

## Chapter 3. Blended Learning

This chapter relates to the following Quality Assurance guidelines from Barrow Training's accrediting bodies:

- QQI Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes
- Blended Online Learning as an Approach to Deliver PHECC Recognised Courses

### 3.1 Introduction

This policy outlines the guiding principles for the development and delivery of blended programmes/modules in Barrow Consultancy and Training Ltd. (hereafter Barrow Training). This has been developed as an enabling resource to facilitate the provision of blended programmes and specifies the relevant quality assurance and enhancement measures required to adhere to best practice and relevant quality standards. This policy has been informed by *QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (March 2018)*.

The design and implementation of blended learning approaches for educational programmes provides learners with alternative learning pathways in a learner-centred environment that promotes self-directed learning. The self-paced interactive and collaborative aspects of digital technology facilitate the development of coursework and learning resources that are supportive and create a constructive learning environment for learners.

The QQI topic specific guidelines state in the context of the blended and online provision that *"it is important that the teaching and learning experience is a positive quality experience, with quality assurance, improvement and enhancement in place"* and Barrow Training is committed to this. The guidelines are organised under the following principal headings:

- organisational context
- programme context
- learner experience context

### 3.2 Definitions

#### *Blended Learning*

For the purpose of these guidelines, blended learning is "the integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences" (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004) as adopted by QQI.

#### *Online Learning*

When referring to online learning, all course content is provided online, with no requirement for classroom-based or face-to-face tuition. Some Barrow Training-certified training is offered via online delivery.

#### *Face-to-Face Learning*

Face-to-face learning is defined as classroom-based delivery where a set period of time is spent with a tutor for lectures, discussions, and workshops. This may also include other learners and involve group activities.

### **3.3 Blended Learning in an Organisational Context**

#### **3.3.1 Strategy and Planning for Blended Learning**

The vision of Barrow Training is to deepen our relationship with the Healthcare, Childcare, Hospitality, Management and Professional Development sectors by becoming the leading provider of training and training-related consultancy services. An integral component of this strategy is to provide the organisation supports for a blended learning infrastructure. This strategy is implemented at functional and programme level with accountable roles identified to ensure effective and efficient implementation. Barrow Training has appointed a manager to this role to work with the Programme Development Committee to design material and processes of the highest standard.

All procedures for Barrow Training are fit for purpose in the context of blended learning and all the necessary resources are researched and allocated to ensure the additional costs of blended learning provision are taken into account.

At the organisational level, the provision of blended learning should occur in a context where:

- Appropriate induction and training are provided to staff who design, support, teach and assess blended learning modules
- All legal and regulatory obligations including intellectual property, copyright and data protection are fully adhered to
- Appropriate infrastructure and resources to support high quality provision of blended learning are planned, developed, and evaluated.

#### **3.3.2 Infrastructure and Resources**

##### **3.3.2.1 Recruitment**

The Board of Management is responsible for the appointment of staff with technical and professional expertise in teaching, learning and assessment appropriate to Blended Learning. The Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) Manager, in conjunction with the Quality Assurance Manager, is responsible for the induction, monitoring and professional development of staff specific to Blended Learning provision.

When an academic vacancy arises, a job specification and associated selection criteria for that particular role is devised by the Director of Training and approved by the Board of Management prior to advertising. Candidates are then shortlisted and approved by the Board of Management prior to interviews taking place. All interview candidates are required to provide copies of relevant qualifications and a signed passport photograph which are kept together with their Curriculum Vitae and any other relevant documentation. Please see further information on Blended Learning tutors in Appendix 1.

##### **3.3.2.2 CPD and Training Initiatives**

The Quality Assurance Committee will lead initiatives to build capacity for CPD. This will include ongoing training and additional support initiatives required by academic and administrative staff to build their digital literacy skills. It will require proportionate expansion and resourcing in line with growing requirements as blended and continues to develop.

The core CPD training will include:

- A comprehensive range of bespoke staff training sessions in Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL)
- Initiatives that guide staff to advance their skills with TEL in a phased manner to continually develop pedagogical approaches and facilitate further progression to innovative practices
- One-to-one guidance and consultation with staff on identifying tools and resources for their teaching and learning requirements and on developing their skills

### 3.3.2.3 Assessment Venues

Barrow Training will ensure that assessment venues are designed so that they meet the requirement for which they are intended.

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Lighting</b>            | All rooms will have the lighting appropriate to their use   |
| <b>Accessibility</b>       | Access for people with a disability (including special arrangements) where required shall be in accordance with national legislation, or reasonable accommodation made as appropriate.<br>This information will be requested upon enrolment and again upon invitation to classroom-based days.  |
| <b>Health &amp; Safety</b> | All venues will comply with legislative requirements relating to health and safety. This will include insurance, risk assessments, safety statements, escape routes, fire drills, emergency contacts and ensuring this information is communicated to both tutors and learners.   |
| <b>Equipment</b>           | Venues for theory assessments and skills demonstrations will satisfy the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desks/chairs set out in examination format</li> <li>• Space to display clock and examination regulations</li> <li>• Sufficient space and breakout rooms for skills demonstrations</li> <li>• Access to appropriate toilet facilities</li> <li>• Appropriate waiting areas</li> </ul> |

The TEL Manager will identify and make booking arrangements with appropriate venues that satisfy the required standards for blended learning programmes in line with QF261 and they also collate learner feedback on venue in line with QF25. See Section 5.2.2 of Quality Assurance Manual for procedure.

### 3.3.2.4 Information Technology

It is the responsibility of the TEL Manager to ensure that Barrow Training’s hardware, software and learner management system (LMS) is of the highest standard to ensure delivery of online and blended learning.

