



TEACHING AND LEARNING
IN A DIGITAL WORLD



GUIDE TO DEVELOPING ENABLING POLICIES FOR DIGITAL AND OPEN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Guide to Developing Enabling Policies for Digital and Open Teaching and Learning

Published by:
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October 2021



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Guide to Developing Enabling Policies for Digital and Open Teaching and Learning

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Guide to Developing Enabling Policies for Digital and Open Teaching and Learning

This guide is designed to support the development of enabling institutional policies for digital and open teaching and learning. Part I defines the concept of 'enabling policies' and outlines five steps for developing enabling policies for digital and open teaching and learning. Part II offers additional resources to support this process: case studies (Irish and international), a list of example policies for digital and open teaching and learning, and a list of references and other policy resources.

Part I. Developing Enabling Policies

Introduction

Background

In 2018, the National Forum published the first 'Guide to Developing Enabling Policies for Digital Teaching and Learning'¹, outlining key steps to developing enabling policies for digital teaching and learning (T&L) in Irish higher education institutions (HEIs). Building on that guide, the National Forum facilitated a series of regional policy workshops in 2019 to provide opportunities for those engaged in institutional policy development for digital teaching and learning to discuss aims and challenges, to share resources, and to consider approaches relevant to their own contexts.

In 2020, the terrain of digital and higher education changed dramatically. With this came a growing recognition that many institutional policies for online teaching, learning and assessment did not sufficiently meet the needs of students, staff and institutions, and/or that the necessary policies did not exist. In addition, research undertaken across Irish higher education institutions in 2019 found that many students and staff did not feel involved in decision-making processes regarding digital services at their institutions². In this context, the National Forum renewed its commitment to support the ongoing development of enabling institutional policies in consultation with students and staff across the sector.

During 2020-21, a cross-institutional team worked with the National Forum to explore sectoral needs and priorities, research existing resources, and create a new resource to support institutional policymaking for digital and open teaching and learning. Draft ideas were shared at a national webinar in March 2021 to gather further feedback. The feedback from all events and consultations during the past two years has contributed to the development of this revised and updated 'Guide to Developing Enabling Policies for Digital and Open Teaching and Learning'.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is designed for all higher education staff and students; policymaking is not the remit of senior managers alone. Institutional policymaking can, and should, engage individuals across the organisation, providing an opportunity for meaningful involvement by students and staff in decision-making. This is especially important when policies relate to aspects of digital and open teaching and learning that affect all who teach and all who learn, such as lecture recording, virtual classrooms, online assessment, open educational resources, and more.

We encourage as wide a range of people as possible to join conversations and consultations about institutional policies related to digital and open T&L. This may include those who are already involved in developing Quality and/or Teaching and Learning policies, as well as those who would like to be involved in the development of current and future policies and/or the related policy briefs, procedures and guidelines.

1 <https://hub.teachingandlearning.ie/resource/guide-to-developing-enabling-policies-for-digital-teaching-and-learning/>

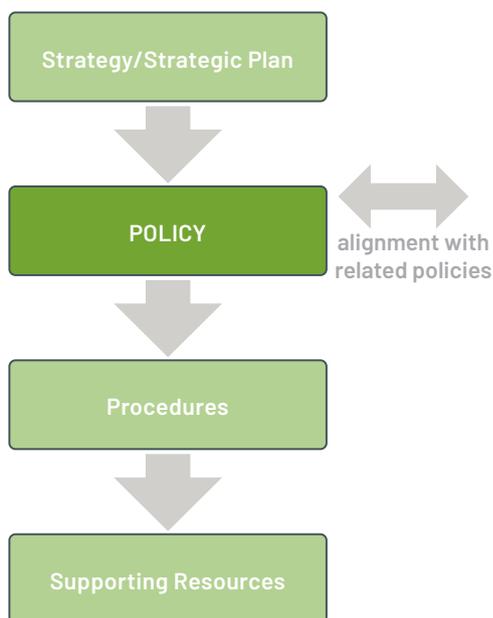
2 The Irish National Digital Experience (INDEx) Survey (2020) found that: 27% of students agreed that they were given the chance to be involved in decisions about digital services, and 14% of staff who teach agreed that they were provided with opportunities to be involved in decisions about digital services. <https://hub.teachingandlearning.ie/resource/irish-national-digital-experience-index-survey-findings-from-students-and-staff-who-teach-in-higher-education/>

About policy

What is policy?

There are many different definitions of policy. A foundational definition by Haddad and Demsky (1995)³ describes policy as explicit or implicit decision(s) that: “set out directives for guiding future decisions, initiate or inhibit action, or guide implementation of previous decisions”. More simply, however, a policy can be defined as a set of principles to guide decision-making. Precision is needed when talking about policy as the deceptively simple word is used to describe instruments that operate at multiple levels. We can speak about institutional policies, sectoral policies, national policies, European policies, etc. Within the ecosystem of any HEI, policies at different levels should be aligned so as to support coordinated action and decision-making.

Institutional policies are the focus of this guide, specifically those relating to digital and open teaching and learning. The purpose of such policies is to support staff and students, and teaching and learning, by clarifying aims, expectations, principles and processes related to digital and open T&L, and thus to guide decision-making. Areas requiring support for decision-making may include blended and online learning, online assessment, lecture recording, use of third-party software tools, learning analytics, open educational resources (OER), intellectual property (IP) rights, ensuring digital wellbeing, etc. Institutional policies are typically formal documents based on broad consultation and approved by a senior committee (such as Academic Council) prior to being implemented.



