



Nkumba
University

THE UNIVERSITY E-LEARNING POLICY



July 2020



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Contents

DEFINITIONS	3
1. CONTEXT.....	4
2. POLICY STATEMENT	4
3. VISSION STATEMENT.....	5
4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY	6
5. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY.....	7
6. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER POLICIES/DOCUMENTS	9
6.1 Policy on Infrastructure	9
6.2 Technical Assistance.....	9
6.3 Software/Hardware	10
6.4 IT Network Management and Infrastructure	10
6.5 Role of E-Learning Unit, ICT Directorate and Library.....	10
6.6 Sharing.....	10
6.7 Policy on Virtual Mobility:	11
7. IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE POLICY	11
7.1 E-LEARNING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION.....	11
7.1.1 School	11
7.1.2 Non-School Staff.....	12
7.1.3 Students	12
7.1.4 An E-Learning Unit/Directorate.....	12
7.1.5 E-learning policy implementation advisory group	12
7.2 NKUMBA UNIVERSITY E-LEARNING MODEL.....	13
7.3 E-LEARNING POLICY EVALUATION.	14

Contents

Table of Contents	3
Definitions	5
1 Context	6
2 Policy Statement	6
3 Vision Statement	7
4 Guiding Principles for Implementation of The Policy	8
5 Objectives Of The Policy	9 - 11
6 Relationship with other Policies/Documents	11
6.1 Policy on Infrastructure:	11
6.2 Technical Assistance	11
6.3 Software/Hardware	12
6.4 IT Network Management and Infrastructure	12
6.5 Role of E-Learning Unit, ICT Directorate and Library	12
6.6 Sharing	12
6.7 Policy on Virtual Mobility	12
7 Implementation And Evaluation Of The Policy	13
7.1 E-Learning Policy Implementation	13
7.1.1 School	13
7.1.2 Non-School Staff	13
7.1.3 Students	14
7.1.4 An E-Learning Unit/Directorate	14
7.2 Nkumba University E-Learning Model	15
7.3 E-Learning Policy Evaluation	15

Definitions

Asynchronous- is a student-centered teaching method that uses online learning resources to facilitate information sharing outside the constraints of time and place among a network of people.

Blended Learning - refers to a mixing of different learning environments. It combines traditional face-to-face classroom (traditional course) methods with more modern computer and web-based mediated activities.

Learning Management System- (LMS) is a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, and reporting of training programs, classroom and online events, E-learning programs, and training content

Service Level Management - is the primary management of IT services, ensuring that agreed services are delivered when and where they are supposed to be delivered. The Service Level Manager is dependent upon all the other areas of Service Delivery providing the necessary support that ensures the agreed services are provided in a secure, efficient and cost-effective manner.

Synchronous – this is teaching in real-time using technology tools such video conferencing tools, chat room etc.

e-Learning Content Space – this is an environment that is created based on agreed upon policies and guidelines and combining multiple technologies to allow effective teaching and learning. It can combine things like LMS, video conferencing tools etc.

Ubiquitous Education – this is education that is provided from anywhere, at any time and at the wish of the learners and teachers.

1 Context

A few years ago, education within the ivory towers was tailored around having large infrastructure, physical libraries and learning was meant to take place within a fixed proximity. With the advancement of Information Communication Technology, education has greatly changed and taken on new forms of knowledge delivery and access. As the access to ICT becomes cheaper and easier, educational institutions are changing their strategies on how they would want to deliver learning, allow students access to educational resources, wanting to tap into new markets for education, reducing congestion within the existing infrastructure and influx of students. It should also be noted that many of that almost everyone working in Higher Education has access and use of a computer. On another note, the students entering higher institutions of learning are digital students (born in the era of ICT) and hence can ably use ICT all the time. With such scenarios revolving around education of this era and if the Nkumba University (NU) wants to achieve its mission of quality education and research its investment in E-learning must be taken with the highest priority required.

E-Learning is the use of electronic means to undertake, improve and deliver educational activities ubiquitously. Electronic can refer to all sorts of electronically supported learning and teaching technologies used within the educational process. Therefore e-learning can take on a form that is network dependent or not. E-learning common applications and processes of this era include Web-based learning, computer-based learning, social learning, virtual education opportunities and digital collaboration. Content is delivered via the Internet, intranet/extranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV, and CD-ROM. It can be self-paced or instructor-led and includes media in the form of text, image, animation, streaming video and audio.

