UPEI Framework for Online and Technology-Supported Learning Guidelines, Documentation, and Resources

Introduction

The role of online learning in post-secondary education was significantly changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, many universities closed or restricted access to in-person learning on campus, while moving programs and courses online. In general, this emergency response to alternate delivery happened without careful design or preparation of effective teaching and learning in a fully online environment. Now that Canadian universities have transitioned back to mostly in-person learning, there is an opportunity to reflect on their performance during the pandemic, particularly to identify what online options they wish to retain or further develop.

In November 2022, the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, MPHEC, announced a requirement to develop and submit an institutional Framework for Online Learning. To support universities in this endeavor, MPHEC released [Guidelines for Institutional Frameworks for Online and Technology-Supported Learning](). These guidelines identify expectations for developing and implementing online programs within a university. Universities were required to develop a framework that is aligned with these guidelines. Once a university has submitted its framework and received approval by MPHEC, it is no longer required to submit a program proposal to change an existing in-person program to online delivery.

In response to this new requirement from MPHEC, a Working Group was formed to develop a new Institutional Framework for Online Learning at UPEI. The initiative would provide institutional guidance for UPEI in future development of online, technology-supported, student-focused education and learning opportunities.

The working group was comprised of members from across campus who have expertise in areas such as instructional design, faculty development, academic oversight, technology infrastructure, planning, policy, and student support services, as they relate to online learning. Over two years between the Fall 2022 and Fall 2024, the Working Group developed a framework (described herein) that improves the coordination of talent, resources, and operational processes to further develop and support online learning at UPEI.

This document provides a summary of the Working Group's development of the framework. It includes six overarching themes: Planning and Policies; Infrastructure; Academic Oversight; Instructional Design; Instructional Support; and Student Support Services. These themes cover a range of online and technology-supported issues, from whole programs to individual course components. At an institutional level, they will help to identify strengths and weaknesses to enable plans for improvement. At a micro level, they also provide helpful guidance for specific programs, courses, or modules.

Each theme presents a standard that represents a general principle or quality indicator. The standard has a subset of criteria that identify the expectations related to the standard, as well as associated parameters to meet the required standard. These standards and criteria outline the necessary institutional resources and procedures to uphold an effective online teaching and learning environment.

Definitions of Delivery Modes

The MPHEC has adopted the following definitions of delivery modes as recommended by the Canadian Digital Learning Research Association (CDLRA).

- Blended Learning: instruction that combines in-person and online learning activities.
- Online Learning: all instruction and interaction is fully online (synchronous or asynchronous).
- Hybrid Learning: a blend of online and in-person instruction (online instruction is synchronous or asynchronous).
- Hyflex Learning: instruction is available online and in-person, and students can move between online and in-person.
- In-Person Learning: all instruction takes place in an in-person setting.
- Synchronous Learning: instruction takes place in real-time and requires student presence.
- Asynchronous Learning: instruction is available for students to access at a time that works best for them.

Framework Guidelines

1. Planning and Policies		
Guideline		**Documentation, Resources and Status**
1(a)	(i) Online and technology-supported guidelines are in place and updated through consultation and best practices.	• UPEI Online and Technology-Supported Learning Framework • Schedule for review of guidelines by APCC to follow normal policy administration cycle
	(ii) Senate-adopted common definitions for delivery modes align with MPHEC definitions and are clearly shared with campus. align with MPHEC definitions and are clearly shared with campus.	• UPEI Academic Calendar (definitions for delivery modes to be incorporated into Academic Calendar) • MPHEC Online and Technology Supported Learning Guidelines
	(iii) Faculty, staff, and students have access to UPEI Senate policy on quality assurance of academic programming.	• UPEI Senate Policy on Quality Assurance of Academic Programs
1(b)	Faculty, staff, and students are provided with information on the location of resources specific to online and technology-supported learning so they can ask questions and access supports.	• UPEI Teaching and Learning Centre
1(c)	Safeguards to support privacy, identity, and personal information in relation to online and technology-supported learning through institutional planning, policies are in place.	• Student Confidentiality • Access to Information and Protection of Personal Information Policy • ITSS Retention and Removal of Digital Course Materials Standard
1(d)	(i) Data on student engagement and performance regarding student progression and retention is tracked for evidence-based decision making and continual improvement measures.	• Office of Institutional Research

