جامعة عجمان
AJMAN UNIVERSITY

E-Learning Manual



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March 2024

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Introduction

Ajman University (AU) is unwavering in its commitment to providing outstanding education through a variety of delivery modes, including face-to-face, blended, and online learning. This E-learning Manual is designed to offer detailed guidelines, procedures, and expectations that oversee the university's E-learning and blended learning modalities. By enacting such provisions, AU guarantees the continuity and accessibility of education under any circumstances.

In addition to ensuring educational resilience, the introduction of online and blended learning modalities is specifically aimed at accommodating flexibility in learning delivery. Recognizing the diverse needs and schedules of our students, AU is dedicated to offering more adaptable and personalized learning pathways. This flexibility not only enhances the learning experience but also ensures that education at AU is more inclusive, allowing students to balance their studies with personal and professional commitments. Through these innovative learning modalities, AU reaffirms its commitment to fostering an educational environment that is both high in quality and adaptable to the evolving needs of our students.

Background

All academic programs offered by Ajman University (AU) have been accredited by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), Ministry of Education, for face-to-face or in-person teaching and learning. As such, AU does not normally offer any courses or programs through online or distance learning. However, due to precautionary measures taken to cope with the extraordinary circumstances resulting from COVID-19 pandemic and following the directives of the UAE Ministry of Education (MoE), all on-campus classes were suspended at Ajman University as of the 8th of March 2020.

For this purpose, AU developed policies and procedures for distance (online) learning; and these were submitted to MoE. The policies and procedures were applied for all teaching and assessment activities during 2020-21. While it surely benefits from the experiences that Ajman University has accumulated during the Covid-19 pandemic, Ajman University’s E-Learning Policy has been developed according to the Procedural Manual for Online and Blended Learning from the MoE to govern and guide our E-learning in the long-run.

Purpose

The purpose of this E-Learning Manual is to enhance and support online and blended learning modalities implemented at Ajman University. Ajman University is committed to high quality and impactful education to all its students, including those who pursue online/blended pedagogy. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education issued The Procedure Manual for Online and Blended Learnings for all institutions in September, 2022. Accordingly, AU has modified its policies and procedures for online and distance learning to fully comply with the directives of the MoE and in alignment with CAA’s Standards 2019.

Regardless of the COVID-19 situation, Ajman University has made a strategic decision to adopt the online/blended model for specific Programs. We believe that the more popular (and less invasive) blended model fits well with our culture, legacy, available resources, and strategic objectives. Several labs, clinics, and similar equipment-intensive courses are challenging to replicate remotely. At the

same time, we have a solid plan to adopt online learning to the farthest extent that does not jeopardize quality of education. In fact, quality of education will be our major compass while exploring our roadmap to online education. Ajman University shall offer online courses as part of blended learning. Therefore, the courses offered online will not form 50% or more of the program's credits.

Scope

This manual is applicable to all courses delivered through online or blended learning modes, as well as the faculty and staff members involved in the development and delivery of these courses.

Statement

In formulating this policy, our goal was to ensure that the delivery of online or blended education at Ajman University (AU) aligns thoroughly with the guidelines and processes established by the Ministry of Education (MoE). This policy is crafted to adhere strictly to the **CAA Standards for Institutional Licensure and Program Accreditation (2019)**, with a particular focus on the requirements outlined in **Annex 15: Courses Taught Through e-Learning and The Procedure Manual for Online and Blended Learning.**

A. Organizational Chart and Responsibilities

Responsibility for oversight, development, evaluation, and support of E-learning education is clearly outlined below:

The **Vice-Chancellor for Academic** Affairs holds the overall responsibility for online and blended programs, encompassing material development, program delivery, learner support, and the overarching E-Learning strategy. This role also involves a shared responsibility with the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE) for the evaluation of online and blended courses, ensuring they adhere to the highest standards of quality and effectiveness.

