

# E-xcellence

## *Quality Assessment for E-learning: a Benchmarking Approach*

**Institution:**

**Contact:**

**Time period:**

**Date:**

## How to use the Quick Scan

The Quick Scan online questionnaire is intended to give you a first orientation on the strengths of your e-learning performance and the potential for improvement. An initial self-assessment via the Quick Scan can be the basis for a subsequent review using the resources in the manual and assessors' notes.

The Quick Scan should ideally be filled out by a team which includes different stakeholders in your organisation: management, academics, course designers, tutors and students. It is therefore recommended that you build a small team which includes members of the stakeholder groups. The review can be conducted at institution, academic department or module level to suit your own needs. However, if you are operating at department or module level, you should ensure that your team includes those with experience of institutional policy and practice relevant to e-learning.

The team should identify which benchmarks are relevant, and which are less important for your organisation. The team should then collaborate to complete the Quick Scan, including adding comments in the open text areas which are provided.

The result of the Quick Scan exercise should be an agreed self-assessment against the benchmarks that fit your organisation. This will reveal those aspects of e-learning where your organisation is already strong, and those aspects where there are opportunities for improvement.

## 1. Strategic Management

The majority of institutions evolved when the prevalent mode of study was face-to-face and campus-based. New modes of study offered through ICT should prompt institutions to review their strategies to take into account increased use of ICT, both in institutional and public online spaces.

The institution should have defined policies and management processes that are used to establish strategic institutional objectives, including those for the development of e-learning. In a mature institution, strategic management will operate over several time horizons.

The institutional strategic plan should identify the roles that e-learning will play in the overall development of the institution and set the context for production of the plans of academic departments, administrative and operational divisions.

The institutional plan should outline options for the use of e-learning in teaching that may define a spectrum of blends of e-learning and more established teaching mechanisms. Institutional plans should also consider issues of resourcing, information systems, staff development, innovation and collaboration with partners.

Faculty and departmental plans should aim to best match the student requirements of their particular market sector (national/international focus) in presenting e-learning/blended learning options.

The institutional strategic plan should ensure that plans of academic departments are consistent with each other. Student mobility between departments should not be restricted by major differences in policy or implementation with respect to e-learning.

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1 The institution has an e-learning strategy that is widely understood and integrated into the overall strategies for institutional development and quality improvement. E-learning policies conform to legal and ethical frameworks.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

2 The institution investigates and monitors emergent technologies and educational developments in the field of e-learning and considers their integration in the learning environment. There is an organisational framework that can foster innovation and development, and evaluation by scholarship and research.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

- 3 The resourcing of developments in e-learning takes into account requirements such as equipment purchase, software implementation, recruitment of staff, training and research needs, staff workload and technology developments.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

- 4 Institutional policy ensures that e-learning systems (e.g. an institutional Virtual Learning Environment) are compatible with related management information systems (e.g. a registration or administrative system) and are reliable, secure and effective.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

- 5 When e-learning involves activities or resources beyond the institution (e.g. virtual mobility of students, institutional partnerships, development of Open Educational Resources and Massive Open Online Courses, or use of social media), the roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, communicated to those concerned, and controlled by operational agreements where appropriate.

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Excellent in all aspects                             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Adequate with some examples of excellent performance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Adequate   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not adequate in some aspects                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not adequate in majority of aspects                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

## 2. Curriculum Design

An important aspect of the quality of e-learning concerns the design of the curriculum. It is assumed that curriculum design is broadly constrained by expectations or requirements on the knowledge, skills and professional outcomes-based curriculum elements; these may be set at national, European and international levels.

The major challenge that institutions face is that of designing curricula that combine the flexibility in time and place of study offered by e-learning without compromising skills development or the sense of academic community that has traditionally been associated with campus based provision. Key challenges and opportunities include: programme modularity, online assessment methods, building online academic communities, integration of knowledge and skills development, and offering personalised learning to meet different learning needs and aspirations.