The information technology of Barrow Training is constantly tested for reliability and security and is updated. Appropriate contingency plans are in place should there be a failure. This is the responsibility of the TEL Manager. In the unlikely event of an LMS, hardware or software failure, the following measures are in place:

- Learner details are kept in a separate password protected and encrypted file which can be accessed by appropriate personnel. This is backed up to Cloud twice daily. Learners can be contacted, and have resources sent to them by email or post, scheduled contact days confirmed, quizzes for formative assessment sent, feedback provided, assignment feedback given.
- There are alternatives in place for any software used (e.g. plagiarism software, Skype) should the software fail.

These measures ensure there is no drop in service to any learner signed up to an online or blended learning programme.

Barrow Training delivers its programmes via a Moodle-Based Learning Management System (LMS) from Enovation. Barrow Training has agreed contingency measures, data processing and Terms of Service for the LMS. The TEL Manager has overall responsibility for the design, implementation, maintenance, security, delivery, and quality assurance of the LMS.

Barrow Training is committed to the use of an LMS that meets the following requirements:

#### *Ease of Use*

- Provide a course delivery LMS that is easy to use for learners, faculty, and administrators
- Environment entry point is clear, simple and welcoming
- Course design facilitates readability
- Course multimedia facilitates ease of use
- Ensure mobile/tablet readable
- Course materials are presented using appropriate formats compatible across computer platform, e.g. pdf, mp3
- Enable upgrades and functionality enhancements as and when appropriate

#### *Security*

- Provide a fully secured online learning environment that ensures user confidence and adheres to national and international data protection standards

#### *Accessibility*

- Provide a course with accessible text and images in files, documents, VLE pages, and web pages to meet the needs of diverse learners
- Provide a course with an alternative means of access to multimedia content in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners
- Videos and screencasts are closed-captioned
- Audio materials (mp3, wav, etc.) are accompanied by a transcript
- Images are accompanied by text descriptions (Alt text) or captions for images that require a more complex description

Barrow Training is cognisant of the three principles of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2019) in ensuring the LMS is accessible to all:

- Provide multiple means of **Engagement**
- Provide multiple means of **Representation**
- Provide multiple means of **Action and Expression**

### *Copyright*

All images used on the LMS are purchased from Deposit Photos and are property of Barrow Training. Developers act in accordance with licensing laws when using content such as images, audio, video, etc. on the LMS.

### *Multimedia*

- Multimedia is produced to a high standard and hosted on an external site such as YouTube
- A wide range of video design approaches are implemented, e.g. presentation slides with voice over, talking head, interview scenario

#### **3.3.2.5 Moodle Workplace Application**

The LMS offers learners the opportunity to work online and offline in a time and place that suits them. Learners can download the Moodle Workplace app to their device which allows for the following:

- Access to the learner dashboard
- Browse course content, even when offline
- Instant notifications of messages and other events
- Quickly find and contact other learners on the programme
- Upload images, audio, videos and other files from a mobile device
- View course grades

#### **3.3.2.6 Migration to New Technology**

Annual reviews of Barrow Training technology take place and include feedback from learners, tutors, administrators, and any other stakeholders such as employers and supervisors. These reviews also include the monitoring of new developments in the e-learning area and wider technology environment to assess if and how these applications might enhance the learner, tutor, and administrator experience.

As new frameworks and models emerge from the sector and existing ones evolve, Barrow Training staff and tutors involved in the module delivery will select a model/framework that they find most suitable for their particular learning requirements.

Any migration to a new or different technology (hardware or software) is approved by the Quality Assurance Committee to ensure compatibility with learners' technology and potential down time. All current technology has been tested and approved by the TEL Manager confirming that the appropriate technical support and contingency plans are in place.

### **3.3.3 Ensuring the Quality of Blended Learning Provision**

#### **3.3.3.1 Criteria for Admission to a Blended Learning Programme**

Applicants must be self-motivated and have the capacity to take responsibility for their own learning as they progress through a blended learning programme.

Basic computer literacy is required to enrol on a blended learning programme, e.g. opening an internet page, following simple instructions, and creating a Word document.

Learner requirements prior to commencing a blended learning programme:

|   |
|---|
| Access to a laptop with functioning camera and audio <b>OR</b> access to a PC with functioning camera and audio (earphones may be required when using PC) <b>OR</b> access to a mobile device with functioning camera and audio |
| Strong internet connection  |
| Microsoft Teams downloaded  |
| Be able to provide photo ID in the form of a passport, public service card or driving license   |

See QF803 Admissions Policy for full list of criteria for admission.

### **3.3.3.2 Integrity of Assessments**

All learners are contacted by the tutor on enrolment for the course. Upon entry to the course, learners must attend workshops relating to the following prior to continuing with the programme:

- Barrow Training Learner Induction which outlines policies and procedures of the relevant accrediting body
- Academic Writing Skills
- Referencing and Plagiarism

Learners are encouraged to upload their profile picture to the LMS. Learners are contacted weekly by their tutor checking their progress and guarding against cheating, plagiarism, or other kinds of unfair advantage. Learners are required to present photographic proof of identification to the facilitator at face-to-face sessions, e.g. exams, skills demonstrations, study groups.

Assessments that are completed online or live online lectures include the following practices:

- Live online lectures are recorded and uploaded to the LMS for learners to access afterwards. Learners verify their identity during live online lectures by entering a breakout room and presenting the tutor with proof of identification. Recording does not take place at this stage and no other learners are present.
- Written protocol is provided to learners for live assessment. The protocol covers information including mobile phones/tablets cannot be used for such sessions as the functionalities are limited, the webcam must be turned on at all times, desk must be clear – the learner must pick up laptop/webcam and show the table to the assessor, and the screen must be shared to allow the assessor to see if access to online sites/files occurs. These assessments are recorded for verification purposes.
- Digital mechanisms for the transfer of learners' work directly to assessors are approved and tested by Barrow Training to ensure they are secure and reliable
- Learner is issued confirmation of safe receipt of assessment work
- Only enrolled learners are permitted to attend and participate in assessment activities. If another individual is present at the time, they will be asked to leave by the tutor prior to the commencement of the assessment. If they refuse to do so, the assessment will be rescheduled at a fee of €20.

