Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Policy on Trinity Virtual Learning Environment

1. Context

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin, herein referred to as Trinity, is committed to providing a distinctive education based on academic excellence. This commitment is demonstrated within the Strategic Plan (2014-2019), the creation of the Trinity Education Project and engagement with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

Use of the institutional Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) should facilitate enhancement of the Trinity student learning experience by providing each student with ongoing access to module information, activities and learning resources outside formal timetables and class time. The University supports the further development of innovative teaching practices through engagement with the VLE and expects that this will be done in a manner which will preserve the integrity of student learning and assessment.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to support the development of technology-enhanced learning across both online and face-to-face teaching environments that will assist in:

- Enhancing the student experience;
- Supporting innovative teaching strategies;
- Building digital capacity.

In doing so, the policy supports the College's Strategic Plan (2014-19) and its related strategies with respect to the educational experience of Trinity students and academic staff.

3. Benefits

3.1. The policy is designed to ensure that every registered student has online access to a minimum standard of programme information and learning resources.
3.2. This policy seeks to support academics in enhancing their academic practice.
3.3. By promoting broad adoption of the VLE, this policy supports self-directed student learning and independent learning activity.
3.4. An optimised VLE facilitates participation and engagement of diverse student population such as mature students, part-time learners and international students.

4. Scope

4.1.   This policy applies to credit bearing modules and programmes delivered to registered undergraduate and postgraduate students of Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin.

4.2.   This policy applies to the institutional VLE with regard to teaching and learning activities.

4.3.   This policy does not apply to the technical service level to support the institutional VLE which is the responsibility of IT Services.

4.4.   A formal timeline for adoption is not proposed however it is expected that the policy is adopted at an academic's earliest convenience and where difficulties arise, they address them in a timely manner.

5. Principles

5.1.   A single institutional VLE platform for all undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes is established across Trinity.

5.2.   The VLE is key to Trinity's ongoing commitment to enhance the undergraduate and postgraduate educational experience through the promotion of appropriate technology enhanced learning and the meaningful use of technology.

5.3.   Digital capacity and innovation in the use of technology enhanced learning will be promoted and supported.

5.4.   All content accessible by students must adhere to Accessible Information Policy & Guidelines.

6. Definitions

6.1.   A virtual learning environment (VLE) is a Web-based platform for digital resources and information of programmes of study, usually within educational institutions.

6.2.   Modules are the building blocks of programmes. They are self-contained units of teaching, learning and assessment on particular topics with defined academic credit values, learning outcomes, modes of delivery and assessment schemes. Students are required to pass a defined number of module credits in order to progress and to attain an award.

6.3.   A Programme is a set of modules, courses or course options that lead to an award (e.g. a degree).

7. Policy

7.1.   Single Institutional VLE

7.1.1.   Trinity requires the use of a single institutional VLE across all foundation, undergraduate, and postgraduate programmes.

7.1.2.   The use of additional environments (where pedagogically required) is not precluded, however, these environments should be supplementary to the institutional VLE and have strong pedagogic or administrative reasons for use which should be discussed with the Associate Dean of Online Education.

7.1.3.   A consistent student experience is facilitated by the use of in-built learning tools within the institutional VLE which are preferred to externally available third party tools, where features and services are broadly similar.

7.2.   Minimum content specifications

7.2.1.   The minimum defined standard within the institutional VLE for all modules will include:

      I.   Course and module information, including course and module handbooks, module specifications, outline, key calendar dates and information regarding assessment. This information will be made available at the commencement of the module.

     II.   Lists of information resources/reading lists, such as books, journals, databases, web sites.

    III.   Lecture materials, before or after lecture, as determined by the lecturer.

    IV.   Information on staff availability and communication.

7.2.2.   A default module template is applied to each module in line with VLE use as stated above (refer 9.1).

7.2.3.   Each module home page will contain information which is standardised and formatted for every module and the VLE interface will be structured to provide access to resources based on simple login and the minimum of navigation.

7.2.4.   All digital materials used in the teaching and learning on the programme will, where possible, be made available to the students within the VLE.

7.3.   Information and Data Compliance

7.3.1.   All users of the institutional VLE must comply with the College Intellectual Property Policy and relevant copyright legislation as per the Guidelines for Staff on the College Information Compliance website.

7.3.2.   Any learning and teaching content provided in an electronic format should be uploaded into an appropriate place within the VLE module in compliance with the College Intellectual Property Policy.

7.3.3.   In accordance with the College responsibilities under the Data Protection Policy student personal data must not be stored and/or maintained in third party hosted services where it may be at risk of being compromised unless approved by the Academic Registry and the College Data Protection Officer.

8. Responsibility

8.1.   The Associate Dean of Online Education has responsibility for this Policy.

8.2.   The Associate Dean of Online Education, with support from Heads of Schools and e-learning CAPSL, is responsible for the implementation of the VLE Policy with respect to Trinity Teaching and Learning.

8.3.   The Director IT Services is responsible for technical service standards and management of the contract with the VLE supplier.

9. Related Documents

9.1.   VLE Default Module Template

9.2.   VLE Guidelines Document

9.3.   Staff Guidelines on College Intellectual Property Policy

9.4.   Intellectual Property Policy

9.5.   Accessible Information Policy and Guidelines

9.6.   Data Protection Policy

10. Document Control

10.1.   Date approved by Council: June 2017

10.2.   Date of next review: Academic Year 2020/2021