Policy/Process Owner	Head of QAE
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Online Learning: Delivery Policy and Guidance

Contents:

1.0   Overview

EFI Group is committed to offering high quality courses across a range of delivery strands. This policy specifically focuses on expectations and rules which govern any courses across our divisions[1] that are delivered solely, or in part, online.

Online learning at the FRA is defined as the delivery of educational topics which utilise a wide range of technologies and web-based platforms to effectively facilitate the learning process and allow students to acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need in order to successfully achieve their chosen qualification or course of study[2].

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[1] Fashion Retail Academy (FRA), London College of Beauty Therapy (LCBT), Education for Industry Training (EFIT)

[2] For 24/25 many of our online offers are not regulated qualifications, rather they are 'bespoke courses' endorsed by an Awarding Institution.

2.0   General Principles

Online delivery at the FRA is governed by the following key principles:

- The EFI Group philosophy; *'By industry, with industry, for industry'*, continues to drive our course delivery offer through an online learning environment.
- EFI Group works with Divisions to ensure that all systems used in online learning delivery provide students with an effective and individualised learning environment which, as far as possible, seeks to encompass all aspects of a traditional learning experience (this to include access to Student Wellbeing, Student Registry, and other key EFI Group Departments outside of direct curriculum delivery).
- Instruction and assessment are effectively delivered entirely or in part online and designed accordingly to allow students to continuously meet their course Learning Outcomes (LOs), as validated by the designated Awarding Body. Instruction is diverse, meeting the needs of learners and facilitating personalised learner growth and enrichment.
- All students will have access to the required online platforms, software, tools, policies and related curriculum resources in order to successfully undertake the course and carry out the required assessment activities. No matter the channel of distribution, course materials always meet the expectations of the EFI Group in respect to the quality of teaching and learning.
- EFI Group will ensure that, through its QAE Framework and supporting processes, all online learning delivery continues to meet the standards expected by the FRA, sector regulatory bodies, and designated Awarding Body institutions.
- Online learning will be accessible, educationally sound, engaging and appropriate to the relevant target audience.
- Staff responsible for facilitating online learning are encouraged to innovate delivery where appropriate to do so, and in line with the wider QAE Regulatory Framework. Staff are expected to use varied pedagogical tools that support learner access and interact with online learning content.
- EFI Group will continuously monitor and evaluate the use of all systems and practices which contribute to students' online learning experience. This policy encourages staff to be responsive to lessons learned and to demonstrate agility in respect of new opportunities relating to the virtual learning environment.

3.0   Online Learning Delivery: Expectations

Effectively facilitating online learning is key to ensuring we are able to continue to support students in their personal development and achievement of their course outcomes. Whether a course is solely delivered online, or where a form of blended learning[3] is necessary, the following key expectations for online lesson planning, scheduling and delivery apply. *[For further guidance on EFI Group 'best practice' in terms of facilitating online learning, see* appendix 1*].*

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[3] Combination of traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning components.

3.1 Digital Pedagogy:

   i. Staff utilise a range of digital pedagogical tools that help learners to access and interact with online content.
   ii. Effective communication tools allow staff and students to interact with online learning in order to enhance learner engagement and establish an online learner community.
   iii. Staff use a range of digital tools and spaces to effectively plan (FRA Policy on Learning Plans continues to apply and will be closely monitored) and deliver their curriculum through providing high quality 'virtual' teaching. This includes the testing of audio, webcam/camera, and other required technology in advance of delivery; as well as producing handouts or other supporting documentation.
   iv. Opportunities to engage industry via digital platforms will be continuously explored by both delivery staff and supporting EFI Group Departments.
   v. Staff continuously review the quality of their delivery and teaching and learning practice by engaging in the agreed EFI Group QAE Framework and its supporting processes (note that some processes may be adapted to align with expectations of online delivery and student experience).

