

## **Blended Learning Procedures**

<b>Policy Number:</b>	ICCS-BLP-V1-2025
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Head of Quality Assurance
<b>Approved By:</b>	Senior Leadership Team
<b>Approval Date:</b>	November 2025
<b>Next Review Date:</b>	January 2027
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## Introduction

International College of Contemporary Sciences ICCS recognises that well designed blended learning offers significant opportunities to enhance flexibility, accessibility and student engagement, by combining the strengths of face to face interaction with the benefits of digital technologies and online resources. The college also acknowledges that poorly planned or inconsistently implemented blended approaches can create confusion, inequity and disengagement for students and staff. This Blended Learning Procedures document therefore sets out how ICCS will design, deliver and support blended provision in a way that is pedagogically robust, inclusive and aligned with regulatory expectations and sector good practice.

The procedures are intended to provide a coherent framework within which programme teams, academic staff and professional services can make informed choices about the balance of online and on-site activity, the use of digital platforms and tools, and the support and communication that students require in blended environments. They sit alongside and are informed by related ICCS policies on quality assurance, assessment, equality, diversity and inclusion, reasonable adjustments, student support and information technology. Taken together, these documents articulate the ICCS commitment to delivering high quality learning experiences, whether students are engaging on campus, online or through a combination of both.

## Purpose and Aims

The purpose of these procedures is to establish clear expectations and practical guidance for the planning, delivery and review of blended learning across ICCS programmes and modules. They are designed to support consistency of student experience, while allowing appropriate flexibility to respond to the specific needs of disciplines, cohorts and partnership arrangements. By setting out the principles, roles and processes that underpin blended provision, the procedures aim to ensure that students understand what to expect from their learning, that staff are supported in developing and delivering effective blended approaches, and that quality assurance mechanisms can operate reliably in digital as well as physical spaces.

The key aims are to promote pedagogically sound use of technology to support active and collaborative learning, to protect academic standards and assessment integrity in blended contexts, and to ensure that no student is disadvantaged as a result of their location, access to technology or particular needs. The procedures also aim to encourage innovation and continuous enhancement in digital and blended teaching, informed by evidence and student feedback, and to ensure that ICCS can respond resiliently to disruption, for example where temporary moves to greater online delivery

are required. In doing so they support the strategic ambitions of the college and its responsibilities to students, partners and regulators.

## **Definition and Scope of Blended Learning**

For the purposes of this document blended learning is defined as a planned and coherent combination of face to face and online learning activities, teaching methods and resources that are integrated to achieve specified learning outcomes. It is distinguished from ad hoc use of digital tools or emergency remote teaching in response to short term disruption, although the procedures may inform responses to such situations. Blended learning may include synchronous online sessions, asynchronous digital materials, virtual collaboration, on site seminars, workshops and practical activities, and independent study supported by virtual learning environments and other platforms.

These procedures apply to all programmes and modules delivered by ICCS that incorporate a substantive blended element, whether at the level of individual sessions or the overall design of delivery. They cover learning activities taking place on ICCS premises, at partner or placement sites and through online platforms under ICCS control or oversight. Where ICCS programmes are delivered in collaboration with partners, the procedures are intended to provide a common framework that can be adapted to local context, subject to agreement and to the requirements of awarding organisations and regulators. The procedures do not replace detailed programme or module specifications, but complement them by addressing cross cutting expectations for blended provision.

## **Regulatory and Sector Context**

ICCS designs and delivers blended learning in a regulatory environment that places increasing emphasis on the quality and reliability of digital and flexible provision. The college therefore has regard to the expectations of the Office for Students and other regulators in relation to academic quality, student outcomes, digital learning and information provision, including the need to ensure that promised learning opportunities are realistically deliverable in blended formats. Where qualifications are regulated by Ofqual or other awarding organisations, ICCS will also comply with relevant conditions and guidance on the conduct of online teaching and assessment, including requirements for security, authentication and record keeping.

The procedures are informed by recognised sector guidance on technology enhanced learning, digital pedagogy and online assessment, including materials produced by Jisc and other national bodies, and by the United Kingdom Quality Code and related reference points on learning, teaching, student engagement and information provision.

ICCS will keep its approach to blended learning under review in the light of evolving sector evidence, emerging technologies and student expectations, and will revise these procedures when necessary to ensure that they remain aligned with good practice and regulatory developments.

## **Principles for Blended Learning Design and Delivery**

Blended learning at ICCS is guided by principles that place pedagogy before technology and students at the centre of design decisions. Learning activities are selected and sequenced on the basis of how effectively they support achievement of learning outcomes, rather than on the availability of particular tools or the desire to use technology for its own sake. Online and face to face components are intended to complement and reinforce one another, creating a coherent journey for students in which expectations are clear and workloads are manageable. Where possible, activities are designed to promote active engagement, collaboration, reflection and timely feedback, rather than passive consumption of materials.

