SECTION 2: GUIDELINES

The most typical form of non-face-to-face teaching and learning in place for blended learning is online learning. A provider moving into blended learning formats is in a position to demonstrate that it has understood, planned and approved any differences in its quality management that may be appropriate for such learning, and has reviewed its policies and regulations to ensure they are fit-for-purpose in context. Quality management arrangements for online learning provision and other non-face-to-face learning are supported by fit-for-purpose organisational infrastructure and processes. For example, the collection and evaluation of feedback from internal and external stakeholders may require different arrangements to those in place for face-to-face provision.

Technology employed to deliver online learning offers some significant advantages for quality assurance and enhancement. The way in which learning resources are used by learners can be more easily monitored and evaluated than is the case in face-to-face contexts. Learning resources need to be quality assured in a different way. The provider's arrangements for the validation of online programmes will focus on some additional issues such as: design and development mechanisms for approving and updating learning resources; arrangements for student support and guidance; and the availability and accessibility of appropriate learning resources.

The guidelines are organised under the following headings:

Organisational context

Programme context including development and assessment

Learner experience context

The focus throughout the guidelines is on raising awareness of issues that are particularly pertinent to the online and overall blended learning context, rather than other kinds of learning and teaching.

3 ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

The focus of this section is on the strategic and institution-wide aspects of managing quality for blended learning, including administrative and technical infrastructure requirements for appropriately skilled personnel.

At organisational level, it is necessary to demonstrate an understanding of the distinctive demands that blended learning will make on infrastructure and systems that differ from full-time face-to-face contexts. Where the nature of high quality online learning or other aspects of remote learning is not properly understood, provision that was originally designed for a face-to-face learning environment may be poorly adapted for learners. For example, teaching staff with no knowledge or experience of blended delivery may not appreciate the pedagogical opportunities and challenges. Learners will not generally have a good experience if what they receive are essentially learning resources, lectures and other resources that have been designed for face-to-face learners and made available online. The responsibility of providers to offer a good learning experience, and the potential reputational risk of not doing so, is significant. Blended learning providers should be particularly mindful of using a learner-centred approach, for example when using technology-enhanced/assisted learning, which may pose a challenge for some learners while creating opportunities for others.

Information Technology (IT), administrative systems and infrastructure that have been designed for face-to-face delivery contexts are unlikely to be effective and efficient for blended learning. Specialist, reliable and accessible computer hardware and software applications are required for designing, developing and delivering online learning. Tracking learner progress and achievement, marking and returning assessments, providing feedback to learners and assessors are just a few of the areas where existing policies, systems and processes are unlikely to be fit-for-purpose in an online learning context.

A decision to deliver some or all provision through blended learning should therefore be a considered one and form part of a provider's vision, supported by an approved strategy. The enthusiasm and expertise of a few people should not be the driver for such a decision, although such enthusiasm and expertise can be harnessed, recognised and valued. This usually means there needs to be a strategy and plan, an appropriate investment of time, money and other resources to develop capacity and resources to deliver high quality blended learning that will offer learners a consistent, enjoyable and effective learning experience.

3.1 Strategy and planning for blended learning

The provider's strategy, infrastructure and policies systematically address and enable existing or planned arrangements for blended learning (incorporating online learning).

Procedures are in place to ensure:

3.1.1 That a strategic approach to the use of blended learning is explicit and is shared with staff, learners and other stakeholders. A strategic plan includes appropriate investment in infrastructure and contingency arrangements to support all options for blended learning in an online context. Accountable key roles have been identified. A strategic plan for online learning should be clearly linked (or incorporated into) the institution's overall education/teaching

and learning strategy, and it should be widely understood and appropriately cross-referenced with other key institutional policies, strategies and plans. Approaches to online learning taken by individual units are in line with institutional plans. Approved strategies and implementation plans are clear about the provider's aspirations in relation to blended learning.

3.1.2 Policies, regulations and processes (including administration) are fit-for-purpose in the context of blended learning. The relevance of existing arrangements originally designed for face-to-face provision may not always be appropriate and/or effective in the blended learning context. Examples include:

- online developments that are subject to business case approval for viability and sustainability

- robust costing models which take into account the additional costs associated with IT support; developing and updating learning resources; induction, training and support for staff and learners

- proposals where market intelligence demonstrates that the scale of demand and income will ensure viability and sustainability

- recruitment and admissions policies and processes that allow for any online requirements

- clarity in any additional registration arrangements deemed necessary by the provider

- appeals and complaints policies and processes which accommodate remote learning

- fees policy and processes which take note of online provision

- arrangements for online assessment including pre-assessment, the conduct of assessment and marking/grading which are robustly tested and invoke confidence

- regulations and arrangements for Boards of Examiners and external examiners which include any additional consideration of online learning experiences

3.1.3 The strategies and processes for the appointment, induction, training, professional development and appraisal arrangements for teaching and support staff are appropriate and specific to blended and online learning. For example:

- Staff engaged to support online learners can either demonstrate previous experience of online provision or are provided with appropriate induction and training.