Institutional policies are highly interdependent; they require the combined actions of multiple people to achieve desired outcomes. As shown in Figure 1, institutional policies typically operate within a hierarchy; they guide decision-making in ways that support the larger strategic aims and/or vision of the institution and are usually accompanied by procedures, guidelines and resources to support the implementation and monitoring of the policy. In addition, policies should be aligned across the institution, supporting and linking to related policies. For example, a lecture recording policy, in addition to supporting key goals of the institution’s strategic plan, might also link to the institution’s learner disability and learner support policy, learner access and widening participation policy, data protection policy, etc.

Figure 1. Policy hierarchy

3 Haddad, W., & Demsky, T. (1995). Education policy-planning process: An applied framework. Paris: UNESCO, International Institute for Educational Planning. <http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/publication/education-policy-planning-process-applied-framework>

What is an enabling policy?

Prefacing policy with the word 'enabling' suggests that there are aspects of any policy that make it more enabling than non-enabling for individuals who are affected by and/or engaged with it. In 2018, the National Forum defined enabling policies as those which are implementable, situated in practice and reflective of the HEI's priorities. These three broad descriptors encompassed ten criteria for enabling policies, ranging from clearly defining the HEI's commitment to the policy area to having an implementation plan⁴.

Based on consultation across the sector during 2019-21, the 'enabling policies' definition has been updated and expanded, now comprising 15 criteria across three categories: (i) policy content, (ii) the policymaking process, and (iii) policy form and style. These criteria are illustrated in Figure 2 and outlined below.

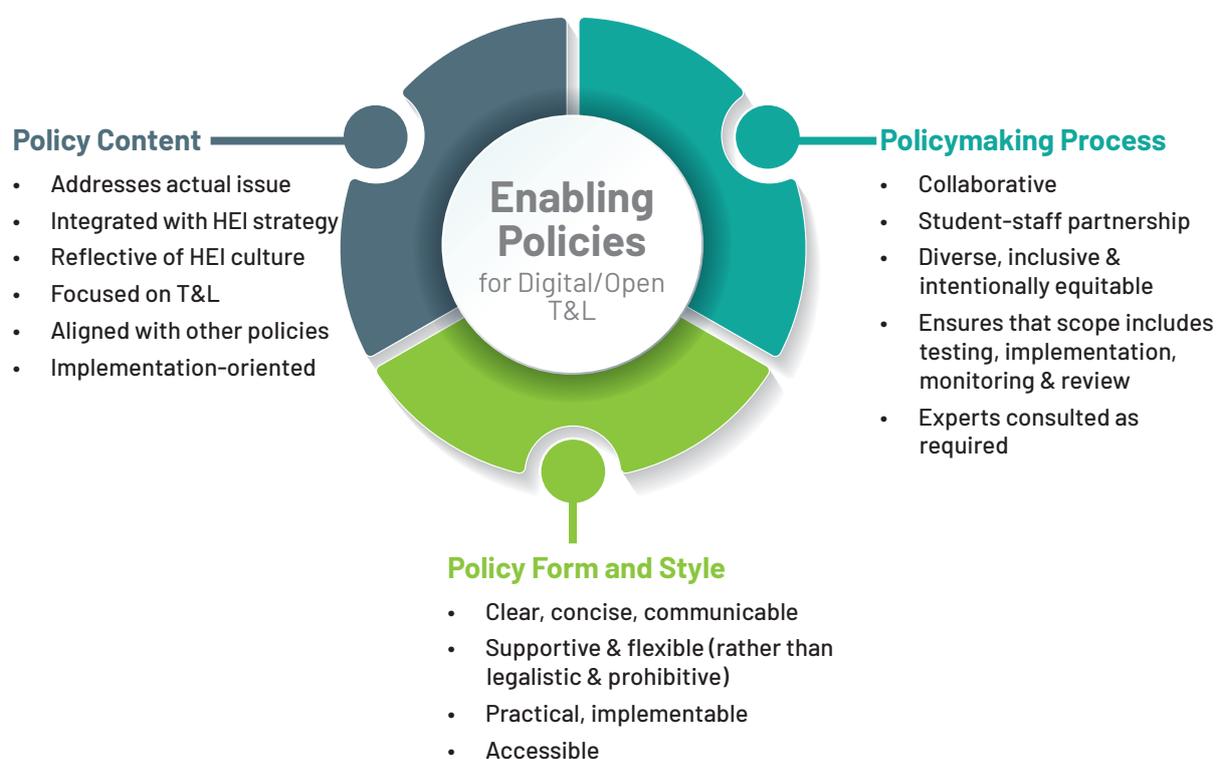


Figure 2. Criteria of enabling policies for digital and open teaching and learning

Policy Content: The content of an enabling policy for digital/open teaching and learning is characterised by the following criteria:

- Policy is meaningful, addressing an **actual issue or problem**.
- Policy is integrated with the **institution's vision and strategy**.
- Policy is reflective of the broader **institutional culture**.
- Policy is focused on **teaching and learning**.

4 See Table 1 in <https://hub.teachingandlearning.ie/resource/guide-to-developing-enabling-policies-for-digital-teaching-and-learning/>

- Policy supports an **integrated** approach, aligned with other relevant policies within the HEI.
- Policy includes an **implementation** plan and procedures, clearly outlining roles and responsibilities (including policy ownership) and linking to related policy procedures, guidelines, resources, etc.

