

# University of Technology, Jamaica

Continuing Education, Open and Distance Learning

## DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

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## *DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY: Principles and Guidelines*

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# 1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

## 1.1. Background

The University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech) is committed to promotion of lifelong learning, personal development and service to community. A central aspect of its vision, as articulated in the Strategic Plan (2006-2010), is the provision of innovative and expanded access to learning, through professionally-driven and leading-edge programmes, facilitated by technically competent staff.

The main institutional drivers of UTech include the need to increase the volume of distance/off-campus learning activities; alleviate the constraint of limited physical space on campus; improve the quality of teaching and learning; widen access to under-represented groups of students; provide greater access to or entry into international student markets; promote collaboration with other institutions to share knowledge, resources and forge partnerships, as appropriate to strategic goals of UTech and increase UTech's competitive advantage in offering services to students.

Other drivers require provision of flexible learning opportunities for students with special needs; better utilization of the specialized expertise of Faculty, adjunct Faculty and staff; modeling of innovative and collaborative use of instructional technology and an increase in enrollment, by offering courses that effectively respond to the instructional needs of prospective students.

Distance Education is regarded as one of the main vehicles for increasing open and flexible access to high quality, innovative and competitive life-long learning opportunities and for responding to these institutional drivers. Constraints of time and distance are mitigated through the provision of learning experiences at times that are convenient to both instructors and students, and access to programmes is opened to a greater number of students who are separated by geographical distance.

Distance education will therefore serve students who cannot be accommodated on campus; students who are separated by geographical distance but require access to programmes; on campus students who can access technology-enabled learning activities at a distance: students who do not have the time to attend traditional face-to-face classes and students who learn best by engaging in learning activities that are consistent with their learning styles.

In order to ensure that distance education at UTech realize the potential to serve this diverse group of students, while adhering to rigorous academic standards, an integrated framework of policies, aligned to the mission and goals of UTech, has to be articulated.

The preparation of this policy required an audit of existing policies to identify those that support distance education and to identify policy gaps. This policy document references relevant policies, suggests the revision of other policies and requires the creation of new ones in areas where policy gaps exist.

## 1.2. Statement of Purpose

While UTech recognizes the advantages of providing learning opportunities to students that are not limited by time, place or method of delivery, it is essential that alternative approaches to instruction adhere to the same high quality standards that exist for traditional face-to-face instruction.

In an effort to meet and ensure that these same standards are maintained in distance education at the University, this document serves to provide a policy framework for integrating existing and new policies in support of distance education at UTech and communicates quality standards for the delivery and

assessment of distance education.

### 1.3. Definition of Distance Education

Distance Education is defined as a formal teaching and learning activity which occurs when students and instructor are separated by geographic distance or by time, often supported by communications technology such as television, videotape, computers, Internet, or mail.<sup>1</sup>

When the term *distance education courses/modules* is used in this *Policy* document, it refers primarily to credit-bearing and non-credit bearing courses/modules developed for continuing education, professional development and academic qualification, and facilitated by technology-mediated delivery. The *Policy* also applies to those traditional face-to-face courses that are incorporating elements of distance education.

All modules that are primarily (that is, with >70% of module hours) mediated by the web at a distance, supported by the selected LMS and have the majority of content, interactions and assessments conducted online, are defined as **Distance Education Modules**

The following terminology is used to identify modules that utilise distance education technology but are not classified as distance education:

Modules which extensively use the selected LMS (50-70% of sessions), supported by face-to-face sessions, and which integrate online assessment with face-to face sessions, are identified as **Hybrid Online Modules**.

Modules which integrate the use of the selected LMS (30-50% of sessions) with face-to-face sessions, promote interaction online and make the selection of assessment modalities reflect the actual balance between online and face-to-face sessions, are identified as **Blended Modules**.

Modules which promote use of online tools and online interaction with the Instructor, explore the use of the LMS (20-30%% of sessions) to supplement face-to-face sessions and may include online components as part of formal assessment, are identified as **Web Enhanced Modules**

Modules which use the selected LMS (10-20% of sessions) primarily to distribute content and to supplement face-to-face sessions, and do not recognise online components in assessment, are identified as **Web Assisted Modules**.

### 1.4. General Principles

The following general principles undergird distance education at UTech.

- Courses/modules will be consistent with the role, mission and academic standards of UTech.
- The design and delivery of courses/modules will adhere to national and international legal and regulatory requirements, including copyright laws and provision of appropriate services for persons with disabilities. Specific provisions of relevant policies of UTech will also apply.<sup>2</sup>
- Courses/modules will be carefully planned to meet the needs of students within unique learning contexts and environments, at the highest quality standards, based on international best practices.

<sup>1</sup> Based on *Glossary of Terms for Higher Education and Distance Learning*, Indiana College Network Web Site, <http://www.icn.org/resources/glossary.html>.

<sup>2</sup> See draft *Policy and Procedures for Students with Disabilities* (Division of Student Services and Registry).

- Students shall have adequate access to library, student services, academic and technical support, and any other administrative services required for successful completion of distance learning programmes and courses/modules.
- Courses/modules shall provide opportunity for regular, personal and substantial interactions among students and between Faculty and students;
- UTech shall offer appropriate training and support services to Faculty and other academic staff involved in the delivery of Distance Education courses/modules and programmes.
- Distance Learning shall be offered by UTech as a means of increasing access to educational programmes and of promoting open and continuing education for professional and personal development.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.5. The UTech Approach to Distance Education

At UTech, distance education delivery may incorporate blended learning with the combination of two or more learning environments - usually face-to-face experiences with technology-mediated experiences/engagements in response to learner needs.<sup>4</sup>

The UTech strategy also involves an integrated systems approach to distance education, through the collaboration of all major departments/units of the University, which provide administrative, technical and academic support for the core business of teaching and learning.

Distance education at UTech will explore and test the capabilities of emerging information and communication technologies; facilitate access to a wide range of information; encourage higher levels of discourse and provide a broad range of learning activities to accommodate various learning styles.

Students engaged in distance learning will be subject to the same requirements and procedures for on campus students regarding enrolment, registration, assessment and graduation and will receive the same high level of instruction as other UTech students.

Many distance students select courses/modules to alleviate the constraints of conflicting work schedules, geographic isolation, and other unique challenges. Students shall therefore benefit from assignments that allow them greater control over the time and pace of their learning, than in the traditional learning environment.

Since the ability of students to succeed in a distance education class depends on their understanding of the class structure and technology, all participants shall be informed about the skills and technological competencies needed for particular distance education courses, in order to afford them the opportunity to realistically assess their capability to succeed in the course.

Students shall be prepared to take readiness or diagnostic tests or any assignment designed for them to demonstrate mastery of the basic computer competencies required for effective participation in courses of study or modules.

<sup>3</sup> The term *open* as used here refers primarily to flexibility of access, with less rigorous entry requirements, including credentials and entrance examinations. (Adapted from definition provided by Commonwealth of Learning at <http://www.col.org>) The provision for prior learning assessment by UTech is an important feature of open access in its broadest interpretation.