Curriculum design should address the needs of the target audience for e-learning programmes that, in the context of growing emphasis on lifelong learning, may differ significantly in prior experience, interest and motivation from the traditional young adult entrant to conventional universities.

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6 Curricula that use e-learning offer personalisation and a flexible path for the learner, while ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

7 Learning outcomes are assessed using a balance of formative and summative assessment appropriate to the curriculum design.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

8 Curricula are designed to include e-learning that contributes both to the development of subject specific educational outcomes and to the acquisition of more transferable educational skills.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

9 Curricula are designed to enable participation in academic communities via social media tools. These online communities provide opportunities for collaborative learning, contact with external professionals and involvement in research and professional activities.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

### 3. Course Design

The course design process should demonstrate a rational progression: the need for the course within the overall curriculum should first be established; then a conceptual framework for the course should be designed, followed by the detailed development of course materials.

Each course should include a clear statement of the learning outcomes to be achieved on successful completion. These outcomes will be specified in terms of knowledge, skills, vocational/professional competencies and personal development

The development of each course should include a clearly documented course specification which sets out the relationship between learning goals/outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessment methods. A course may include a blend of e-learning and face-to-face elements; attention should be paid to the appropriateness of assessment methods, the levels of interactivity and the provision of adequate feedback.

Aspects of course design and implementation may be delegated to an outside agency (a consortium partner, commercial developer or through use of OER). However, the parent institution should retain oversight and responsibility.

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10 Each course includes a clear statement of learning outcomes in respect of both knowledge and skills. There is reasoned coherence between learning goals/outcomes, the teaching and learning activities, the learning materials and the assessment methods.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

11 Learning outcomes determine the use of methods and course contents. In a blended-learning context there is an explicit rationale for the use of each element in the blend.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

12 The design, development and evaluation of a course involves individuals or teams with expertise in both academic and technical aspects.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

13 OER and other third-party material is selected with regard to learning outcome, tailored if necessary for fit to the learning context, and integrated with other learning materials. These materials are subject to the same review processes as other course materials.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

14 E-learning materials have sufficient interactivity (student-to-content, student-to-student and student-to-teacher) to encourage active engagement and enable students to test their knowledge, understanding and skills.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

15 Independent learning materials provide learners with regular feedback through self-assessment activities or tests.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

16 Courses conform to explicit guidelines concerning layout and presentation and are as consistent as possible across a programme.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

17 Courses provide both formative and summative assessment. Assessment is explicit, fair, valid and reliable. Appropriate measures are in place to prevent impersonation and/or plagiarism, especially where assessments are conducted online.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

18 Course materials, including the intended learning outcomes, are reviewed by expert educators prior to first use, and then regularly reviewed, up-dated and improved using feedback from stakeholders.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

## 4. Course Delivery

Course delivery encompasses the Virtual Learning Environment, personal learning environments and/or other channels, such as social media, through which students receive their course materials or communicate with fellow learners and staff.<sup>1</sup> These systems represent a very significant investment of financial and human resource in their acquisition and on-going support.

The selection of a particular system, which may influence teaching developments for many years, should be driven by both educational and technical requirements. Educational requirements include delivery of learning resources, facilities for online communication and tools for assessment. Technical requirements include reliability and security standards. The delivery system should be reviewed and monitored to ensure it continues to meet these requirements.

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19 The technical infrastructure maintaining the e-learning system is fit for purpose and supports academic, social and administrative functions.. Technical specification is based on stakeholder requirements and involves realistic estimates of system usage and development.

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Excellent in all aspects                             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Adequate with some examples of excellent performance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Adequate   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not adequate in some aspects                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not adequate in majority of aspects                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

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<sup>1</sup> The system through which the e-learning student interacts with the University may have several components: a system through which the student accesses learning materials and teaching services, an administrative system that handles registration, etc. These components may be commercially acquired or developed by the institution itself. We are using the term VLE as a coverall term to describe this system. In a well-developed system a student should be able to access all services via a single log-on.

