

1. Teaching, learning and assessment strategies and delivery mechanisms shall specifically be designed for online learning course delivery.
2. The University shall ensure that online learning courses are learner-centred and subject-led rather than technology-led and that the technology is appropriately used to support pedagogy.
3. The course/programme design shall specify the level of 'blending' between the online component and the regular face-to-face classroom-based component of the courses and the synchronous/asynchronous nature of activities planned.
4. The course/programme design shall specify the nature of the effort required of the students towards the activities of teaching, content creation and moderation in blended and online learning delivery.
5. All newly developed and converted online and blended courses shall adhere to and comply with the standards and guidelines specified in the *Policy on Planning, Designing/Revising and Obtaining Approval for Curricula*.
6. The University shall take all practicable steps to ensure the security and reliability of its online learning and support systems in accordance with the *Information and Communication Technology Policy of the University*.
7. During 'Emergency Remote Teaching' (ERT), the University shall ensure that the best practices for ERT are adopted.
8. Blended learning requires digital literacy, which is recognised as an important graduate attribute and a core skill for academic staff.

SECTION 6

Types of Blended Learning

1. Face-to-Face

This is the most traditional form of teaching and learning. It is a 'teacher-centered' method of education and takes place in University and in person. Students benefit from increased levels of interaction with their peers, as well as with their teacher, and are allowed the opportunity to bond with other students. In face-to-face learning, students are held accountable for their progress at the specific time the lesson is taking place, for example, using assessment for learning techniques.

2. Flipped Classroom

The flipped Classroom model deliberately shifts instruction to a student-centered approach, where in-class time is dedicated to: exploring topics in greater depth; introducing complex concepts; answering questions; addressing misconceptions; setting clear expectations

around work to be completed at home (online or paper based); and creating rich learning opportunities.

3. Online Learning

The University platforms for sharing online resources and setting work is Microsoft (MS) Teams, Zoom, and Moodle, with the aim of full migration over to the cloud-based platform (Office 365). Students will also be able to return/submit completed tasks through these platforms.

4. Asynchronous Learning

Asynchronous learning is learning that does not necessarily happen at the same time for the teacher and the students. There is no real-time interaction; the learning resources are created and made available for students to use later. The main features of asynchronous learning are:

- Resources and activities delivered online, e.g., through MS Teams/Zoom;
- Recorded lessons/video instruction/podcasts;
- Flipped Classroom - students engage with material before discussions in class.

5. Synchronous Learning

Synchronous learning is teaching and learning that happens where the teacher is present at the same time as the students, meaning that there is real-time interaction between them. The main features of synchronous learning are:

- Live, streamed lessons;
- Live online;
- Paper packs and work booklets;
- Textbooks and Guidebooks
- Resources needed for projects, games, and activities, for example, music, art, and performance subjects.

SECTION 7

Expectations of Blended Learning: Quality Learning and Teaching

For maintaining and developing excellence in teaching and learning, the following key aspects of quality blended learning are highlighted.

1. Teaching and learning quality are essential in the student learning experience and are more important than the delivery itself. The effective implementation of Outcome-Based Approaches to Teaching and Learning (OBATL) and constructive alignment, the design of the curriculum learning outcomes, coupled with the assessment and feedback mechanisms, provides the basis for quality blended learning.

2. Blended learning approaches are pedagogically considered in curriculum design. The use of learning technologies is integrated and designed into the learning and teaching experience.
3. Active blended learning, in the same way as active learning in a physical teaching space, is designed to develop and support interaction and collaboration between teacher-student/peer-to-peer, which, in turn, helps to encourage independent learning, enhance motivation and cultivate a deep approach to learning.
4. Blended learning can help to optimise contact time and in-class learning.
5. Blended learning provides further insight into students' learning and progress. Informed and appropriate use of learning analytics via online systems and platforms can help to identify students who may be at risk of failing or struggling, to address gaps in knowledge or skills within the curriculum and to inform and develop teaching practice.

SECTION 8

Design and Development for Blended Learning

1. The design and development of blended learning require careful consideration of learning, teaching, and assessment strategies that will differ from provisions which are predominately delivered in face-to-face environments. The University actively encourages the adoption of blended learning approaches to be integrated into courses and programmes by academic staff.
2. The design of blended learning approaches requires a review of the curriculum learning outcomes and assessment to ensure the use of technologies is fit-for-purpose and ultimately provides the best environment, both face-to-face and online, to help students construct their learning and development.
3. Clear guidance and expectations are required for students to ensure that (i.) appropriate behaviours are adhered to in the online environment, both asynchronous and synchronous, and (ii.) academic staff commitment on how and when to respond to student communications.
4. A blended Learning checklist is provided for academic staff in *Annex 1* with a set of actions that can be implemented as minimum standards for teaching online within a course. This is intended to form part of a framework to enable academic staff to design and deliver effective blended learning and teaching.