<sup>4</sup> B. Mullinix et al, *Balancing the Learning Equation: Exploring Effective Mixtures of Technology, Teaching and Learning*, The Technology Source, September/October 2003. <http://ts.mivu.org>

### 1.5.1. Distance Education Modalities

The range of distance education synchronous and asynchronous modes may include the use of the internet, interactive television, digital video disks (DVDs), compact disk with read-only memory (CD-ROMs), videotapes, multi-media packages, computer-based instruction, audio and video conferencing and printed media.

Of special significance for UTech will be the increasing emphasis on incorporating Internet-based or online learning modes, where appropriate. The current thrust towards the adoption of an Online Learning Management System (LMS) to undergird the UTech Distance Learning Initiative is being driven by advances in Information and Communication Technologies.

### 1.5.2. Implementation

UTech will adopt a phased and incremental approach to the implementation of distance education as a totally integrated system. Implementation of the distance education programme will focus on readiness of systems and processes; acquisition and upgrading of information and communication technological infrastructure; consistency with all relevant policies, strategies and corporate goals; promotion and expansion of flexible learning options; collaborative leadership; incentives for research; support for instructional development and course re-design; a multi-pronged and multi-level communication strategy and incentives and recognition for participation in distance education.

## 1.6. Specific Quality Indicators

The specific quality indicators for distance education are based on *The Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*<sup>5</sup>, which can also be applied, in part, to graduate education. These indicators are determined by the proven value of providing opportunities for active learning, encouraging cooperation and interaction among students, increasing student responsibility, sharing expectations with students, and respecting and responding to various preferences and circumstances of students. These specific quality indicators are:

- Students that are highly motivated and involved in learning activities, as a result of regular contact with instructors;
- Teamwork among students characterized by a high level of cooperation and reciprocity, because of engagement with learning activities that provide opportunities for productive interactions;
- Students who become active learners through frequent engagement with learning activities that encourage them to relate what they learn to their own experiences;
- Students who are provided with regular and appropriate feedback on their current level of knowledge and competence as well as suggestions for improvement.
- Students who manage their time effectively, guided by realistic timelines and adequate pacing of courses/modules;
- Students who can clearly identify the expectations of tutors and are motivated to meet high expectations and

<sup>5</sup> By Arthur W. Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson - From The American Association for Higher Education Bulletin, March 1987



- Students who regularly participate in activities that facilitate the expression of different learning styles and talents.

## 1.7. Institutional Context

**Distance education at UTech is to be undertaken on a collaborative basis with development and delivery of courses/modules carried out by Faculties, CEODL, OCDE and the Learning Technologies Support Unit (LTSU), with deployment of the required mix of diverse planning, implementation and evaluation skills. The responsibilities of each of these departments are to be clearly defined and pursued within the University's established framework for accountability and performance management.**

- The Office of Continuing Education, Open and Distance Learning (CEODL) has the primary responsibility for developing the distance learning capability of UTech. To this end, CEODL has oversight of the design, development and delivery of distance education.
- All credit-bearing distance education programmes are reviewed and approved through the Office of Curriculum Development and Evaluation (OCDE) which is charged with the responsibility of overseeing curriculum development and managing quality assurance of the University's academic programmes, in consultation with CEODL. The non-credit bearing distance education programmes will also reflect UTech standards, with provision for the award of continuing education units or professional development units, through CEODL in consultation with OCDE.
- Deans and Heads of School will set and monitor performance of the Faculty and Schools on targets related to corporate goals for distance education; identify and deliver distance education modules and courses and provide resources for the development of distance teaching and learning resources.
- The technical and physical facilities to support distance education shall be provided by UTech's campus infrastructure and monitored by a cross-functional workgroup of operational managers and other stakeholders, with oversight by the CEODL Office.
- All distance education courses/modules shall be developed and designed within a coherent technical framework, supported by the use of templates recommended by CEODL, in collaboration with the Learning Technologies Support Unit (LTSU) and made accessible through the selected Online Learning Management System.
- Facilities, staffing, equipment, and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of the delivery of distance education, will be informed by UTech's long range planning, budgeting, and policy development processes.
- Administrative support for registration, enrolment, academic records and financial administration will be provided by the Registrar Office (Academic Services Department - Admissions Office and Student Records Office) and the Division of Finance, Business and ICT Services.
- Resources for technical support, including access to the Online Learning Management System and multi-media support, will be provided through the Technology and Information Management Department (with the offices of Enterprise Application Services (EAS), Network Operations Systems Services [NOSS] and Learning Technologies Support Unit [LTSU]).

## 2. DISTANCE TEACHING AND LEARNING PLAN

### 2.1. Proposed learning outcomes

Learner outcomes shall be based on the parameters identified in the Teaching and Learning Policy (TLP) of UTech). These parameters include the following:

- The centrality of the instructional event (See Paragraph 3.3 of TLP )
- The need for use of measurable learning outcomes; (See Paragraph 3.3. of TLP)
- The identification of learning outcomes that span the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domain levels, at higher order domain levels; (See Paragraph 3.3 of TLP)
- The adoption of learning situations that encourage collaborative approaches (See Paragraph 3.4 of TLP).

To this end, distance education courses/modules shall promote the achievement of proposed learning outcomes through careful selection of learning design, including learning activities and media or delivery system.

Intended learning outcomes shall be reviewed regularly to ensure their clarity, utility and appropriateness for the learners.

### 2.2. Alternative Testing and Assessment

**Assessment of student achievement is guided by parameters outlined in the Teaching and Learning Policy of UTech which highlights the importance of assessment that is guided by a clear statement of outcomes, is congruent with intended learning and provides opportunities for learners to demonstrate what they have learnt. (See Paragraph 3.5 of TLP)**

Careful analysis of the profile of the target student population should inform the delivery of a distance learning course to ensure its effectiveness. Learner Profiles shall include demographics, previous experience and coursework, technological skill and access, learning preferences and any special needs.

All distance education activities shall be designed with an assessment plan for effective formative and summative assessments and for sustainability of the assessment process.

A systematic approach to assessment shall be adopted with techniques for measuring prior learning and intended learning outcomes, and with provisions for documenting what learners know and what they can do as a result of learning experiences.

Where assessment of prior learning, with regard to online readiness and technical capability, indicates limited or marginal state of readiness, appropriate steps shall be taken to provide preparatory training to such students for effective participation in online learning activities.

Students shall be provided with systematic, regular, timely and useful feedback throughout the process for assessment of outcomes.

Assessment strategies for distance education courses shall be approved by OCDE and CEODL with consideration of the extent to which distance education technologies are used in each module. Proctored tests can be used for any type of module, including blended, hybrid online and online modules.

(See additional details on assessment of interaction in the online learning environment in Section 2.4)

## 2.3. Redo Policy

All distance education students shall be subject to the provisions regarding re-do examination policies and procedures as outlined in the relevant section of the Student Handbook. A student who fails a module must re-do the module. The student is consequently required to register for the module, complete the required learning activities, including all coursework assignments and sit the end-of-module final examination.

## 2.4. Definition of Contact Credit Hours and Interaction Standards

**Academic Credit will be awarded on the basis of course content, course competence, extent of student time on task and Faculty-student contact, in accordance with UTech standards as approved by the University Council of Jamaica.**

UTech requires fifteen contact hours for each course credit. A three-credit course would therefore require a total of forty-five contact hours, with at least three contact hours per week over the typical fifteen-week semester.