- There is a planned approach to the appointment of (or access to) specialist staff to support the provider's blended learning strategy. For example, specialist staff with academic, technical or professional expertise in the pedagogy/assessment appropriate to online learning and in educational technology.

- There is planned close collaboration between the academic and other support personnel and specialist staff, such as teams involved in designing learning technologies and other methodologies supporting online learning.

- There is a planned approach to staff guidance of online learners on any open education resources referenced including any intended or unintended endorsement of such resources.

Subject expertise and academic standing remain important criteria in recruiting appropriate staff but also include appropriate competencies required, for example, in designing a programme, understanding the pedagogical differences within a curriculum of supporting learners in a blended learning environment, such as virtual learning environment.

3.1.4 Arrangements for assuring compliance with any legal or regulatory obligations are appropriate to the blended learning and online learning context. For example, this may include:

- child protection

- intellectual property and copyright

- clear parameters on data protection including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

- protection for enrolled learners

- applicable professional or statutory body requirements

- local regulatory considerations in the context of transnational provision

3.1.5 Processes are fit-for-purpose in the case of learners located outside Ireland. Regulations and institutional processes that are appropriate in the face-to-face context can be a challenge in the blended learning or online learning context, including those governing Boards of Examiners/Results Approval Panels and external examiners; appeals and complaints; and student disciplinary arrangements.

3.1.6 Arrangements for collaboration or partnership as set out in the Core Statutory QA Guidelines facilitate any additional responsibilities to be specified for learners in a blended learning context.

3.2 Infrastructure and resources

The infrastructure and resources required to support good quality blended learning are understood, planned, and routinely monitored and evaluated. These arrangements should take into account that while online, learners are likely to be remote from the provider and from teachers and/or assessors. There is an institutional approach to these matters.

Procedures in this context include:

3.2.1 A planned approach to the procurement of services (e.g. cloud services), hardware and software to support online learning and a clear policy on a common platform for approval of exceptions.

3.2.2 Contingency arrangements in the event of platform, hardware or software failures.

3.2.3 Robust and consistent systems and processes across the organisation to manage the submission, receipt, marking and return of assessments. There are robust arrangements in place across the organisation to confirm the identity of remote learners and mitigate against fraudulent practices, attempts to gain unfair advantage, or academic malpractice. For example:

- all systems and processes used are capable of:

    - verifying the identity of learners;

    - guarding against cheating, plagiarism or other kinds of unfair advantage;

    - being reliable and scalable in the context of the provider and the strategic plan;

    - timing and synchronizing assessment to take into account factors such as cultural or religious calendars and provision that is offered across different time zones.

3.2.4 A student record system designed or adapted to support blended learning programmes and learners and their quality assurance.

3.2.5 Effective institutional arrangements to provide assurance that:

- Any blended learning elements of provision have had the reliability of their delivery systems tested and signed off in advance, with confirmation that appropriate technical support and contingency plans are in place.

- Intellectual property rights and software licensing issues are addressed in the development and delivery of online learning.

- The delivery system for each online section/unit of study is fit-for-purpose, for example, with a clear statement of:

    - resources needed to complement any online technology

    - how the technology is to be used by teaching and other personnel involved both individually and collectively

    - how it is to be used to confirm that the teaching and learning has occurred, including assessment and feedback for each individual programme

- The availability and life expectancy of the technology is appropriate to the nature of the blended learning provision, numbers of learners and duration of programmes.

- Institutionally approved transitional arrangements are in place to support any migration to new or different technology (hardware or software), taking account of the need to maintain compatibility with the technology that learners are using.

- A common policy and process is in place for ensuring that learners' work is properly attributed to them, particularly in cases where the assessment is conducted through remote methods that might be vulnerable to interception or other interference.

- Those with responsibility for assessment have the means and authority to confirm that a learner's assessed work is the original work of that learner only, particularly in cases where the assessment is conducted through remote methods.

