# NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BOARD

**GUIDELINES ON ASSURING QUALITY OF ONLINE LEARNING IN TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN GHANA**

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Online learning, as practiced around the world, exist in varied formats (Allen & Seaman, 2015). With the outbreak of COVID-19, online learning has become a major mode of instruction at all levels of education. This rapid growth and expansion in online learning have increased demand for ensuring and guaranteeing quality, providing support for students and staff as part of the process of improving learning outcomes. This calls for the development of standards for assessing content and teaching approaches for the learning experience to be as efficient and effective as possible.

Although the ultimate responsibility of assuring quality of online education, like all other modes, lies with the institutions itself, regulatory bodies have a role to play in ensuring parity of esteem (Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft e.V., 2015).

## 1.0 STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

### 2.1 Quality Assurance Policy for Online Education

The first step in assuring quality of online learning in tertiary education is to develop a policy setting out the institution's vision and commitment to the enterprise. It is essential that the policy is rooted in the strategic management plan of the institution. That is, the online learning policy must align with the overall vision and mission of the institution. In the policy, the institutions must explain why online learning has been selected, the platform adopted and why, the supporting technology and the budgetary implications. Whether online learning is new or is supplementing traditional contact mode, it is important to encourage innovation and quality through earmarked resources.

Institutional policies for online learning should, among others, cover the following:

- institutional support;
- course development;
- teaching and learning;
- course structure;
- student support;
- faculty support with compulsory e-learning training for new members of staff;
- technological infrastructure;
- student assessment (learner authentication, work authorship and examination security) and certification; and
- electronic security measures.

### 2.2 Code of Practice

The policy must define code of practice related to appropriate behaviour online, electronic security, measures for the use of student data (privacy, security, consent, etc.) and what constitutes fraudulent conduct. It must also indicate how infractions will be addressed as well as the lodging complaints and the procedures for redress.

## 2.3    Teaching Methods

It is important for the policy to pay attention to the process by which the teaching staff will determine the best teaching methods for students in a specific context. It should consider pedagogical practice, innovation, and the specific goal of each programme. This will ensure that the needs of students are factored into the whole process in the design of the curriculum, the delivery and assessment.

## 2.4    E-Learning Resources

Online learning thrives on the sharing of information in all dimensions: about courses by level, subject content, relationship with other courses, mechanisms for dissemination of course materials, assignments, assessment, IT requirements, and estimated time that students will need to dedicate to a course.

At every step, continuing and prospective students are to be informed about requirements concerning equipment, e-learning and digital skills, pre-knowledge and prerequisite subjects, and attendance.

## 2.5    Teaching Staff

Well-developed educational models acknowledge the crucial role of teaching staff in the delivery of quality learning, particularly for e-learning. As such, the policy should include strategies for professional development for teaching and facilitating staff. It should take into account the needs of those who will be transiting from the traditional face-to-face teaching environment to e-learning. Where face-to-face exist alongside e-learning, the teaching staff involved should be comparable in qualification and competence.

## 2.6    Student Support

The policy should have proper procedures in place to provide student support, - tutoring, pedagogical, technological, and administrative. Student support should be provided according to students' profile and their specific needs.

It should provide information on library resources (i.e. an e-library service), and any required training, including virtual labs designed to guarantee the acquisition of particular learning outcomes.

## 2.7    Access by Disadvantaged Students

The policy should also outline support for students with disability and in other difficult circumstances who will need extra care.

## 2.8    E-Assessment Methods

E-assessment methods must align with learning outcomes and established procedures for validating programmes, including non-classroom-based activities. The development and implementation of e-assessment processes are expected to include protective measures that guarantee learner authentication and work authorship, secured documentation and fit for purpose.

**2.9 Monitoring and Review of Programmes**

The policy should indicate mechanisms for monitoring and periodically reviewing programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set out as well as on how to respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

**3.0 CONCLUSION**

Institutions providing e-learning are encouraged to develop documents to govern their programmes. As a regulatory body, the National Accreditation Board is available for dialogue with the view to promoting understanding and enhancing e-learning at the tertiary level.

## REFERENCES

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