Contact hours in compressed video courses/modules or satellite courses/modules, where student-instructor meetings are in a synchronous mode, shall be recorded in the same manner as for traditional face-to-face sessions. However, asynchronous learning, such as Internet-based courses/modules, is more difficult to monitor and maintain contact hours. For this reason, all courses with online elements (blended or fully online) will maintain at a minimum the number of hours for 'time on task' online equivalent to the number of contact hours per week required for traditional face-to-face sessions.

The following guidelines shall be used at UTech to define and document time spent on learning in asynchronous learning environments:

The course syllabus for distance education courses shall be prepared using the same Template or Outline approved by OCDE and required for other courses.

Each instructor must keep an "attendance record" for each class. Attendance in an asynchronous online learning environment must be defined in the syllabus and may be numerically measured by the number of logins (generally available as a course statistics option in most courseware), degree of participation in regularly scheduled online discussions, chat sessions, or by timely submission of assignments.<sup>6</sup>

(See additional Section 2.2. for additional details on standards for assessment.)

<sup>6</sup> Based on Southeastern Louisiana University, Standards for Quality Distance Education, Distance Education: Definition and Principles Retrieved: February 18, 2008 from <http://www2.selu.edu/documents/policies/distedustandards.pdf>

## 2.5. Best Practices

**Every attempt shall be made to develop the Distance Teaching and Learning Plans based on current best practices that model the seven principles outlined under *Section – Specific Quality Indicators*.**

UTech shall adopt two basic approaches to ensure that students enrolled in distance education courses/modules are familiar with the knowledge and equipment necessary to be successful in the course. The respective Faculty shall provide the required information to prospective students in the Course Outline and students shall be encouraged to read this document before enrolling in a distance education class.

Instructional strategies shall engage students in activities that provide opportunities for application of learning, such as case studies, journal writing, role playing and problem-solving, as well as class discussions that encourage active learning and interaction with course content.

CEODL shall promote practices of flexibility in the design of assignments and use of multiple means of content delivery and other practices, which respond to students' individual learning preferences, meet the special needs of disabled students and promote active learning. All distance education courses/modules should encourage, where applicable, course experiences such as cooperative learning activities; field experiences; public debates; activities requiring analysis, synthesis and evaluation, with application to real-life situations; threaded discussions and interactive chat rooms.

In order to mitigate the fairly 'isolating' nature of distance learning, CEODL shall encourage the establishment of 'learning communities' that engage in productive communication and collaboration.

## 3. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

### 3.1. Distance Learning Budget and Fees

Consistency in application of standards and efficient allocation of resources to support distance education shall be supported through an established set of technologies and tools which are centrally funded and supported and made available to staff and students.

The administrative costs of distance education programmes are borne proportionally by the Faculties and the central UTech support units. Each cost centre will indicate the proportional contribution of its services to the development and delivery process, to facilitate the disaggregation of costs.

There will be a special Central Fund made available to support distance teaching and learning innovations, research and development, especially in the areas of testing new technologies for distance learning.

Each distance learning activity will undergo rigorous feasibility and risk assessment processes. Income generated by the offering of distance learning courses to off campus students will provide surplus for investments in infrastructure and support services required for the continuous improvement and expansion of distance education.

Distance learning options shall be pursued as a means of releasing or maximizing existing classroom space.

### 3.2. Tuition Rate for Distance Learners

Distance learning students in traditional credit courses will normally be charged at the same tuition rate as on-campus students. They will also be charged to cover costs and administrative fees which are associated with distance delivery but are not included in tuition.

Non-credit distance education courses/modules shall be offered with tuition and fees that cover direct instructional costs, and indirect personnel fees and infrastructure costs.

Distance education that is conducted on a cost-recovery basis is defined as an entrepreneurial activity. It includes credit or non-credit instruction for groups that are not normally served by UTech. Such courses/modules are demand-driven and managed on a project basis. Tuition and fees are determined by the willingness or ability of the market to bear direct and indirect costs of instruction and infrastructure.

### 3.3. Benefits to the Distance Learners

Before the start of the course, registered students must complete a short Orientation Module for successful navigation of the selected learning management system and for effective participation in online learning.

Each student should receive a Distance Learner Handbook, which provides information on matters such as admissions, technical requirements, instructional requirements and expectations and library resources.

Student support services required for an online learning community, including an integrated help desk, tutorial support and access to electronic library resources are to be accessible to each distance learner.

### 3.4. Financial Aid

Eligibility requirements for financial aid are the same for Jamaican students in distance education as they are for those pursuing traditional on-campus courses/modules. In order to qualify for financial aid, students should be enrolled at UTech in a degree-seeking Programme and earning credit towards the degree.

Students who are taking non-credit courses/modules and students who are not in a degree Programme are not eligible for financial aid.

Other conditions will apply for overseas non-Jamaican students.

### 3.5. Staffing

Staffing provisions for distance education are directly connected to the scope of services required for effective distance learning. This implies that part-time or temporary personnel may be hired on a project basis to support distance education activities that generate income for the University.

The functions performed by staff in support of distance education are therefore distributed throughout UTech. The specific roles played by each department or unit are as follows:

**Academic support** is provided by Faculty members, under the direction of the Dean of the Faculty or

Adjunct Faculty contracted through the CEODL Office, and includes course design, development, delivery and student assessment.

**Administrative and technical support services** that are provided by a network of departments and units are to be coordinated by CEODL. (See Section 1.7 for details on the role of each department.)

## 4. TECHNOLOGY ACCESS & USE – PRIVACY & SECURITY

### 4.1. Selection Criteria for Mode/Threshold Application

UTech will promote low threshold application of information technology, which is reliable, accessible, easy to learn, user-friendly and with low marginal costs for teaching/learning. Examples of low threshold applications to minimize the risks of inadequate bandwidth and/or poor Internet connectivity could include CD ROMS and DVDs.

The main criteria in selecting mode/threshold applications are:

- accessibility – availability and flexibility for users;
- level of expenses incurred for delivery and support services;
- appropriateness of teaching/learning approach in terms of the volume of text and ease for incorporating multi-media resources to facilitate interactions that accommodate diverse learning styles;
- interactivity and user-friendliness – the extent to which the learner can interact with the technology;
- institutional structures and levels of support to facilitate learner success and
- the newness of the technology and its potential for sustainability.

### 4.2. Infrastructure

**The extensive use of computing, internet-based and related technologies for teaching and learning, research, library automation and administration will require the provision of adequate computer power, file storage, and input/output facilities for use by staff and students.**

**The University will provide software and support in the form of applications software, access to data sets, documentation and advice for staff and students to use the services provided in the most efficient manner possible.**

**The University's IS/IT policy is designed to optimise the utilisation of IS/IT resources, by providing computer access and related equipment on a 24-hour basis, where possible.** (Chapter 2 – General Policy Framework, Paragraphs 2.27-2.29 of the UTech Information Management Policies and Procedures Manual)

### 4.3. Hardware and Software Decisions

Details on Information Technology Governance are provided in Chapter 3 of the UTech *Information Management Policies and Procedures Manual*.