Policymaking Process: An enabling policymaking process is characterised by the following criteria:

- Policymaking process is **collaborative**, with a focus on collective ownership.
- Policymaking process builds on existing student-staff **partnership** approaches.
- Policymaking process is **diverse, inclusive** and **intentionally equitable**⁵; this means not simply consulting a student or member of staff but working to ensure that a diversity of perspectives is represented throughout all stages of the policymaking process.
- Policymaking process ensures that the process **scope is defined broadly**, including policy design and drafting, as well as testing, implementation, monitoring and review.
- **Experts** are consulted as required to clarify questions, ensure legal compliance, and support an integrated approach, such as legal advice, data protection, copyright expertise, technology considerations, etc.

Policy Form and Style: The form/style of an enabling policy is characterised by the following criteria:

- Written policy is **clear, concise** and easily **communicable** to all staff and students.
- Written policy, whether mandatory or permissive, uses language that is **supportive** and flexible rather than overly legalistic or prohibitive.
- Written policy is **practical**, ensuring that it is easy to implement.
- Written policy is **accessible** by all, following relevant accessibility guidelines.

The wider landscape: policies, guidelines and more

While this guide focuses on the development of formal institutional policies, it is important to note that policies also may operate implicitly within institutions, where certain practices can become unstated policy over time. If implicit policies are not enabling, then embarking on an enabling policymaking process can be helpful to unearth assumptions and differences, facilitate open discussions, and reach consensus – as well as to decide whether or not a formal policy is required in this area.

In some cases, a less formal alternative than a policy may be chosen. These may include guidelines, codes of practice, and/or frameworks. Guidelines can define a recommended approach for conducting a specific activity and provide operational detail, instructions and advice to facilitate the implementation of specific practices. A code of practice may include guidelines and principles. A framework may outline assumptions, concepts, values and practices. Typically, these options would not require senior-level approval and would not have the level of accountability of a formal institutional policy. These are not mutually exclusive, of course. Most policies are accompanied by related guidelines and other instruments to facilitate their implementation.

5 See Bali, M., Caines, A., Hogue, R.J., DeWaard, H.J., & Friedrich, C. (2019). Intentionally equitable hospitality in hybrid video dialogue: the context of virtually connecting. *eLearn Magazine*, Special Issue: Paradigm Shifts in Global Higher Education and eLearning. <https://elearnmag.acm.org/archive.cfm?aid=3331173>

Whether you are developing an institutional policy or a less formal alternative, the criteria (Figure 2) and steps (Figure 3) for developing an enabling policy will help to ensure that any instrument developed to facilitate decision-making will be meaningful, relevant, practical, ethical, inclusive, accessible and equitable, that is, *enabling*.

Developing enabling policies for digital and open teaching and learning

Enabling policies should be developed in an open, transparent, participatory way to ensure that those who will be affected by the policy can participate in the policymaking processes; this core value underlies our use of the term 'co-create' (see Atenas et al., 2020)⁶. To support the development of enabling policies for digital and open teaching and learning, the following five steps are recommended:

1. Identify need for policy
2. Co-create policy
 - Consultation and collaboration
 - Research and analysis
 - Design and (re)draft
 - Evaluate and review
3. Approve policy
4. Implement and communicate policy
5. Monitor and review policy

Figure 3 illustrates these steps, and they are explained in detail below.

6 See Atenas, J., Havemann, L., Neumann, J., & Stefanelli, C. (2020). Open Education Policies: Guidelines for co-creation. Open Education Policy Lab. <https://zenodo.org/record/4032994#.YQEfXO0o8W8> and Nelson, D.R., Folhes, M.T., & Finan, T.J. (2009). Mapping the road to development: A methodology for scaling up participation in policy processes. *Development in Practice*, 19(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614520902808225>