	(ii) Best practices are considered when developing student feedback methods to inform actions related to the quality of online and technology-supported learning and student experiences in these courses/programs.	• UPEI Teaching and Learning Centre • Indigenous Educational Resources • Instructional Resources Hub – Gathering and Implementing Student Feedback
1(e)	Policies and processes are in place to foster academic honesty and integrity, and how to address misconduct.	• Academic Integrity (Undergraduate Regulation 20) • Academic Integrity (Graduate Regulation 6) • Student Code of Conduct • UPEI Robertson Library Academic Integrity Portal • UPEI Teaching and Learning Centre • UPEI Generative AI Task Force • Responsible Conduct of Research, Scholarly, and Creative Work • Instructional Resources Hub – Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct
1(f)	Policies, processes along with instructor and student resources and supports are in place to safeguard equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility as they relate to online and technology-supported learning.	• EDI Strategy • Accessibility Services • UPEI Teaching and Learning Centre • Instructional Resources Hub – Safeguarding EDI and Accessibility • Fair Treatment Policy (to be replaced by Harassment and Discrimination Policy)

2. Infrastructure

Guideline		Documentation, Resources and Status
2(a)	Mechanisms are in place to identify when to update any technologies employed, to evaluate emerging technologies, and to ensure access for students and faculty.	• Audio Visual Guidelines and Standards • Classroom and Lab Software
2(b)	Appropriate risk management provisions are in place (e.g., to ensure technological infrastructure and course management systems are stable, reliable, well maintained, secure, and scalable; a disaster recovery plan is available in the event that services or technologies fail; faculty and students are not adversely affected should an agreement with a partner or contractor be repealed; and faculty and students are provided with timely updates about impending changes).	• Retention and Removal of Digital Course Materials • Electronic Information and Systems Policy • System Maintenance Standard • Wireless Network Security Standard
2(c)	The institutional, departmental, or unit budgets account for investment, as needed, in appropriate technical and physical infrastructure (e.g., library services, laptop loan programs, computer labs and printing services, subscriptions and licenses to online educational	• Computer Modernization and Replacement Program • Library resource reports for new or modified courses and programs—contact the University Librarian to initiate

	resources and software, and on-campus spaces that support the use of online technology).	

3. Academic Oversight

	Guideline	**Documentation, Resources and Status**
3(a)	Program development committees or equivalent have members who can effectively assess the design of online and technology-supported programs or are required/encouraged to consult with appropriate professionals who can do so.	• Revised APCC templates (for effective assessment of the design of online / tech-supported programs – under development) • Consultation with TLC Instructional Designers • Rubric or checklist for use during the course / program development process (under development)
3(b)	APCC regularly reviews programs and courses to ensure: • appropriateness of the mode of delivery and its impact upon the pathways for students; • access to and utilization of student support services, staffing and other resources; • curriculum continues to be aligned with articulated learning outcomes; and • consistent pathways to graduation for students. Internal formative course reviews are conducted after 1-2 offerings of a newly developed online or technology-supported courses.	• UPEI Senate Policy on Quality Assurance of Academic Programs • MPHEC: New Programs and Ongoing QA • Regular review of programs and courses (APCC) • Documentation / checklist for review processes (Office of Quality Assurance and Planning) • Training and workshops (TLC)
3(c)	(i) Induction and Professional development training opportunities include both technical and pedagogical aspects of online and technology-supported learning.	• Training to onboard instructors before teaching online (under development) • Training for academic administrators and senators around how to judge the appropriateness, accessibility, and strategic fit of online courses and programs (under development) • Training for academic support staff to meet the unique needs of online learners (under development)
	(ii) Academic regulations reflect needs, concerns, and issues specific to online and technology-enhanced teaching and learning.	• UPEI Academic Regulations: Undergraduate; Graduate

4. Instructional Design

	Guideline	**Documentation, Resources and Status**
4(a)	The development of new and modified programs with online or other technology-supported learning is based on quality standards and sound educational principles and ensures that faculty and staff understand that program outcomes are independent of delivery mode.	• Quality Assurance Guidelines for Academic Units • Instructional Resources Hub—Quality Standards and Sound Educational Principles • UPEI Office of Quality Assurance and Planning

			• APCC New / Revised Program Forms
4(b)	(i) Incorporate inclusive assessment design to meet the needs of diverse learners.		• UPEI Procedures and Guidelines on Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities – January 2023 • Ethics Committee documents (Research-oriented programs) • UPEI Teaching and Learning Centre • UPEI Accessibility Services • UPEI EDIHR • Teaching and Learning Guide for UPEI Instructors – Open Textbook • Accessibility Information for UPEI Faculty and Instructors • Instructional Resources Hub – Inclusive Assessment Design • UDL-IRN: UDL Resources
	(ii) Map knowledge, skills, and assessment tasks to learning outcomes.		• UPEI Teaching and Learning Centre • Instructional Resources Hub – Curriculum Mapping
	(iii) Develop disciplinary skills progressively.		• APCC guiding documents • UPEI Teaching and Learning Centre • Instructional Resources Hub – Develop Skills Progressively
	(iv) Consider the implications of cohort models and other team, collaborate, and networked learning environments.		• Check/Revised APCC forms • UPEI Teaching and Learning Centre • Teaching and Learning Guide for UPEI Instructors – Open Textbook • Instructional Resources Hub – Networked and Collaborative Learning Models
	(v) Facilitate interaction between support staff, faculty, and students.		• Faculty Association Collective Agreement: A-8.2 (Teaching and Advising); and A-9.3 (Librarians' Professional Practice) • UPEI Teaching and Learning Centre • Library Council • Deans Council • Faculty work groups for lab instructors • Student Affairs • Instructional Resources Hub - Facilitate Interaction