## 4.4. Access

### 4.4.1. Library

In addition to meeting technological requirements, the Enterprise Application Services in collaboration with Admissions, enrolls and registers students who are issued special codes to access the Calvin McKain Library and its online resources. (See Section 9 also on ***Library, and Laboratory and Other Resources***)

### 4.4.2. Learning Management System

The LTSU will provide appropriate, user-friendly, cost-effective and up-to-date learning technologies, including the selected learning management system, in support of pedagogical objectives.

## 4.5. System Reliability/Backup/Maintenance

The LTSU will ensure that the security, availability, processing integrity and confidentiality of the LMS is maintained, while the Network Operations Systems Services (NOSS) will ensure system reliability for the technology and network infrastructure to support online learning.

UTech, through NOSS, will provide appropriate and adequate mechanisms for data protection (backup/restore, data corruption, disaster recovery, virus protection) and data security (unauthorised access)". (See Chapter 2 – General Policy Framework – Paragraph 2.21 of the *Information Management Policies and Procedures Manual*).

## 4.6. Use of ICT to Enhance Teaching, Learning, Research and Services

The University's policy is to provide appropriate access to computing and IS/IT services for all designated members of the University community and to facilitate their acquisition of the skills required to exploit those services. (Chapter 2- General Policy Framework - Paragraph 2.22 of the Information Management Policies and Procedures Manual)

**The University will promote the widespread use of technology in the educational process as part of its commitment to the provision of a high-quality learning experience.** (Chapter 2- General Policy Framework - Paragraph 2.2.3 of the Information Management Policies and Procedures Manual)

**The University will endeavor to make available appropriate computer facilities for research in keeping with its intention to promote research.** (Chapter 2- General Policy Framework - Paragraph 2.24 of the Information Management Policies and Procedures Manual)

## 4.7. Multimedia Support

**The University's policy is designed to optimise the utilisation of IS/IT resources, by providing computer access and related equipment on a 24-hour basis, where possible.** (Chapter 2 –General Policy Framework – Paragraph 2.2.9 of the Information Management Policies and Procedures Manual)

To this end, through the adoption of an integrated approach to student support, NOSS, LTSU, EAS, CEODL and the Faculties will provide a 24-hour Help Desk which refers all queries to the respective unit.

## 5. QUALITY ASSURANCE – ACCREDITATION & PROGRAMME EVALUATION

### 5.1. Definition of Standards

All distance education courses/modules, as defined in Section 1.2, shall meet the same standards for objectives and substantive content, as required for a traditionally delivered course. All distance education courses should have learning outcomes that are appropriate to the degree or certificate to be granted, and should be held to the same rigorous standards as traditional on-campus degrees and certificates.

Students should be advised, before registration, of any steps taken to adapt or replace a module (based on face-to-face sessions) with components of distance education mediated by web-based tools. The syllabus for the course (distributed at the beginning of the semester) should designate which modules are to be adapted or replaced by distance education, and such courses should be reviewed and approved in advance by the departmental head, the OCDE and CEODL.

To ensure the quality of the distance education courses/modules offered, the OCDE and CEODL will monitor the development of new courses and all modifications to existing courses to ensure that all standards are maintained, in accordance with national and professional accrediting bodies. (See Paragraph 1 of the *Academic Quality Audit Policy*).

### 5.2. Course Integrity

The same policies concerning admissions requirements, scholastic standards, academic honesty, dropping and adding classes, repetition of courses, incomplete designations, withdrawal from a course or from the University, classification, grading, grievance procedures, credits, degree completion, and honors will apply to distance learning as they do for campus-based classes. (See WEBSITE:

<http://www.utechjamaica.edu.jm/CurrStudents/StudentHandbook.pdf>

for the Student Handbook and

<http://utechonline.utech.edu.jm/mod/resource/view.php?inpopup=true&id=5794> for A Guide for Online Learners)

The goals and objectives, and skills and competencies for courses offered on campus also apply to distance learning courses as for those offered on campus. The Faculty will apply the same standards for coursework and grading for both on-campus and distance learning courses.

Courses will comply with all related policies of UTech, including but not limited to:

- Academic Integrity
- Code of Ethics
- Student Code of Conduct
- Policy on Discrimination and Harassment
- Disability Compliance Statement

In accordance with the *General Principles* and *Specific Quality Indicators* outlined in this Document, all distance education courses are required to reflect good practices relating to:

- Properly defined learning goals and expectations;



- Effective and efficient course procedures (e.g. communication, assignment submission);
- Appropriate format and accessibility of material.
- Use of media that effectively engage different learning styles;
- Clearly defined student assessment policies and procedures;
- Systematic and effective course assessment;
- Establishment of a productive and dynamic learning community;
- Provision of instructions to students in the event of interruption of service;
- Inclusion in the course syllabus of well articulated learning goals, course expectations and requirements, and methods of communication with instructor and
- Provision of warning to students that the posting of abusive or insulting messages is prohibited.<sup>7</sup>

### 5.3. Class Monitoring

Distance education modules shall demonstrate that they provide the opportunity for substantial, personal, and regular interactions between Faculty and students (including online tutorial support) and among students.

### 5.4. Student/Course Evaluation

Distance learning courses will be periodically reviewed as part of the general Academic Quality Audit conducted by OCDE to ensure high quality, consistency with the curriculum, currency of content and methodology and advancement of the student learning outcomes.

CEODL and Faculties, in collaboration with OCDE, will adopt reflective teaching practices in the delivery of distance education. Consequently, additional reviews will be conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the delivery of distance education. Faculty members who participate in distance education may be surveyed periodically by the CEODL to review their perceptions of the distance education modules, including personal effectiveness in use of the technology, appropriateness of different instructional styles for distance instruction, access to technical support, success of distance education modules as compared to modules, effectiveness of interactions with CEODL staff and suggestions for improvement. CEODL will report on the findings of such surveys, which will be used to inform the wider institutional planning process for distance education.

### 5.5. Accreditation/ The Role of the University Council of Jamaica

All distance learning or face-to-face courses that incorporate major elements of technology-mediated delivery must be submitted to the UCJ through the OCDE for approval.

### 5.6. Transferability

Credits for individual academic modules earned in distance education modalities and delivered by Faculties may apply to UTech degrees. Non-degree modules may also earn continuing education units or professional development units as recognized by professional bodies and international agencies. (See UTech policy on Continuing Education Units)

<sup>7</sup> Based on principles outlined in University of North Alabama, Distance Learning Policy Manual - <http://distance.una.edu/policies/>

## **6. CURRICULUM – LEARNING RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, MATERIAL PRODUCTION & DELIVERY**

### **6.1. Criteria for Selecting Modules/Courses**

Among the factors considered in determining courses to be offered through distance education are student demand; availability of interested, qualified Faculty and staff members; accreditation issues; economic feasibility; course adaptability; accessibility of appropriate library services, learning resources, and/or laboratory equipment; timeliness of topic; and technological capabilities.<sup>8</sup>

### **6.2. Curriculum/Course Approval**

Proposals for totally new credit-bearing courses of short duration, as well as new degree Programme proposals, progress through a similar curriculum development process as used for regular on-campus proposals.