The college is committed to ensuring that blended provision is inclusive and accessible, taking account of the needs of students with different learning preferences, digital skills and personal circumstances. This includes attention to the accessibility of digital content, clarity of instructions and timelines, and provision for students who may have intermittent connectivity or limited access to devices. It also involves structuring opportunities for students to build relationships with peers and staff, both online and on site, and providing a sense of belonging and support. Assessment within blended modules will adhere to principles of validity, reliability, fairness and academic integrity, and will be clearly explained in relation to the blended design.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Responsibility for the quality and effectiveness of blended learning is shared across the institution. Programme leaders and module leaders are responsible for ensuring that blended designs are pedagogically sound, aligned with programme learning outcomes and compliant with ICCS policies and external requirements. They coordinate the development of digital materials and activities, oversee consistency across modules and ensure that students receive clear information about expectations, schedules and modes of engagement. Academic staff delivering blended modules are responsible for facilitating online and face to face activities, monitoring participation, providing timely feedback and signposting support.

Professional services colleagues, including learning technologists, library and learning resources staff and information technology teams, play a key role in supporting the

design, implementation and maintenance of digital platforms and resources. Quality assurance staff ensure that blended elements are appropriately considered in validation, monitoring and review processes, and that evidence about student outcomes and experience is used to inform enhancement. Students also have responsibilities within blended learning, including engaging actively with scheduled activities, managing their time and digital workload, communicating difficulties promptly and providing constructive feedback. Senior leaders are responsible for resourcing and championing blended learning and for ensuring that staff have access to development and guidance.

## **Designing Blended Curricula and Modules**

When designing or reviewing curricula and modules that incorporate blended learning, ICCS expects teams to adopt a structured approach that begins with clear articulation of learning outcomes and assessment strategies. Teams should then determine which elements of the curriculum are best suited to face-to-face delivery, which can be delivered effectively online, and how these elements will interact to support progression in knowledge, skills and understanding. Consideration should be given to how students will be introduced to digital platforms and expectations, how formative and summative assessment points will be distributed across online and on-site components and how feedback will be integrated into the learning cycle.

Design processes should also take account of student's overall workload and the cumulative impact of blended activities across modules and stages, to avoid overload or conflicting demands. Where programmes are subject to professional or statutory body requirements, these must be reflected in decisions about the proportion and nature of online provision, particularly in relation to practical skills, supervision and assessment. Programme approval and review processes will include scrutiny of blended designs, including evidence that students and external examiners have been consulted and that equality and accessibility considerations have been addressed.

## **Digital Platforms, Learning Resources and Accessibility**

ICCS uses approved digital platforms, including virtual learning environments and associated tools, as the primary means of delivering online components of blended learning. Programme and module teams are expected to use these platforms in a consistent and structured way so that students can readily navigate between modules and understand where to find key information, learning materials, activities and feedback. Essential information such as module aims, learning outcomes, assessment details, schedules and contact arrangements should be clearly signposted and kept up

to date, and core resources should be accessible through the platforms wherever licensing permits.

The college will ensure that digital platforms and resources meet appropriate standards of reliability, security and accessibility and will work with suppliers and staff to address any gaps. Staff are expected to follow guidance on creating accessible content, for example using clear headings, providing alternative text for images, offering transcripts or captions for audio visual materials and avoiding unnecessary barriers for screen reader users. Students will be provided with guidance and support to develop their digital skills and to make effective use of online resources, and will be encouraged to raise concerns where they encounter accessibility or usability issues so that these can be addressed promptly.

## **Student Induction, Support and Engagement**

Effective blended learning depends on students understanding what is expected of them and feeling confident in their ability to engage with online and on-site components. ICCS will therefore ensure that students receive an appropriate induction to blended learning, including orientation to digital platforms, explanation of participation expectations and guidance on managing time and workload in a blended context. Induction activities may include demonstrations, practice tasks, peer support and signposting to digital skills resources, and should be revisited at key transition points, such as the start of new stages or modules.

Throughout their studies, students will have access to academic and pastoral support that is responsive to the particular challenges and opportunities of blended provision. This includes opportunities for regular contact with tutors, mechanisms for asking questions about online materials, and access to support services that can be reached both on campus and digitally. Programme teams are expected to monitor engagement, for example using attendance data and learning analytics, and to follow up where patterns suggest that students may be disengaging or encountering difficulties. Students, in turn, are encouraged to participate actively in online discussions, collaborative tasks and feedback opportunities, recognising that these are integral to their learning experience.

## **Assessment, Academic Integrity and Authenticity**

Assessment within blended programmes must continue to assure that students have achieved the intended learning outcomes and that academic standards are maintained. ICCS will use a range of assessment methods that are appropriate to blended contexts, including online tests, digital submissions, presentations, projects and practical



demonstrations, as well as traditional examinations and coursework. Assessment tasks should be designed to minimise opportunities for academic misconduct by emphasising higher order skills, critical thinking and application of knowledge in context, and by making use of authentic, real-world tasks where feasible.