To confirm that learners' assessment work is their own original work, the following criteria for submission of assessment will apply:

1. A statement and clear instructions about identity fraud and the consequences of academic malpractice that must be signed and agreed to
2. Submission of assessments should incorporate the following:
  - learners must confirm authenticity of own work by selecting an honesty and non-plagiarism box on each submission
  - learners verify their identity by logging into the LMS for the submission of assignments and/or completion of assessments with their private access details, i.e. username and password
  - all assessments uploaded through the LMS will undergo a plagiarism check before being accepted for submission to Barrow Training

The tutor will report any discrepancies in work submitted to the TEL Manager, who will follow up with the learner. This may include a telephone interview to confirm knowledge, an interview, and request for assessment drafts and rough work.

### **3.3.3.3 Assuring Quality Technology**

It is the responsibility of Barrow Training to monitor and ensure that it becomes and remains a leader in technology-enhanced learning (TEL). Barrow Training has used expertise from industry and educational partners to obtain the best advice on technologies and approaches to online and blended learning.

These include:

- External TEL and FET experts
- Enovation, eLearning Consultants
- RIKON, Waterford Institute of Technology

Barrow Training commits to continue investing in the most effective hosting provider which will:

- Greatly reduce or eliminate downtime and provide Barrow Training learners with confidence
- Protect Barrow Training from malicious attack
- Establish managed procedures to ensure rapid recovery from server failure or other data loss

Barrow Training delivers its programmes via a Moodle-Based Learning Management System (LMS) from Enovation. To ensure effectiveness from an organisational, programme and learner context, Barrow Training monitors and reviews the provision of blended learning programmes on a continuous basis.

| Tool                         | Indicators  |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>External Reports</b>      | Learning outcomes<br>Learner engagement<br>Support services<br>Programme outcomes<br>EA reports   |
| <b>Learner Surveys</b>       | End of course learner evaluation forms<br>Overall learner experience<br>Repeat bookings/referrals<br>Recommendations for improvement                                |
| <b>Module Review Reports</b> | Module delivery<br>Learner feedback<br>Learner engagement<br>Achievement of module learning outcomes<br>Certification outcomes<br>Tutor delivery and tutor feedback |
| <b>Staff Surveys</b>         | Achievement rates of module and programme<br>Learner outcomes and learner engagement<br>Support surveys<br>CPD requirements<br>IV reports                           |

Support provided by Enovation is detailed in Appendix 2.

#### **3.3.4 Learners outside Ireland**

Barrow Training does not enrol learners onto its programmes who reside outside Ireland.

#### **3.3.5 Collaboration and Other Partners**

Barrow Training does not engage in any collaborations relevant to its provision of blended learning.

### **3.4 Blended Learning in a Programme Context**

#### **3.4.1 Programme Development and Delivery**

Barrow Training will develop and deliver programmes that are well-structured, relevant to the needs of learners and industry, and reflect the standards as set out by the National Framework of Qualifications (if applicable). This process is guided by the Policies and criteria for the validation by QQI of programmes of education and training. See Section 2.1 of Quality Assurance Manual for the Procedure for the Development and Approval of New Programmes.

#### **3.4.2 Blended Learning Programme Design**

Barrow Training implements the ABC curriculum design method for the development of its blended learning programmes. This approach is based on activity-based learning and is structured around designing a course that facilitates six learning types:

- Acquisition – Learners listen to a lecture, presentation or podcast, watch videos or demonstrations, and read from books or websites
- Inquiry – Learners explore, compare, contrast and critically analyse the texts, documents and resources that reflect the concepts and ideas being taught
- Practice – Learners adapt their actions to the task goal, and use the feedback to improve their next action
- Production – Tutor motivates learners to consolidate what they have learned by articulating their current conceptual understanding and how they used it in practice
- Discussion – Learners articulate their ideas and questions, and challenges and responds to the ideas and questions from the tutor and/or their peers
- Collaboration – Learners take part in the process of knowledge building itself

ABC Learning Design (Young & Perović, 2018)

The ABC curriculum design method is complemented by the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) – a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn, including learners with disabilities. UDL aims to improve the educational experience of all learners by introducing more flexible methods of teaching, assessment and service provision to cater for the diversity of learners in our classrooms. This is underpinned by QF800 Reasonable Accommodation Policy.

The academic standards that inform the design and structure of each module are key to the quality of course and directly impact on the learner experience. Key academic standards include:

- Course overview and introduction
- Learning outcomes
- Assessment
- Learning resources
- Learning activities
- Interaction
- Learner support

(Quality Matters, 2019)

### **3.4.2.1 Course Overview and Introduction**

At the start of a module, there are clear instructions on the structure, layout, purpose, assessment, and participation in the course. Communication expectations for online discussions, email, and other forms of interaction are clearly stated. Minimum technology requirements for the course are clearly stated, and information on how to obtain the technologies is provided. The self-introduction by the tutor is professional and designed to build rapport with the learners.

