

Rapid Online and Remote Course Readiness Policy and Procedures

Policy Name	Online and Remote Course Readiness Policy and Procedures
Policy Number	To Be Assigned
Approved by	Established under University Policy #042 University Provost
Date of Original Approval	30/4/2020
Date of Revisions	NA
Contact	Network of Quality, Teaching & Learning

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Whilst it is acknowledged that online and remote teaching are alternate modes of delivery governed by AKU policies that relate to all modes of teaching (Appendix A), this policy reinforces procedures for online or remote readiness in order to ensure that teaching meets the AKU principles of Quality, Relevance and Access for a strong student learning experience.
- 1.2 Where extenuating circumstances and disruption mean that online and remote teaching is the only way to reach students Policy 042 on responding to disruptions of Academic Programming will come into effect, including maintaining compliance with the regulations of relevant professional and accreditation bodies.
- 1.3 Keeping in mind the need to adapt and respond to rapid technological change and innovation in pedagogical models, a set of guidelines accompany this policy as a *Checklist for Online and Remote Readiness* (Appendix B) are provided along with definitions of e-learning terminology (Appendix C). These are intended to be 'flexible and evolving' in order to be inclusive of such changes and to provide a continuum of quality.
- 1.4 While quality standards apply across the entire spectrum of courses, in order to cover the particular challenges and opportunities of online education and remote learning this policy targets those standards that require special attention for this approach to learning. These standards cover 8 major areas, namely the university, the course, the faculty, the library, the technology, the examination, the laboratory, and the student.
- 1.5 It should be recognized in situations where online teaching is in place as a response to a disruption beyond the University's control, this policy provides a framework to ensure even then that course provision is effective. However, in normal circumstances blended or online learning will be expected to be exemplary.

2. Readiness at the University Level

- 2.1 The University shall provide a functional, effective, and operational, Learning Management System (LMS) and other teaching and learning (e.g. Zoom) that are robust and reliable so

that students are able to access course learning materials and engage in meaningful interactions for remote learning.

- 2.2 No dilution of standards normally expected of students should be permitted and the procedures set out in the *Checklist for Online and Remote Readiness* should be followed to ensure quality expectations are met in the provision of teaching or supervisory support given to students.
- 2.3 However, where online teaching is as a result of disruption, concerns about student and faculty loneliness, welfare, isolation and lack of interaction should be taken into account. Therefore, all teaching programmes should include humane and flexible approaches.
- 2.4 The same principles of good teaching set out in the Teaching and Learning Framework (Policy 031) should be adhered to for online and remote teaching in order to uphold the AKU common graduate attributes. Support on how to do so should be sought from the Blended and Digital Learning team of the Network of Quality, Teaching and Learning, who will provide guidance for online and remote teaching.
- 2.5 As with all teaching, academic programmes that include courses taught using online and remote approaches will be subject to the AKU Academic Quality Framework (Policy 030) and Curriculum Development Policy (Policy 040).

3. Readiness at the Course Level

- 3.1 Courses are expected to be aligned to best practice for course organization, as outlined in the course template provided (Appendix D). This should provide all of the following information to the students ahead of time: the course introduction, the learning outcomes, expectations regarding online participation, the evaluation/ grading policy, course prerequisites (if any), course requirement or rules (if any), essential and other required readings, the key dates, the time and venue (physical or virtual) of classes, the assignments and other learning resources.
- 3.2 All course content and strategies have been designed for Online/Remote Learning and are aligned to the course learning outcomes. Any challenges regarding components of the course that cannot be taught remotely have been dealt with (e.g. clinical rotations or practicum).
- 3.3 Where online teaching is as a result of disruption, concerns about student and faculty loneliness, welfare, isolation and lack of interaction should be taken into account. Therefore, all teaching programmes should include humane and flexible approaches (e.g. provide enough time to complete readings, extend deadlines for assignments, use alternate teaching approaches where students can't attend live online class, encourage/praise students for showing up/completing small tasks)
- 3.4 The Programme Director should ensure that all these conditions have been met by assessing the course templates against the *Checklist for Online and Remote Readiness*, which should be completed in consultation with the Course faculty and course coordinator.
- 3.5 The course template and duly completed *Checklist for Online and Remote Readiness* should be submitted to the Dean for approvals. These are then submitted for approval through the Dean or Programme Office, either through the Registrar's Working Group (as per policy 040) or in the case of disruption, through the Provost Response Committee (as per policy 042), highlighting any areas in the checklist where Essential Elements have not been met.