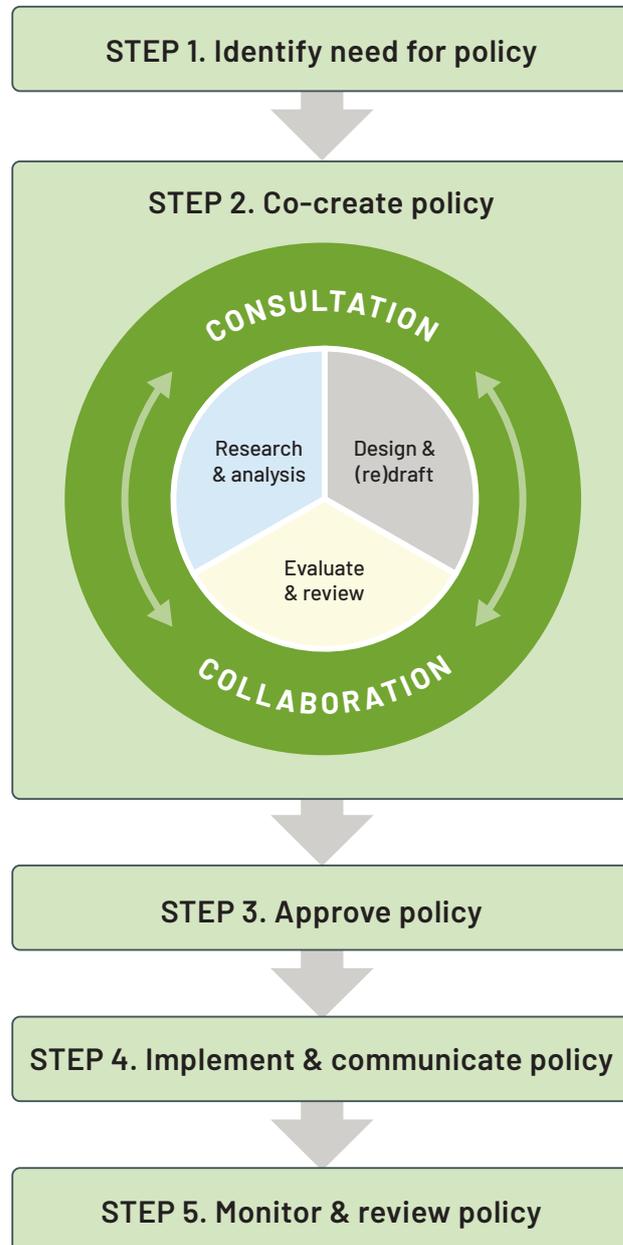


Figure 3. Steps in developing an enabling policy

Step 1. Identify need for policy

The need to develop or redevelop a policy may arise from a specific prompt (such as new legislation, institutional merger, request by students and/or staff, external events) or analysis of current practice (such as gap analysis, analysis of survey data, review of an existing policy). In conducting an analysis of current practice, following are some questions that may be considered:

- What is the gap between existing policy and expectations for this policy area?
- If there are existing policies in this area, to what extent are they enabling? Are there current practices outside the remit of existing policy/policies? Do existing policies need to be amended or is a new policy required?
- What is the gap between existing resources and expectations for this policy area?

The outcome of this step will be an initial draft of the needs, aim and scope of the proposed policy, as well as an identified policy owner responsible for implementation and review.

Step 2. Co-create policy

Step 2 comprises a dynamic cycle of interrelated actions, as shown in Figure 3. It is advisable to spend as much time working on this step as possible to ensure that all stakeholders can contribute as the policy draft evolves, all relevant experts are consulted, and the criteria for enabling policies are met. A truly inclusive consultation will help to ensure a transparent and collaborative approach. This approach also can maximise the likelihood that the policy will be accepted/approved and then be effectively implemented.

Consultation and collaboration

An effective and enabling policy cannot be developed by one individual; collaboration is essential. An enabling policymaking process begins by identifying all possible stakeholders who may use and/or be impacted by the proposed policy. Stakeholders typically include students, academic staff, T&L staff, IT staff, library staff, administrative staff, and senior and middle management. It is important also to consider groups of individuals that are (or may be) affected by the proposed policy more than others, such as individuals with disabilities, international students or part-time staff, for example.

The policymaking process typically requires a committee or working group representing key stakeholders to draft the policy. However, wider consultation with stakeholder groups at different stages of the development process is also advisable (eg via meetings, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups) as well as consultation with relevant experts. The aim of ongoing consultation and collaboration in policy development is to facilitate open discussion amongst stakeholders, including around developing a clear vision for the HEI's future practice in this area, ensuring that policy reflects institutional aims and culture, ensuring the policy aligns with existing policies, clarifying what the HEI is capable of supporting, and determining how enabling practice can be sustained.

Ensuring that the policymaking process is diverse, inclusive and intentionally equitable is an essential aspect of enabling policymaking at all stages of the process.

Research and analysis

Several strands of research and analysis are likely to be important as policy design and development evolves:

- Analyse the **policy prompt** to determine the specific needs and requirement(s) and short- and long-term expectations for the new policy. As noted above, the policy prompt may be new legislation, a request from students and/or staff, an analysis of existing policies or other data etc.
- Conduct **bench research**, exploring policy and related resources from national and international bodies⁷ as well as similar policies from other organisations (sample policies are included in Part II of this guide; your research will likely extend beyond this).
- Identify **expected barriers** (structural, cultural, personal) to the proposed policy and determine how these might be overcome.
- Identify areas of **expertise** that may be required to craft an informed, robust and ethical policy, such as legal, data protection, copyright, technology, etc.

Design and (re)draft

It is important to be aware of the specific policy development and approval process within your institution. Some HEIs have a policy on policies⁸ and most use specific policy templates. The design and (re)drafting of an enabling policy will be guided by asking and answering questions that address the needs, issues and concerns of stakeholders. The criteria for enabling policy content (see Figure 2) can be used as a guide here, although the detail of this step will depend on the specific policy topic and institutional context. Once the text of the policy nears its final draft, a policy implementation plan should be developed, identifying how the impact on existing operations and systems will be managed.

Evaluate and review

As a policy draft is refined, each version should be evaluated and reviewed by stakeholders. This process should include scenario-based testing to determine whether the draft policy is sufficient to respond to the expectations of stakeholders. This may entail going beyond the working group for feedback from various stakeholder groups at specific stages in the process. Some questions which may be considered at this stage include:

- What effect will the policy have on digital well-being and on equitable access to learning?
- Does the policy comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and ensure data privacy and a secure teaching and learning environment, for students and staff?
- How are staff and student rights of ownership, the concepts of intellectual property, copyright and open licensing understood, determined and supported by the policy?
- How does the policy include provision for support for all students and staff?
- How will the policy affect the HEI as a whole, specific disciplines and/or programmes?