Putting the above context in focus, Nkumba University (NU) is striving to create a policy on e-learning that intends to guide and streamline the implementation of e-learning within the University for effective and efficient use of all educational resources. NU is committed to providing education that is of quality, flexible, global and suits the current era of customers. Therefore, it is pertinent for NU to fully establish guidelines that will enable it commit and deliver as expected locally and internationally.

NU anticipates tapping into the advancement of ICT to support its educational delivery that is inclined on the provision of a learning experience that is flexible, effective, global and suits all types of learners across the globe and all its partners.

In order to avoid any conflicts during implementation of the e-learning policy, it will be implemented in line with other existing University policies and procedures. This will ensure that there is no conflict amongst the University policies, processes and responsibilities.

For easy roll out and implementation of e-learning within NU, the educational environment needs to be prepared, enabled and conducive to both students and lecturers. Teachers will need to be trained and prepared to deliver education activities using ICT. The students will be expected to have an access to all required materials/resources so that they are able to meet

the learning goals they set out to achieve.

If E-learning is to be successfully implemented within NU, it should undertake the following;

- The University should have reliable and accessible technology for both students and staff including people with disability
- E-Learning should be inclined to pedagogy rather than technology
- Capacity building for both staff and students should be ably undertaken
- Implementation should encourage social, ubiquitous, flexible, collaborative and interactive learning across all stakeholders involved in the educational process
- The implementation model should be one that allows use of all types of technologies to enable effective teaching and learning to occur ubiquitously

3 Vision Statement

As already been defined within the context, E-Learning implementation within NU will take on a form that is inclined on the pedagogy and social elements that are geared to offering an effective educational environment for all stakeholders (students and staff). With the current University vision, the prospects of taking up opportunities that are empowered by creativity in providing effective and affordable education are so high and need to be tapped into by all stakeholders. In order to effectively implement the policy, there are several activities that will need to be undertaken and these include;

- Tapping into the open source resources for building both ICT infrastructure and content resources
- Using personalized, technology-supported, flexible student learning experience to offset the student influx within the University
- Tapping into the increasing mobile devices to provide ubiquitous education to all stakeholders irrespective of their vicinity
- Having access to rich developed open online courses across the world to enrich the locally developed content

Therefore, the staff and students will be supported through;

- A well thought through ICT infrastructure that depends on both open and closed resources, enough bandwidth, a multimedia enabled environment and vast skills within the stakeholders
- An open source based E-Learning Environment that has been configured to provide interactivity, collaboration, information access, storage, online assessment to stakeholders
- An educational ICT environment that enables teachers and students to use ICT for educational purposes
- And, hence the University will realize the following benefits;
- Ability to support all stakeholders (staff and students) to realize their educational dreams through a ubiquitous form of teaching and learning

- Making sure the University realizes its dream of being a global University that is ably powered by technology to support flexible education locally and internationally
- Putting to use the available open resources from across the world to enrich the University's teaching and learning through a socially and collaborative teaching and learning

Therefore, the NU E-Learning policy strives to realize the following vision:

To provide global education that is facilitated through the use of ICTs through an improved experiential learning that provides opportunities for flexible, accessible and ubiquitous teaching and learning to all stakeholders globally.

NU will take the responsibility of making sure that its educational system is fully enhanced through the use of ICTs and that teaching and learning are fully supported at all levels. Across the world there are several models currently under use during the e-learning implementation, however NU will identify the most appropriate ones that can suit their environment and setting for adoption.

4 Guiding Principles for Implementation of The Policy

Principle 1: That NU will ensure that all academic programmes to be adopted for e-learning have been accredited by National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and that the appropriate pedagogy has been embedded based on internationally accepted norms for curriculum design.

Principle 2: The University ensures that the empowerment and support of staff to pedagogically develop and deliver education that is supported by technology and that it is mainstreamed within educational system.

Principle 3: The University strives to ensure that on-campus teaching and learning is collaboratively and interactively facilitated to ensure an experiential learning. This will maintain the necessary coherence, consistency and transparency required with the programmes.

Principle 4: The University ensures that the adoption of e-learning will lead to a full range of flexible and independent learning experiences. The Learning experiences will be for the local and global stakeholders who are interested in certificate, undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes.

Principle 5: The University ensures that students who are being taught through any form of e-learning have the same opportunities to achieve their learning objectives like those who do not use e-learning at all.

