



## **BUGEMA UNIVERSITY**

### **ONLINE/E-LEARNING POLICY**

**Policy Version BU/eLP/012025**

**Approved by:** University Administration Board  
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**Review Cycle:** Every 3 years  
**Responsible Office:** Directorate of Open, Distance, and e-Learning (ODeL)  
**Regulatory Reference:** NCHE ODeL Policy and Guidelines (2022)

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## **1. PREAMBLE**

Bugema University recognizes Open, Distance, and e-Learning (ODeL) as a transformative approach to broadening access to quality higher education in Uganda and beyond. In that spirit, this policy establishes the institutional framework to guide the planning, implementation, quality assurance, and continuous improvement of all ODeL programs at the University. It provides a strategic direction that ensures compliance with NCHE regulations and alignment with Bugema University ODeL strategy (2026 -2030) vision of “providing accessible, high-quality, and innovative learning experiences in higher education.”

## **2. POLICY STATEMENT**

Bugema University is committed to providing accessible, equitable, flexible, technology-enabled, and high-quality education through e-Learning delivery mode.

The University shall ensure that all ODeL programs meet Bugema University ODeL operating standards, NCHE minimum standards, uphold academic integrity, and are supported by appropriate infrastructure, competent staff, and learner-centred pedagogies

## **3. POLICY RATIONALE**

This policy responds to:

- i. The need to expand access to higher education for working, rural, and marginalized learners.
- ii. The integration of technology and innovation in teaching and learning.
- iii. The requirements of NCHE ODeL Delivery Standards for institutional readiness, quality assurance, and compliance.
- iv. The University’s Strategic Plan objective 3.2.2 to “increase access to higher education”

## **4. SCOPE**

This policy applies to:

- i. All academic programs delivered fully through open, distance, or e-learning modalities.
- ii. All staff and students engaged in ODeL activities.
- iii. All digital learning platforms, systems, and resources under Bugema University.
- iv. All partnerships and collaborations involved in Bugema University ODeL program delivery.

## 5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- i. **Quality and Integrity:** All ODeL programs shall maintain equivalent academic quality and standards as conventional programs.
- ii. **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Learning resources shall be accessible to all, including persons with disabilities.
- iii. **Learner-centeredness:** ODeL design and delivery shall prioritize learner needs, engagement, and support.
- iv. **Innovation and Continuous Improvement:** The University shall promote research, innovation, and adoption of new technologies.
- v. **Compliance and Accountability:** All ODeL activities shall adhere to Bugema University standards and regulations, and NCHE guidelines.
- vi. **Equity and Affordability:** Bugema University shall strive to make ODeL affordable and equitable to diverse learners.

## 6. POLICY OBJECTIVES

- i. To institutionalize ODeL as an integral mode of teaching and learning delivery at Bugema University.
- ii. To ensure compliance with NCHE ODeL Delivery Standards.
- iii. To strengthen the University's technological capacity for flexible learning.
- iv. To enhance access to higher education through open and distance learning.
- v. To build staff capacity in digital pedagogy, online instructional design, and e-content development.
- vi. To promote research and innovation in ODeL methodologies.
- vii. To ensure learner support systems that facilitate retention, completion, and success.

## 7. POLICY FRAMEWORK AND GOVERNANCE

### 7.1 Oversight Structure

- a) **University Administration Board:** Approves ODeL policies, and resource allocations.
- b) **Senate:** Oversees academic quality, programs and curriculum approval, and staff capacity.
- c) **Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs & Research):** Provides executive oversight and coordination.
- d) **Directorate of Open, Distance, and e-Learning (ODeL):** Implements policy, manages operations, and ensures quality assurance.
- e) **Schools:** Develop and deliver programs in collaboration with the ODeL Directorate.
- f) **Quality Assurance Directorate:** Monitors and evaluates ODeL program quality and NCHE compliance.

## 8. STRATEGIC COMPONENTS

### 8.1 Institutional Readiness

- a) Establish and maintain an operational ODeL Directorate with a clear governance structure and qualified staff.
- b) Develop and maintain an NCHE-compliant institutional ODeL Framework.

- c) Ensure reliable ICT infrastructure and LMS (Learning Management System) functionality.
- d) Provide digital literacy training to staff and students.

