



POLICY TITLE: OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) POLICY

Policy number:
AP-OPS 9

Policy group:
Academic Operations

Effective:
01/11/2024

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PURPOSE

- To position UGHE as a leader in delivering high-quality global health education through ODL.
- To ensure UGHE's ODL programs align with accreditation and regulatory standards while fostering academic excellence and integrity.
- To enhance UGHE's impact on health care capacity-building by expanding access to quality education and training across different regions.

DEFINITIONS

Blended Learning: Blended learning is a meaningful, aligned combination of online and face-to-face teaching and learning that takes advantage of both approaches. A combination of online and in-person teaching methods, integrating digital resources, virtual simulations, and interactive content to enhance learning outcomes. Blended learning is a coherent design approach that openly assesses and integrates the strengths of face-to-face and online learning to address worthwhile educational goals.

Online Learning: The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to facilitate distance learning, flexible learning and the implementation of open learning policies.

Distance learning: Individual study of specially prepared learning materials, usually print and sometimes e-learning, supplemented by integrated learning resources, other learning experiences, including face-to-face teaching and practical experience, feedback on learning and student support.

Open distance Learning (ODL): A comprehensive learning approach that removes barriers to education by providing flexible, technology-driven learning solutions, emphasizing student-centered pedagogy and support.

Student Support: A range of services is provided to ODL students, including academic advising, technical assistance, career counseling, and virtual mentoring to ensure successful learning outcomes.

SCOPE

The University of Global Health Equity (UGHE) is committed to transforming global health education and addressing inequities in healthcare through high-quality, accessible, and innovative Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programs.



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UGHE's mission aligns with promoting social justice, equity, and inclusion by providing flexible learning opportunities for diverse populations, including professionals, students in remote locations, and those with limited access to traditional education.

As an institution dedicated to equity-driven health education, UGHE integrates technology-enhanced learning with global best practices to ensure inclusive, student-centered ODL programs.

PROCEDURE

1. Principles

UGHE's ODL model aims to:

- Ensure equitable access to education for all learners, irrespective of geographical, economic, or social barriers.
- Provide high-quality, student-centered learning experiences.
- Integrate cutting-edge digital learning tools and resources to enhance global health education.
- Maintain rigorous academic standards, ensuring that distance learning students receive the same quality of education as on-campus students.
- Promote active engagement and interactivity through virtual discussions, collaborative projects, and peer-learning networks.
- Ethical Use of Technology: learning governance prioritizes ethical technology use in continuous professional development.
- Scalability and Sustainability: learning initiatives be scalable to accommodate large numbers of learners and sustainable in the long term.

2. Academic Collaboration

- UGHE shall establish virtual learning centers where appropriate to bring services closer to learners.
- UGHE will collaborate with distance education institutions locally, regionally and internationally to provide opportunities for students and staff.
- When engaging in collaborative arrangements for ODL delivery, UGHE shall establish written agreements specifying rights and responsibilities, clear declaration of ownership and legal responsibility, documentation of accreditation status, and identification of academic resources supporting the collaboration.

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3. Academic Systems

3.1. Curriculum Design

- UGHE's ODL programs shall align with accreditation requirement to ensure standards.
- Curriculum design shall be based on analyzing the existing societal needs and identifying gaps or problems that must be addressed.
- Curriculum design shall define the purpose of the curriculum and the broad education goal
- Curriculum design shall orient to agreed-up-on graduate outcome abilities and organized around competencies derived from an analysis of societal and patient needs
- Curriculum design shall ensure both horizontal and vertical integration Curricula shall be designed to incorporate interactive, competency-based learning and real-world applications.
- Programs shall integrate case studies, research projects, and community-based learning to enhance practical applications.
- Curriculum design shall clearly state objectives, learning outcomes (LOs), content areas, media and media mix to be used in presenting different content areas, and resources to be used for teaching and learning.
- Curriculum design shall determine what will be assessed, how, and when throughout the curriculum.
- Curriculum design shall determine how and when the curriculum evaluation will occur (evaluate by design').

3.2. Teaching and Learning Methods

- UGHE shall employ a mix of synchronous (live virtual lectures) and asynchronous (pre-recorded modules, discussion forums) teaching methods.
- Shall be purposeful (aligned with LOs) and allow student mental process, enough practice, and feedback.
- Shall employ active learning methods that engage students cognitively and meaningfully with the learning materials and get involved with the information presented.
- Shall offer self-directed online materials and resources created with an authoring tool to learn at their own pace and learning path.
- Shall create interaction with peers and/or facilitators to foster collaborative learning.
- Shall keep track of students' work and offer specific feedback to help them improve their skills and knowledge (Coaching).
- Shall create opportunities for students to think about how and when to apply /transfer learning to a workplace).
- Shall create opportunities for students to be involved in work-based problem-solving.
- Problem-based learning and virtual lab sessions shall be incorporated to enhance engagement.
- Faculty shall be trained in digital pedagogy and technology-driven education.