- 3.6 Academic Entities should consult with the Library to ensure provision is made to enable access to library resources for faculty and students.
- 3.7 The Programme Directors need to ensure there is a mechanism by which students and faculty can voice concerns faced in participating in remote/online learning and identify in the *Checklist for Online and Remote Readiness* how these will be addressed, including providing feedback to students on concerns raised.

4. Faculty Readiness

- 4.1 Special attention needs to be paid to the special attributes of online teaching, including its challenges, opportunities, techniques, and supportive resources. All faculty members who wish to offer online courses must have had or else avail training to familiarize themselves with the tools and approaches used in order to maximize learner engagement. This includes courses provided by QTL_net for faculty engage with both Synchronous (e.g. Zoom) and Asynchronous (e.g. Moodle) learning, as well as workshops offered by individual academic departments for their own faculty.
- 4.2 The Programme Director must satisfy the Dean that any faculty member engaged with remote and online teaching has the requisite training or experience to do so and include that reporting in the *Checklist for Online and Remote Readiness* as part of the course approval process.

5. Readiness of the Library

- 5.1 Academic entities must consult with the Library to ensure provision is made to enable access remotely for faculty and students
- 5.2 It is the responsibility of the Library to enable faculty and students to digitally access all required readings and associated course related materials, and disseminate guidelines towards this end. This includes providing digital and information literacy training.
- 5.3 It is the responsibility of the Library to provide a copyright clearance service for all online materials used in courses

6. Technology Support

- 6.1 The Academic Computing team within the IT department will be responsible to provide technical support to students and faculty to enable access to the VLE, remote learning content, software and connectivity.
- 6.2 The QTL team will liaise with IT on the use of university-wide teaching software and learning management system and guide programmes to the use these for online course teaching. However, if particular courses require other technology resources, these need to be reviewed by IT and QTL and budgeted for by the Academic entity, including operational and training support for resource-effective decision making..
- 6.3 The IT team must advise on compatibility of learning systems and technological security measures providing protocols as required.
- 6.4 The IT team should advise on providers and internet/mobile bundles for remote access by faculty and students.

7 Student Readiness and Access

- 7.1 Prior to beginning a course in remote/online mode, a technology audit needs to be undertaken by the academic entity to ensure students access to remote/online materials. The audit needs to take into account student location, the internet service quality in their area of residence, and their access to devices and connections, and should be done in consultation with the Registrar's Office/Student Experience Office.
- 7.2 The academic entity must ensure a student orientation takes place for student readiness to online learning. The QTL_net and Student Experience Office may be contacted for support.
- 7.3 Students have been made aware of a system to communicate their concerns related to remote/online learning to the entity.

8 Online Evaluation and Assessment

- 8.1 The imperatives for evaluation and assessment for online education are different from those of on-campus educational processes. Courses will need to ensure information on robust assessment systems are communicated to the students at the outset so that they can manage their studies in a prudent manner. Consideration should be made for formative assessment to ensure assessment promotes learning.
- 8.2 Programme Directors will need to ensure adequate support is provided to faculty to implement online assessments effectively.
- 8.3 Online courses may be subject to the regular university-wide approved Student Evaluation of Teaching (SETs), in order to improve the offering of the course. Aligned to good practice SETs should never be used for punitive purposes, but be used as one reflective tool to enhance teaching practices.

9 Online/Remote Course Approval Process

- 9.1 In accordance with this policy after due endorsement from the Dean the Programme Director must submit the remote, blended or online course template (Appendix D) with the duly completed *Course Checklist for Online and Remote Readiness* (Appendix B) through the Registrar's Working Group (as per policy 025) for the course to be approved.