## **8.2 Policy on Quality of e - Learning design, development and delivery**

- a) QA office shall ensure that all ODeL curricula follow NCHE curriculum design and approval processes.
- b) Programs shall integrate appropriate instructional design, multimedia, and assessment strategies.
- c) Course materials developed using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.
- d) ODeL office shall develop and circulate to all schools Deans the template for online course development.
- e) From the design stage, the quality of the online courses to be deployed on LMS should be ensured through the capacity building of lecturers, instructional designers and course development team.
- f) Peer review and editing would be ensured as part of the quality assurance mechanisms
- g) Integrate digital libraries, open educational resources (OER), and virtual laboratories.

## **8.3 Policy on Learner Support and Engagement**

- a) Admission of online learning students shall follow the same regulations as prescribed in the University's Study and Examination Regulations and shall be *bona fide* students of the university.
- b) Registration of online learning students shall be registered against the same regulations as prescribed in the University's registration regulations and shall be *bona fide* students of the university.
- c) Establish online learner support centre to provide orientation, tutoring, and counselling.
- d) Maintain clear communication channels between learners, faculty, and administration using the university emailing system.
- e) Implement digital academic tracking systems for monitoring learner progress and retention.
- f) Audit of e - Learning skills and e-Readiness of students should be conducted on the recommendation of the ODeL committee.
- g) Students' competencies to be able to engage in e - Learning would be enhanced through online short courses made available for all students.
- h) An online support help desk, where students lodge complaints on the LMS engagement should be created. This should be available during working days and hours for student's problem solving and manned by the experienced student advisers.
- i) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) should be a major part of the support service.
- j) ODeL Student Grievance Procedure should maintain open lines of communication with their instructors, coordinators and/or administrators to avoid unnecessary appeals. In the instance where any informal contact has not resolved any grievance, ODeL students shall be able to lodge a formal complaint to the ODeL Director through the provided digital communication channels for complaints.

#### **8.4 Policy on Technology and Infrastructure**

- a) Directorate of ICT support deploy and maintain secure, scalable, and accessible LMS and related tools.
- b) Directorate of ICT ensure ICT redundancy and cybersecurity compliance.
- c) Directorate of ICT support mobile learning and low-bandwidth solutions for remote learners.

#### **8.5 Policy on Quality Assurance**

- a) ODeL Directorate implement NCHE-compliant quality assurance systems for ODeL delivery.
- b) ODeL Directorate conduct regular internal audits and self-assessment reviews.
- c) ODeL Directorate evaluate course delivery, learner feedback, and staff performance periodically.
- d) QA Directorate Submit compliance and performance reports to NCHE as required.

#### **8.6 Policy on Staff Capacity Building**

8.6.1 ODeL committee will recommend periodic capacity building programmes and implemented by the ODeL Director. Such training will include online course design, online instruction and online assessment

8.6.2. Schedule of activities and budget should be prepared by ODeL committee or the relevant subcommittee of the ODeL committee.

8.6.3 Train the trainer approaches, at school level, will be used for faculty capacity building

## **8.7 Research and Innovation**

- a) Promote ODeL-related research, innovation, and scholarly publications.
- b) Establish an annual Bugema ODeL Research and Innovation Forum.
- c) Encourage collaboration with national and international ODeL institutions and networks.

## **8.8 Partnerships and Collaboration**

- a) ODeL Directorate create partnerships with government, industry, and international organizations for ODeL development.
- b) ODeL Directorate ensure all partnerships comply with NCHE and University policy frameworks.

## **8.9 Policy on Assessment-for-Learning**

- a) Course work and final assessment shall be Competence Based essay writing, promoting standard academic writing practices
- b) Lecturers and tutors should provide timely and effective feedback to students within schedules prescribed by the senate

## **8.10 Policy on Online Safety and Security**

- a) All issues of security and safety of online resources are the responsibilities of the ICT support Directorate. All measures to be taken, as stipulated in the University ICT policy for security, would apply for the e-learning policy.
- b) Cybersecurity protocols would be circulated by ICT support Directorate and non-compliance penalized based on Bugema University guidelines on such.
- c) Online bullying and harassment would be treated the same way the physical bullying is treated in the university. When investigated and confirmed, it shall be punished based on Bugema University guidelines on such.