#### **6.2.1. Changes to Courses of Study and Modules**

Major and minor changes to modules and/or courses of study delivered by distance learning are to be made in accordance with the approval process required by University (See Policy Guidelines on Major and Minor Changes to Courses and Modules - 2006/APCC/02/06).

The approval process for new distance education courses of study and for major re-design of courses of study to incorporate elements of distance education is outlined in Revised Steps in Course of Study Development (2009/BUS/03/10/C)

The approval process for minor changes which requires the review and approval of the Faculty Curriculum Committee is to be expanded to include the review and approval of the CEODL Sub Committee.

### **6.3. Calendar/Class Size**

Some distance education courses are offered concurrently with the regular semester schedule utilized for on-campus classes at UTech, while other customized courses/modules are offered at times convenient to the targeted participants.

Class size should be determined by the availability of tutors to support learners. The recommended ratio is twenty students to one tutor to facilitate individual support to learners and the monitoring of student progress to successful completion.

### **6.4. Module/Course/Degree availability**

All distance education course offerings will be identified in the prospectus of the University. Students will be advised of any significant changes proposed to existing courses or modules, on an ongoing basis, before registration deadlines.

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<sup>8</sup> University of North Alabama, Distance Learning Policy Manual - from <http://distance.una.edu/policies/>

Once registered for an online module/course/degree, the distance learner will be provided with web access to the LMS – **UTechOnline** – which is located at <http://utechonline.utech.edu.jm/>

## **6.5. Materials Delivery**

Hard copies of texts, videotapes, and CD and DVD ROMs will be made available at the specified distribution points (Faculty Office or Bookstore) on the UTech campus or will be located in off-campus (including overseas) sites for participants. Where appropriate, access to electronic texts and web-based course sites will be facilitated through copyright permission of the publishers. All costs for material resources will be recovered by tuition fees or project sponsorship.

## **6.6. Production of Materials**

The production of all printed materials for distance education courses/modules will be coordinated by the Faculty, for degree or credit-bearing certificates and by CEODL, where the course or module is initiated by CEODL.

# **7. STAFF COMPENSATION AND RECOGNITION**

## **7.1. Compensation and Workload / Release Time/ Innovation and Development Incentives**

The wider UTech policies on Intellectual Property Rights and Copyright; Workload; Promotion and Tenure will provide the context for consideration of compensation for development, coordination and delivery of blended/online courses, sustained promotion of online involvement by Faculty members, and for recognition of their achievements in the area of distance learning.

Compensation mechanisms will recognize development and delivery of distance education courses of study as part of Faculty workload, with provision of release time where required, or compensation as determined and appropriate to the roles and/or activities that are undertaken.

Faculty members participating in distance education will be evaluated in the same manner as all other Faculty members in accordance with institutional policy.

These recommendations do not preclude the use of special incentives by the Faculty to encourage Faculty members to promote innovative approaches to distance education.

## **7.2. Existing union contracts**

All provisions made for compensation of Faculty members and any incentives introduced to encourage Faculty involvement in distance education should be consistent with the principles articulated in the existing collective bargaining agreement of the University and with provisions of the current contract with the Union.

### **7.3. Ownership, Promotion/Tenure**

The policy guideline for the ownership of distance learning materials or creative products will be subject to the University's policy on Intellectual Property Rights and Copyright. (See Section 15)

Assessment of teaching and academic advisement falls within the framework of Ordinance 199/16 and includes performance in the delivery of distance education.

Research and creative works related to distance education and online learning or which provide new models for integrating the advantages of face-to-face and online learning are also to be recognized under this Ordinance.

## **8. STUDENT RECRUITMENT/ADMISSION & GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

### **8.1. Recruiting/Marketing**

Distance education students for credit and non-credit bearing continuing education and professional development courses are to be recruited in accordance with the general principles outlined in the Student Recruitment Policy of the University. Emphasis is to be placed on meeting student demands and interests for high quality, flexible programming delivered to eligible students and supported by appropriate academic support services.

Marketing of distance education modules is the responsibility of the Faculties. Where CEODL provides services in respect of marketing, the attendant costs for these services are to be paid to CEODL. The marketing of CEODL-initiated non-credit bearing courses will be fully coordinated by CEODL, which will be responsible for the attendant costs.

### **8.2. Admission/Registration**

All students participating in credit-bearing distance education courses of study must first be enrolled at the University. Students in degree programmes must meet the same matriculation and graduation requirements as those of on-campus students. Requirements for non credit-bearing courses will be set by CEODL in consultation with the academic unit that will deliver these courses or by the external client who requested the courses.

Students wishing to participate in the distance education courses are expected to follow the normal registration process, including use of the online portal.

Students at remote locations will be registered online, by mail, in advance of the starting date of sessions, or they may be registered on-site in particular situations.

### 8.3. Prior Learning Assessment

Pursuant to its stated commitment to offer programmes of the highest academic quality that are flexible, accessible and responsive to national and regional needs, UTech “**recognizes the measurable value of life-long experiential and work-based learning**” and “**offers entry to its programmes for mature adults (25 years and older) who demonstrate the ability to manage university level programmes.**” (See UTech Prior Learning Assessment Policy)

Consequently all distance education courses of study, in accordance with the Prior Learning Assessment Policy, for designated courses, will accept portfolios as evidence of prior learning and achievement and grant credit for relevant demonstrated work, training and/or life experiences that correspond to designated courses or modules.

### 8.4. Graduation Requirements

The conditions for award of undergraduate certification are as outlined in Regulation 3 – Academic Progress and Granting of Awards of the UTech Student Handbook. Consequently, to qualify for certificates or diplomas offered in the distance education programme of credit-bearing courses of study, students must have a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 1.7 or higher. The GPA calculation includes the grades awarded in required modules of the certificate or the diploma.

## 9. LIBRARY, LABORATORY AND OTHER RESOURCES

### 9.1. Virtual Library Resources

The UTech library system, including off-campus service sites and partner libraries, is an integral part of the distance education network and offers a variety of online information resources, including books, journals, multimedia materials and online databases.

### 9.2. Lab Resources

Wireless access points are available on campus. The provision for additional dedicated spaces for technology-mediated learning, such as general purpose laboratories and learning resource centres, where students can access online resources and print materials will be reflected in the wider University's Strategic Plan, and embedded within the operational plans of each Faculty and pertinent central support unit (CEODL, LTSU, Library).

The University's comprehensive budget for academic development and the supporting technology infrastructure will also reflect the expansion and continuous upgrading of computer laboratories and designated classrooms with multi-media resources for online students<sup>9</sup> as well as the upgrading of systems for increased student access to information technology facilities.

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<sup>9</sup> Technology-enhanced or SMART classrooms, with server, file-sharing capabilities, a dedicated projector screen and audio equipment to support multi-media are required.

### 9.3. Acquisition of IT and Other Resources

Instructional materials, including print and software, for distance instruction are handled through UTech's Bookstore, the CEODL Office or the Faculty Office and the Library. With regard to the provision of text books, instructors will communicate their needs to the UTech Bookstore personnel in a similar manner as for traditional face-to-face courses, and with adequate time to facilitate special arrangements for distribution to distance learners.