- Mechanisms such as web-based methods or correspondence for the transfer of learners' work directly to assessors have been approved and tested by the institution to ensure they are secure and reliable; and there is an institutionally approved and consistent means of proving or confirming the safe receipt of student work.

3.3   Published expectations on blended learning

The provider has approved and published expectations for the overall quality of the blended learning provision, including expectations on the effectiveness and accessibility of learning resources and other learning materials to support online provision. The provider also has approved and published expectations for the effective delivery of teaching and learning and assessment in a blended learning context, which are available to stakeholders.

Procedures in place:

3.3.1 Make available benchmark or specification documents for learning resources and information specific to monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of learning resources and the learning environment. These are all considered as part of a programme validation and review process.

3.3.2 Include assessment practice and process that are published and provide consistent, equitable and fair arrangements for the setting of, marking of and return of feedback on assessment tasks. Learners are provided with consistent, secure and reliable means for submitting work to be assessed and confirmation of receipt. There are institutional regulations and protocols to ensure confidentiality and security in feedback to individual learners on assessment, and for the recording of marks or scores.

3.4   Learners outside Ireland

Where the online learning element is to be offered to learners based outside of Ireland, due diligence and risk management arrangements are robust and fit-for-purpose.[2]

Procedures in place include:

3.4.1 Internal approval processes to confirm that any relevant legal or regulatory requirements (e.g. in each jurisdiction) have been met. For example:

- requirements for local accreditation or recognition by statutory or regulatory bodies, which may be at programme and/or institutional level

2 For the purpose of this document "outside of Ireland" refers to countries outside the State.

- permission for foreign providers to operate within the local jurisdiction (if required)

- cultural considerations that may inhibit group interactions, for example between different religious groupings or synchronous delivery of content where gender considerations are required

- regulations that may prohibit or inhibit the charging of fees

- other jurisdictional requirements that may influence the blend of learning permitted

3.4.2 An internal process to consider and approve business models and associated risk management to ensure viability and sustainability of quality. Matters that are specific or heightened in the online learning context include:

- taxation

- definitions of 'student' that may impact funding streams

- the location of servers

- employment law that may inhibit the ability to employ local tutors or use other support functions

- recognition of qualifications gained through online learning

3.4.3 That appropriate legal advice is sought to consider, for example, that:

- learners' interests are safeguarded

- the location of servers will meet the needs of stakeholders in each jurisdiction

- provider's software or learning resources licences will be valid; or other arrangements are in place

- due regard is paid to local financial regulations or taxation issues

- due regard is paid to local employment law

- due regard is paid to local law or expectations of consumer protection

- intellectual property rights or copyright are not compromised

3.4.4 That the provider can demonstrate that, before offering blended learning options to learners outside Ireland, it has tested delivery systems to ensure that learners outside Ireland will have equal access to support and to learning resources. For example, commonly used platforms routinely available in one country may not be available in other jurisdictions.

3.5 Collaboration and other partners

Where a provider is relying on a second provider, partner or collaborator to provide aspects of blended learning such as online learning, a number of aspects are covered by the internal QA procedures.

3.5.1 Formal written agreements are in place and clearly specify the respective rights and division of responsibilities, including in the case of data protection for those processing data.

3.5.2 Learners and staff are made aware which organisation carries legal responsibility for the delivery or support of defined sections of the blended learning provision.

3.5.3 Arrangements for quality management in general are consistent with the Core Statutory QA Guidelines for all providers and topic- or sector-specific guidelines as appropriate.

3.5.4 Where one provider offers a programme that aims to enhance or provide additional (usually face-to-face) support for online programmes offered by a different provider, the relationship between the two providers is made clear to all stakeholders, including any requirements regarding technical compatibility or technology protocols. Responsibility for the effectiveness and quality assurance of such complementary provision rests with the providers.

4 PROGRAMME CONTEXT

The focus of this section is on the key issues and principles of good practice in provider responsibility for assuring quality in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of programmes and modules that include blended learning. In this context, programmes and modules are processes offered by providers in blended learning mode, by which learners achieve knowledge, skill or competence, irrespective of duration, level, volume of credit, or accreditation.

Procedures supporting the development and delivery of a blended programme of study partly by online learning will need to ensure that the value of online learning in enabling learners to meet intended learning outcomes is clearly demonstrated.