20 The systems for communication and storage of data are secure, reliable and assure appropriate levels of privacy. Measures are in place for system recovery in the event of failure or breakdown.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

21 Appropriate provision is made for system maintenance, monitoring and review of performance against the standards set. These standards are updated when necessary.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

22 E-learning systems provide a choice of online tools which are appropriate for the educational models adopted and for the requirements of students and educators.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

23 Information about how to use the institution’s e-learning systems and services is provided to all users in a logical, consistent and reliable way.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

24 Institutional materials and information accessible through the VLE are regularly monitored, reviewed and updated. The responsibility for this is clearly defined and those responsible are provided with appropriate and secure access to the system to enable revision and updating.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

## 5. Staff Support

The objective of staff support services is to enable all members of academic, administrative and technical staff to contribute fully to e-learning development and service delivery. Institutional adoption of innovations from the media and technical landscape will trigger the need for specific staff development activities. There is also a need for ongoing dissemination of good practice.

Academic staff need particular support to make the transition from traditional face-to-face teaching to effective teaching using an online environment; this support should encompass both educational and technical aspects without demanding that academics become ICT or media specialists in their own right.

Teaching through e-learning should be acknowledged when managing staff workload. Career development incentives should promote the use of e-learning. It is important to address the needs of both full time and associate staff who may be employed in a number of teaching and administrative roles.

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25 Staff in academic, media development and administrative roles can adequately support the development and delivery of e-learning elements and activities.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

26 The institution ensures that appropriate training and support is provided for staff and that this training is enhanced in the light of technological and educational developments.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

27 Educational research and innovation in e-learning are regarded as high status activities, and are promoted by career development incentives.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

28 There are mechanisms for the dissemination of good practice based on experience and research on e-learning.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

29 The institution ensures that issues of staff workload, and any other implications of staff participation in e-learning activities, are taken into account when managing courses or programmes.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

30 Adequate support and resources (e.g. technical helpdesk and administrative support) are available to academic staff, including any affiliated tutors/mentors.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

## 6. Student Support

Student support services are an essential component of e-learning provision. Students' retention, success and satisfaction are their main objectives.

Institutions should develop policies and strategies for the design and provision of student support services. Although the delivery of student support services may vary between institutions, some aspects of student support should be taken into account in all e-learning programmes.

Summarizing, support services for e-learning students should be designed to cover the pedagogic, technical and administrative aspects that affect the online learner:

- Clear and up-to-date information and advice about courses should be provided to enable students to make informed choices.
- Information and advice about technical and administrative matters should be easily accessible.
- Guidance, resources and activities should be provided to support students on their journey through university, including induction, pastoral support, the development of generic study skills and e-learning skills, and career advice.
- Staffed helpdesk and advisory services should be provided at times appropriate to students' needs.
- Online library services should be provided to e-learning students. Study centres may be appropriate for some courses.
- Students should be supported through online communities.

Quality student support services depend on adequate numbers of professional staff. Students should be provided with identified academic contacts responsible for providing feedback and support. Other supporting roles and services should be also available.

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31 Students are provided with clear and up-to-date information about their courses including learning and assessment methods.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

32 Students are provided with guidelines stating their rights, roles and responsibilities and those of their institution. Guidelines of specific relevance to e-learning include provision of hardware, information on accessibility and expected participation in collaborative activities.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

33 Social media opportunities are provided in order to build and support student communities. This may be achieved using the institution’s VLE or through external social networking sites, as appropriate.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

34 Students have access to support services including technical helpdesk, administrative support and course choice advice.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*

35 Students have access to learning resources including online library access, study skills development and a study advisor, and they receive guidelines and training in using these resources.

- Excellent in all aspects
- Adequate with some examples of excellent performance
- Adequate
- Not adequate in some aspects
- Not adequate in majority of aspects

*Please add your comments or refer to evidence:*