Within each Faculty, there is to be one designated person to provide oversight of the arrangements to acquire and distribute learning resources and materials for distance students. For courses delivered overseas, there will be an in-country coordinator to manage the local learner support systems. Electronic materials will be made available through the online course portals and the Library system.

At the start of each distance education course, instructors should clearly identify for students, the list of materials that will be required. Supplementary materials are to be made available in printed or electronic form.

UTech will seek to acquire relevant proprietary software, for courses that require such software, by negotiating discounted costs or acquiring educational versions of specialized proprietary software and building these costs into the costs of the course.

## 10. STUDENT SUPPORT

UTech is committed to providing appropriate and adequate access to the diverse range of student services required for effective participation of distance students. These services include admissions, financial aid, academic advisement, counseling, delivery of course materials and access to the Learning Management System and library facilities.

In the *Online Learner Guide* the University is to clearly indicate the services that are provided and how to access them. These services will be provided in diverse formats and will be accessible during hours that are convenient for the distance student. The University may contract and/or outsource the delivery of these services as necessary.

### 10.1. Virtual Support – Distance Learners

Timely and reliable support and solutions to technical problems related to the LMS will be provided for students and Faculty through the virtual Help Desk, staffed by well trained persons and having the resources to provide high quality service.

### 10.2. Orientation, Response Time

All distance education students should participate in an Orientation Session before the start of each distance education course, to prepare them for effective distance learning. This Orientation Session as well as the *Online Learner Guide* should provide student with a description of the Course content and assessment strategies, the delivery mode, support services available, study tips for success and technical requirements for individual access to personal computers.

The Faculty offering the courses and instructors should also provide mechanisms for communicating expectations and assessing student capability for success in distance education.

The Instructor of each course shall indicate to students the timeframe and mechanisms in place for the provision of feedback. This provision shall be guided by the principle that students should be provided with regular and appropriate feedback on their current level of knowledge and competence, as well as suggestions for improvement.

### **10.3. Feedback/Handling Complaints**

The resolution process for resolving student complaints at UTech is to be guided by University policy on handling student complaints, which will include considerations particularly relevant to distance learners.

Relevant procedures are to be included in the *Online Learner Guide*.

## **11. STUDENTS RECORDS**

### **11.1. Transcripts**

The student records for non-credit courses including those awarding continuing education units or professional development units will be managed by CEODL, on a separate database, but in consultation with the Student Records Office.

Students have the right to access their academic and institutional records. To access their records, students must submit a signed request by mail or fax (emails are not acceptable) to the Students Records Office. Access is determined on an individual basis. However, the Students' Records Office does not release official transcripts if a student is in debt to UTech. No partial transcripts of a record are issued.

Student transcripts do not distinguish between academic courses taken on campus and those completed through the distance education modality.

## **12. FACULTY DEVELOPMENT**

CEODL will provide training and opportunities for professional development for Faculty members so that they will have the requisite skills and resources to adapt to the new teaching and learning environment of technology-mediated distance education and to effectively engage in the delivery of distance learning experiences.

### **12.1. Faculty Training**

It is expected that any Faculty member who is involved in distance education will also participate in the required training sessions on the use of the LMS, promotion of student interaction and management of situations characteristic to the delivery of distance education.

Training required for each online Faculty member will include areas relating to:

- **Course development**, including: procedures, contact information, timelines, preferred content formats, materials submission protocols, and best practices);
- **Instructional design** issues in developing or adapting face-to-face courses to the online environment such as syllabus concerns; **course objectives and student-centered learning outcomes**; development of appropriate **assignments and activities** for the distance learning environment; varying information and activity presentation to accommodate different learning styles; **assessment strategies**, choosing the best technologies available for course delivery, understanding the needs and expectation of distance education students and **creating multi-media resources**.
- **Learning Management System** - overview of features; effective presentation of resources; use of tools for promotion of interaction and creation of online communities such as chat and forum; tools for collaboration such as workshop and wikis and tools for feedback such as choice and survey tools;
- **Accessing Resources** – General and specific library resources available to enrich distance education courses; use of the digital resources on the Web in the form of documents, databases, archives, recordings, audio files, video files, magazines and instructor resource materials.
- **Key Strategies and Issues in Distance Education** – fair use of copyrighted materials; administrative strategies for managing courses and contingency plans for dealing with problems in distance education, including equipment breakdown.
- **Basic Computer Skills** – working knowledge of computer hardware used to teach online courses; computer file management; document preparation; e-mail and web browsing.

## 12.2. Faculty Support

The provision of instructional programmes as well as access to the necessary technical and communication resources to facilitate development of skills in classroom management and technology-based instructional design will be assured for Faculty members involved in distance education through an internal network of relevant persons from support services units comprising CEODL, LTSU, NOSS, EAS, OCDE, the Library and Faculty representatives.

Support to Faculty involved in distance education will be provided in the following ways:

- Web access to the *Distance Education Policies and Guidelines* document.
- Orientation and training sessions based on an Integrated UTech Training Plan
- User-friendly templates for designing course materials
- Individual technological assistance
- Opportunities to participate in CEODL Fora
- The monthly CEODL Newsletter
- Advice from the CEODL Faculty Liaison



- Sandbox in the online LMS which provides a safe area for practice and trial and error in the development of online courses, before review by CEODL and export to the LMS for delivery.
- Learning Commons/Learning Support Centre (CEODL) for support, mentoring and consultation in instructional design, including provision for walk-in consultation on eFridays
- Priority consideration in new technology purchases and updates at the departmental level.
- Priority technical support in the design and maintenance of delivery systems, as provided by the LTSU
- External short term fellowships for professional development
- Support for research and pedagogical models in Distance Education

There will a system of faculty mentoring where experienced distance learning technology users designated as Fellows are linked with new members of staff to help them develop their distance teaching capabilities. Within each Faculty there are assigned personnel including the CEODL Liaison, designated mentors and multimedia technologists who help to coordinate and implement distance learning initiatives in collaboration with CEODL. The network of distance learning faculty Fellows across the University will provide an opportunity for sharing good practice.

### 12.3. Faculty Evaluation

Distance education courses or modules should be evaluated to determine the view of students regarding both the quality of instruction. Student input will primarily be solicited using the Instructor-Course Evaluation Form administered at the conclusion of each course.

Participating Faculty are to be surveyed periodically by the CEODL in collaboration with OCDE to assess their perceptions of their effectiveness in utilizing the technology, appropriateness of different teaching methods for distance instruction, access to support resources, success of distance learning students as compared to on-campus students, effectiveness of interactions with CEODL and suggestions for improvement. Results are then analyzed by both CEODL and OCDE and utilized in the planning process and for upgrading the quality of academic delivery.

### 12.4. Professional Development Programme

CEODL through collaboration with a number of external partners will facilitate externally-funded short-term fellowships for professional training in various aspects of the design and delivery of distance education.

CEODL in collaboration with FELS will provide a series of credit-bearing modules in Distance Education for certification as a Distance Education Tutor.