The curriculum design process should consider programme structure, coherence and sequencing in a blended learning context with reference to online learning. The teaching, learning and assessment strategies, and the delivery mechanisms adopted in online learning, are explicitly designed for the online learning context recognising, for example, that learning, teaching and assessment may be asynchronous, and that online learners (as well as providers) should be empowered to track and check learning, progress and achievement. The quality of learning resources plays a distinctive and critical role in online provision, as highlighted in the *Guidelines for Open Educational Resources (OER) in Higher Education*: "Much of the quality of OER will depend on which resources academic staff choose to use, how they adapt them for contextual relevance and how they integrate them into various teaching and learning activities."[3]

4.1 Programme outcomes

The programme as a whole is intended to achieve learning outcomes. Online learning is effectively integrated into the programme for this purpose. Overall programme design is informed by best practice in curriculum design.

Procedures in place include:

4.1.1 Learning and teaching practices that are informed by best practice in blended and online provision. Subject-specific and educational scholarship informs the pedagogy and instructional design.

4.1.2 Curriculum content and student support that accommodates enhancement or updating, for example, in response to feedback or other quality assurance mechanisms. All online content is subject to approval and ongoing quality assurance. Resource planning at programme level includes a budget for the updating of content to ensure it remains current. Resource implications need to be fully considered as part of the approval process. Programme structure, coherence and sequencing are considered to be part of the regular evaluation and feedback.

4.1.3 Assessment strategies with opportunities for learners to engage in formative assessment activities that will check and reinforce learning remotely.

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3 *Guidelines for Open Educational Resources (OER) in Higher Education* (UNESCO/ Commonwealth of Learning 2015), p. 9.

4.1.4 Curriculum development processes with an appropriate representation of subject, educational technology, instructional design and other key internal stakeholder expertise. For example, specialist student support advisers and administrators, library and information professionals play significant roles in effective online learning as well as the teaching staff who will support learners. Processes enable close collaboration between academic subject specialists and those responsible for online educational technology and/or instructional design in the development and delivery of online provision to ensure that:

- developments are learner centred

- developments are subject-led rather than technology-led

- organisational structures and processes ensure that technology is in the service of pedagogy

- open education resources referenced by the provider are subject to quality evaluation

4.1.5 A focus on the delivery of an interactive learning experience for each module delivered online and academic content appropriate to the unit of study.

4.1.6 Information for individuals developing online learning modules to ensure the use of the platform the institution has committed to and that they are bound by the institutional policies, systems, hardware and processes for online learning.

4.1.7 Planned and controlled opportunities for staff to test new or evolving technologies not currently supported by the existing policy or provider platform.

4.2   Learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms

Learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms are appropriate, fit-for-purpose, monitored and reviewed.

4.2.1 All materials and media (for example audio-visual, printed or digitised assets) used to deliver online learning are subject to informed peer comment at one or more draft stages and allow for the incorporation of feedback into subsequent and final versions of the learning resources. Such informed peer review may be both internal and external, and enable commentary to be made on both academic content and pedagogical approach. The aim is to ensure that:

- The materials produced are of sufficient quality.

- The different media used are integrated so that they support and complement each other in enabling learner achievement of the stated learning outcomes.

- Programme design is learner-centred and provides a consistent and accessible experience for all learners.

- All modules of a programme are owned by an academic or training department. This applies to online learning even when some modules or sections are outsourced.

- There is clarity in the information provided to learners and staff about communication channels and the availability of advice and support, for example, communication must manage learner expectations of communication and availability of staff in the provider. What learners may reasonably expect is specified, for example, expectations of staff and learners on developing any meta skills as part of engaging with the online aspects of the blended learning programme.

- Learners can test and monitor their progress at appropriate points. The whole learning environment for blended learning used in conjunction with the learning resources requires active engagement by the learners.

- The relationship between learning materials and other components of learner support activity such as face-to-face tutorials and residential schools is defined.

- Protocols and information are provided to learners and staff on the use of the full range of online interactions and forums in their learning.

- There are nominated academic/professional moderators who understand and have the authority to intervene in, for example, cyber bullying that may constitute risk to learners and/or the provider.

4.3 Approval and programme validation processes

Approval and validation processes for blended learning programmes including online learning modules are appropriate and fit-for-purpose.

Procedures in place include:

4.3.1 A robust programme development process designed for online learning that includes explicit consideration of, for example:

- Staff qualifications and experience in online learning.

- The use to be made of external consultants and experts in online provision, including in critical review and appraisal of draft learning resources.