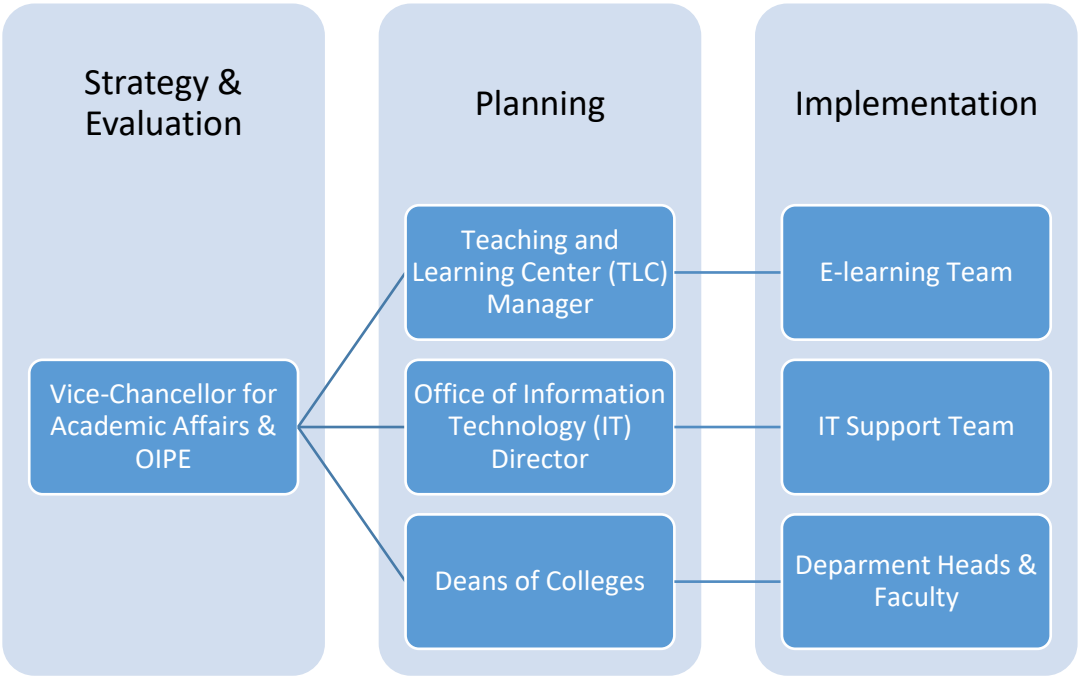
The **Executive Director of the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE)** is specifically charged with conducting evaluations of online and blended courses. Working in tandem with the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs, this office ensures that these courses fulfill the predefined standards and criteria for quality and effectiveness. The OIPE is pivotal in upholding the excellence and integrity of the university's E-Learning programs.

The **Manager of the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC)** manages the E-learning department, overseeing the creation and delivery of online courses, faculty training, and learner support. Additionally, the Manager of the TLC is responsible for implementing the E-Learning strategy developed in collaboration with the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs, ensuring the strategic objectives are met through effective program delivery and support mechanisms.

The **E-learning Team** collaborates with faculty to develop, design, and update E-learning materials and assessments.

The **Information Technology (IT) Support Team** of the ensures the technical reliability of the Learning Management System (LMS) and all other educational technology tools, including hardware and software components, and provides technical support to students and faculty.

The **Academic Departments**, along with the faculty members, department heads and deans, are responsible for the development and implementation of online and blended courses within their respective disciplines.



Organizational Chart of E-learning

B. Faculty Roles and Responsibilities

Faculty members are integral to the success of high-quality online and blended learning at Ajman University. Their roles encompass a wide range of responsibilities that are crucial for the effective delivery and management of courses. These responsibilities include collaborating with the E-learning team to create engaging and informative course materials, conducting synchronous online lectures, developing material to support asynchronous learning of students, and fostering student engagement through interactive learning activities.

Additionally, faculty are tasked with monitoring student progress and offering timely feedback to support their academic journey. A key aspect of their role also involves upholding academic integrity by implementing appropriate assessment and proctoring mechanisms. For a comprehensive overview of faculty expectations, please refer to **Appendix A: Expectations of Faculty and Students**.