7 In addition to this Enabling Policy guide, additional resources may be found from the National Forum, QQI and relevant representative bodies. See, for example: ALT (2021) Framework for Ethical Learning Technology <https://www.alt.ac.uk/about-alt/what-we-do/alts-ethical-framework-learning-technology>

8 Some example 'policy on policies' include: Guidelines on Policy Development (DCU) https://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/ocoo/docs/1_guidelines_on_policy_development_-_final_-_v2.0.pdf; Policy Guide (UCD) <https://www.ucd.ie/governance/t4media/Complete%20Policy%20Guide.pdf>; Policy on Policies (Carlow College, St Patrick's) <https://www.carlowcollege.ie/media/PolicyOnPolicies.pdf>

The evaluation and review process should also include drawing up the remaining policy instruments and accompanying documentation such as procedures, operational guides, technical set-up guides, forms, etc.

Finally, before submitting the policy for approval, review how the policy aligns to the 15 criteria for enabling policies (Figure 2) and double-check institution-specific requirements.

Step 3. Approve policy

The approval process for T&L policies differs between institutions, although most involve being approved by an academic sub-committee(s) before being submitted for approval by a senior committee such as a Senate or Academic Council. Policies going forward for approval typically require a specified owner, an implementation plan, policy instruments such as procedures, a stated review period, and details on policy monitoring. Following approval, policies are usually published on the institution website. Consider adding an open licence to policy documents to facilitate access, communication, adaptation and reuse.

Step 4. Implement and communicate policy

Implementation of a policy requires the combined actions of multiple people to achieve desired outcomes. Thus, communication is an integral part not only of policy development, but also of implementation. Policy implementation will likely include dissemination of the policy and accompanying documents, staff and student communications, information sessions, training sessions, providing access to resources, etc.

The collective ownership of the policy, shared by members of the committee/working group and other stakeholders, is an enormous asset at this stage. Stakeholders can be consulted as to the most effective and impactful ways to communicate a new policy to various groups, and to facilitate dialogue and engagement.

Step 5. Monitor and review policy

Finally, monitoring of the policy should be managed by the policy owner. Policy monitoring can be implemented by setting up a communications channel for reporting policy problems or issues (such as a policy log) and/or adopting an indicator system to measure the policy's effectiveness against a set of criteria. Policy performance indicators can be generic or policy specific.

All policies should be reviewed within a stated period of time (specified in the policy document). Regular reviews of policies ensure that they remain relevant and are aligned with newer policies which may have been developed. The conditions under which a policy can be updated should be clarified.

In summary, whether a policy is being created in an area where no previous policy exists or a current policy is being updated, it is important to acknowledge that institutional policymaking is changemaking. Thus, the policy considerations and suggested steps in this guide should be considered within the broader context of making change, where empathy, thoughtfulness, creativity, collaboration and collaborative leadership are required⁹.

9 See Ashoka 'Changemaker Skills' for more: <https://www.ashoka.org/en-us/collection/changemaker-skills>

Part II. Additional Resources

Case studies (Irish and international)

During ‘Enabling Policy’ workshops and webinars (2019 to 2021), the stories of *why* and *how* policies were developed often sparked the most reflection and discussion. In this guide, we include seven case studies, that is, seven policy stories from seven different higher education institutions. By definition, this does not include all types of digital/open education policies, but the selection does represent a diversity of policy approaches and institution types¹⁰. Each case study summarises the rationale and processes involved in developing an institutional policy (and/or policy-related instruments) for digital/open teaching and learning, highlighting how policies reflect the strategies, structures, systems, norms and cultures within each institution. Where links to policies are available, these are provided.

Lecture Recording Policy – Institute of Technology Carlow

https://www.itcarlow.ie/public/userfiles/files/Lecture-Recording-Policy-v_1_0.pdf

The mission of Institute of Technology (IT) Carlow is to Engage, Learn, Innovate and Lead. Three months into remote online learning in June 2020, IT Carlow formally recognised the need for a lecture recording policy; no such policy had previously existed. The intended aim was to provide practical and useful information to students and staff regarding lecture recordings – ensuring that recordings would be available wherever possible and specifying guidelines to ensure the comfort and safety of staff and students. A working group (of the T&L subcommittee of Academic Council) was assembled to develop the policy: members included a lecturer in the T&L centre (the group coordinator), Students’ Union President, Student Services manager, Chair of Academic Regulations, Quality Officer, Registrar and Assistant Registrar. After consulting institutional policy guidelines and the National Forum enabling policy guide¹¹, and reviewing similar policies from other institutions, an initial policy draft was written, shared and discussed within the working group. Other key stakeholders also were consulted, including the relevant teachers’ union.

Wide consultation was key to understanding and balancing the diversity of perspectives regarding lecture recordings. The students’ union, and some other stakeholders, recommended that the policy language be student-focused: students inarguably value lecture recordings. Some lecturers noted the importance of context, that is, there may be times when recording a lecture is not appropriate; others suggested the inclusion of screencasts within the scope of the policy. Over successive drafts and discussions, a nuanced policy was developed, aiming to balance the needs, safety and comfort of students and staff.

The final draft of the policy was shared and discussed with the T&L subcommittee before proceeding to Academic Council where the policy was approved in October 2020. Due to the collaborative policymaking process, communication of the policy by the Registrar was supported by both the students’ and teachers’ unions. The Lecture Recording Policy is aligned within the institution, linking to other related policies (Learner Disability and Learning Support Policy, Policy for Learner Access and Widening Participation) and supporting broader Universal Design for Learning (UDL) guidelines. The policy is scheduled for review in the first term of 2021-22. This timeline may yet change, as IT Carlow and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) are scheduled to merge to form a new Technological University in the South-East in early 2022.