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3.3. Assessment and Evaluation

- Shall have clear and measurable learning outcomes that outline what students are expected to know and be able to do by the end of a course or program
- Shall ensure a constructive alignment with instructional activities and learning objectives to promote coherence and reinforce learning
- Shall incorporate both formative assessment (to provide feedback and support learning) and summative assessment (to evaluate student achievement) throughout the course or program
- UGHE shall implement various assessment methods (robust assessment mechanisms), including online exams, research assignments, and peer-reviewed projects.
- Shall provide timely, constructive feedback to students on their performance to support their learning and encourage reflection and improvement
- Shall be flexible in assessment formats and timing for students with special needs
- Anti-plagiarism tools such as Turnitin shall be used to uphold academic integrity.
- Continuous feedback mechanisms shall be established to support student success.
- Digital safety during assessment will be confirmed by the use of Lockdown browser, Speedwell and Canvas assessment systems.

3.4. Self-Learning Materials

- UGHE shall ensure availability of self-learning materials suited to students' characteristics, media used, and separation from instructors.
- UGHE shall ensure materials are free from significant errors, misleading information, or outdated content.

4. Delivery Channels

- UGHE's Learning Management System (LMS) - Canvas shall be the primary platform for course delivery.
- Cloud-based resources, mobile-compatible content, and digital libraries shall be utilized to ensure accessibility.
- Virtual conferencing tools such as Zoom shall facilitate interactive discussions and mentorship.

5. Pre-testing and piloting of Learning Materials

- UGHE shall establish mechanisms for pre-testing and piloting learning materials to ensure they are at the appropriate level and enable learners to achieve intended outcomes.

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6. Review of Curriculum and Learning Materials

- UGHE shall implement regular review mechanisms of curriculum and instructional materials by peers and experts.

7. Student Support Systems

- UGHE shall provide virtual orientation sessions to familiarize students with ODL platforms and policies and the basic skills needed for ODL (e.g. Computer skills)
- Online academic advising, mentorship, and career counseling shall be available.
- Digital peer-learning communities and interactive group discussions shall be encouraged.
- A dedicated IT support team shall assist students with technical issues.
- Special accommodation shall be provided for students with disabilities in accordance with UGHE's accessibility policies.

8. Staff Support

- UGHE shall provide appropriate orientation and training for faculty members, course tutors and counselors on ODL curriculum design and materials development.
- UGHE shall ensure appropriate orientation of non-academic staff on the role of non-academic staff in the learning environment and understanding learner concerns and needs.

9. Administrative Systems**9.1. Admission and Registration**

- UGHE's ODL admissions shall ensure ODL increases access and equity by reducing admission barriers, and incorporating flexible enrollment options for working professionals, while adhering to general university policies.
- A full online application and registration system shall be implemented.
- Student records, including transcripts and grades, shall be maintained digitally.

9.2. Program Structure and Duration

- UGHE shall ensure flexibility in program structures and duration by clearly tabulating program units with prerequisites, providing for varied unit loads and setting maximum unit limits to ensure timely completion.

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10.Examination Regulations

- UGHE shall inform learners about any external examinations and their requirements at enrollment.
- UGHE shall maintain written examination regulations covering types of examinations (continuous assessment, final examinations), assessment ratio between continuous and final examinations, grading systems, disciplinary procedures and appeals, flexibility provisions for learner convenience, regional examination centers, credit accumulation options, and multiple sitting opportunities.

11.Quality Assurance and program evaluation

- A dedicated ODL Quality Assurance Team in partnership with the EDQC shall oversee compliance with academic and accreditation standards.
- The curriculum, student learning and assessment, and support service shall be continuously monitored through internal and external quality assurance mechanisms.
- Regular student evaluations and faculty performance assessments shall be conducted.
- Continuous program improvement measures shall be implemented based on student feedback and emerging educational trends.
- Effectiveness of the curriculum, learning outcomes, teaching-learning strategies, , learning assessment , student support, and other learning environments shall be periodically evaluated through survey, competency assessment, and stakeholders interview.

12.Facilities, Infrastructure, and Resources

- UGHE shall maintain a robust IT infrastructure, ensuring secure and seamless access to learning platforms.
- Digital libraries, e-books, journals, and online research databases shall be made available to all ODL students.
- Faculty shall be provided with digital teaching tools, including virtual whiteboards, content creation software, and automated grading tools.
- UGHE shall explore partnerships with global health organizations and academic institutions to enhance resource sharing and collaborative learning opportunities.

13.Policy Implementation and Review

- An ODL Steering Committee shall be responsible for policy implementation, oversight, and periodic review.
- The policy shall be reviewed biennially to ensure alignment with global best practices and technological advancements.
- Input from students, faculty, and industry stakeholders shall be incorporated into the review process.

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14. Compliance with Academic Integrity and Institutional Policies

- ODL students shall adhere to UGHE's Honor Code, plagiarism policies, and ethical guidelines.
- Strict data privacy and cybersecurity measures shall be enforced to protect student information.
- UGHE shall implement mechanisms to detect and prevent academic misconduct in online learning environments.

RESPONSIBILITY

UGHE is dedicated to expanding global health education through high-quality Open and Distance Learning. This policy ensures that UGHE's ODL programs uphold academic excellence, inclusivity, and innovation while addressing the evolving needs of health professionals and learners worldwide.

REVISION/REPLACING

This policy shall be subject to review in five years (01/11/2029).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

This policy shall come into effect on the date of its approval by the Academic Commission of the University of Global Health Equity.

Date: 07/11/2024**Approved by:****Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs and Research****Signature:**