Trinity Learning Management System (LMS) Policy

1. Context

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin, herein referred to as Trinity, is committed to providing a distinctive education based on academic excellence. This commitment is demonstrated within Trinity's Strategic Plan (2025 - 2030) and, for example, through Trinity's engagement with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

In recent years, the development and use of digital learning technologies has greatly enhanced the teaching and learning experience for staff and students. There are a range of digital learning technologies available at Trinity through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) e.g. Blackboard, Panopto, Turnitin, Vevox (and other technologies integrated into the LMS), and these make up the whole learning environment/ecosystem. Trinity's Learning Management System (LMS), currently Blackboard Ultra, provides a central hub for the virtual learning environment with other learning technologies available through the LMS. An LMS is a software application designed to manage and support the delivery of educational content and services to learners and staff. The LMS also facilitates collaborative learning and a wide range of assessment activities such as assignments, quizzes, and exams, while supporting online, blended, and flipped learning modalities.

Trinity recognises that teaching, learning and assessment practices must continue to embrace existing and emerging technologies. The University supports effective implementation of the LMS as part of the mainstream pedagogical practice of the University and expects that this will be done in a manner which will preserve the integrity of student learning and assessment.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to support the development of technology-enhanced learning across both online and face-to-face teaching environments that will assist in:

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Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Policy No: QPolVLE

Version: 1.1

Date of Issue: 29 August 2025

- Enhancing the student experience and encouraging active participation by students in their learning.

- Providing a consistent and inclusive experience for students and staff involved in teaching.

- Supporting more diverse and more flexible learning and programme delivery.

- Building digital capabilities.

- Ensuring that all learning materials provided to students are accessible and designed to adhere to principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

In doing so, the policy supports the College's Strategic Plan (2025 - 2030) and its related strategies with respect to the teaching, learning and assessment experiences of Trinity students, researchers, and staff.

3. Benefits

3.1. The policy is designed to ensure that every registered student has online access to programme information, learning resources, assessment tools and collaborative online spaces which may enrich the learning experience.

3.2. This policy seeks to support academics in enhancing their academic practice.

3.3 Optimised usage of the LMS, underpinned by accessibility and inclusion practices (Universal Design for Learning UDL), facilitates participation and engagement of a diverse student population in Trinity's programmes, while enhancing autonomous learning. This policy supports online, blended and hybrid learning modalities, and the use of the LMS to support in-person teaching.

3.4 All students will expect to find consistent standards applied across all modules they undertake within the LMS.

4. Scope

4.1. This policy applies to for-credit and not-for-credit modules, programmes, micro-credentials and courses delivered to registered undergraduate and postgraduate students of Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin and to those who are not registered Trinity students but who are taking courses/modules delivered by Trinity.

4.2. This policy applies to the institutional LMS (currently Blackboard Ultra) with regard to teaching and learning activities.

4.3. This policy does not apply to technical services which support the institutional LMS which is the responsibility of IT Services.

4.4 This policy applies to the institutional LMS irrespective of the specific platform in use.

5   Principles

5.1.   Innovation in teaching, learning and assessment practices, and the enhancement of digital capacity and digital literacies, will be promoted and supported within the LMS.

5.2.   All usage of the LMS at Trinity will align with Trinity's Statement of Principles on Integrity, ensuring that these principles and policies underpin all teaching, learning and assessment processes and that all those using the LMS do so with responsibility, honesty, transparency and accountability.

5.3.   All digital content and learning materials made accessible to students in the LMS will align, where possible, with the Trinity Accessible Information Policy & Guidelines and the Universal Design for Learning Principles.

6   Definitions

6.1   A Learning Management System (LMS) is a web-based platform which offers access to content and a variety of tools and services, both inside and outside of the platform, which support and facilitate learning, teaching and assessment activities. A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is an integrated collection of digital, web-based tools which enable the facilitation, management and delivery of teaching, learning and assessment activities; provide online access to content; facilitate assessment and feedback activities and processes. A VLE environment can include but is not limited to a LMS' offerings. Thus, the VLE is considered to be the total online services available to learners and teachers.