### **3.4.2.2 Learning Outcomes**

"Learning outcomes are sets of competences, expressing what the learner will know, understand or be able to do after completion of a process of learning, long or short" (*European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (Key Features), European Commission, 2004*)

"Learning outcomes focus on what the learner has achieved rather than merely focussing on the content of what has been taught. Learning outcomes focus on what the learner can demonstrate at the end of a learning activity." (*Writing and Using Learning Outcomes: A Practical Guide, D. Kennedy, UCC & NAIRTL, 2007*)

The minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs) and minimum intended module learning outcomes (MIMLOs), while important and intrinsic to the programme, do not define it. All programmes offered by Barrow Training will have an associated set of MIPLOs and MIMLOs. Learning outcomes at programme and module level will be used as the basis on which decisions regarding teaching, learning and assessment approaches will be used. During the monitoring and review stage, MIPLOs and MIMLOs are reviewed by the Director of Training, tutoring staff and SMEs.

Clear learning outcomes that are measurable and clearly linked to the course learning activities and assessments are presented and explained at the start of the course.

### **3.4.2.3 Assessments**

Digital technology facilitates assessments to be completed online by learners as part of a blended programme. Assessment plays a key role in the learning outcome approach by Barrow Training. Assessment tasks are seen as a primary means of learning and will provide the opportunity for demonstrating the learning outcomes in an integrated and realistic setting. Barrow Training aims to provide a balance of formative and summative assessment in its training and education programmes, including blended learning programmes. The outcomes of these assessments provide an opportunity for the learner to give and receive feedback and aid their progress.

Formative assessments are completed through quizzes and exercises on the LMS, and during classroom-based tutorials, where assessments are usually devised by the tutors, and are usually informal with no associated module marks or weighting. This type of assessment may include group-work exercises in class to include role-play, problem-solving and presentations, quizzes or mock exams, and peer feedback activities. This is an inclusive approach to assessment which supports learners in reflecting on their own learning.

Summative assessments normally take place at the end of a module and measure the extent to which a learner has met the learning outcomes. Examples of this type of assessment include exams, skills demonstrations, assignments, projects and portfolios. The result of these assessments will contribute to the learners overall grade for the module. Exams and skills demonstrations are completed during face-to-face classroom-

based time, while assignments, projects and portfolios can be securely submitted to the tutor for correction on the LMS. These assessments are subject to a plagiarism check on the LMS, provided by Viper Plagiarism Checker (scanmyessay.com). The report generated from this check must show less than 17% matching content.

The module grading policy is stated clearly in the learner induction at the beginning of the module. The assessments used are sequenced, varied, and suited to the level of the course. The module provides learners with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress with timely, high-quality feedback. A detailed assessment brief is provided so that all learners in the module know what they are expected to do. Consistency of style and structure across different assignment briefs is also important such that learners can easily navigate those documents and not miss key information on their assessment.

### 3.4.2.4 Learning Resources and Materials

The module resource pack is provided to each learner in pdf form, and content is also presented in units on the LMS. These units are made up of groups of learning outcomes and contain quizzes and exercises that form the learners' formative assessment. Active learning is encouraged using questions, activities, and encouraging discussion of topics with other learners. The learning resources represent up-to-date theory and practice. Visual design is simple and organised, with a clean page design that supports clarity and understanding. Consistency of style and structure across learning resources/content is also important such that learners can easily navigate resources/content.

Once content is developed for a particular module, this requires attention and work over time to ensure its currency as well as simple upkeep to fix identified errors, broken weblinks, etc. Learners are provided with a facility on the footer of each page to log any errors, broken links etc. that they find as they study. Additionally, an annual audit of each module is planned and conducted by the Quality Assurance Manager in conjunction with the TEL Manager. Issues are logged in the Incident database (QF14).

Additional resources for face-to-face days include the following:

- Projector and screen
- Laptop/mobile device
- Whiteboard and/or flipchart
- Webcam

Skills demonstration equipment varies by module and the Programme Development Committee consider this early in the process. A resource list is drawn up for each module to ensure that skills demonstrations that cannot be completed in the workplace can be completed via a role play method onsite.

Many skills demonstrations include the use of the KERi mannequin, a life-size human mannequin model for training. KERi has a range of motions, realistic client positioning, non-pinching joints and can be used for male and female client skills demonstrations to demonstrate clinical skills.

Learner requirements prior to commencing a blended learning programme:

|   |
|---|
| Access to a laptop with functioning camera and audio <b>OR</b> access to a PC with functioning camera and audio (earphones may be required when using PC) <b>OR</b> access to a mobile device with functioning camera and audio |
| Strong internet connection  |
| Microsoft Teams downloaded  |
| Be able to provide photo ID in the form of a passport, public service card or driving license   |

### 3.4.2.5 Learning Activities

The following methodologies will be implemented for the delivery of blended learning programmes with Barrow Training:

- Online tutorials
- Learner Management System
- One-to-one support by:
  - Phone
  - Email
  - Meetings via Microsoft Teams
- Group meetings and discussions via Microsoft Teams
- Study and revision days
- Online exercises
- Practical sessions to include role-play scenarios
- Simulated environments on skills demonstration days

### 3.4.2.6 Interaction

Barrow Training is cognisant of the Universal Design for Learning and uses interactive material to engage learners in the virtual learning environment.

Over 200 templates have been designed by a graphic designer for use in the VLE to be visually engaging, promote consistency and to integrate audio, video and learner activities to enhance the overall learning experience. Module design features such as facilitator photos and video introductions, a community forum for learners, and collaborative learning activities can facilitate social presence and enable learner-instructor and learner-learner interaction.

Minimum levels of alternative formats are set out for all courses to provide multiple means of engagement to promote inclusivity in the learning environment for all learners.

### 3.4.2.7 Community Forum

The LMS includes a discussion forum for each module which can be accessed by both learners and tutors. The purpose of the discussion forum is for learners to ask questions about their course content, engage with fellow learners and respond to questions raised by tutors. The forum is monitored by the TEL Manager – all comments must be approved prior to publishing.