Principle 6: The University regularly undertakes the task of making sure all infrastructure used in making sure there is effective e-learning are interoperable, up to date, secured, well managed and that it provided a holistic managed learning environment necessary for the 21st century stakeholder (staff and student).

Principle 7: The University supports capacity building for staff in order to sustain the development and sustenance of the capability to undertake e-learning at all educational levels.

Principle 8: The University will exploit numerous technologies during the provision of e-learning which will include both open source and proprietary. This will easily help the University undertake its mandate without any hindrance of any technological nature.

Principle 9: The University ensures that all the e-learning processes have a mechanism for quality assurance and feedback provision through formative assessments from both staff and students. This will ensure that improvements are regularly done within the entire processes of e-learning implementation.

Principle 10: The University ensures that, by using effective costing models and market research, the pricing of eLearning offerings is both competitive and appropriate to the target populations.

5 Objectives Of The Policy

The main objective of this policy is to facilitate and support e-learning through the use of ICTs by guiding and coordinating all the stakeholders within and outside the University.

Described below are the specific objectives of the policy.

5.1 To tap into and use current and emerging flexible technologies to enrich e-learning experiences that can demonstrate added value for staff and students and cost effectiveness.

Implementation Strategies:

- Adopt new emerging technologies and upkeep with the ongoing technological advancement in the operational areas that includes teaching, learning, communication, collaboration, feedback provision, assessment and reach out.
- Prior analysis of the cost-effectiveness, customer oriented, effective and efficient in teaching and learning for all stakeholders of the technologies should be done before integration.
- Undertake integration that facilitates open source technologies that are cost effective and have full support internationally.
- Teaching and learning provided through the technologies should be suitable for to a wider range of both on and off campus staff and students.
- All implemented technologies will need to be reviewed, analyzed and endorsed by the responsible ICT and management committees.

5.2 To develop process, systems, courses and units that are consistent with strategic planning, and are pedagogically appropriate and cost-effective for e-learning.

Implementation Strategies:

- The University will regularly organize ICT pedagogical integration training to equip staff with the necessary skills to undertake development of e-learning courses and other systems.
- The university will establish trainers of trainers under the e-learning Unit to take up the

task of retooling experienced and skilled teaching staffs that are capable of developing courses and units.

- The e-learning unit will develop effective methods of internal communication, collaboration and consultation and to disseminate best practice to staff about ICT integration within all NU partner institutions.
- The University will establish mechanisms to allow staff and student have access to ICTs for their day to day teaching and learning through opportunities such as buying computers from the University at higher purchase, setting up multi purpose library and computer labs for students' access and staff.

5.3 To adopt University-wide quality assurance processes to ensure the appropriate use of current and emerging technologies for teaching and learning, including planning, design and development, implementation, evaluation and feedback and revision.

Implementation Strategies:

- A University Unit in charge of e-learning planning, design, and development will need to be established and provided with the mandate of integrating ICT in teaching and learning.
- The university quality assurance will set standards that will be used as the base to assess the quality of the processes, resources and systems used in e-learning.
- A variety of flexible learning, delivery, assessment, feedback mechanisms, communication and collaboration that meet the demands of all educational stakeholders within the University will need to be developed and rolled out.
- To support the professional learning of staff in the use of current and emerging flexible technologies; and support students to develop the abilities to use current and emerging flexible technologies to enhance their learning experiences.

Implementation Strategy:

- Technical support and training of staff should be enabled (conducive environment) such that the staff are efficiently and effectively retooled.
- Students should be provided with technical support for the technology under use during orientation or during any formal organized training to facilitate their continuous smooth learning.
- Staff time for developing, managing, sustaining the e-learning programmes should be valued through a reward and penalty system.

5.4 To take a national lead in offering learning opportunities to all those who can benefit, at a range of levels and in a variety of modes to suit individual needs.

Implementation Strategies:

- The university should observe gender balance and marginalized groups to make sure that students from all communities, backgrounds, ICT literacy levels have got an equal chance of studying at NU.
- The University should develop Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) to be freely availed to whoever wants to learn. Whoever wants to be certified in the particular programme will

be required to register, get examined and then awarded the certification.

5.5 To play an international education and leadership role in the cultural, social, economic and intellectual life of the local, regional and wider communities that need the University educational programmes.

