Teaching and Learning Policy

Approved on: 12th February 2023
Approved by: Academic Senate
Contact Person: Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Affairs)

1.   Policy Statement

The Maldives National University (MNU) values the importance of creating a culture of contextualised quality learning and teaching distinguished by collaboration, innovation and excellence. Hence, the University is committed to support student-centred learning, evidence-based instructional practices and assessment environments, where professional academic and services staff focus on providing an excellent student experience.

2.   Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide academic direction to enhance the quality of learning and teaching at The Maldives National University (MNU). The primary aspiration for teaching and learning is to develop globally focused graduates who are rigorous scholars, capable of leadership and functional in a global community. The specific objectives of the policy are:

1.   To support pedagogical transformation through the integration of student centred learning, teaching and assessment strategies across all courses offered by the university;

2.   To promote Evidence-Based Instructional Practices;

3.   To support and promote teaching that focuses on student diversity, inclusivity, experience and employability;

4.   To support the integration of MNU graduate attributes in teaching;

5.   To promote the professionalisation of academic staff in their teaching role, and the scholarship of their teaching practice;

6. To promote the effective use of appropriate physical and digital infrastructure and learning technologies;

7. To ensure that all the courses equip the students with the knowledge, skills and experiences needed to flourish and continue to learn in a complex world and enhance the ability of students to think critically, apply their skills and knowledge, behave ethically, and make informed decisions both as professionals and citizens;

8. To ensure learning and teaching practices are reviewed through a systematic approach; and

9. To ensure that learning and teaching are continuously improved via the quality assurance system.

3. Scope

This is an overarching policy for all related policies in the area of learning and teaching at the University. It applies to all members of the University community and all MNU qualifications.

4. Definitions

Assessments: Evidence of actual learning outcomes and capabilities achieved by the student. Assessment methods can be both formative and summative and are designed to ensure progress in all learning outcomes can be demonstrated and verified.

Attributes: The qualities, skills, dispositions and understandings that a student should gain as a result of the learning and experiences they engage with while at MNU.

Constructive alignment: an approach to learning design where the intended learning outcomes are clearly identified, and the alignment between the said intended learning outcomes, assessments and the learning and teaching activities are ensured (Biggs, 2014).

Faculty: Institutes, centres, schools or other academic units within the University with a major responsibility for teaching students.

Learning-centred approach: A learning-centred approach to teaching is focused on learning as a partnership, where students are seen as co-creators of knowledge and learning environments. In a learning-centred approach, teaching activities facilitate knowledge-building and actively engage students in their own learning.

Learning outcomes: The learning outcomes are the areas of knowledge, understanding, skills, and attributes students are expected to achieve as a result of engagement with the content of a subject course/program leading to a qualification.

Student-centred learning: Student-centred learning is an *educational philosophy* or approach to learning that places students' needs and interests at the forefront of the operations and decision-making. The focus is to make students co-creators of their own education and to engage them in decisions about what, when, and how they learn.

University: The Maldives National University (MNU).

5. Principles of quality teaching

Teaching and learning at MNU should be framed around the following ten principles.

1. Align teaching and learning to MNU strategic goals
2. Focus on developing MNU graduate attributes
3. Engages students in active learning
4. Builds on students' existing knowledge
5. Links learning to professional, disciplinary, industry and/or personal contexts
6. Challenges and supports student learning
7. Communicates expectations and requirements
8. Caters for student diversity
9. Monitor student progress and provide quality feedback
10. Refines teaching and learning through evidenced based teaching practices supported by reflection and feedback.

6. Policy directives

6.1. Engaging Students in Learning

Student engagement must be achieved through the implementation of active learning pedagogy. The observable indicators are:

a. teaching is designed using constructive alignment;

b. learning activities are intellectually challenging, stimulate curiosity and develop critical awareness;

c. meet the diverse needs of students from different life experiences and recognise individual learning needs and extend the student's range of approaches to learning;

d. respect, recognise and build on students' current knowledge and experience and provide appropriate opportunities for the formal recognition of prior learning;

e. provide a variety of meaningful strategies and contexts to enable students to construct and apply new knowledge and skills;

f. encourages and enables students to learn and practice attributes, or vocational competencies which underpin graduate/or industry setting through apprenticeship opportunities for contextualised workplace learning in industry and other relevant settings;

g. create opportunities for regular feedback about learning progress which acknowledges individual learning achievements;

h. provide opportunities for self-assessment and peer-assessment in both the physical and virtual environment; and

i. encourages and enables students to take responsibility for their own learning.

6.2.   Creating Supportive Learning Communities

A supportive learning community is evidenced by the following observable indicators:

a. establish a functional Academic Support System which delivers sustained, effective academic guidance and support to both staff and students;

b. provide access to high quality and well provisioned pastoral support within Faculties and from specialist support services to ensure the physical and emotional welfare of students and staff;

c. employ assessment and feedback strategies that deliver constructive and supportive dialogue between students and staff that focus on students' learning progress

d. provide peer support for learning;

e. provide functional physical and digital infrastructure and learning environments to support and enhance safe and high-quality learning and teaching and interaction between staff and students;

f. use learning analytics systems to help Personal Tutors/lecturers to provide effective academic support and enhance learning;

g. offer responsive, flexible courses that increase the level of student-centeredness, control and access through a range of delivery options including flexible and online learning, and the inclusion of workplace and work integrated learning; and

h. establish responsive mechanisms to ensure employer and industry engagement to support apprenticeship delivery whether on the job or off the job.