Positive online behaviours are encouraged and the following 'netiquette' (internet etiquette) applies to the discussion forums on the LMS:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Respect the opinions of other learners. Disagree respectfully and acknowledge the valid points in the other learner's argument. Acknowledge that others are entitled to have their own perspective on the issue. |
| 2 | Avoid sarcasm as it can be difficult to get tone across on an online platform  |
| 3 | Try not to distract other learners with off-topic discussions  |
| 4 | Before posting a question to a discussion forum, check if anyone has asked it already and received a reply   |
| 5 | Always make an effort to use proper punctuation, spelling and grammar. It's also important to be reasonable about others' grammar mistakes.  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 6 | Set a respectful tone. A certain level of formality is expected in this communication. Remember to say "please" and "thank you" when soliciting help from tutors or other learners. |
| 7 | Do not type in ALL CAPS as readers tend to perceive it as shouting  |
| 8 | When replying to a question from another learner, make sure the answer is accurate  |
| 9 | Be responsive to queries to show interest   |

Abusive or offensive comments will not be tolerated. The forum should not be used to:

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Abuse, harass, stalk, threaten or violate the rights of others   |
| 2  | Post illegal material  |
| 3  | Solicit personal information   |
| 4  | Harm minors in any way   |
| 5  | Solicit passwords of personal identifying information for commercial or unlawful purposes  |
| 6  | Post material that contains software viruses or harmful programmes such as trojan horses, worms, time bombs, computer code or files designed to interrupt, destroy or limit the functionality of any computer software or hardware |
| 7  | Post material that falsely expresses or implies that such material is endorsed by Barrow Training  |
| 8  | Post irrelevant material   |
| 9  | Post any unsolicited or unauthorised advertising, promotional content, junk mail, spam, chain letters or any other form of commercial publicity.   |
| 10 | Post material that contains violence or offensive subject matter or contains a link to an adult website  |
| 11 | Post material that promotes or encourages illegal activity   |

A learner found to be in breach of the above may be removed from the LMS and can lead to expulsion from a programme.

#### 3.4.2.8 Classroom-Based Days

Learners on blended learning programmes are invited to classroom-based days which involve a variety of the following:

- Practical skills demonstrations and assessments
- Exam (if applicable)
- Face-to-face tutor support
- Group revision and study sessions

Learners completing their QQI- or PHECC-accredited training and education programmes through blended learning are invited to a classroom-based assessment day, where they will meet with their tutor for assessment of knowledge and practical skills.

Classroom-based days for learners completing a blended learning programme are scheduled one day per month in the Barrow Training classroom by the TEL Manager. Offsite classroom-based days are organised as required.

All practical skills demonstrations that take place on these classroom-based days are demonstrated initially by the tutor, then practiced by the learner before final assessment takes place. Skills demonstrations that form part of the assessment are photographed or, preferably, video recorded to be presented as evidence. If the module includes a skills assessment, learners sign a consent form (QF223) which confirms that they

understand that video recordings/photographs of their skills demonstration will be submitted as part of their assessment for certification in line with GDPR requirements. Evidence of skills demonstrations are stored in an encrypted file and made available only to those involved in the certification process, i.e. tutor, internal verifier, external authenticator and results approval panel. The maximum timeframe for these to be stored is nine months. After this time, skills demonstrations are deleted from the Barrow Training system. Learners who complete skills demonstrations in the workplace must also present video/photographic evidence, as appropriate. Skills such as these are quality assured by the workplace supervisor, and a report is compiled as part of the assessment.

First Aid Response (PHECC-accredited) training delivered via blended learning requires one virtual training day delivered via Microsoft Teams (see timetable in Appendix 3) and one classroom-based day (see timetable in Appendix 4). Learners must have 100% of the theory completed on Moodle having spent a minimum of 12 hours on the platform before being invited to these training days. A maximum of 8 learners are invited to each training day. Learners must attend the first day of virtual training prior to attending the classroom-based day. The first session includes the revision of the skills objectives as outlined by PHECC, as well as tutor demonstrations of the relevant skills. The classroom-based day involves learners practicing the skills before being assessed on them by the tutor using the skills assessment sheets. All required equipment will be provided to the learners onsite. The MCQ examination will also take place at the end of this second day. A score of 60% is required to be successful in this examination.

All examinations held in Barrow Training adhere to the procedures and standards that are required by the respective awarding body. Exam papers are provided to the tutor in a sealed envelope and stamped with the Barrow Training stamp. The exam date must be clearly written on the envelope along with the statement "must be opened and witnessed in class". The version used is logged on the Barrow Training system and the versions of exams are alternated. This envelope must be stored securely by the tutor. Learners are made aware of the exam code of conduct during their induction and this is reiterated to the learners immediately prior to the exam. Tutors must then return corrected exams to the Barrow Training office in person or by registered post. Any spare exam papers are also returned and are shredded and destroyed. If a learner is unsuccessful in their examination, they may repeat the exam within two weeks of their first attempt (maximum of 3 attempts). If the learner requires a repeat examination for a QQI module, their grade will be capped at a Merit. This may result in postponement of Certification until the next submission date. An administration fee of €50 applies per additional sitting.