C. Modes of Delivery

AU adopts a blended mode of learning and delivery for selected programs. For these programs, less than 50% of it will be delivered using the online mode, while the remaining courses of the program will be conducted in-person on AU campus. For example, for the Masters of Public Relations and Corporate Communication Program, 4 courses from this program will be delivered online accounting for approximately 36% of the program's total credit hours. The remaining courses will be delivered using the in-person mode. All courses opting for the Online Learning Mode will still have assessments such

as Mid-Term Exams and Final Exams on campus, face to face, please see the University's Assessment Policy. For the online component the course delivery will include modes which combine:

- **Synchronous Learning**: Real-time, interactive classes conducted via platforms like Zoom, integrated into the Moodle LMS.
- **Asynchronous Learning**: Self-paced study materials accessible through the LMS.
- **Blended Learning**: A combination of face-to-face and online instruction, especially for labs, clinics, and courses requiring physical presence.

D. Continuous Development of E-Learning Materials

In the development of E-learning materials at Ajman University, a structured approach is adopted, encapsulating the ADDIE model which stands for Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. This model guides the creation of comprehensive and effective online learning experiences. Initially, the Analysis phase identifies learners' needs and defines the learning objectives. The Design phase then conceptualizes the course structure and content, ensuring alignment with educational goals. Development involves the actual creation of the E-learning materials, incorporating multimedia elements to enhance engagement. During Implementation, these materials are integrated into the learning management system, ready for student access. Finally, the Evaluation phase assesses the effectiveness of the course, gathering feedback for continuous improvement. For an exhaustive account of the procedures and processes involved in developing E-learning materials, including detailed steps within each phase of the ADDIE model, please refer to **Appendix B: Developing E-Learning Materials**.

E. Assessment Policies

Ajman University (AU) online assessment policies uphold the integrity of student work through a comprehensive suite of online assessment strategies. These include the deployment of plagiarism detection tools to ensure originality, conducting oral examinations and live presentations to evaluate understanding and presentation skills, implementing proctored online quizzes and exams to maintain academic honesty, and offering alternative assessments for lab and studio courses to accommodate the unique requirements of practical disciplines. For a detailed exposition of these strategies and their application, please refer to **Appendix C: Online Assessments Policy**.

Cumulative assignments, assessments and quizzes for the program will be assessed online, adhering to Appendix C: Online Assessments Policy. Any assessment which is equivalent to or more than 20% of students' cumulative grade will be conducted in-person mode on campus. This includes the final assessment as well as any mid-term assessment. These assessments will be conducted on campus following the University's face-to face assessment policies and procedures.

F. Learning Management System (LMS)

At the core of AU's digital learning environment is its Learning Management System (LMS), a critical component for delivering e-learning:

- Software Utilization: The combination of Moodle and Zoom forms the foundation for both synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.
- Hardware Support: A solid foundation of servers and network infrastructure ensures consistent availability and performance.

1. **Learning Management System (LMS) Details:**
    a. **Moodle Platform**: Ajman University adopts Moodle as its central Learning Management System. This platform is renowned for its intuitive interface, facilitating the delivery of course materials, hosting discussion forums, managing assessments, and enabling seamless communication between instructors and students.
    b. **Zoom Integration**: To support real-time online interactions, Zoom is seamlessly integrated with Moodle. This allows for effective synchronous learning sessions, virtual gatherings, and collaborative activities among the university community.
2. **Infrastructure and Technology:**
    a. **Server Infrastructure**: The university has invested in a strong server infrastructure designed to guarantee the Moodle platform's continuous availability and dependable performance.
    b. **Network Capabilities**: A commitment to high-quality network infrastructure, including advanced internet connectivity, underpins the smooth operation of online learning activities.
    c. **Software Updates**: Ensuring the best user experience and security, the e-learning tools and software undergo regular updates, incorporating the latest advancements and security measures.

For comprehensive details on the use of technology in teaching and learning, please consult the Ajman University **Information Technology Policy**, particularly the section dedicated to **Teaching and Learning Technology**.