3.2 Instruction and Assessment:

   i. Staff undertake online 1-1 instruction for learners who require additional support.
   ii. Platforms meet the needs of diverse learners and accommodate alternative means of access or adjustments where appropriate.
   iii. Staff consider varied opportunities to demonstrate their learning online (i.e. quizzes, discussion prompts etc.).
   iv. Online/digital assessment submission is supported and effectively facilitated, aligning to required assessment criteria.
   v. Timely feedback on student progress and formal assessment submissions will continue to be administered either verbally (recorded), or in writing via the chosen digital platform (in most cases this will continue to be via the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), *Canvas*).
   vi. Student progress is effectively monitored through a number of virtual interventions, in line with wider EFI Group learning and teaching practice, as appropriate (i.e. online tutorials, progress activity or tasks).
   vii. Progression will be formally ratified by an EFI Group Progression Board aligned to each summative assessment point. Retrieval opportunities will be given in line with Awarding Body and/or EFI Group requirements.

3.3 Student Engagement:

   i. Tutor communication is planned specifically to online delivery through a diverse range of formats.
   ii. Student learning is effectively monitored through virtual lesson delivery via several alternative means. For example, staff may utilise online 'polls' through lessons as checks for understanding or set up digital breakout 'spaces' to

allow students to participate in smaller groups and report back on findings or discussions. Engagement should be evidenced through actionable, specific and timely online tasks or activities

    iii. Students are expected to have their Webcam on during all timetabled 'live' sessions[4] unless otherwise agreed through a reasonable adjustment, or other such arrangement endorsed by the Group Leader (or equivalent).

    iv. When registering for an online course, students effectively agree to always engage and show professionalism in line, where appropriate, with the wider EFI Group Student Charter.

    v. Students are expected to ask questions and respond or engage in discussion via a number of means which may include 'chat boxes' or Q&A threads.

    vi. Staff continuously monitor student compliance to EFI Group rules and regulations through monitoring attendance and behaviour (please note that it remains a requirement for registers to be taken and recorded directly to REMS in the standard way) and achievement as per the EFI Group Disciplinary Procedures.

3.4   Building a sense of Belonging and Community:

    i. Staff work to create online learning spaces that are inclusive and ensure a positive and effective learning experience.

    ii. Learning is structured to support students' sense of belonging in order to avoid feelings of isolation that may come from learning remotely.

    iii. Methods to enhance a sense of belonging or sense of class spirit could include maintaining a 'virtual classroom' or 'outside class' spaces or platforms to allow students to discuss topics covered (i.e. an online discussion board) outside of timetabled learning, or embedding break out activity where students interact with peers during scheduled online learning.

4.0   Expectations for Online Learning ('*Netiquette*'):

4.1   Staff:

    iv. Staff are familiar with this policy and communicate expectations for student behaviour online as outlined within section 3.2 below. Staff should clearly outline any rules around online behaviour at the beginning of any online session.

    v. Staff should have their Webcam on when delivering live online lessons.

    vi. When sharing the screen with students, staff must ensure all sensitive documents or tabs are closed.

    vii. Online delivery experiences facilitate and promote fair-use, and internet safety.

    viii. Staff may only record classes with the permission of students[5].

    ix. Instruction for online learning conforms to the FRA Safeguarding Policy.

    x. Staff should confirm when any live session has ended and wait for all students to log off or leave the online session.

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[4] This includes any industry talks or other such activity that may be arranged.
[5] Permission from students may be obtained in writing at the beginning of any online course to cover future sessions.