¹⁰ Our thanks to all who responded to our call for case study contributions. For specific details of individuals and institutions, please refer to the ‘Report authors and sectoral partnership’ section.

¹¹ <https://hub.teachingandlearning.ie/resource/guide-to-developing-enabling-policies-for-digital-teaching-and-learning/>

Lecture Recording Guidelines – Maynooth University

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/dean-teaching-learning>
(available on this page)

Maynooth University (MU) is a research-led university that prides itself on its “unique collegial culture”. Prior to March 2020, the university had limited experience of lecture recording. With the move to emergency remote teaching due to COVID-19, a diversity of approaches emerged in which all, some or no lecture recordings were available to students, depending on their course and lecturer. Prompted by student feedback, the Maynooth Students’ Union (MSU) requested a more consistent approach to lecture recording to support accessibility and flexibility for all students.

A student-staff working group had already been formed as part of the Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning (EDTL) project at MU. The aim of this group was to ensure that decisions relating to digital T&L at MU would be authentically informed by students. As part of their overall work, this group collaborated to develop a draft lecture recording policy. Rather than rely on one MSU rep on the working group to represent the voices of all students, the MSU Vice President for Education worked with individual class reps (170 in total) to conduct consultations with every class, via MS Teams, so that all students had the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. The initial student response was for all classes to be recorded. Subsequent student-staff discussions led to a more nuanced understanding that not every class is suitable for recording, for example, for sensitive topics.

A draft Lecture Recording Policy was sent to the MU Academic Council T&L Committee and Faculty T&L committees, and then to Academic Council in May 2021 for discussion. Two important questions arose during this process which prompted further discussion and drafts of the policy. Firstly, a lack of clarity around copyright and intellectual property (IP) rights emerged. Engagement with this complex issue was seen as important for raising awareness across the university community and for aligning institutional policies with respect to copyright and IP. A second question related to academic culture, with some members of staff voicing concerns about prescriptive rules related to lecture recording. Further consultation is ongoing. At present, the working group is recommending Lecture Recording guidelines, rather than a formal policy. After approval and implementation of these guidelines in 2021-22, further feedback will be sought as to next steps.

Blended and Online Learning Policy – Limerick Institute of Technology

[https://lit.ie/admin/LIT/media/LIT/Quality/Quality%20Handbook%202019_2020/Volume%20\(4\)%20Ac%20Regs_Policies_Procedures/\(20\)-LIT-Blended-and-Online-Policy-2019-2024.pdf](https://lit.ie/admin/LIT/media/LIT/Quality/Quality%20Handbook%202019_2020/Volume%20(4)%20Ac%20Regs_Policies_Procedures/(20)-LIT-Blended-and-Online-Policy-2019-2024.pdf)

The Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) Strategic Plan 2018-2022 prioritised the need to enhance LIT's flexible model of education to include new online and blended programmes. The development of best practice principles for blended and online delivery was also included in the LIT Teaching and Learning Strategy. This strategic focus led to the development of the institution's first Blended and Online Learning Policy in 2018. The policy outlines the guiding principles for development and delivery of blended and online programmes and modules, serving as an enabling resource to facilitate the provision of blended and online programmes across all LIT campuses. The policy specifies the relevant quality assurance and enhancement measures required to adhere to best practice and relevant quality standards.

The policy was developed in 2017-18 by a working group of 16 members including academic staff, T&L staff, representatives from LIT Students' Union, Computer Services and management, including the Registrar. The final policy was reviewed by the Quality, Teaching and Learning subcommittee and subsequently approved by Academic Council in December 2018.

During the development of the policy, the working group found that some material that would be useful for staff was not necessary to include in the formal policy document. Thus, a number of supporting guides were created alongside the Blended and Online Learning Policy to support staff, eg a Learning Design Frameworks Guide, an Operational Guide, and a Technical Setup Guide.

Policy development is a cyclical process which involves ongoing evaluation and review. Since the shift to emergency remote teaching in March 2020, the need for additional policies regarding lecture recording were identified; these were developed in line with the existing Blended and Online Learning Policy. On 1 October 2021, LIT merged with Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) to become Ireland's newest technological university – the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest. As part of this merger, a new working group has been set up with staff from both LIT and AIT collaborating on the development of a revised policy on Blended and Online Learning.

Blended Learning QA guidelines – Technological University Dublin

Technological University Dublin became the first technological university in Ireland in January 2019. TU Dublin was formed as a merger of three existing institutes of technology and now comprises five campuses across Dublin. The merger precipitated the development of new strategies, policies and structures across the new university. A working group, comprising representatives from across all campuses, was formed in anticipation of the merger and tasked with making recommendations regarding Quality Assurance (QA) policies, procedures, infrastructure and support for blended learning. The working group identified the QQI Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning¹² as an important foundation for this work, with the aim not only of formulating QA guidelines but also highlighting blended learning as a key element of the university's new strategic plan.

Initial members of the working group included QA Officers, academic representation from across all constituent colleges and campuses, student representatives, Assistant Registrar, Digital Skills Architect and T&L staff. The working group was chaired by the Head of eLearning Support and Development. Membership of the working group changed over the course of the two-year project, but diversity across roles and campuses, as well as student involvement, was maintained.