G. Support Facilities

AU provides both physical and virtual support facilities:

- On-campus Computer Labs: Accessible to students requiring computers and high-speed internet.
- Virtual Help Desk: Offers technical and academic support to students and faculty accessible through LMS, the IT web page (https://www.ajman.ac.ae/en/submit-a-ticket-to-it-helpdesk), email (helpdesk@ajman.ac.ae) or telephone (06-7056500).

H. Security and Authentication

To ensure the security of tests and authenticate student identities, AU employs several measures:

- Secure login and encryption for the LMS.
- Proctoring software for online exams (if required).
- Policies mandating photo identification for exam takers.

For more information about the overall IT security and authentication, please refer to Ajman University **Information Technology Policy** and specifically the **Policies and Procedures for Using I.T. Services**.

I. Copyright and Intellectual Property Policies

Ajman University (AU) is committed to respecting and upholding the intellectual property rights of its faculty and the institution, as detailed in **Appendix D: Copyright and Intellectual Property Policies** for Blended and Online Courses. The policies are designed to balance the rights of faculty members as authors of their course materials with the educational and instructional needs of the university:

- **Faculty Rights and Responsibilities**: Faculty members hold copyright to their course materials as the recognized authors, in accordance with the "The Work" and "The Author" sections of the AU Intellectual Property Policy. However, Ajman University retains the right to use, modify, and distribute these materials within the institution for educational purposes, as specified under the "Financial Rights" section of the Intellectual Property Policy.
- **Conditions of Use**: Faculty may not share copyrighted materials on social media or external platforms without university permission.
- **Branding**: All online materials must adhere to AU's branding guidelines.
- **Commercial Use**: Any commercial distribution of course materials outside of AU requires a separate agreement, safeguarding faculty rights and providing appropriate compensation.

Appendix A: Expectations of Faculty and Students

Expectations of Faculty

- Upload a comprehensive weekly plan (before the semester starts) that contains:
  - Topics covered each week.
  - Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) covered in each session.
  - Relevant textbook chapters and sections covered in each session.
  - Additional resources such as references, web links, video links, and extra tutorials.
  - Activities for students to do before, during, and after the online sessions.
- Connect to the online class at least 10 minutes before the scheduled time to ensure all functionalities are working properly.
- Begin the synchronous online class on time, warmly welcoming students and checking their audio accessibility.
- Upload lecture materials and ensure their availability to students.
- Keep students engaged and motivated during sessions by leveraging interactive discussions and questions.
- When off-campus, instructors are responsible for arranging an appropriate "educational environment," including necessary internet connection and electronic devices.

Expectations of Students

- Ensure functional access to the educational environment, including a reliable internet connection and appropriate electronic devices (computer, laptop, tablet, smartphone, camera, speakers, and microphones).
- Adhere to the attendance policy for online learning, including active participation in learning activities as requested by the instructor, with attendance recorded and enforced.
- Continuously monitor updates on Moodle, as well as emails and messages from instructors.
- Review the activities outlined in the weekly work plan, complete assigned reading materials before online sessions, participate in activities during sessions, and submit assignments on time.
- Utilize additional resources available on Moodle, such as web links, video links, and supplementary materials and references.

To support these expectations, both faculty and students must meet the technical requirements outlined in **Appendix E: Blended and Online Courses Technical Requirements**. This includes having access to a PC/laptop with appropriate specifications, a reliable internet connection, necessary software, and other tools as detailed in the **AU Technology Minimum Requirements**. Compliance with these technical requirements is essential for a smooth and effective online learning experience, ensuring that all participants can engage fully in the educational process. Failure to meet these requirements may impact the ability to participate in online classes and assessments, underscoring the importance of adhering to the guidelines specified in **Appendix E**.

Appendix B: Developing E-Learning Materials

This appendix provides a detailed overview of the procedures and processes involved in the development of E-learning materials at Ajman University, guided by the ADDIE model. This model ensures a systematic approach to creating educational content that is both effective and engaging for learners.