- Arrangements for the induction and continuing professional development (CPD) of staff involved in a) the development and support of online resources; b) online teaching, where such experience is lacking; c) support services for learners.

- Testing of delivery mechanisms for online modules or parts of modules. For example, confirming that (where appropriate) it is possible to access learning on a private computer or on a mobile device or other as appropriate.

4.3.2 Processes to establish sustainable timescales and planning for resources including:

- Early confirmation of staffing resources. If the programme is dependent on local tutors for support, confirmation will need to be provided at an early stage to determine a demonstrable local supply of appropriate staff, and the criteria for their appointment.

- Timescale for subsequent development and approval of online sections and associated learning resources at the various levels in the programme, and the identification of the external assessors who are involved (if relevant). The timescale is influenced by factors such as pre-requisites, progression rules, applicable legal or regulatory body requirements, and programme flexibility.

- Programmes are fully designed before being offered to learners.

4.3.3 Robust arrangements for the quality assurance of learning resources, the learning environment and other learning resources. Depending on the blend of learning involved, there is a varying focus on the effectiveness and quality of the learning experience. For example, where appropriate, equal QA scrutiny is focussed on learner engagement with the learning resources and on their engagement with teaching staff. The nature of the learning materials and resources will also be different for online learners.

4.3.4 Processes that highlight the availability and timeliness of feedback to learners. In online modules this is likely to be achieved virtually, thus benchmarks and expectations will be different. In many remote contexts, learners will rely primarily on electronic learning resources.

4.3.5 Processes for learner records are sufficient and accurately maintained, and up-to-date learner records are available for monitoring progression and achievement. They will facilitate timely intervention for online learners who may be struggling. Where learning opportunities are flexible and allow learners to stop and start the programme, the student record arrangements are able to support the level and nature of flexibility permitted.

4.3.6 Privacy laws on data protection are appropriate for all aspects of online provision. Learner concerns about the confidentiality of learner records are respected. For example, protocols will be necessary to manage and archive formal or informal learning conversations between learners or between learners and teaching staff, as appropriate. Learners are made aware of the regulations:

- that will provide them with a unique learner identity to be used by the provider;

- that protect learners and indicate their own electronic trail or digital persona.

4.3.7   Staff induction processes for staff employed to support or assess learners are in place. Staff are appropriately inducted and trained for their role in online learning. There may be aspects of the assessment process that are distinctive (or at least more prominent than in a face-to-face context) for online learning. For example, it is commonplace in online learning for assessors to assess, grade or mark learner assessment:

- where assignments have been set by someone else

- submitted and returned electronically

- from learners they have only met face-to-face on a few occasions throughout the academic year

4.3.8   Moderation processes are in place to ensure consistency and share good practice where more than one tutor is employed to support or assess more than one group of learners. Documentation of best practice examples and exchange of information among all staff is important where there is a growing knowledge base, a growing availability of additional open access resources and constant demands to update ICT skills. Provider support through structured networking is in place to facilitate this.

5   LEARNER EXPERIENCE CONTEXT

This section relates to key issues and principles in provider responsibility for supporting learners, as groups/cohorts and as individuals.

The benefits of flexibility offered for learners by blended learning in general and online learning in particular is balanced by its demands for autonomy, commitment and self-regulation. Procedures are in place to highlight to learners that online learning may differ from their previous learning experience; that they are appropriately prepared for it; and that their progress and engagement is monitored, encouraged and supported. Learners are enabled to pre-assess their own readiness to engage with online/blended learning programme.

5.1   Support available to learners

Learners are supported to make informed choices about participating in a blended learning programme and to develop the necessary independent study skills to successfully progress towards becoming an autonomous learner. The level and nature of support available to learners is clear.

Procedures in place include:

5.1.1 The availability of appropriate information that adequately explains the online sections of the programme and assesses the suitability of a programme. This is available in advance of the programme commencing. For example:

- prospective learners receive a clear explanation of the blend of learning that they will experience and the realistic commitment required of them to complete the programme as well as the pre-knowledge and technological skills necessary to participate;

- information on the nature and extent of autonomous, collaborative and supported aspects of learning;

- information about the hours when academic, technical or pastoral support is available;

- information on the hardware and software required;

- information on how much time learners are expected to commit to independent learning in order to successfully complete the programme;

- clarity on the specific level of engagement expected for different elements of the blend, for example mandatory participation in online activities in order to demonstrate participation in collaborative learning activity, face-to-face attendance requirement, synchronous and asynchronous activities, autonomous learning etc.;

- information on the extent to which face-to-face attendance is part of the blend is made clear to learners and/or other stakeholders such as funding, recognition or validating bodies.