SECTION 9

Operational Support

1. The University advocates the use of innovative technologies to support quality learning and teaching, whilst also ensuring a need for a consistent and equitable access for students to access their learning. In this respect, it is expected that the majority of blended learning will be facilitated via the University Learning Management System (LMS, e.g. Moodle).
2. To ensure a level of consistency in the students' learning experience, it is expected that the following (as a minimum) are required to be uploaded into the University LMS:
 - a) Course Syllabus/Outline, including schedules and deadlines
 - b) Online resources and materials (e.g. readings; PowerPoint slides)
 - c) Guidelines on expectations and online behaviour (etiquette)
 - d) Assessment details and rubrics
3. Assessments, feedback and grading are important aspects of the learning experience. This process can also be facilitated via a blended learning mode. In this respect, where courses are taught fully online, it is expected that all aspects of assessments and feedback (e.g. submission of work, feedback of grades) are uploaded and recorded using the LMS.
4. The use of videos for content and resources, as well as the use of cameras for synchronous teaching (e.g. Zoom, MS Teams) has an important role in blended learning in helping to support the learning, and to establish rapport and communication.
5. Learning is also a social process, and the online environment provides the basis for interaction between teacher-student and student-to-student. It is important to build in time and activities within the online environment to establish connections and socialisation, which helps to develop a foundation for the learning community to collaborate and engage in group work.
6. It is more appropriate to provide opportunities for learning in multiple ways, which appeal to different learning styles e.g. combination of video, audio and images.
7. The university shall conduct an orientation programme on online learning at the beginning of each degree programme.
8. The University shall ensure that guidelines specifically formulated for the use of social media are fit-for-purpose in an online learning environment.

9. The academic staff and students shall be provided with all necessary guidelines on the ethics pertaining to the online environment with the goal of promoting '*digital citizenship*'. This shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
- Online presence
 - Ethical use of online information
 - Responsible use of online materials in learning
 - Consequences of the irresponsible use of digital materials

SECTION 10

Institutional Commitment

1. Appropriate budgetary resources will be made available to support the design of the blended learning approaches at the University.
2. The University shall ensure, through the Staff Development Centre (SDC), that the members of the academic staff are provided with opportunities to develop their academic and technology-enhanced learning skills and digital competence.
3. The University shall assist the faculties in creating high quality online learning environments and innovative teaching and learning programmes and methods.
4. The University shall be responsible for the cybersecurity and backup facilities for student assessments.

Related Policies

1. Planning, Designing/Revising, and Obtaining Approval for Curricula.
2. Student Assessment Policy.
3. Information and Communication Technology Policy.

-END-

Annex 1

Blended Learning Checklist for Blended Learning Policy

Online component	Action	Y/N
Course overview	Create a short welcome message or video to introduce yourself/the teaching team and the course	
	Provide instructions for students on how the online environment (e.g. Moodle, Zoom) is used to support their learning and progress	
	Give details of the course learning outcomes, and how activities are connected to the assessments. Upload or hyperlink to the course outline/syllabus document	
	Design your online course layout to align to your teaching approach e.g. by weeks, topics, themes	
Course content	Provide relevant and meaningful descriptions and titles for resources so students can locate them easily	
	Provide information such as expected time on tasks, video duration, and specify where key learning and interaction are required. Highlight whether resources are compulsory or optional.	
	Use a range of content formats (e.g. documents, videos, audio, links)	
Communication	Ensure your/teaching team contact details are available and up to date (e.g. names, contact method, hours)	
	Set expectations on when and how you will communicate and respond. Give clear guidance on etiquette.	
	Use communication tools such as discussion forums, chat and virtual classrooms to keep in contact and develop social interactions to support collaboration and group work	
	Link to essential and online reading lists from the Library	
Synchronous teaching	Plan and integrate interactions such as breakout rooms and polls into your live sessions to encourage dialogue and active participation	
	Give time in advance to check and troubleshoot for basic technical issues. Ensure your students have access to the relevant technology and provide guidance on how to use them	
	Set clear expectations on how students participate in the synchronous environment, as well as the use of cameras and chat facility	
	Provide and upload recordings after the event and make these available for all students	
Assessment	Ensure all assessment information and instructions are up-to-date, including how and when feedback and grades will be made available	
	Upload or hyperlink to assessment criteria and rubrics, and ensure these are clearly displayed on your Moodle course	
Evaluation and feedback	Set up the online feedback survey in Moodle course	