### **3.4.2.9 Virtual Classroom Scenario**

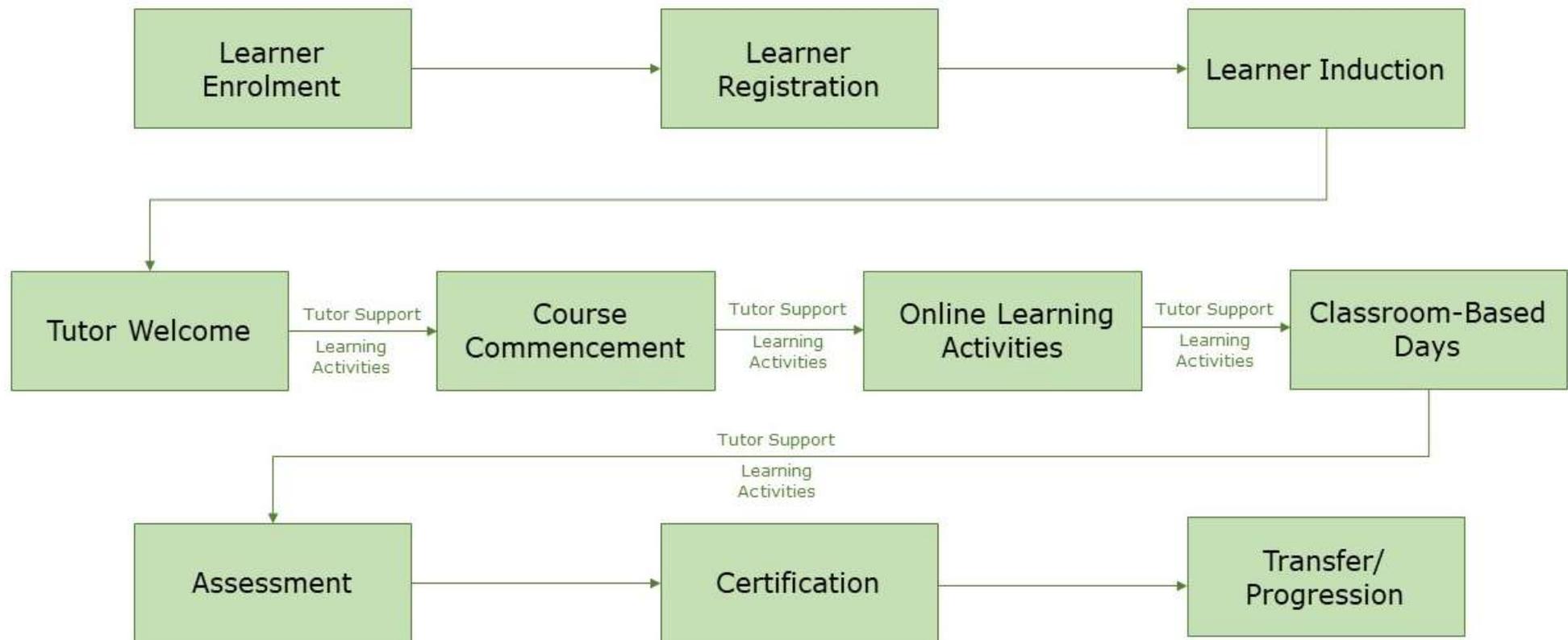
Microsoft Teams is used by Barrow Training to offer one-to-one support between learners on a blended learning programme, to facilitate group meetings and discussions, and to complete skills demonstrations. Where existing company policy may prevent us from using Microsoft Teams, an alternative method of delivery would be sought, e.g. Zoom. Live online lectures are recorded and uploaded to the LMS for learners to access afterwards.

The learner(s) will remain in the 'waiting room' until access is granted by the tutor or programme administrator. Learners then verify their identity in the virtual classroom by entering a breakout room and presenting the tutor with proof of identification. Recording does not take place at this stage and no other learners are present. An email invitation is issued to the learner, along with the instructions in Appendix 3.

It will be decided with the tutor and individual/group at the beginning of the meeting when breaks will take place, but it is advised that a break is taken every 60-90 minutes for 10-15 minutes. It is important to step away from the screen at the opportunities provided to prevent dry eyes, to use the bathroom, have a snack, etc. If a learner does not return after a break or leaves during the meeting, they will be signed out by the tutor/programme administrator and marked as absent.

### 3.5 Blended Learning in a Learner Experience Context

#### 3.5.1 Blended Learning Learner Journey



|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Learner Enrolment</b>          | Learner completes enrolment process as per QF803 Admissions Policy & Criteria. Administration team confirms application process is completed correctly. QA Manager confirms minimum requirements are met. Submission is accepted.  |
| <b>Learner Registration</b>       | Learner is contacted by the TEL Manager to welcome them to their programme. Support tutor details and technical support information are provided.  |
| <b>Learner Induction</b>          | Learner completes an induction to the programme, Barrow Training's policies and procedures, and to the blended learning process.   |
| <b>Tutor Welcome</b>              | Support tutor contacts the learner to introduce themselves and explain the guidance that they can offer.   |
| <b>Course Commencement</b>        | Learner completes workshops on Academic Writing Skills and Referencing & Plagiarism prior to entering the course   |
| <b>Online Learning Activities</b> | Learner accesses the programme content on the LMS which includes text, audio, video, and interactive quizzes and exercises.  |
| <b>Classroom-Based Days</b>       | Learner is invited to classroom-based days which involve a variety of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exam (if applicable)</li> <li>• Recording of skills demonstrations</li> <li>• Face-to-face tutor support</li> <li>• Group revision and study sessions</li> </ul> |
| <b>Assessment</b>                 | Summative assessment of the programme takes place, e.g. assignment, portfolio, project, exam, skills demonstration.  |
| <b>Certification</b>              | Learner receives a certificate for the successful completion of their programme.   |
| <b>Transfer/Progression</b>       | Successful completion of the programme may enable the learner to transfer to another programme at the same level, or progress to a programme at a level above.   |

### 3.5.2 Support Available to Learners

#### 3.5.2.1 Induction

Prior to enrolment on a blended learning programme, learners are provided with an induction to the programme. This includes, but is not limited to, the nature and extent of autonomous learning, collaborative and supported aspects of learning, details of specified timings for synchronous learning or assessment, rules governing flexibility for learners, and regulations in place to protect learner information.