Appendix A

Applicable University Policies to this Policy include:

Policy # 002: Policy on Assessment of Student Learning Outcome (Academic Council, February, 2004)

Policy # 003: Credit Framework Policy (Academic Council, September 2016)

Policy # 004: Qualifications Framework Policy (Academic Council, February 2004)

Policy # 010: Checklist for Submitting New Academic Programme Proposals to Academic Council (Academic Council, March 2018)

Policy # 025: Guidelines for Programme Curriculum Modifications (Academic Council, March 2018)

Policy # 030: Academic Quality Framework: Policies and Procedures (Academic Council, March 2015)

Policy # 031: Teaching and Learning Framework (Academic Council, March 2018)

Policy # 038: Graduate Degree Completion Time Limits (Academic Council, February 2019)

Policy # 040: Curriculum Development Policy (Academic Council, October 2019)

Policy # 042: Policy on Responding to Disruptions of Academic Programming (Academic Council, April 2020)

Appendix B: Checklist for Online and Remote Readiness

University Wide Check-list

Rapid Online/Remote Readiness Checklist: UNIVERSITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Support Entity:	Regional Vice Provost Signature and Date:
RWG Chair Signature and Date:	Comments by Vice Provost

This readiness checklist will assist the University (Academic Council) in assessing the readiness of academic support entities to facilitate and provide necessary support for online or remote teaching. Following are the instructions to complete the checklist:

- I. Each indicator is to be filled out by a specific support entity/department. The relevant department is mentioned in the 'Responsibility' column. The Regional Vice Provost provides sign off and any comments for consideration by RWG.**
- II. The status of each indicator is to be provided as either Y = Yes/Completed, N = Not completed, IP = In progress.**
- III. For each indicator, please provide a short commentary on the status in the 'Comment: Evidence' section.**

Rapid Online/Remote Readiness Checklist				
	Readiness Indicator	Respons- ibility	Status (Y/N/IP)	Comment: Evidence
1.1	A functional, effective and operational Learning Management System and other remote teaching and learning tools are available and in use by the university personnel. It is ensured that these systems are as fail-safe as possible with secure data and latest backups available for courses.	IT		
1.2	A governing body has been established for authorizing online courses and adjudicate complaints.	RWG		

1.3	A policy/SOP for remote online readiness is in place.	Provost Office/ QTL_net		
1.4	The university has developed procedures that are communicated which consider ethical norms and respective government policies with respect to data protection and the privacy of students' and faculty data generated in online learning.	IT		
1.5	The library has enabled faculty and students to digitally access library resources, including all required readings and associated course materials. Guidelines on digital access have been disseminated (including information on access via different devices).	Library		
1.6	The library staff has prepared programmes to develop information literacy of faculty and students (how to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information properly).	Library		
1.7	All faculty, staff and students have access to appropriate devices/hardware for online/remote courses	IT		
1.8	Appropriate internet connectivity is available to all students, faculty and staff.	IT		
1.9	All faculty, staff and students have access to a prompt and relevant IT Helpdesk service for troubleshooting	IT		
1.10	Relevant support is available (e.g. AV, CIME, GSMC) to facilitate faculty members in the development of interactive media for courses (e.g. videos, simulation, animation).	Library AV/CIME /GSMC		
1.11	Workshops and courses on online course design, teaching and assessment have been developed and are being offered to faculty teaching online/remote courses	QTL		

Course-specific Checklist

Rapid Online/Remote Readiness Self-Assessment Checklist

This online/remote readiness self-assessment checklist will assist entities in assessing their readiness to conduct teaching online or remotely. The checklist is divided into 2 sections. Following are the instructions to complete the checklist:

- I. The first section is to be filled out by each Course Coordinator.
- II. The second section is to be filled out by the Programme Director.
- III. The status of each indicator is to be provided as either Y = Yes/Completed, N = Not completed, IP = In progress.
- IV. Each indicator is marked as either Essential or Desirable. **GREEN=An Essential Element that must be in place for course approval.**
YELLOW = Desirable but not necessary for course approval during the rapid phase.
- V. For each indicator, please provide a short commentary on the status in the 'Comment: Evidence' section.

Section 1: To be filled out by Course Coordinator

Rapid Online/Remote Readiness Self-Assessment Checklist		
Readiness Indicator	Status (Y/N/IP)	Comment: Evidence
1.1	The course is on the VLE and has duly completed the course template.	
1.2	Faculty members teaching the course have updated their profiles on the VLE (LMS).	
1.3	All course content and strategies have been designed for Online/Remote Learning and are aligned to the course learning outcomes.	
1.4	Any challenges regarding components of the course that cannot be taught online or remotely have been dealt with (e.g. clinical rotations or practicum).	
1.5	Faculty teaching the course are aware of students' needs (e.g. access, personal circumstances) and all teaching approaches are humane and flexible.	