Continuing Education Units will also be awarded by CEODL in collaboration with the Human Resource Department to Faculty members who participate in modules offered under the integrated *UTech Training and Development Plan*.

## **13. ALLIANCES, PARTNERSHIPS AND COOPERATIVE OFFERINGS**

Institutional capacity to provide distance education and the actual implementation of distance education initiatives are undertaken in partnerships with development agencies, educational institutions, regional organizations, government agencies, the business community and professional associates.

Partnerships for strengthening capacity for distance education are usually met through technical cooperation agreements with external agencies and focus on training, professional development, development and conversion of courses, provision of technological infrastructure and support for strategic planning. Expansion of course offerings in distance education are effected through memoranda of understanding, franchise agreements and promotion of academic outreach programmes with a variety of educational institutions and outreach sites.

Extra and intramural offerings of distance education courses at UTech require adoption of a collaborative model with internal and external partners. Internally, every effort should be made to form cross-functional instructional teams enriched with expertise in instructional design, content resource, learner support services, graphic design, multi-media, learning technology, quality assurance and resource coordination.

### **13.1. Geographic Coverage**

UTech seeks to increase geographic penetration of programmes, not only through articulation linkages with community colleges and other accredited educational providers and through divestment of lower level certificate and diploma programmes to other providers but also through the introduction, of existing degree programmes in modular forms and as distance education courses, in partnership with these training providers.

UTech also actively participates in regional projects for the development of distance education courses in response to demands of overseas students and in support of efforts to improve the quality of and access to tertiary level courses throughout the Caribbean.

### **13.2. Local versus Collaborative Tuition**

UTech continues to promote initiatives for collaborative tuition through execution of memoranda of understanding. This mode of collaboration is encouraged, particularly in the context of promotion of institutional capacity building of the region's Tertiary Level Institutions. Specific initiatives that prepare Faculty members to adapt face-to-face courses to the online environment and develop and share a common core of online courses are to be embraced.

### **13.3. Outreach and Franchise Programmes**

Existing relationships of outreach and franchise arrangements with community colleges and other tertiary institutions may include offerings of distance education courses so as to expand academic outreach and access to UTech services.

## 14. COMMUNICATION AND WORKFLOW

### 14.1. Mapping Internal Processes/Approval Levels/Timelines

The entire instructional design and delivery process should comprise the following steps: incorporating the phases of submission of proposals, completion of course templates, selection and development of materials, review of instructional strategy and materials, adding content to the LMS, piloting the course, conducting student orientation, course implementation and evaluation. The flow chart outlining this process of analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation is presented in Appendix 1.

For minor changes in the adaptation of face-to-face courses, approval of changes should be obtained and instructional design process initiated at least one semester in advance of the date for course delivery. Exceptions may be entertained in cases where Faculty members have already secured approval for the module, are competent in the use of the LMS and are well advanced in the selection and development of material.

For major changes in modules and courses, approval should be secured by the end of April of the Academic Year preceding the one in which the changes are to be implemented in the course or module. (See *Policy Guidelines on Major and Minor Changes to Courses and Module*, approved by the Academic Policy Committee for definition of minor changes to courses and modules).

### 14.2. Iterative Cycle for Instructional Design

The process adopted for instructional design should provide for review and subsequent revision, where required, at each stage.

A pilot of the course should be conducted and the findings from this treated as formative evaluation for improvement of the course design. This iterative process should be undertaken for each module, where applicable, but the entire course should be piloted.

### 14.3. Implementation and Quality Monitoring

Steps outlined in Sections 5 – Student and Course Evaluation will be used to monitor quality of implementation and at the end of the course or module, summative evaluation incorporating provisions outlined in Section 5 and Section 12, will be conducted.

## 15. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS AND COPYRIGHT

### 15.1. Intellectual Property

All copyright issues of distance education will be guided by the Intellectual Property Policy of UTech, including the following broad principles:

- Content developed for distance learning courses will comply with copyright law.
- In the use of copyrighted material, the usual permission should be acquired and submitted by the Faculty member with the course proposal for approval. If there is doubt about copyright ownership, Faculty members should substitute other resources where copyright permission is clear and obtainable, or substitute resources that are in the public domain.
- Faculty members involved in content development should be aware of Utech's policies with regard to content ownership and to that end; the copyright and intellectual property policies of UTech will be written and accessible to Faculty members.

## 15.2. Informed Consent

Students should be informed about the nature and requirements of a distance education course or module before enrolment. Students should also be advised and consulted on any changes proposed for incorporating elements of distance education in a face-to-face course or module for which they have already registered.

Students who are involved in fieldwork or research that involves the participation of other persons, should be instructed to advise such persons of the facts and implications of their involvement, and should obtain the consent of such persons based on the persons' appreciation and understanding of the facts. Persons who do not understand the relevant facts or who lack the reasoning faculties to arrive at an understanding of these facts should not be asked to participate. A consent form should be signed by such persons.

## GLOSSARY

### Abbreviations

EAS – Enterprise Application Services

CEODL – The Office of Continuing Education, Open and Distance Learning

LMS – Learning Management System

LTP – Learning and Teaching Policy

LTSU – Learning Technologies Support Unit

NOSS - Network Operations and Systems Services

OCDE – Office of Curriculum Development and Evaluation

UTech – University of Technology, Jamaica

### Definitions

**Active learning** a way of designing learning materials that provides a series of activities to help learners master content, on the assumption that learners will only learn if they actively engage with the material presented.

**Asynchronous communication** refers to two-way communication in which there is a delay between when a message is sent and when it is actually received. In distance learning, asynchronous communication often takes the form of email, voice mail and discussion boards.

**Asynchronous learning:** a type of learning in which learners and instructors use computers to exchange messages, engage in dialogue and access resources; the interaction can occur in delayed-time when they are not linked at the same time.

**Bandwidth** refers to the capacity of a connection to transport digital content, measured usually in terms of transfer speed (bits-per-second). Text can be transferred more quickly than audio or video resources, although compression of such resources may be used to reduce their size with less demand on bandwidth.

**Blended learning** combines different delivery methods and learning activities to create the most effective learning experience to accommodate different styles of learning. This approach often involves the adoption of different technologies, activities and types of events, which may include face-to-face sessions, e-learning and self-paced instruction.

OR

Blended learning is the combination of multiple approaches to teaching or to educational processes which involve the deployment of a diversity of **methods** and **resources** or **learning experiences** which are derived from more than one kind of information source.

Examples include combining technology-based materials and traditional print materials, group and individual study, structured pace study and self-paced study, tutorial and coaching.

**Continuing education:** education that is usually not for credit, but which can be delivered on campus or at a distance.

**Courseware** is computer software whose primary purpose is teaching or self-learning. A set of lessons designed to be used with a computer.

**Flexible learning:** a term that emphasises the creation of environments for learning that have the following characteristics: convergence of open and distance learning methods, media and classroom strategies; learner-centred philosophy; recognition of diversity in learning styles and in learners' needs; recognition of the importance of equity in curriculum and pedagogy; use of a variety of learning resources and media; fostering of lifelong learning habits and skills in learners and staff.