4.2   Students

The following expectations around student conduct and engagement in relation to learning via digital platforms apply:

i. Students engage with the assigned digital tools and infrastructure in order to effectively and actively participate in learning. This includes testing audio, webcam/cameras, and other required technology prior to the start of any live sessions.

ii. Students are expected to keep their Webcam on for the duration of any live sessions[6] unless specific approval has been given by the Group Leader (or equivalent), or where a student has an agreed reasonable adjustment in relation to this area.

iii. Students commit to asking questions or raising queries where they do not understand any aspect of their online lesson. This to be by the appropriate functionality depending on the online platform being used and as established by the Group Leader (or equivalent) responsible for delivery.

iv. Student conduct for online learning follows that required, as appropriate, within the EFI Group Student Charter and any local rules communicated to students through the online learning management team. Failure to adhere to these expectations and requirements may result in disciplinary action (as defined within the EFI Group Disciplinary Policy).

v. Students must always present themselves in a professional manner. Students should use professional language, and behaviour should match that expected for face-to-face teaching.

vi. Students should attend online lessons according to the timings outlined within their confirmed timetable. Where it is not possible for a student to log on to a scheduled online learning activity, they must formally record their absence as per the defined attendance policy in the normal way. Failure to do so will impact on attendance records and may result in disciplinary action.

vii. Students effectively allocate time to prepare for scheduled digital lessons and other online learning activities, as prescribed by the Group Leader (or equivalent) responsible.

viii. Students are not permitted to record classes or take screenshots without the advance permission of the Group Leader (or equivalent).

ix. All assessment will be submitted online via the platform confirmed by the responsible Group Leader (or equivalent) and is required to adhere to the confirmed deadline. Extensions outside of special considerations will not be permitted and failure to meet deadlines may impact a student's ability to progress on the course. (Students should be mindful that some documents may take time to upload and should account for this when working to deadlines).

x. Where students do not pass a first attempt at a summative assessment, a second 'referral' opportunity may be given, subject to approval by the EFI Group Progression Board in line with the EFI Group Assessment Policy[7].

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[6] This includes any industry talks or other such activity that may be arranged.

[7] There may be bespoke assessment requirements set by the Awarding Body which must also be taken into consideration when considering progression. For further advice, please refer to the Quality Assurance & Enhancement (QAE) team, qae@efigroup.ac.uk

Normally, second retrieval opportunities will not be provided unless there are grounds to consider this.

Facilitating Online Learning: Best Practice Guide (Staff)

1.0   Before the Session:

Provide clear instructions including:

- A schedule of the session outlining timings and the order of any planned activities.
- Details of any activities that require completion in advance.
- Instructions of how students should access the online learning activity, including guidance relating to any technology, functionality or digital tools that students may be required to use.

2.0   At the Start of the Session:

- Ensure you arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the online lesson to check that everything is working ok and is set up accordingly, and to allow you to welcome students to the session as they log-in.
- Take time at the beginning to ensure that all attendees are clear about how the session will progress, what the learning outcomes/aims of the session are and how long it is to run etc. If the session is broken into 'live' lectures, break out groups, quizzes etc, try to provide an overview of this so that students get an idea of how their day will be structured.
- Set some ground rules. Outline to students how they will be expected to communicate or interact with the session. For example, encourage students to turn on their webcams if they are comfortable doing so (please note that this is not a requirement), ensure students are aware of how to turn on their mic and provide protocol for questions 'hands-up', or the typed 'chat' functionality.
- If any part of the session is due to be recorded, advise students and ensure they provide their consent for this to happen.

3.0   During the Session:

- If you find that some students are hesitant to actively engage online, try to utilise smaller group breakouts or look to facilitate an online discussion forum to try to encourage contribution. Set some small tasks or quizzes, or embed some 'polls' to check-in on student understanding or progress. Ensure any activities are clearly aligned to the learning outcomes/aims and that students understand the intent.
- Utilise offline 'independent' tasks in between online sessions. These can work well in terms of scaffolding lessons, embedding stretch and challenge tasks, and breaking up activities effectively throughout the day.
- Ensure you keep an eye on any typed 'chat' functionality to ensure that any queries or comments can be effectively picked up as appropriate.
- At the end of the session, sum up the topics covered and summarise any tasks or independent study to be completed before the next session.

4.0   After the Session:

- Remain online until all students have officially left the session.
- Commit to following up on any questions that may not have been answered or addressed during the online lesson via the approved communication channel (i.e. outlook or Canvas).