



**INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITY
OF EAST AFRICA**
'Learning to Succeed'

Guidelines and Standards for e-learning

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Guidelines and Standards for e-learning

1.0 Introduction

Due to increasing demand for access to higher education and technological advancements, e-learning has become an integral part of the delivery of higher education globally. This document sets out the guidelines and standards for IUEA e-learning systems.

The purpose of these guidelines is to:

1. Provide a minimum standard and quality of work for any IUEA's e-learning systems so that each course is fit for purpose and complies with national standards
2. Ensure pedagogical best practices for e-learning are considered in any e-learning delivery
3. Guarantee that e-learning supports institutional objectives

The document is divided into sections on minimum standards, formatting and display and content management. The standards are applicable for different e-learning modes of delivery including online, distances, virtual, blended, open and flexible.

1.1 Definitions

“curriculum” means any documented programme of study.

“distance education” means delivery of learning or training to those who are separated mostly by time and space from those who are teaching or training. The teaching is done with a variety of mediating processes used to transmit content, to provide tuition and to conduct assessment or measure outcomes. The delivery modes may include traditional distance education by standards of National Council for Higher Education. Correspondence courses, on-line provision and interactive CD ROMs, e-learning and blended learning to open learning centres and face-to-face provision where a significant element of flexibility, self-study, and learning support, in an integral part.

“flexible learning” means provision of learning opportunities that can be accessed at any place and time. It relates more to scheduling of activities than to any particular delivery mode.

“formative assessment” means assessment conducted to assess student performance during a course of study and to guide learning processes

“e-learning” means the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance distance education, implement open learning policies, make learning activities more flexible and enable those learning activities to be distributed among many learning venues.

“open learning” means policies and practices that permit entry to learning with no or minimum barriers with respect to age, gender, or time constraints and with recognition or prior learning.

“blended learning” means a style of education in which students learn via electronic and online media as well as traditional face-to-face teaching.

“programme of study” means the prescribed syllabus that students must be taught at each key stage.

“institution” means an organization founded for purposes of higher education and research;

“summative assessment” means final assessments that assess competencies and skills as learned in class and that define the level of attainment of these competencies and skills of these students for recognition and certification;

“syllabus” means the course of study including course content, course objectives and descriptions, learning outcomes, suggested lesson planning, modes of delivery, and resources of a course used for teaching

“virtual education” means distance education which is largely web-centered, but does not necessarily limit itself to learners outside a conventional classroom. It uses multimedia and, besides delivering content, also enables a high level of interaction among learners, content, teachers, peers and administration both synchronously and asynchronously.

2.0 Minimum standards for e-learning

2.1 Course design

Each course shall ensure that the following are in place in terms of course design:

1. Descriptions of the course including an overview of the course and course objectives are stated
2. Descriptions of learning outcomes using the correct taxonomies are used
3. Learning hours are stated in relation to their credit value
4. Teacher contacts and times for pastoral care are provided for
5. Teaching and learning strategies are stated
6. Resources or links to resources are provided for
7. Assessment activities are clearly stated

The above information should be contained in a course outline given to students at the beginning of their course and available throughout the course of study.

2.2 Instructional design

Each course shall provide instructional materials that meet the course objectives and align with the learning outcomes of the course. The following guidelines must be considered in instructional design:

1. Instructional materials such as notes, readings, audio-visual content, or other instructional aides should be sourced from credible and authoritative sources and accurately referenced or developed to meet course objectives
2. Students should be provided with opportunities to participate in different learning contexts such as group work and discussions, peer review, and forums and feedback.
3. Learning and assessment activities should link to learning outcomes and course objectives and be relevant and accurate
4. Active learning strategies should be used to encourage active participation by students and encourage critical thinking

Reference to instructional materials should be included in any course outlines given to students as well as linked to and presented for each topic and/or learning outcome of the course.

2.3 Assessment design

Assessment is recognized as a key motivator of learning and an integral part of the teaching and learning process. It is used to inform the teaching and learning process and improve the curriculum. Proper assessment strategies and activities that are proportionate to the level of the qualification and reflect the expected standards of skills, competencies, performance and abilities of students should be considered, designed and maintained. The following guidelines must be considered:

1. Assessment demands should be commensurate to the level of qualification
2. Assessments appropriately measure skills and competencies linked to learning outcomes
3. Clear objectives, instructions and timeframes for each assessment activity are given to students
4. Both formative and summative assessment activities follow the University's established Study and Examination Regulations and factor technological constraints and differences. This includes the use of anti-plagiarism software to detect authenticity of student work.
5. Assessment allows for accurate marking and recording of student progress and achievement
6. Measures are taken to ensure student identities are accurate and that impersonation is not taking place

Reference to assessment activities should be included in any course outlines given to students as well as linked to and presented for each topic and/or learning outcome of the course.