The working group dealt with multiple challenges, including working as part of a brand-new organisation, establishing a mutually agreed definition of blended learning, and determining where the scope of Blended Learning QA guidelines overlapped with other policy work across the university (such as, assessment and exams). Then, of course, COVID changed everything. One outcome has been that many more people have learned and taught online, so all working group members now have experience of blended learning. One important lesson learned so far is the recognition that the culture of a new university takes time to evolve.

The final report of the working group contains a recommended definition of blended learning; Blended Learning QA Checklists for three key contexts – learner experience, programme and organisation; and additional recommendations for specific departments/functions. The report was adopted by the Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and is available via the staff intranet to support staff developing and delivering blended learning programmes. The QA checklists have been incorporated into the criteria for programme validation and review sections of the Quality Framework approved by Academic Council in June 2021.

12 <https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Statutory%20QA%20Guidelines%20for%20Blended%20Learning%20Programmes.pdf>

Assessment, Marking and Feedback Policies and Guidelines – Dublin Business School

Work is currently in process at Dublin Business School (DBS) to review and develop policies on Assessment, Marking and Feedback. This work has emerged from needs identified in practice including: a need for greater consistency and clarity around assessment terminology and comparability and equity of assessments; a need to clarify definitions and practices on moderation and second marking; and a need for existing marking criteria to be updated. In addition, student feedback has consistently requested greater clarity regarding assessment and more timely, comprehensive and relevant feedback, while faculty are experiencing increasing workloads due to learner numbers and learner expectations around assessment. These conversations at DBS have taken place in the context of related national initiatives such as QQI's Green Paper on Assessment (2018)¹³ and National Forum work regarding Assessment OF/FOR/AS learning (2016-18)¹⁴.

A working group was set up under the chair of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LT&A) subcommittee of the Academic Board, with the Registrar, Head of Academic Programmes and four faculty from the committee. The working group initially distinguished between policies, procedures and guidelines and agreed to first establish a set of guiding principles, or policies, for decision making. The group decided not to develop guidelines until after the principles had been widely agreed. Two documents of principles were drafted: one for assessment and one for marking and feedback. These draft principles will be shared with the LT&A subcommittee, student representatives, academic directors, programme managers and programme teams for consideration and feedback. A revised set of principles will be constructed by the working group for consideration by the LT&A subcommittee, Senior Leadership Team and then Academic Board. Although student representation was not included in the original composition of the working group, this is being rectified to include student representatives.

Following agreement of the principles, work on developing Assessment, Marking and Feedback guidelines will begin in autumn 2021 with a workshop open to all faculty and students. It is hoped that the policies (principles) will provide a constructive framework for expansive and practice-informed consultations with faculty and students about creating new guidelines, including marking criteria. Overall, the process is working constructively and is expected to last several months.

13 QQI (2018) Green Paper on Assessment of Learners and Learning <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Green%20Paper%20Assessment%20of%20Learners%20and%20Learning%20March%202018.pdf>

14 National Forum: Assessment OF/FOR/AS Learning <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/our-priorities/student-success/assessment-of-for-as-learning/>

Open Educational Resources (OER) Policy – University of Edinburgh (UK)

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/openeducationalresourcespolicy.pdf>

The University of Edinburgh approved their first Open Educational Resources (OER) policy in 2016 and updated it in September 2021. The policy explicitly ties OER to the university's vision ¹⁵: "The University encourages staff and students to use, create, and publish OERs to enhance the quality of the student experience, increase the provision of learning opportunities for all, and improve teaching practices. It also recognises that the use and creation of OERs is consistent with the University's vision and values; to discover knowledge and make the world a better place, and to ensure our teaching and research is relevant to society, diverse, inclusive, and accessible to all."

The initial OER policy drew from existing policies at other institutions but was adapted for the Edinburgh context. While the university's Open Access policy is governed by the Library, the OER policy sits within the domain of T&L, along with the Lecture Recording and Virtual Classroom policies ¹⁶. The OER policy is an informative rather than a mandatory policy, aiming to encourage and support (rather than require) open practice. The policy is reinforced by an OER Service which works to support the university's commitment to openness strategically and operationally. For example, digital skills workshops focus on copyright literacy, and T&L services have open licensing options built in, enabling staff to assign open licenses to any resources that are uploaded to the VLE or associated media platforms.

The University of Edinburgh has found that having an OER policy over the past five years has helped to encourage and embed the use of OER and open educational practices (OEP) for teaching and learning, enhancing the quality of the student experience and supporting the university's civic mission. Creation of OER has been added to 'exemplars of excellence' that may be used by teaching staff seeking promotion at different grade levels, enabling recognition of open practice. 2021 updates to the policy include references to the UNESCO Recommendation on OER ¹⁷, UN Sustainable Development Goals, and recent data protection legislation. The new policy also links to related policies to ensure adequate policy alignment across the institution. The policy is openly licensed (CC BY-NC-SA) and has been widely shared and adapted for reuse.