Implementation Strategies:

- University, country and regional partnership and reach out to all stakeholders who may need the University programmes should be made to facilitate massive enrollments and effective educational provision.
- The University will need to sustain and integrate the NU partner Universities in a collaborative regional e-learning educational programme that will need to be centrally managed under the e-learning unit but with nodes within the partner institutions.

6 Relationship with other Policies/Documents

E-learning demands closer working relationships between academic units and the institution’s administrative and operational divisions. School or Schools and departmental plans indicate the demands that they place on services provided by other departments. The implementation of this policy will be along with the following policies:

6.1 Policy on Infrastructure:

The introduction of an e-learning program imposes new requirements for the institution to provide on-line administrative services and a technical infrastructure designed to provide secure services accessed by users operating outside an institutional firewall. A new infrastructure should be put in place and only designated persons will be authorized to have access and provide support as described below:

6.2 Technical Assistance

The following personnel will provide technical assistance for e-learning staff and users at the three main stages i.e. production, delivery and access.

Process and System Administration	E-Learning Officer or Director
Production	Media Specialists consisting of E-Learning specialist, Graphic Designers, Web Designers and Editors
Delivery	IT Specialists
Access	IT Helpdesk Officers

See University ICT Policy for description of the above-named technical personnel.

6.3 Software/Hardware

The university will provide software and hardware options that are suitable for e-learning users where possible. A technical committee that has been mandated by the University to undertake that role will agree on what ICTs are to be integrated within the University. This committee should contain technical, academic and management staff.

See University ICT Policy for description of the above software and hardware that have been agreed upon for roll out within the University. This will clearly indicate the network infrastructure, hardware specifications and software categories.

6.4 IT Network Management and Infrastructure

The university needs to provide good Internet bandwidth (at least 5 Mbps) and this will facilitate an improved and efficient access throughout the university campus and beyond.

NU has positioned itself towards having a more efficient intranet system. This will facilitate the provision of educational services within the university premises and outside the University. Wireless technologies have been rolled out within the University to enable students and staff have access to the e-learning system from anywhere within the University. The available bandwidth is sufficient to allow the e-learning system to easily be accessible beyond the University premises and across the border within the partner institutions. The ICT policy will ably augment this policy during the provision of this effective and efficient form of teaching and learning.

6.5 Role of E-Learning Unit, ICT Directorate and Library

The University encourages a teamwork approach to curriculum and materials development to bring together different kinds of expertise available across the university e.g. disciplinary, pedagogic, design, systems, ICT, etc. The above units will be mandated to avail the necessary expertise during support and all training for e-learning.

6.6 Sharing

NU runs a model of having multi regional campuses and therefore it will foster open sharing of educational materials within these institutions. This sharing policy should mandate that all material developed by NU staff and placed on the e-learning system are open for use to all other staff irrespective of the institution they belong. The same content that has been developed under the share policy of NU will not be placed on any other site without authorization from management. Therefore, NU will make sure that all the content developers are rewarded for their efforts before taking over the content as NU open content. This policy helps avoid copyrights abuse and duplicative efforts and expand the base of materials for all involved parties.

6.7 Policy on Virtual Mobility

Due to the fact that all NU programmes will be accessible ubiquitously, their delivery offers a new opportunity for students and staff mobility across the NU regional institutions. Therefore, these virtual mechanisms will allow students to easily transfer from one University to another

under the NU umbrella. Such an opportunity will also allow staff to easily share resources without any hindrance and hence improve on their teaching.

7 Implementation And Evaluation Of The Policy

7.1 E-Learning Policy Implementation

There are several factors that have been found to be pertinent during e-learning implementation for any institution. It is not only the e-learning policy that is necessary for successful e-learning institutional adoption but also other factors are important and these include an active e-learning unit, e-learning champions or innovators, pedagogical strategies that provide an enabling climate for organizational change and collaboration.

It is also very important to have senior leadership's commitment plus policy statements articulating clearly the commitment from the top management. There is need of clear strategic ownership needed at the highest level for the integration and rapid diffusion of e-learning in institutions.

In the initial stages of the integration, some staff may consider themselves not ready to integrate, lack ICT skills and see no clear vision and mission to improve on how they teach and learn. However, gradual training and integration undertaken within phases and in certain departments can lead to an effective implementation. Therefore, it is not feasible to roll out to the entire University at once but scale up gradually until it has been fully integrated. For a smooth implementation, the following guidelines have to be reinforced.