2.4 Self-learning materials

Self-learning materials include any materials that are used or developed to guide students through their course of study as a substitute for traditional higher education learning. Examples may include online or offline accessible learning packages that are used in distance or remote learning contexts. The following guidelines should be considered:

1. Clear and consistent layouts and formats should be used by all lectures;
2. All standards for course, instructional and assessment design as provided above must be considered
3. Opportunities for dialogue with course instructors are made clear and are appropriately accessible to the learning environment
4. Content and delivery is clearly stated and presented in an appropriate forms of into module, units and lectures
5. All technical content is explained clearly and appropriately and
6. Illustrations which are set next to the text they illustrate with appropriate captions;
7. Clear guide to the learners in the use of module provided including the time a learner of average ability might spend on each unit;
8. Keeping the learner actively involved through the use of text and self-assessment questions and other activities involving application of the new knowledge and skills;
9. Situations and feedback to self-assessment questions to show the learner his/her performance and progress;
10. The provider shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that course materials are effective and do not contain significant errors of fact, misleading or outdated information, concepts or approaches.

3.0 Format and Layout

Most e-learning systems provide for similar if not identical editing functionality as a word processor or have an inbuilt presentation style provided for. However, all e-learning courses must be developed and maintained according to an acceptable IUEA standard. These standards are outlined below:

3.1 Formatting

3.1.1 Course title and code

Course titles must follow *sentence case* structure with a capital letter at the beginning of sentences and lower case sentences. They should not be entirely capitalized/uppercase. The course title should be in full as presented in the course title of the syllabus, e.g. MKT2102 Marketing Management

The short course code is requested be the course code, e.g.MKT2102

3.1.2 Headings and text

Headings and text must also follow *sentence case* structure with a capital letter at the beginning and lower case sentences. Headings and text should not be entirely capitalized/uppercase.

3.1.3 Proofreading

All text that is uploaded must be proofread. Spelling, punctuation and other editing mistakes are not acceptable for publically accessible content of IUEA.

3.1.4 Use of Documents

All documents should be original or otherwise sourced from reputable and authoritative sources of information and accurately referenced. All use of documentation should be able to be justified for its applicability, relevance and usefulness for the course. All internally authored documentation, such as instructor power points or readings, etc, should be to a high publishable standard and branded with the official University logo.

3.1.5 Document uploads

For ease of accessibility including format type on different devices and file size, all documents should be uploaded as Pdf documents. This includes powerpoint presentations. Most documents including word, power point, excel, etc can easily be 'printed' or 'saved as' Pdf files. If you are unsure how to do this, please consult ICT or review any instructional videos, wikies, or webages on how to do this.

3.1.6 File naming conventions

When uploading documents, filenames will either reflect the file name as uploaded or provide for renaming. File names should be standardized according to those required by Faculty for ease and consistency of filing and reference. Any readings, articles, text books, excerpts of chapters of books, etc, must be filed and named using the correct reference entry according to the referencing styles accepted by Faculty.

3.1.7 Hyperlinks

A hyperlink or link is a form of hypertext that links to a document in another location and is activated by clicking on a high-lighted word or image. Hyperlinks should be used by inserting them into a particular and relevant section of text or an image rather than copying and pasting entire URLs into a text body.

3.1.8 Referencing

Any references should follow the referencing styles accepted by Faculty.

3.2 Layout

The layout of any e-learning course of study is dependent on the learning management system (LMS) being used. However, the following general standards apply.

3.2.1 Course/module layout

Each course has an overall course or module layout including a section at the top for general or introductory information. Below this, the course is usually further subdivided into topics or sections.

Each course shall provide an introduction section at the top of the course that shall include the course description as prescribed in the course syllabus.

3.2.2 Topic or section layout

Each course shall be subdivided into topics or sections. The number and naming of these subdivisions can be determined based on the following:

1. Sections that cover each learning outcome and are title as 'Learning outcome 1, etc)
2. Sections that cover each topic as prescribed in the course syllabus with each topic title represented as the topic number and title, e.g. 'Topic 1: Introduction to Marketing Management'
3. Sections corresponding to a duration of a course of study, usually weeks, as prescribed in the course syllabus, with each week represented by the week number.

For courses following a modular delivery format, layouts 1 and 2 should be used. For semester delivery formats, sections 3 may be used.

3.2.3 Section content layout

Each section shall use the full functionality of the LMS available to delivery content to a high standard. This includes the use of headings and subheadings to clearly distinguish activities, assignments, activities, and links to embedded or online webinars and audio-visual content. Each section must be laid out in a way that makes progression through the section and navigation of the content intuitive and easily accessible for students.

3.2.4 Other layout considerations

Depending on the LMS being used, other features should be considered. These include using the full range of 'widgets', 'plugins', 'reports' or such features that make e-learning so versatile. Instructors are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these features through tutorials or videos on how to use them.

4.0 Content management

4.1 Standards of content management

Content must always closely follow the prescribed syllabus from the approved curriculum. If instructors seek changes or modifications, these should be presented to the Dean of Faculty and included in any curriculum review activities.

However, content once uploaded should not remain static. Instructors are encouraged to constantly tweak and improve the content that has been uploaded to offer a high impact and engaging learning experience for students. Authoring and accessibility rights should be provided to allow the ability for instructors to do this.

If for any reason an instructor cannot access a feature or would like to try something new, they should consult ICT.

4.2 Continuous Access

The management of content on an LMS should consider how content may be accessed in offline contexts. This means that content should be able to be downloaded when online for future use when offline. The use of uploaded reading materials and resources must be considered and where the technical capacity allows, to be downloaded for future use.