5. Instructional Support

Guidelines		Documentation, Resources and Status
5(a)	Instructors are provided with / participate in on-boarding training for online and tech-supported education.	• Regular offerings of Moodle Essentials workshop in-person and online • Academic Instructional Skills Program (AISP) Courses – Teaching Online, Blended Learning, Teaching with Technology, Moodle Essentials

		• Faculty Academy for Online Educators (a variation of Sessional Faculty Academy – under development)
5(b)	Instructors are provided with resources to assist them in selecting textbooks and developing online course materials.	• Atlantic OER • OER Development Grants • Online reserves at Library including a revised process to efficiently receive information about required and recommended course materials (under development) • Process to review online course materials to ensure accessibility and availability (under Senate Policy for Quality Assurance of Academic Programs)
5(c)	Administrators and review committees understand and value online and technology-supported teaching and use holistic approaches in the assessment and evaluation of online and technology-supported teaching.	• Annual training workshop for Dept. Chairs and Deans incorporates a module about online and technology-supported teaching and how to provide appropriate comments and advice as part of faculty reviews (under development, TLC / SCENT) • Training for (new) DRC and URC members ensures that designated evaluators have appropriate knowledge and skills to assess online and technology-supported teaching (in progress, TLC / SCENT) • Webpage on the TLC website with resources for instructors on various types of evidence of effective teaching (in progress, TLC)
5(d)	(i) Courses are scheduled and assigned with adequate time and funding for course development in the appropriate modality.	• Course assignment and Instructor hiring practices in FA Collective Agreement • Start dates for sessional contracts (Collective Agreement)
	(ii) Intellectual property rights of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) are addressed so that online course materials can be used by other instructors to ensure continuity within online programs.	• Collective Agreement - IP rights for SMEs engaged in the development of online and technology-enhanced courses and programs

6. Student Support and Services

Guideline		Documentation, Resources and Status
6(a)	Clear and consistent communication about the delivery mode for a program is provided to students in program materials and for each course in a program at the point of registration.	• Definitions of Delivery Modes • MyUPEI labels (in progress) • Timetable policy (pending update)
6(b)	Student orientation is provided for programs and courses with online and technology-supported learning, which includes:	• Moodle/LMS – Welcome to Moodle video • Helpdesk@upei.ca • Studentsupport@upei.ca

	• the required or available technology and materials to participate (e.g., clarification on library access, and tools, equipment, or software to be purchased or provided); • the level of preparation (e.g., technical knowledge and skills); • expectations of compliance with institutional policies; • any additional costs associated with the mode of delivery; • the kinds of support and protection available to them (e.g., intellectual property and privacy); and • staff and faculty availability.	• Subject librarians can provide course-specific information or instruction upon request • Policies: Academic Integrity, etc. UPEI policies, procedures and guidelines • Student Orientation materials for online courses (to be developed) • TLC instructional development course (in progress) • Generative Artificial Intelligence Guidelines for Students (pending)
6(c)	A range of support services are accessible, especially for students who study fully or mostly online (e.g., accessibility services; academic advising, library services; technical support and training; career services; health services).	• Student Services and Counselling • ITSS • Library • Health Centre • Studentsupport@upei.ca • Health and Dental Coverage • Career Services Website
6(d)	Online and technology-supported learning includes provisions designed to meet the needs of learners with disabilities (e.g., closed captioning, compatibility with screen readers).	• UPEI Accessibility Services website • Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Policy • Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Guidelines • Counselling Services • Instructional Resources Hub – Safe-Guarding EDI and Accessibility
6(e)	Students provide feedback on support mechanisms and services provided fully or partially online.	• Faculty/Departments • Helpdesk@upei.ca • Studentsupport@upei.ca • Student Union • Student Affairs • Process for feedback through regular meetings between Student Union executive members and academic administrators
6(f)	Guidelines for online student behaviour and etiquette foster positive interaction, and chat rooms and other interactive features are moderated by staff/faculty.	• Student Code of Conduct • ITSS Use Policy • Indigenous Ceremonial Practices UPEI Guidelines
6(g)	Policies determine when interventions are needed to support students at risk of failure or discontinuation of studies.	• Academic Regulations (Academic Standing) • Admissions Standards • UPEI EDI Strategy • Student of Concern • Scholarships and Awards • LMS analytics guidelines and procedures

Acknowledgements

December 4, 2024