7.1.1 School

School that originates materials reserves the right to decide the conditions under which the material will be shared except in the following cases:

- The material is specifically paid for or commissioned by the university or the university provides an unusual contribution either financial or material. In this case, the university will determine the conditions under which the material will be shared.
- The material is developed as a result of a specific collaboration, in which case the guidelines governing that collaboration will prevail.

The developed materials that do not indicate any specific conditions for sharing will automatically be considered to have been shared according to NU regulations.

7.1.2 Non-School Staff

Materials created by non-staff as part of their job responsibilities (contractual arrangements) will be owned by the University unless a discrete agreement has been signed to allow the initiator of the content to have copyright access to the content. This means that the non-staff own a substantial intellectual contribution to the content despite being used within NU.

7.1.3 Students

This policy presumes that students will directly or indirectly participate in the content authoring of e-learning material. Students who assist with authoring e-learning material shall be acknowledged as collaborators. In the event that students are involved in authoring e-learning content as part of their university education, the authorship rights should fall to the University but the students will be appropriately attributed.

7.1.4 An E-Learning Unit/Directorate

This is the unit or directorate that will be mandated with the implementation of the e-Learning policy and will report regularly to the University teaching and learning Committee and other relevant University committees. The same unit or directorate will oversee the development of an evaluation plan to assess the impact of the policy. They will also develop mechanisms of feedback generation from all stakeholders (students, staff and management) on all aspects of e-learning. The Unit or directorate will formulate an e-learning policy implementation advisory group that will work closely with them to streamline the implementation.

7.1.5 E-learning policy implementation advisory group

Terms of Reference

- Represent Faculties' or school's strategies and priorities in relation to the implementation of eLearning Policy
- Consider and assess University Plans and make recommendations for the consideration of the eLearning Policy Implementation Advisory Group with respect to the eLearning Policy development or implementation.
- Advise on the priority and nature of eLearning Policy implementation activities
- Promote and disseminate eLearning Policy implementation
- Advise on the ongoing development of University eLearning Policy
- Make recommendations on the prioritization and implementation of approved developments to management.
- Consider eLearning Policy developments on progression for ratification by the relevant University committees.

Membership

Representatives from the following areas of the University and its partner

- Head of the e-learning Unit or directorate (undertake the secretarial role)
- ICT Office
- Academic Registrar Office
- Quality Assurance Office
- 2 members of each School who can represent the activities relating to the strategic focus of the School including: course design & delivery; administration; quality & the student experience.
- Representative from Management

7.2 Nkumba University E-Learning Model

Nkumba University has developed a model that will be used during its implementation of the policy. This model clearly describes how the different stakeholders can engage between each other to make sure there is effective use of e-learning across the different environments and under different circumstances.

The model shows that e-learning within the University will involve four main stakeholders and these include; Digital Teachers, Digital Students, Digital Family and the Nkumba University. These stakeholders will effectively interact and engage via the NU e-learning content space which has been developed and in use. The NU e-learning content space will contain the NU Learning Management System and a synchronous tool called Zoom to be used for the real-time class session time tabled.

The NU e-learning content space is linked to a variety of databases which house different things but very important for effective learning. NU Localised Content Database will house all localised authored content and recorded videos from the learning sessions for NU. The content space will link to the database and extract the necessary localised content for the staff and students. The Open Access data base will contain all free resources linked to directly through the content space. These may include YouTube, open course resources, simulations that are developed to support learning across the world. The NU E-Library will support in providing e-resources to the staff and students through the content space. This library is fully stocked with multiples databases of both books and journals for staff and student access. The model also taps into the social applications to be used for teaching and learning. The staff and students will be allowed to use some selected social media for educational activities. For example, use of WhatsApp for an online discussion between students and staff is allowed to happen but following laid out procedures and guidelines. All the technologies that feed the NU e-learning content space are governed by policies that laid out by National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), partners and the community. NU envisages that the model will be implemented with support of the Internet Service Providers (ISP) who will provide subsidised prices for internet connection or even free internet. NU will negotiate with the ISPs and show them how they can benefit from supporting the implementation of the model.