## **8.11 Policy on Administration and Management of e-Learning in Bugema University**

8.11a The ODeL Director will coordinate the activities of ODeL committee

8.11b The ODeL committee will comply with the Director ODeL, Manager ICT support, Director QA, School Deans and an expert in e-Learning pedagogy

8.11c Functions of ODeL committee

- i. Oversee the implementation of the Bugema University strategy and policy for e-learning
- ii. Create awareness about the e-learning policy and activities across the university
- iii. Oversee plans for training of staff and students on e – Learning strategies
- iv. Superintend the implementation of e-learning through School based e-learning committees

- v. Oversee e-learning activities, management of the LMS and make recommendations
- vi. Create guiding principles and templates/rubrics for design and development of e-learning (on the university LMS)
- vii. Conduct periodic review, quality assurance and evaluation of course materials, resources and activities on the LMS
- viii. Seek external funding to support e-learning activities such as capacity building, internet access, purchase of e-learning devices for staff and students, e-learning infrastructure etc.

## **8.12 Policy on Intellectual Property and Copyright Issues**

8.12.1 Each course as designed and developed is the intellectual property (IP) of the lecturer(s) and content team that developed it. However, Bugema University holds the IP on all resources hosted on the LMS.

8.12.2 During capacity building programmes, there would be sessions on IP, OER and copyright issues to train lecturers on how to references resources used online and the use of creative common licenses.

8.12.3 Each course lecturer is required to ensure compliance to copyrights on all resources used in their courses (graphics, videos, audios, written documents etc.).

8.12.4 Appropriate referencing of the resources as relevant referencing styles for non-written information should be adhered to. This would be the responsibility of every lecturer, and the lecturer bears the liabilities.

8.12.5 What constitutes plagiarism and punishment for plagiarism in Bugema University as stipulated by the relevant Bugema University code of conduct is adopted for the e - Learning policy.

## **8.13 Policy on Sanctions for Breach**

8.13.1 Breach of not developing the online course activities within the stipulated period, the sanctions and punishment stipulated by Bugema University, with respect to a shirking of allocated duties shall be adopted.

8.13.2 Breach of not conducting online assessment, the sanctions and punishment stipulated by Bugema University, with respect to a shirking of allocated duties shall be adopted.

#### **8.14. Policy on Staff Recruitment**

8.14.1 New staff engagement procedures shall be subsequently (as determined by Senate and Administration Board on the recommendation of ODeL committee), include experience and evidence of online teaching and learning skills as one of the criteria to be considered for employment

8.14.2 New staff would undergo training/mentorship to design and develop their course contents within the 3 months of their engagement.

### **10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

- a) The ODeL Directorate shall prepare and submit **quarterly and annual progress reports** to the DVC (Academic Affairs) and Quality Assurance Directorate.
- b) QA Directorate shall conduct periodic reviews and NCHE compliance audits.
- c) Performance indicators shall include learner enrolment, retention, satisfaction, and quality ratings.

### **11. FUNDING AND RESOURCES**

- a) Bugema University administration shall allocate an annual budget line for ODeL development and operations.
- b) The ODeL Directorate may seek external grants and partnerships to supplement institutional funding.
- c) Resource utilization shall adhere to the University's financial management policies.

### **12. POLICY REVIEW**

This policy shall be reviewed every **three (3) years** or earlier as deemed necessary by the University Administration Board, in consultation with the ODeL Directorate.

### **13. REFERENCES**

- a) National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), *ODeL Delivery Standards, 2022 (Uganda)*.
- b) Bugema University Strategic Plan (2017 – 2027).
- c) Bugema University Quality Assurance Policy.
- d) Bugema University ODeL operating standards
- e) Bugema ICT policy (2020)

**Outcome:** This policy provides a complete, NCHE-compliant framework for Bugema University Online Teaching and Learning experiences suitable for submission to NCHE as part of the Institutional Online Teaching and Learning Framework.

#### **14. APPROVAL**

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
Director, ODeL		
DVC (Academic and Research)		
Chairperson Admin. Board		