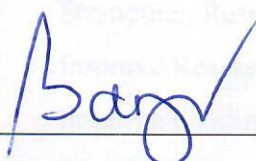# KING CEASOR UNIVERSITY

OPEN DISTANCE AND E-LEARNING POLICY

March 2024

Approval

This policy has been approved on the ...19th... day of ...March...the year 2024

Signed:

Bary (signature)	*MBCharity* (signature)
Hon. Dr. Chris Baryomunsi	Dr. Charity Basaza Mulenga
CHAIRPERSON, KCU COUNCIL	**VICE-CHANCELLOR**

OPEN DISTANCE AND E-LEARNING POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

King Ceasor University's Open Distance and E-Learning (ODeL) Policy aims to offer staff and students opportunities to access and utilize open distance and e-learning platforms and technologies.

This policy outlines the responsibilities of everyone involved: students, staff, King Ceasor University, the government, as well as partners and collaborators, in delivering Open Distance and E-Learning at the university.

This policy relies on several guidelines that must be adhered to for its implementation, aligning with other policies of KCU and national regulations. Decisions regarding Open Distance and E-Learning at KCU will be informed by the principles outlined in this policy.

Aligned with its mission to deliver quality and pertinent education nationally and globally, King Ceasor University (KCU), under the guidance of this ODeL policy, strives to offer Open Distance and E-Learning opportunities that anticipate and meet market demands.

This policy meets one of the University's strategic Objectives 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.

This policy therefore seeks to ensure that there is a consolidated view on how ODeL should be effectively implemented within KCU to enhance teaching and learning.

The Policy covers the following broad areas;

    a) E-Learning Platforms or Software Management
    b) E-Learning Infrastructure Management
    c) E-Learning Support Services
    d) Information Security
    e) Data Management
    f) Remote Access
    g) Open Distance Learning

2.0 DEFINITIONS

E-Learning
E-learning, short for electronic learning, refers to the use of electronic technologies, primarily the Internet, to facilitate learning outside of traditional classroom settings.

Blended learning

Blended learning is an educational approach that combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning activities and resources. It integrates technology into the classroom to enhance the learning experience and cater to diverse learning styles.

Distance education
Distance education, also known as distance learning or remote learning, is a method of delivering education to students who are not physically present in a traditional classroom setting.

Learning
Learning is an engaging journey of building knowledge, shaping attitudes, and refining values, all the while honing skills through a diverse range of resources. These resources span from interactions with individuals to exploring printed material, electronic media, experiential learning, practical training, and reflective practices. It's a dynamic process that involves personal growth, empowerment, and a commitment to self-improvement for the betterment of oneself and others.

Open distance learning
Is a multi-dimensional concept aimed at bridging the time, geographical, economic, social, educational and communication distance between student and institution, student and academics, student and courseware, and student and peers. Open distance learning focuses on removing barriers to access learning, flexibility of learning provision, student-centeredness, supporting students and constructing learning programs with the expectation that students can succeed.

Open learning
Is an approach to learning that gives students flexibility and choice over what, when, where, at what pace and how they learn. Open learning is all-encompassing and includes distance education, resource-based learning, correspondence learning, flexi-study and self-paced study.

3.0 CONTEXT AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

As the learning landscape evolves, universities worldwide are grappling with challenges like high staff turnover and fierce competition for student enrollment and retention. Moreover, they're navigating a competitive arena where student expectations are constantly evolving.

Today's students inhabit a tech-driven world, where Open Distance Learning and ICT are integral to various aspects of their lives.

4.0 JUSTIFICATION

Today, the focus is on student-centered learning rather than teacher-centered approaches, a shift that technology readily enables. Hence, there's a pressing need for a policy to streamline the use of technology in education.

The policy will encourage academic staff to utilize Open Distance and ICT during their teaching, learning, and assessment of students.

4.0 GOAL

To incorporate ODeL in KCU's teaching, learning and research activities so that its role is apparent to staff and learners at all levels.

5.0 OBJECTIVES

a) To enhance teacher to student teaching and learning experience, through the use of technology.

b) To improve electronic communication between academic staff and students as a means of effective teaching, learning and research.

c) To increase opportunities for distance, to self-directed and independent learning.

d) To enhance the university's potential to recruit and retain more students.

e) To commit KCU to an ongoing, responsive interaction with current and emerging national and international imperatives and developments with relevance to quality ODeL provision.

6.0 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The ODeL policy is in line with the following Institutional & National Policies:

a) **Institutional Policies**
- KCU Human Resource Manual
- KCU ICT Policy
- KCU Quality Assurance Policy
- KCU Examinations Rules and Regulations
- KCU Research Policy

b) **National Policies**
- Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001 (As amended)
- National ICT Policy (2014)
- The Computer Misuse Act, 2010
- The Electronic Transaction Act 2010
- Data Protection and Privacy Act, 2019

7.0 STRATEGIES

7.1 STRATEGY 1: E-Learning Platforms (Software) Management

Objective: To ensure the utilization of an appropriate E-Learning Platform(s) for effective and authoritative teaching and learning.