The learner induction will also specify requirements for access to the online learning environment – detailing the required broadband specification and any specific hardware or software requirements, for example.

The learner induction will provide information on the level and nature of support available, including but not limited to academic, technical and pastoral support.

Further detail will be offered to learners in the Learner Handbook (QF42)

#### 3.5.2.2 Badges

Badges on the LMS are used to motivate learners. They are an electronic way to demonstrate that the learner has completed a specific section of the programme and are assigned to a learner's personal account. Moodle badges may be awarded based on a variety of criteria chosen by the Barrow Training TEL Manager.

Badges are currently awarded on the LMS for completion of the following:

- QQI Learner Induction
- Introduction to Blended Learning
- Academic Writing and Referencing
- Course Completion

LMS Admin has access to the badges in a course and the recipient list of who earned each badge, and when they received it.

### **3.5.2.3 Technical Support**

Technical support on the LMS is available from the TEL Manager by contacting [support@barrowtraining.ie](mailto:support@barrowtraining.ie). All emails are responded to within 12 hours.

The TEL Manager is notified at each stage of a learner's, tutor's, or administrator's progress throughout the LMS. See Appendix 4 for full list of notifications received by the TEL Manager.

Enovation offer 24/7 technical support to the TEL Manager.

### **3.5.2.4 Security**

Learners will be assigned a private username and password for secure access to their personal account on the LMS. This will be issued to the email address provided at enrolment.

If a learner has forgotten their password or inputs their password incorrectly, they will be prompted to reset their password. The link provided will be sent directly to the learner's email address.

Barrow Training administration and academic staff do not have access to the learners' access information at any point.

See Chapter 6 – Learner Supports of Quality Assurance Manual for further information on:

- Reasonable Accommodation
- Protection for Enrolled Learners (PEL)
- Pastoral Care
- Equality of Opportunity

## **3.6 References**

CAST (2019) *Universal Design for Learning*. Massachusetts: Available from <http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html#.XTbuBohKiUk> [Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020]

Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training. QQI, November 2017

Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes. QQI, March 2018

University College London (2020) *ABC Learning Design @ UCL*. London: Available from <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/abc-ld/> [Accessed 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020]

Young, C., Perović, N. (2018). *ABC Learning Design*.

### 3.7 Appendix 1 – Blended Learning Tutors

The role and responsibilities of a Barrow Training Blended Learning tutor includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Understand the Barrow Training organisation and your role within Barrow
- Respect and follow Barrow Training QA and administrative policies and procedures
- Deliver training and complete assessment on behalf of Barrow Training in line with pre-course commencement briefing
- Return promptly all relevant paperwork and assignments
- Read and understand all Barrow Training updates sent to you
- Inform Barrow Training immediately if you are late for classroom-based or virtual training days or need to cancel
- Continue to check our website and QQI website for updates and current information
- Maintain your content expertise by being knowledgeable about the research, current practice and future trends regarding the topic you train in
- Always appear professional in dress and manner
- Do not promote or sell any non-training related material or market your own services
- Respect client confidentiality and advise learners to do the same
- Know how to set up, operate and troubleshoot all necessary equipment
- Utilise feedback given to improve content and delivery
- Have your own equipment necessary for training e.g. PC/laptop, webcam, headphones, strong internet connection
- Provide informal feedback to learners on assignments and learners throughout the course

Professionalism is characterised by behaviour that shows respect for the interests and welfare of learners. Barrow Training aims to promote self-respect and a positive self-image in its learners. All staff must be well presented; a smart casual dress code is permitted. Good hygiene standards are expected at all times. Tutors should not engage in demeaning descriptions of either learners, learner representatives or colleagues.

Use of the internet and email by tutors and learners is permitted where such use supports the goals and objectives of the training programme. Learners and tutors must ensure that they use this tool in a responsible, effective and lawful manner. The internet or email cannot be used for personal gain or profit.

The tutor must make Barrow Training aware of the following:

- Any discussion around the changing of dates or times of classroom-based days
- Any change in the number of learners, e.g. additional learners now attending the course.
- Any issues with learners not logging in or not spending enough time on each aspect of their course.
- If there are any issues relating to Barrow Training paperwork or materials, e.g. if you are short any documentation, packs or assignments, we must be informed and will arrange for additional paperwork to be sent to you immediately.
- Permission must be sought from Barrow Training before any additional materials are bought and any requests for materials should come through us. If materials are purchased without prior permission, they will be at the tutor's own cost.
- Photos/video recordings are mandatory in meeting QQI requirements on certain programmes. If for any reason you do not have a camera or cannot provide one to take evidence of skills demonstrations, you must contact us in advance of the course commencing, and we will provide you with a camera or other equipment as necessary.

Blended learning tutor support is available from the TEL Manager on [support@barrowtraining.ie](mailto:support@barrowtraining.ie) or 059 972 1416.

Please see Tutor Handbook for more detail on tutors' roles and responsibilities, as well as health and safety requirements.

### **3.8 Appendix 2 - Enovation Technical Support**

Application Support – Enovation covers updates necessary to ensure the continued security of the application, where patches are released as point/minor upgrades. In case of fixes requiring major upgrades, Enovation will charge Barrow Training a fee based on the application's customisation level. Security patches are applied at the discretion of Enovation, based on an evaluation of the associated risks.

Monitoring – The Enovation service is connected to multiple monitoring systems providing both active and passive health checks of critical service components.

Availability is monitored every minute from multiple geographic locations to assure rapid problem detection and the system alerts the designated contacts of any outages or potential problems when readings reach predefined thresholds.

An array of specialised passive checks installed with the Enovation service allow for early detection of application configuration specific issues for example scheduler execution, email delivery problems, security settings problems (code and data permissions), anti-virus settings and password policies enforcement.