6.2   Blended learning refers to the integration of complementary in-person learning experiences with online learning experiences.

6.3   Online learning is any form of learning which is facilitated wholly via the internet, encompassing both asynchronous and synchronous activities.

6.4   In-person learning (sometimes referred to as face-to-face learning) refers to any form of learning that occurs "in person" and in real time.

6.5   Digital capabilities refer to the knowledge, skills and attitudes that equip individuals to live, learn and work in a digital society.

6.6   Micro-credentials are small, highly flexible, accredited courses designed to meet the upskilling demands of learners, enterprise and organisations.

6.7   A Programme is a set of modules, courses or course options that lead to an award (e.g., a degree).

6.8   Modules are the building blocks of programmes. They are self-contained units of teaching, learning and assessment on topics with defined academic credit values, learning outcomes, modes of delivery and assessment scheme.

7. Policy

7.1 Single Institutional LMS

7.1.1 Trinity requires the use of a single institutional LMS across all foundation, undergraduate, and postgraduate programmes, inclusive of micro-credentials. Any derogation from this requires approval from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies or the Dean of Graduate Studies as appropriate.

7.1.2 A consistent student experience is facilitated by the use of in-built learning tools within the institutional LMS and VLE, which are preferred to externally available third-party tools, where features and services are broadly similar.

7.1.3 The use of additional technologies (where pedagogically required) is not precluded; however, these should be supplementary to the institutional LMS and, in order to ensure the security and protection of student and staff data they should, where appropriate, be part of the institutionally supported suite of digital tools.

7.1.4 The use of additional technologies that are not institutionally supported is permitted if required to support the academic requirements of the programme/course of study.

7.2 Minimum content specifications

7.2.1 The minimum defined standards for all modules – inclusive of content, resources, communication and assessment - are defined in Trinity's LMS Baseline available on the Centre for Academic Practice website.

7.2.2 A default module template is applied to each module in minimum defined standards as stated in 7.2.1

7.2.3 All digital materials used as part of teaching, learning and assessment processes (not including examinations) within a module will, where possible, be made available to students within the LMS.

7.1.4 All course materials should adhere to the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), where possible.

7.3 Information and Data Compliance

7.3.1 All users of the institutional LMS must comply with the College Intellectual Property Policy and relevant copyright legislation as per the Guidelines for Staff on the College Information Compliance website.

7.3.2 Any digital content provided in an electronic format should be uploaded into an appropriate place within the LMS module in compliance with the College Intellectual Property Policy.

In accordance with the College responsibilities under the Data Protection Policy, student personal data must not be stored and/or maintained in third party hosted services where it may be at risk of being compromised unless approved by the Academic Registry and the College Data Protection Officer.

7.3.3 Student submissions should be removed from any module within the LMS by the course co-ordinator/lead academic of that module, in accordance with the College's Records Management Policy and Data Retention Schedule (ref page 8 *Examination, results, graduation records*). IT Services will automatically delete all modules in the LMS that are older than 5 years except where the course co-ordinator specifically asks for them to be retained.

8   Responsibility

8.1   The Senior Lecturer and Dean of Undergraduate Studies has responsibility for this Policy.

8.2   The Senior Lecturer and Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and the Dean of Graduate Studies, with support from Heads of Schools and Centre for Academic Practice, are responsible for the implementation of the LMS Policy with respect to Trinity Teaching and Learning.

8.3   The Director IT Services is responsible for technical service standards and management of the contract with the LMS supplier.

9   Related Documents

9.1   Trinity LMS Baseline guidelines

9.2   Intellectual Property Policy

9.3   Accessible Information Policy

9.4   Data Protection Policy

9.5   Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy

9.6   College Statement on Artificial Intelligence and Generative AI in Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research.

10   Document Control

10.1 Approved by: University Council
10.2 Date of initial approval: June 2017 (Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Policy)
10.3 Date revised policy approved: 14 May 2025
10.4 Date policy effective from: 29 August 2025
10.5 Date of next review: Academic Year 2027/2028