Procedures for the conduct of online assessments will include clear guidance on expectations, permitted resources, time limits, identification and verification of student identity and the use of proctoring or monitoring tools where necessary and lawful. ICCS will ensure that students are informed about academic integrity, including plagiarism, collusion and unauthorised use of artificial intelligence tools, and that they know how to reference sources properly in digital as well as traditional formats. Allegations of misconduct in blended or online assessments will be handled under established ICCS policies, with due regard to fairness, evidence and the specific features of digital assessment environments.

### **Learning Analytics, Monitoring and Quality Assurance**

Blended learning generates a range of data about student engagement and performance, including access to materials, participation in activities and assessment outcomes. ICCS will use such data, in combination with qualitative feedback, to monitor the effectiveness of blended provision and to identify where additional support or adjustments may be needed. Any use of learning analytics will be transparent and proportionate, with students informed about what data is collected, how it will be used and what benefits it is intended to deliver. Data will be handled in accordance with data protection legislation and ICCS data governance policies.

Quality assurance processes, including validation, annual monitoring, periodic review and external examining, will explicitly consider the design, delivery and outcomes of blended learning. Evidence about student achievement, satisfaction, retention and progression will be analysed by mode of delivery where possible, so that differences can be understood and addressed. Feedback from students, staff, external examiners and partners will be used to inform enhancement actions, and examples of effective blended practice will be identified and shared across programmes. These processes will support the continuous improvement of digital and blended provision and contribute to institutional assurance that standards and quality are being maintained.

### **Staff Development and Digital Capability**

ICCS recognises that staff confidence and competence in using digital technologies and in designing blended learning are critical to the success of these procedures. The college will therefore provide opportunities for academic and professional services staff

to develop their digital and pedagogic skills, through induction, workshops, online resources, peer observation and communities of practice. Topics may include the use of the virtual learning environment and associated tools, inclusive digital design, facilitation of online discussion, creation of multimedia resources and design of assessments suitable for blended environments.

Managers will support staff in identifying development needs through appraisal and professional development planning and will take account of digital capability when allocating responsibilities and designing roles. ICCS will recognise and value innovation and leadership in blended learning, for example through teaching awards, promotion criteria or internal recognition schemes, in order to encourage continuous professional growth. Staff will be encouraged to share experiences, reflect on challenges and learn from both internal and external examples of effective blended practice.

### **Risk Management, Continuity and Data Protection**

Blended learning depends on the reliable functioning of digital systems and the availability of appropriate hardware and connectivity. ICCS will work with technology providers and internal teams to manage risks associated with system failures, cyber security threats and data loss, and will maintain contingency plans for maintaining critical learning activities in the event of disruption. This may include alternative communication channels, offline access to key materials or temporary adjustments to assessment arrangements, implemented in a way that is fair and clearly communicated to students and staff.

The college will ensure that the use of digital platforms for learning and assessment complies with data protection and privacy requirements, including appropriate control of access to personal data, secure authentication and retention and deletion of data in line with policy. Students and staff will be reminded of their responsibilities in relation to the use of personal devices, storage of information and appropriate conduct in online spaces. Where blended activities involve recording of teaching sessions or student contributions, ICCS will make clear the purposes of recording, the conditions of access and the implications for privacy, and will provide alternatives where recording is not appropriate or consent cannot be obtained.

### **Monitoring, Review and Continuous Improvement**

These Blended Learning Procedures will be subject to ongoing monitoring and periodic formal review, in order to ensure that they remain effective, proportionate and responsive to the evolving context of digital education. Monitoring will draw on evidence from programme monitoring reports, student and staff surveys, focus groups, external



examiner comments, partner feedback and analysis of engagement and outcome data. Governance bodies will receive regular summaries of this information and will oversee the development and implementation of action plans to address identified issues or to capitalise on opportunities for enhancement.

A full review of the procedures will normally take place at least every two years, or sooner if there are significant changes in regulatory expectations, institutional strategy or the technological environment. Revisions will be informed by consultation with students, staff, partners and other stakeholders, and will be approved through established ICCS governance processes. By treating these procedures as a living framework, ICCS aims to ensure that its approach to blended learning continues to align with its mission, values and quality expectations and supports positive outcomes for all students.

## References

- Office for Students regulatory framework and associated expectations for digital and blended learning.
- Relevant guidance from the Department for Education on remote, online and blended delivery.
- Ofqual and awarding organisation requirements for programmes that include online and blended assessment and delivery, where applicable.
- Recognised sector guidance on technology enhanced learning and digital pedagogy, including materials published by Jisc.
- United Kingdom Quality Code and related sector reference points on learning, teaching and student engagement.
- Professional and statutory body guidance, where relevant, on the use of blended and online approaches in regulated professions.