¹⁵ Open Educational Resources, University of Edinburgh <https://open.ed.ac.uk/about/>

¹⁶ Open Policies for Learning and Teaching, University of Edinburgh <https://open.ed.ac.uk/open-policy-for-learning-and-teaching/>

¹⁷ UNESCO Recommendation on OER <https://en.unesco.org/themes/building-knowledge-societies/oer/recommendation>

Intellectual Property Policy – Kwantlen Polytechnic University (Canada)

<https://www.kpu.ca/sites/default/files/Policies/RS5%20Intellectual%20Property%20Policy.pdf>

Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) is a public higher education institution in British Columbia. As a strategic priority, KPU supports the use of open educational practices (OEP) including the creation, adaptation and adoption of open educational resources (OER), open pedagogy and open education research. In 2018-19, KPU undertook development of an Intellectual Property (IP) policy in order to clarify IP rights for university members and to encourage the use of open practices across research, learning and teaching. The policy advisory task force that developed the new policy included diverse faculty, student, support staff, and administrative representation and was chaired by the Associate Vice President for Research. The task force consulted widely across the university, including with the Associate Vice Provost for Open Education. The revised policy went into effect in June 2019.

The KPU IP policy upholds existing institutional agreements with faculty that the copyright for any work product created as part of assigned duties (including creative work, instructional strategies or curriculum/instructional material) belongs to the employee. The KPU IP policy further specifies that students also retain the copyright to works that they create in the course of their program of study¹⁸. The IP policy encourages KPU members to create and adapt OER, publish in open access outlets and adopt open science practices to maximise access and impact. The policy is supported by a range of related procedures and templates. The university consistently models open licensing in its publications and communications.

Professional development is considered key to the overall open education strategy at KPU and to the IP policy; privacy legislation and copyright are integrated into faculty training. Faculty are both encouraged and supported to have conversations with students about their IP rights and options for open licensing in order to facilitate student agency and informed choice¹⁹.

The KPU IP policy has been of immense value since March 2020, providing a foundation for a broad understanding of agency and ownership by faculty and staff in a time of change.

18 Supporting students' IP rights at KPU <https://thatpsychprof.com/supporting-students-ip-rights-at-kpu/>

19 See, for example, Student Agreement to Publish Course Work under a Creative Commons License https://www.kpu.ca/sites/default/files/Teaching%20and%20Learning/Student%20Agreement%20to%20Publish%20Course%20Work%20under%20a%20Creative%20Commons%20License_1_1.docx

Example policies for digital and open teaching and learning

Included below are examples of policies (and policy-related instruments) for digital and/or open teaching and learning from a variety of higher education institutions and organisations. The list includes policies that have been explored in National Forum policy workshops and webinars over the past two years, policies and policy types suggested by National Forum Associates and colleagues in the sector as useful for exploration, and all policies featured as case studies in this guide.

i) Policies

HEIs in Ireland:

- [Blended and Online Learning policy](#) (Limerick Institute of Technology)
- [Learning Analytics policy](#) (Dublin Business School)
- [Learning Analytics for Student Success policy](#) (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology)
- [Lecture Recording policy](#) (Institute of Technology Carlow)
- [Lecture Recording Usage policy](#) (University College Cork)
- [Open Access Publications policy](#) (Trinity College Dublin)
- [Open Access to Research Outputs policy](#) (NUI Galway)
- [Recording of Lectures policy](#) (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology)
- [Student Voice policy](#) (Dundalk Institute of Technology)

HEIs international:

- [Academic Integrity policy](#) (University of Wollongong)
- [Intellectual Property \(IP\) policy](#) – supportive of OER (University of Cape Town)
- [Intellectual Property \(IP\) policy](#) – supportive of OER (Kwantlen Polytechnic University)
- [Open Access Publishing policy](#) (TU Delft)
- [Open Educational Resources \(OER\) policy](#) (University of Edinburgh)
- [Policy on Ethical Use of Student Data for Learning Analytics](#) (The Open University)
- [University Policy on Policy Development](#) (Carnegie Mellon University)
- [Virtual Classroom policy](#) (University of Edinburgh)

ii) Policy-related instruments

HEIs and related organisations, Ireland:

- [Assessment Code of Practice](#) (University College Dublin)
- [Digital Learning Charter](#) (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology)
- [Engaging in Online Communication Guideline](#) (Hibernia College)
- [Guidelines for Designing, Delivering and Assessing Group Work](#) (University College Cork)
- [Recording of Online Classes Guidelines and Code of Practice](#) (Dundalk Institute of Technology)
- [Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes](#) (QQI)
- [Student Evaluation and Learning Analytics](#) (University of Limerick)

HEIs and related organisations, international:

- [Digital Citizenship Guide](#) (University of Edinburgh)
- [Framework for Ethical Learning Technology](#) (Association for Learning Technology)
- [Inclusive Curriculum Health Check](#) (University College London)
- [Learning Analytics Principles and Purposes](#) (University of Edinburgh)
- [Learning Analytics: Purpose and Principles](#) (University of British Columbia)
- [Principles for Ethical Use of Personalised Student Data](#) (Athabasca University)
- [Recording Virtual Classrooms Guidelines](#) (London City University)

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Additional resources

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As noted in the Introduction, this guide is the product of numerous conversations and consultations with members of the Irish higher education community over the past three years. The National Forum extends thanks to all who participated and contributed in workshops, webinars, meetings and discussions as the plans and ideas for this guide took shape. We extend particular thanks to our National Forum Associates²⁰ who have provided ongoing feedback and advice.

We also extend our thanks to all individuals who provided additional cases studies for this guide:

Institute of Technology Carlow: Damien Raftery, Lecturer and eLearning Development Officer

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²⁰ National Forum Associates <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/about/associates/>



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DOI: 10.6084/m9.figshare.16903282