**Higher Order Skills – Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation.** The delineation of higher order skills is part of a broader effort to define the nature of thinking and is mainly associated with the work of the Bloom et al and their identification of the levels of thinking in the cognitive domain. In this model there are six levels of thinking skills ranging from the lowest to the highest: namely knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The three highest levels are defined as follows:

**Analysis:** a level of learning that involves breaking down material into its meaningful parts so that the relationship among the parts can be determined.

**Synthesis:** a level of learning activities that involves combining parts to form a new whole.

**Evaluation:** a level of learning that involves judging the value of the material with reference to a specific set of criteria.

**Instructional Design:** a process of designing instruction in a way that enables learners to learn effectively.

**Learning Community** involves a group of people who share common values and beliefs and are committed to the pursuit of goals, problems or projects that provide the basis for their active engagement in generating and sharing new knowledge. Members engage in flexible and negotiated learning activities, characterised by high levels of dialogue, interaction and collaboration. Members work and learn from each other and have the opportunity to influence the activities of the community which, in turn meets the needs of its members.

**Learning Management System** provides a suite of tools to educators to create Course web sites, provide access control so that only enrolled students can view the web site and offer a wide variety of tools for uploading and sharing material, holding online discussions and chats, setting and taking quizzes and surveys, uploading, gathering and reviewing assignments and recording grades.

**Learning Outcome** is a statement which identifies what a learner is expected to know, understand or do as a result of successfully completing a process of learning.

**Learning styles or preferences** refer to an individual's natural, habitual and preferred way of absorbing, processing and retaining new information and skills. Learning style embraces channels such as vision, hearing, movement, touching, or any combination of these through which a person best understands and retains learning. It can also refer to active or passive, as well as reflective or impulsive learning styles.

**Low Threshold Application** is a teaching/learning application of information technology, which is reliable, accessible, easy to learn, user-friendly and relatively inexpensive.

**Online Learning Environment** involves use of the Internet for learning via coursework or information posted on the Web, electronic communication and other instructional activities.

**Open education:** a way of providing learning opportunities that implies a lack of formal entry requirements, prerequisite credentials or an entrance examination.

**Prior Learning Assessment** is a process adopted at some colleges and universities UTech by which the prospective learners can earn academic credit for what they already know and can do, through the formal evaluation of an experiential or prior learning portfolio that identifies, documents and assesses significant college-level learning acquired through informal or independent study, work experience, community service, non-credit courses and other life experiences. PLA is based on the belief that college-level learning is not limited to the classroom.

**Reusable Objects** refer to learning resources, usually digital and web-based, that can be used and re-used to support learning. They are re-usable units of learning with instructional content and may also include assessment tools.

**Reflective Teaching Practice** is an approach to teaching where teachers and student teachers collect data about teaching and examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching.

**Synchronous communication** refers to live, real-time communication. Such communication includes face-to-face conversations, telephone calls, instant messaging and chatting online.

**Synchronous learning:** a type of learning in which learners and instructors use computers to exchange messages, engage in dialogue and access resources; the interaction can occur in real-time (synchronously) when learners and instructors are communicating at the same time from different places.

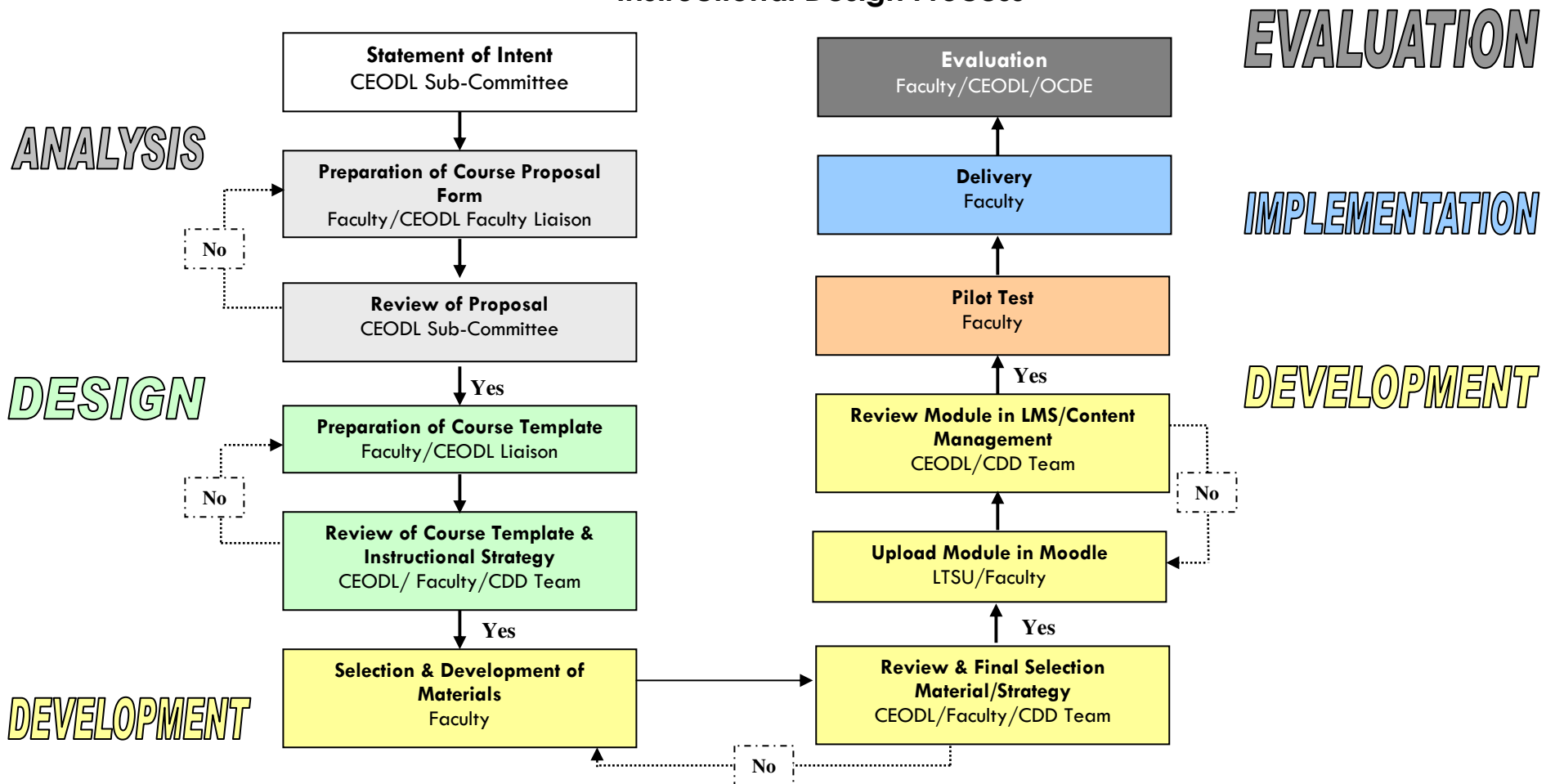
**Technology-mediated learning:** in the context of teaching and learning, a system in which a media other than print has a major role.

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**The University of Technology, Jamaica**  
Office of Continuing Education Open & Distance Learning (CEODL)

**Instructional Design Process**



At all stages of the process CEODL may be contacted for assistance