5.1.2 Clear terms and conditions:
Prior to enrolment on a particular programme, the prospective learner is made aware of all terms and conditions relevant to that programme, either in the prospectus or similar material, by correspondence, or in discussion with the provider. This might include:

- any specified timings for synchronous learning or assessment

- deadlines and the consequences of not meeting them

- the rules governing flexibility for learners, such as the regularity of presentation or re-assessment opportunities

- processes in place to protect the provider against fraud, plagiarism or other forms of cheating

5.1.3 Requirements for access, bandwidth and any prescribed hardware or software are appropriate and viable, are communicated well in advance to the learners and all requirements are published. There is a mechanism for learners to test if hardware meets technological requirements to participate.

5.1.4 Processes to ensure the delivery of any study materials direct to learners remotely through, for example, online methods or correspondence, are secure and reliable, and there is a means of confirming its safe receipt.

5.1.5 Deliberate steps taken to assist every learner to understand their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided and to shape their own learning experience.

5.1.6 Learner support for monitoring their own programmes. Every learner undertaking online learning is supported in monitoring their own progression and achievement through the provision of regular opportunities to test their knowledge and understanding, reflect on feedback and engage in dialogue with staff and/or their peers.

5.1.7 Appropriate interventions and mechanisms to identify learners who may be struggling with online remote learning. Learners are encouraged to complete their programme. Progress is monitored, and learners are provided with prompt and helpful comments on their progress in relation to learning guidelines and goals.

5.1.8 Learners have access to:

- Descriptions of the online components of the blended learning programme, or aspect of study, to show the intended learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment methods of the unit or module.

- A clear schedule for the delivery of their online learning study materials, learner support (local and/or remote) and for the submission and assessment of their work. This will include learner responsibilities in this regard.

- Information on the ways in which their achievements will be judged, and the relative weighting of online and other remote parts of the programme in respect of assessment overall.

- Timely formative assessment on their academic performance in the online sections of the programme to provide a basis for constructive individual feedback and guidance.

- Information about the quality assurance processes in place to give confidence that the assessed work conducted through online activity is properly attributed to them.

- Unique identifiers that will enable them to access learning resources in good time at the start of their programme and form part of the validation of their identity. Learners are made aware of all the mechanisms the provider has in place to test and confirm learner identity.

- Appropriate and sufficient learning resources to support online learning and remote study.

- Orientation to learning resources and other support to access them effectively and efficiently (including technical and academic support and guidance, as appropriate). Face-to-face induction includes an explanation of the concept of blended learning; where possible, staff who will deliver the online portion of the programme are present at this induction.

- Identified and available contacts (academic, administrative, technical).

- Information about the intended life-span of all online sections of their programme and the arrangements in place to phase in or out new online or other remote components without disadvantaging learners.

- Appropriate opportunities to give formal feedback on their experience of the programme, including the effectiveness of blended and online learning arrangements.

- (Where appropriate) information about the respective responsibilities of the provider and any third parties – such as local study centres or administrative offices - that may be involved in supporting the provider's online learning.

5.1.9 Information in advance of programme commencement on how personal data will be used, for instance, in relation to the monitoring of learner engagement with online platforms.

5.2 Equality of opportunity

Learning and teaching activities and associated resources provide every learner with an equitable, fair and realistic opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Procedures in place include:

5.2.1 Teaching and learning resources for online learning which meet the provider's specified expectations around equality of opportunity, interactivity and the empowerment of autonomous learning.

5.2.2 Mechanisms that monitor and/or moderate standards (both in terms of learner outcomes and teachers and/or assessors' practice). Assessment arrangements conducted through online learning are valid, reliable, and secure and provide learners with appropriate confidential feedback on their progress.

5.2.3 Arrangements that provide assurance that all those involved in teaching and learning or supporting learning are appropriately qualified, supported and developed to provide effective online learning. This will include the protocols for communication and facilitation of online discussions and other challenges of teaching with technology.

5.2.4 Mechanisms that facilitate a safe, accessible and reliable blended learning environment for all learners. These mechanisms promote dignity, courtesy and respect in their use and encourage gender sensitivity amongst both learners and teachers.

5.2.5 Arrangements that make reasonable effort to ensure blended learning experiences are accessible to all learners, including learners with disabilities.