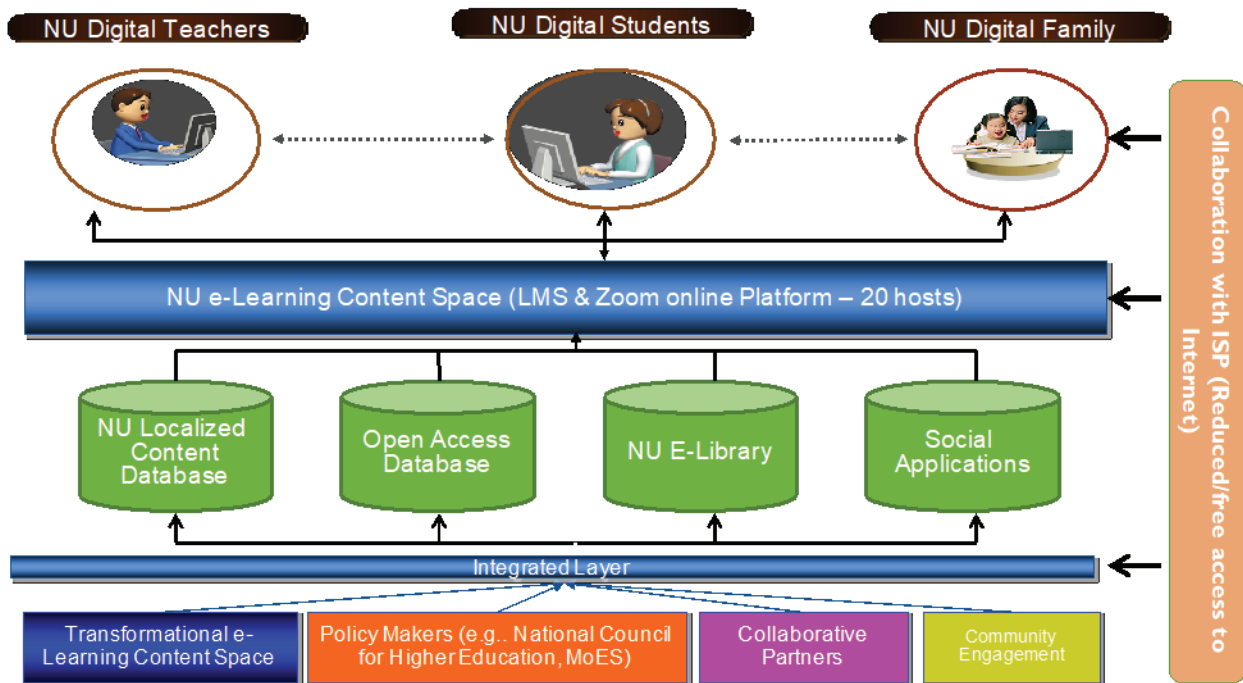
7.3 E-Learning Policy Evaluation

Within the University schedule, regular evaluation session will be arranged where developed content will be assessed for quality and effectiveness. Therefore, every semester, a workshop on ICT pedagogy will be organized for two main reasons; to retool staff on e-learning and assess the existing developed content if it meets the required standards. This assessment will enhance the reputation of those that excel in e-learning implementation and make their accomplishments more visible to the university at large. In addition, the University can promote the e-learning culture by organizing certificate-awarding advocacy seminars, hands-on workshops, etc for School and staff. Also those who excel in content development will be appreciated through a reward system.

Further still, the entire process of evaluation will be supplemented with other statistical data from different stakeholders. The stakeholders will provide feedback on the systems and processes that will further enhance the policy implementation. Below is a table that shows what feedback could be collected to enhance the policy;

TABLE 1: E-LEARNING EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Evaluation Item	Evaluation criteria
Quality and excellence	Feed back to be picked from Stakeholders
	a. QAA reports
	b. Professional body reports
	c. Subject review reports
	d. Publications
IT reliability	e. Strategy and policy documents
	a. Statistics of uptime
	b. Statistics of unscheduled downtime
	c. Student survey comments



The feedback generated from the stakeholders' input can inform future policy directives and help guide practice. The teacher and student voices can help shape policy and steer e-learning activities. Some of the research questions that can be posted to the stakeholders include;

- How can technologies support new forms of pedagogy?
- What is the relationship between technologies, physical and virtual spaces and pedagogy?
- How do we take account of a digital divide that is ever narrower but deeper?
- What new digital literacy skills will learners and teachers need?
- E-learning innovation will require a radical rethinking of the curriculum,
- E-learning challenges existing norms about assessment



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