- **Analysis**: This initial phase involves conducting a thorough needs assessment to identify the target audience's characteristics, prerequisites, and learning environment. It also defines clear and measurable learning objectives that align with the course's overall goals.
- **Design**: In this phase, instructional designers and subject matter experts collaborate to outline the course structure, including modules, lessons, and assessments. The design phase also involves selecting the appropriate instructional strategies and media to achieve the learning objectives effectively.
- **Development**: Here, the actual creation of E-learning materials takes place. This includes the production of multimedia content such as videos, animations, and interactive simulations, as well as the development of quizzes, assignments, and other assessment tools. The development phase emphasizes creating engaging and accessible content for a diverse learner population.
- **Implementation**: Once developed, the E-learning materials are uploaded to the learning management system (LMS) and made accessible to students. This phase may also involve training instructors on how to facilitate the online course effectively and troubleshoot any technical issues that may arise.
- **Evaluation**: The final phase focuses on assessing the E-learning materials' effectiveness in meeting the learning objectives. This involves collecting feedback from students and instructors, analyzing course completion rates, and evaluating assessment outcomes. Insights gained from this phase are used to refine and improve the E-learning materials for future iterations.

Appendix C: Online Assessments Policies

To maintain the integrity of student work, AU employs various online assessment strategies, such as:

- Online assessments will be conducted using a diverse array of tools, including but not limited to assignments, quizzes, oral examinations, live presentations, and projects. This approach aims to move away from traditional examination methods. Faculty members are responsible for informing their students about the specific assessment tools and their respective timings.
- Regardless of the chosen assessment method, it is imperative that it accurately reflects the Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) as specified in the course syllabus. This ensures that assessments are aligned with the educational objectives of the course.
- For assignments and projects, it is mandatory to use plagiarism detection tools like Turnitin. Additionally, oral verifications and live video presentations should be employed to validate the authenticity of student work and to mitigate the risk of academic dishonesty.
- In cases where lab or studio-related assessments are necessary, and these assessments require access to specific software packages, faculty members must consult with the Office of IT well in advance. This is to ensure that students are granted the necessary remote access. For assessments that traditionally require physical lab presence, alternatives such as virtual labs or questions based on experimental data and videos of experiments should be utilized, unless a physical presence is mandated.
- Any assessment including midterm assessments and final assessments that collate to 20% or more of the student's cumulative grade will be conducted face-to-face, on campus. These assessments will follow the University Assessment Policy.
- Final assessments that include a practical component, or are required by an accrediting body, or are deemed necessary for the integrity of the course, will be conducted on campus. This policy is particularly relevant to programs where practical or clinical training is integral to the curriculum and cannot be replicated online.
- The university will ensure that all students have the necessary information and resources to effectively utilize the online platform for learning and assessment purposes. This includes clear communication of the online attendance policy and the implementation of measures to accommodate the needs of Students of Determination, based on individual requirements and the nature of their disability.
- Faculty members are expected to employ appropriate proctoring mechanisms during online assessments to uphold academic integrity. Additionally, the student disciplinary policy will be revised to address instances of academic dishonesty specifically related to online learning and assessment.
- Comprehensive guidelines for online assessments will be provided to faculty members to ensure a consistent and fair assessment process across all courses. These guidelines will cover the selection of assessment tools, the administration of assessments, and the measures to be taken to ensure academic integrity.

Appendix D: Copyright and Intellectual Property Policies for Blended and Online Courses

In alignment with Ajman University's (AU) Intellectual Property Policy, the following guidelines are established to respect and protect the intellectual property rights concerning E-learning and course materials developed by faculty members, while also recognizing the rights of the institution:

Faculty Rights and Responsibilities:

- Faculty members are recognized as the authors of their course materials, holding copyright to such works as defined under the "The Work" and "The Author" sections of the AU Intellectual Property Policy.
- While faculty members retain copyright to their course materials, Ajman University reserves the right to use these materials for educational and instructional purposes within the institution, as outlined under the "Financial Rights" section of the Intellectual Property Policy. This includes the right to use, modify, and distribute these materials for course delivery and related academic activities.
- Faculty members are required to disclose any and all works, including course materials, to the Dean of Research and Graduate Studies promptly, as stipulated in the Intellectual Property Policy's disclosure requirements.