The capacity of the system storage devices, its memory, central processing unit (CPU) and network load are reported for alerting purposes but also collected in a separate system to help with performance related investigations.

Linux Stack Support - The service from Enovation covers systematic maintenance of all essential system components required to run the application - Operating System, Databases, Web/Application servers and additionally management of various aspects of the system on a per request basis including, but not limited to users permissions, custom configuration changes and auxiliary services like SFTP, SSH, SMTP.

Critical security updates are implemented within two business days from the release. The less critical updates and upgrades (security, stability, performance) are implemented either seamlessly or within a scheduled maintenance window. Security updates are applied at the discretion of Enovation, based on an evaluation of the associated risks.

Disaster Recovery – The service from Enovation covers an on-site, nightly, encrypted backup solution with 7 days retention. This level of protection allows for a service recovery within 24 hours (RTO) with data loss up to 24 hours (RPO). All disaster recovery solutions are tested on annual basis.

Infrastructure Support - The service from Enovation covers server hardware, storage, networking equipment and/or virtualisation/cloud software of the platform hosting the application. This service is an integral part of Managed Hosting but can also be added to Remote Server Management.

### 3.9 Appendix 3 - Instructions for Microsoft Teams

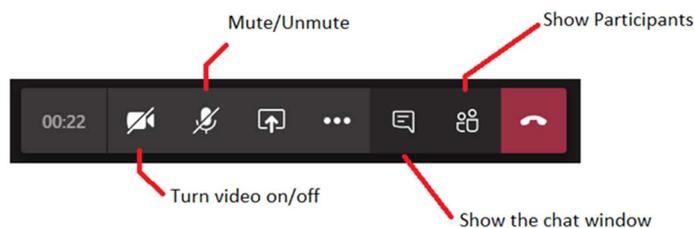
1. Click on the 'Join Microsoft Teams Meeting' hyperlink in the meeting invitation.



2. Join the meeting by clicking on the 'Join Now'.



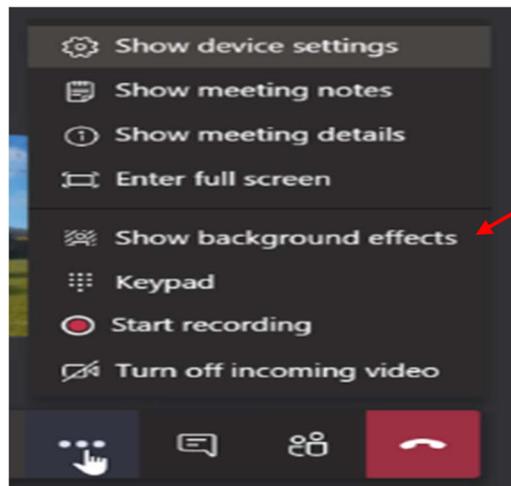
3. You can switch off your camera and/or microphone as below. You are required to keep your camera on at all times to confirm your attendance. You can also view participants at the meeting by clicking the 'Show Participants' button and view the chat window by clicking the 'Show the Chat Window' button.



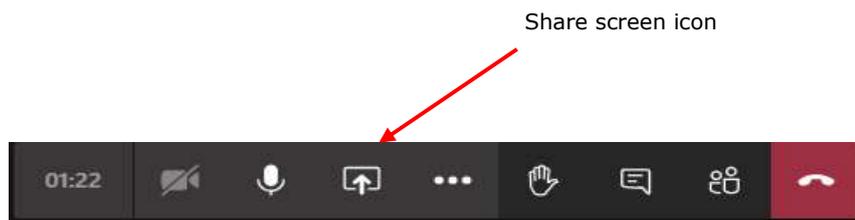
4. Turn your microphone on when you wish to speak. When not speaking, make sure your audio is muted. This will prevent interruption from background noises. It is important, however, that you use a quiet room to ensure you are not distracted.
5. Keep the "chat" side bar open and use it to ask questions. You can also use the "raise your hand" function for this purpose.



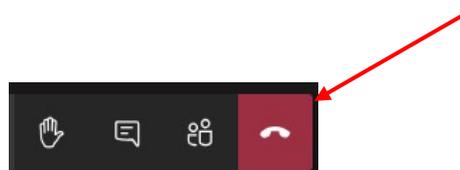
6. You may hide your background by using the "show background effects" option to minimise distractions.



7. You can share your screen by selecting Share Screen icon. You can then choose a window or program to share. You also can share your system audio to play a video or audio clip by ticking the include system audio option.



8. To leave meeting select red handset to hang up



### **3.10 Appendix 4 - Notifications Received by TEL Manager**

- Assignment notifications
- Feedback notifications
- Feedback reminder
- Subscribed forum posts
- Subscribed forum digests
- Lesson essay graded notification
- Notification of quiz submissions
- Confirmation of quiz submissions
- Warning when quiz attempt becomes overdue
- Notices about minor problems
- Important errors with the site
- Available update notifications
- Backup notifications
- Course creation request notification
- Course creation request approval notification
- Course creation request rejection notification
- Badge recipient notifications
- Badge creator notifications
- Comment posted on a learning plan
- Comment posted on a competency
- Insights generated by prediction models
- Message contact requests notification
- Asynchronous backup/restore notifications
- Grade notifications
- Manual enrolments
- Manual enrolment expiry notifications
- Certificate received
- Certifications
- Certification completed
- User allocated
- User deallocated
- Data requests
- Data request processing results
- Data requests exceptions notifications
- Notification action for dynamic rule tool
- Inbound message configuration
- Message to confirm that an inbound message came from you
- Warning when an inbound message could not be processed
- Confirmation that a message was successfully processed
- Event monitor
- Notifications of rule subscriptions
- Program completed
- User allocated
- User deallocated