1.6	The Library has been made aware of the needs of the online/remote course.		
1.7	Information on assessment has been communicated to the students. Consideration should be made for formative assessment to ensure assessment promotes learning.		
1.8	Faculty members teaching the course have access to appropriate hardware, software and connectivity to conduct online/remote teaching.		
1.9	All the copyright clearance have been sought with the help of the copyright officer (e.g. copyright clearance from resources being used in the course content; purchasing rights to include content in the courses)		
Section 2: To be filled out by Programme Director			
2.1	The entity has conducted an audit to collect information on student demographics, location, ability to study remotely, and access to hardware, software and connectivity.		
2.2	Student access and remote/online learning needs are considered when developing the online/remote learning model and the curriculum design.		
2.3	Faculty members teaching the course have access to support staff (e.g. VLE assistants, faculty champions) to design and teach the online/remote course.		
2.4	Students have been informed about the requirements concerning devices and Internet access. When students do not have access to appropriate technology, alternate methods of learning are proposed.		

2.5	IT Helpdesk has been informed of the specific needs for each course, and IT has provided a plan to provide timely and relevant technical support to faculty and online/remote students		
2.6	An orientation programme has been provided for faculty, which includes information on expectations, time commitments, copyright, ICT literacy, online learning and assessments.		
2.7	An orientation programme has been planned for students, which includes overview of the courses, information on assessments, expectations of learning outcomes and engagement, time commitments, plagiarism, online/remote learning, and information literacy skills. This orientation is to be offered before the courses start to guide students in becoming self-directed learners.		
2.8	The faculty members involved in teaching an online/remote course have been trained or have prior experience of doing so, are confident in the use of online tools for teaching, learning and assessment (e.g. through QTL or entity based training) and are considered online ready.		
2.9	Those faculty members teaching for the first time are being mentored by an experienced faculty member.		
2.10	If a faculty member is teaching an online/remote course for the first time, a dry run is planned to iron out any unforeseen issues.		
2.11	Students have access to relevant hardware and software and good connectivity at home.		

2.12	The entity has set up a feedback mechanism of receiving and responding to student concerns around online/remote teaching and learning. This should be done in consultation with the Student Experience Office.		
2.13	All students have updated their profile on the VLE (LMS).		
2.14	Students have the required digital and information literacies to study in an online or remote environment (e.g., Keyboarding, computer operations, use of productivity software, email use, use of multimedia such as videos, basic to advanced internet knowledge and use of online tools)		
2.15	Special needs (including learning disabilities and mental health) pertaining to students have been identified and strategies have been developed to address those for online/remote courses.		
2.16	Library has been informed about the needs and it has developed and shared required information.		

Course Name with Course template attached:	Entity: Name of the programme:
Programme Director Signature and Date:	Dean Signature and Date:
Department Chair/Associate Dean Signature and Date:	
RWG Chair Signature: and Date	RWG Comments:

Appendix C: E-learning Terminology

Online Learning

The primary delivery mechanism is the internet where instructor/student interaction and distribution of learning material takes place. It is often term as virtual and e-learning among other forms. The online courses are delivered synchronously or asynchronously. All instruction is conducted online at a distance.

- **Asynchronous**

Courses where students are not required to participate in sessions at the same time as the instructor. It is a time-delay where Learning Management System (LMS), print-based courses or online courses modes can be used.

- **Synchronous**

Courses where students and an instructor participate at the real-time, but at separate locations other than an institutional campus. The courses are delivered by instructor(s) using video conferencing, web conferencing, audio conferencing, and similarly others.

Remote Teaching

In Remote Teaching the student and instructor or source of information are separated by time and distance. Here either student will obtain learning materials or the course/learning materials will be delivered to the student at a distance.

LMS / VLE

The Learning Management System (LMS) is a platform to upload teaching, learning and assessment items and it can be accessible to student at his/her convenient time and location . At LMS the learning objects are track-able. LMS is often used synonymously with VLE.

Blended / Hybrid Learning

Blended Learning combines face-to-face in-classroom instruction and online teaching.

Appendix D: AKU Course Template

Course title:

Course number:

Semester/Term offered:

Course status¹:

Credit points:

Pre-requisite:

Co-requisite:

Mode of study²:

Faculty:

Course Description:

Aim of the Course:

Learning Outcomes:

Course Themes:

Weekly Course Schedule:

Course Structure (including details of synchronous and asynchronous learning):

Course Assessment Tasks:

Assessment Rubrics:

Essential Readings:

Suggested Readings:

¹ Core/Elective/Specialisation

² Face-to-face/Blended/Online