Conditions of Use:

- Faculty members are prohibited from sharing copyrighted course materials on social media, external platforms, or with third parties without explicit permission from Ajman University. This is to ensure compliance with the "Copying" and "Publication" definitions of the Intellectual Property Policy, safeguarding the materials against unauthorized use and distribution.
- Any use of course materials outside the scope of educational and instructional purposes within AU requires a written agreement, acknowledging the faculty's copyright and detailing the terms of use, in line with the "Financial Rights" assignment and compensation guidelines of the Intellectual Property Policy.

Branding and Presentation:

- All online course materials must adhere to Ajman University's branding guidelines, ensuring a consistent and professional presentation of educational content. This adherence supports the "Publication" and "Broadcasting" aspects of the Intellectual Property Policy, promoting AU's identity and standards in educational resources.

Commercial Use and Compensation:

- Faculty members interested in the commercial distribution of their course materials outside of Ajman University must enter into a separate agreement with the institution. This agreement will address copyright ownership, the right of use, and financial compensation, in accordance with the "Financial Rights" section of the Intellectual Property Policy. The agreement will ensure that faculty rights are protected while providing appropriate compensation for the commercial use of their intellectual property, taking into account the economic value of the work and the level of support provided by the University in its creation.

These policies are designed to align with the broader Intellectual Property Policy of Ajman University, ensuring that the rights and responsibilities of both the faculty and the institution are clearly defined and protected. Faculty members are encouraged to consult the Office of Legal Affairs for further clarification or assistance regarding intellectual property matters related to E-learning and course material development.

Appendix E: Blended and Online Courses Technology Minimum Requirements

To facilitate a seamless and effective online learning experience, Ajman University outlines specific technical requirements for both faculty and students, ensuring alignment with the AU Technology Minimum Requirements as detailed on the AU IT Services page. These requirements are essential for accessing and utilizing online services, participating in courses, and completing assessments.

For Faculty:

- A PC or laptop (with SSD and minimum 8th Generation i5 Core) equipped with a camera and microphone, adhering to the specifications suitable for their specialization. If the PC/laptop does not include these, external devices must be used.
- A broadband Internet connection with a minimum speed of 20 Mbps for both upload and download to support video conferencing and online course delivery.
- A minimum of 5% free disk space, which might change as per the installed software.
- Operating System requirements include Windows 10 or MacOS 10.12 or higher.
- The recommended web browser is Google Chrome for optimal compatibility with online platforms.
- Proficiency in basic computer skills, including file management and the use of the Learning Management System (LMS) and video conferencing platforms.
- Familiarity with and access to all software and tools requested by their College for educational purposes, including Microsoft Office and any specialized software or simulation programs relevant to their courses.

For Students:

- Access to a personal computer (with SSD and minimum 8th Generation i5 Core), laptop (with SSD and minimum 8th Generation i5 Core), or tablet that includes a camera and microphone, meeting the appropriate specifications for their field of study. External devices should be used if these are not built in.
- A reliable broadband Internet connection with a minimum speed of 20 Mbps for both upload and download, facilitating smooth access to online learning resources and platforms.
- A minimum of 5% free disk space, which might change as per the installed software.
- Supported Operating Systems include Windows 10 or MacOS 10.12 or higher.
- Google Chrome is recommended as the web browser for accessing the LMS and other online resources.
- All software requested by your college for educational purposes.
- Basic computer skills are required, such as file management, and uploading and downloading files, along with familiarity with the LMS and video conferencing platforms.
- Students must also have access to any specific software or tools required for their courses or disciplines, as requested by their College.

Both faculty and students are expected to ensure their devices and internet connection meet these requirements to participate effectively in online classes and exams. Failure to comply with these technical requirements may result in being unable to sit for online classes/exams, leading to a failing grade (grade X) for the exam. In the event of litigation, the burden of proving the fulfillment of these requirements rests on the individual.