



Quality Assurance of Remote Teaching and Learning

Approved by MECA

24 June 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

As per the requirements of the CHE, universities are expected to ensure QA, especially for the period after lockdown was imposed, during which the institution transitioned to remote learning. In this regard, in consultation with DVC: Academic, a QA process has been developed, and approved by MECA on 24 June 2020.

The COVID crisis precipitated the implementation of remote learning across the HE sector that, while designed to salvage the academic year, has the potential to impact on quality, particularly as contact learning continues to be the dominant mode of delivery. The CHE requires ongoing internal quality assurance, and the move to remote learning needs also to be assessed.

The purpose of the review is:

- to identify areas of good practice that may be shared; and
- to identify areas in which support may be needed during the next phase.

The University is aware that staff members have been under a great deal of pressure, as the transition to remote learning created additional work at speed.

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE DURING COVID-19

The University's Quality Promotion Policy (14 March 2019) provides for quality assurance of teaching and learning to ensure that provision is continuously enhanced. The University has a coherent and integrated quality system to address teaching, learning and assessment, as well as academic and other support and service functions.

The unprecedented events of March 2020, and the need rapidly to deliver the academic programme in a new manner, requires the University to quality assure the transition. The quality of the move to remote learning is reviewed in three ways.

- The Centre for Academic Technologies (CAT) has supported the delivery via remote learning across the institution.
- The Centre for Academic Staff Development (CASD) has revised module and teaching evaluations taking into account the current context.
- The Division for Academic Planning, Quality Promotion and Academic Staff Development (DAPQPASD) will conduct a review of a sample of Semester 1 modules.

These three elements will, working together, provide the University with an aggregated review of the effectiveness of the transition to remote learning, and of the needs associated with its continuation.

3. QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS DURING COVID-19

3.1 Centre for Academic Technologies

In the ordinary course of events, and at the point at which an academic begins to work on developing a module for online delivery, the academic will engage with the CAT Instructional Designer (ID) who provides the technical support needed to assist the academic to achieve the pedagogical intent of the module at the outset.

The shift to remote teaching and learning precipitated by the COVID-19 lockdown required a swift and effective intervention to ensure that the modules were developed on Blackboard. CAT staff reviewed 1500 undergraduate modules to check for 'online readiness' using the following markets:

- A structure student can easily follow;
- A learning guide;
- Evidence of activities for week 6 of term 1;
- Presence of assignments; and
- Presence of online assessments.

3.2 CASD Teaching and module evaluations

The MEC recommended that all modules will be evaluated in term two. In the context of remote learning, the CASD modified the questions used for both module and teaching evaluations.

The purpose of the evaluations is **developmental** and will be used to help academic staff to **reflect on** and **improve** their practice of online teaching and learning. In this iteration, individual module evaluation reports will be sent **only** to the academic staff member/s teaching the module. Generic faculty and institutional reports will be generated by *eXplorance Blue* and will be distributed.

3.3 Quality Review

The purpose of quality assuring the remote teaching and learning is to provide the opportunity for reflection on the University's transition to remote teaching and learning. The purpose of this quality review is thus primarily developmental and is designed to identify the ways in which the University can support, enable and enhance quality.

The process will be to select a **sample** of modules per faculty/college for review. An aggregated report focusing on the good practices, challenges and opportunities experienced over the transitional and delivery periods will be developed. Using this information, the University will better be able to understand how to provide greater support to academics and students during this period.

3.3.1 Preliminary steps

- Deans identify a sample of modules per faculty/college with due regard to a mix of NQF levels, years of study, module types, UG/PG etc.;
- Blackboard access to these selected modules is to be provided;
- A mini panel consisting of internal staff will be requested to review the selected modules, using the questions on level 1 (set out below);
- Panel members will be drawn from senior staff in the Division for Academic Planning, Quality Promotion and Academic Staff Development (DAPQPASD) and the Vice Deans: Teaching and Learning or senior academics in each faculty / college;
- Focus group discussions between academics and panel members will be held;
- A high-level report will be circulated to the participants for input and will be provided to MECA. The identities of individual academics and modules will be anonymized, in line with the purpose of the QA review.

3.3.2 1st Level: Module review by Panel (desktop analysis)

Panel members will assess the modules provided using the following guiding questions:

- How effectively does the online version of the module address the module purpose?
- How readily do the activities provided engage students in active learning of the materials?
- Comment on the alignment of the content provided to the module outcomes.

- How do the assignments / tasks / activities allow the students to practice skills, to integrate their learning, or to assess their own understanding, as aligned to the outcomes and module level?
- How effectively was feedback on learning provided to students?

3.3.3 2nd Level: Focus group discussions with academics

Panel members will engage with the academics on the following questions:

- How would you characterise the experience of the work involved in transitioning your module/s to remote teaching and learning?
- What would you say the challenges were? What were the positives?
- Did you make use of the support provided by the University? Was it effective / sufficient?
- What were your experiences of the students' engagement with the learning in this mode?
- Are there any particular observations on teaching, learning, and assessment that you would like to note?