6.3. Enhancing and Recognizing Excellence in Teaching

Enhancing and recognizing Excellence in Teaching is evidenced by the following observable indicators:

a. celebrate and reward the innovative teaching practices and showcasing success in teaching in University's internal and external communications;

b. recognise student education as a key element in staff recruitment, promotion and annual review processes;

c. develop robust sources of evidence on the quality of teaching;

d. build communities of practice which encourage innovation and diffuse good ideas across the University;

e. embed professional development in learning and teaching as a routine feature of academic work;

f. pursue the aspiration that every educator is a digital educator, and that all teaching staff are supported in the appropriate use of the full breadth of learning technologies;

g. ensure opportunity for reflection, development and innovation in teaching in workload modelling;

h. provide support for innovative and inclusive learning and teaching practices;

i. promote critical inquiry and research into aspects of teaching, education and training which links teaching practice with research; and

j. integrate discipline specific research, based on the Maldivian context in teaching and learning.

6.4. Reviewing and Evaluation of Learning and Teaching Practices

Review and evaluation of learning and teaching practices is evidenced by the following observable indicators:

a. use peer enhancement models that are embedded throughout existing learning and teaching related roles, and referenced in relevant policy and procedures;

b. publish standard and procedures related to learning and teaching to support quality assurance processes which lead to the integrity of assessment and awarding of Testamurs;

c. continuously review the link between professional development, research and scholarship and learner outcomes and other relevant survey data;

d. conduct cyclic course and subject reviews by the relevant stakeholders;

e. acknowledge and capitalise on the educative expertise and judgement of lecturers in their fields;

f. review the nature and duties of the academic role;

g. conduct summative peer review of teaching (including people, practices, and resources) framed around the principles highlighted in this policy; and

h. share a summary of reviews and evaluations conducted with the respective academic staff at the end of each term or as agreed.

7.   Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Academic staff	• Deliver quality courses for academic success and retention. The responsibilities of academic staff shall be directed by the Academic Workload Policy and their relevant job descriptions. • Ensure the policy principles, directives, and quality assurance standards are followed.
Dean of Faculty	• Offer leadership and facilitate deliberations on issues affecting decisions and processes related to learning and teaching in their faculty.

	• Establish quality assurance processes across departments (at course level) in their faculty to ensure that the policy principles and directives are met. • Facilitate infrastructural facilities and services for delivery of courses internally or by distance including IT, production, printery and learning spaces. • Ensure the policy principles, directives, and quality assurance standards are followed.
Policy and Quality Control Unit (PQCU)	• Quality assurance of study resources such as paper descriptions, paper guides and online learning environments, and any other materials. • Conduct periodic review and evaluation of teaching and learning practices. • Recommend the necessary training to ensure standardisation. • Ensure the policy principles, directives, and quality assurance standards are followed.
Training & Development Unit (TDU)/Centre for Educational Technology Excellence (CETE)	• Professional and teaching development support provided to staff in the preparation, delivery and ongoing revision and quality assurance of qualifications, courses and material. • Conduct training for all the relevant staff on possible ways in which the principle highlighted in this policy can be demonstrated in Face to Face, and online synchronous and asynchronous teaching. • Conduct training regularly to ensure that all teaching staff undergo the same training to ensure standardisation.
Student Support Service	• Ensure students have access to appropriate pastoral care, academic advice and student learning support regardless of mode or locus of study.

Students Administrative Services	• Ensure students have proper guidance and support related to all central administrative functions involved in the student lifecycle, including Registration/Enrolment, Graduation Ceremonies and Research Degree Administration; and provide a central point of contact for students. • Provide administrative support for the course, including collection and compilation of data required for monitoring student progression and recognition of learning. • Present a professional, helpful atmosphere and positive attitude for students, staff, visitors and callers.
Deputy Vice Chancellor of Administration and Finance	• Offer high-level strategic leadership on matters pertaining to teaching and learning resources, infrastructure, and human resource, taking into account the national context and developments within it as well as a broad understanding of the institutional context and particularly the challenges within it.
Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research and Enterprise	• Offer high-level strategic leadership on matters pertaining to connecting research and teaching and learning at MNU, taking into account the national context and developments within it as well as a broad understanding of the institutional context and particularly the challenges within it.
Deputy Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs	• Offer high-level strategic academic leadership on matters pertaining to teaching and learning across all the Faculties, taking into account the national context and developments within it as well as a broad understanding of the institutional context and particularly the challenges within it.
Vice Chancellor	• Offer high-level strategic academic leadership to support the development of quality teaching learning across all the Faculties, including the development of teaching and learning practices, enhancement of teaching and learning

	related infrastructure (physical and virtual), human resource and services and the establishment of monitoring mechanism to ensure accountability and quality assurance of teaching and learning, taking into account the national context and developments within it as well as a broad understanding of the institutional context and particularly the challenges within it.

8. This policy should be read in conjunction with relevant policies, including and not limited to:

1.   MQA Guidelines for E-Learning
2.   MQA Guidelines for programme Accreditation
3.   Maldives National Qualifications Framework (MNQF)
4.   Course Development Procedure
5.   Assessment Policy
6.   Plagiarism Policy
7.   Graduate Attributes policy
8.   Quality Assurance Policy
9.   Student Voice Policy
10.   Captive Audience Policy
11.   Academic Staff Workload policy
12.   Supporting Students with Disability Policy
13.   MNU Strategic Plan
14.   Accreditation Frameworks of relevant regulatory bodies