7.1.1 The E-Learning Platform(s)

a) Shall be developed in line with the proven pedagogical instructional design concepts selected by KCU.

b) Shall be Open Source to allow easy sustainability

c) Shall have guidelines, for the effective adoption, testing and evaluation.

d) Shall be used in line with the Software Management guidelines of the KCU ICT Policy 2019

7.1.2 Propriety Software

a) Shall be procured in accordance with the University's Procurement and Disposal regulations. This shall begin with documented business requirements justified by a stated business case by a Unit with the approval of the ICT Services Unit.

b) Shall be maintained in an inventory of all University property, including licenses, installations, licensing keys, copies of agreements, media and permitted users, by the ICT Services Unit.

7.2 STRATEGY 2: E-Learning Infrastructure Management

Objective: To provide an E-Learning infrastructure to facilitate teaching, research and innovation.

The University shall ensure the effective and efficient use of E-resources following quality assurance standards by;

a) Ensuring that there is an appropriate and sufficient physical infrastructure (i.e. classroom, computer laboratories and learning spaces) to support access to e-learning which meets staff and student needs and expectations.

b) Ensuring supply and maintenance of the technical equipment for teaching, research, learning technologies both software and hardware.

c) Ensuring that E-Learning Infrastructure Management is guided by the KCU ICT Policy.

7.3 STRATEGY 3: E-Learning Support Services

Objective: To provide documentation, training, continuous support and service level agreements to both staff and students.

The University, through the University Computing Services Unit, shall;

a) Provide central support for e-learning through staff training and development.

b) Support creation and maintenance of an e-learning directory.

c) Support the university library in the creation and maintenance of a digital library.

7.4 STRATEGY 4: E-Learning Security

Objective: To develop mechanisms, guidelines and procedures to support IT Security functions.

The University recognizes the need to protect her IT resources against various security risks that could lead to data loss and affect business continuity. The university;

a) Shall uphold the principles of Information Security through the preservation of the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the university's information.

b) Shall ensure that the developed e-learning content complies with the KCU and National Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights, policies and guidelines.

c) Shall ensure that the provisions of Information and IT Security will be in line with the Security guidelines of the KCU ICT Policy including, but not limited to;

  i. Information Security Infrastructure
  ii. Information Access
  iii. Security of Third-Party Access
  iv. Protection of Key Data and Information
  v. Personal Security of Information
  vi. Communications Management
  vii. Virus Protection
  viii. Password and Privilege Management
  ix. Unattended User Equipment
  x. Disposal of Information Storage Media
  xi. Disaster Recovery
  xii. Expectation of Privacy
  xiii. Security Testing Tools
  xiv. Incident Handling
  xv. Monitoring
  xvi. Physical Security

7.5 STRATEGY 5: E-Learning Data Management

Objective: To develop e-learning content standards.

The university shall develop e-learning content standards. All e-learning content shall be in a format described in the E-Learning Content standards manual.

a) KCU will ensure that staff and students have appropriate access to electronic teaching and learning tools and materials, including materials stored locally and those held else-where.

b) KCU will establish an infrastructure for the creation and maintenance of electronic resources.

c) KCU will manage its own electronic resources by creating a repository for archiving, access and reuse of digital materials created for teaching, learning and research.

d) KCU will ensure that Data Management is in line with the guidelines of the KCU ICT Policy.

7.6 STRATEGY 6: Remote Access

Objective: To develop procedures and guidelines to support remote connectivity.

The university will;

a) Provide a networked environment that supports remote connectivity to both staff and students.

b) Provide remote access rights, to its eLearning contents authorized users.

c) Ensure remote access follows the principle of, "at least access", to users.

d) Ensure remote access by users is monitored and evaluated.

e) Develop comprehensive guidelines for remote connectivity to E-Learning platforms.

7.7 STRATEGY 7: Open Distance Curricula Development

The curricula will:

a) Have academic integrity and be responsive to the vision and mission of KCU.

b) Be aligned with the community needs and students' profiles.

c) Have articulate and clear exit level outcomes.

d) Design teaching, learning and assessment strategies to meet these outcomes.

e) Be developed by a team(s) involving academics, relevant external stakeholders and, where possible, representatives of current and past students.

7.8 STRATEGY 8: Admission Procedures

Admission to Open and Distance Learning programs shall follow the university's Admission Policy

7.9 STRATEGY 9: Open Distance E-Learning (ODeL) Teaching Methods

The ODeL teaching and learning methods for a particular program or course:

a) Will be determined by the nature of the program, the profile of the students, students' access to resources and level of the program.

b) Will include independent study of learning materials, completion of various activities, formative assessment tasks, tutorials, practical work and opportunities to interact with others as well as research activities.

7.10 STRATEGY 10: Open Distance Learning (ODL) Assessment

The assessment strategy:

a) will ensure that students develop effective cognitive, reflective, self-management and practical skills,

b) will include formative assessment which is designed to support the teaching and learning processes or support research skills,

c) will include formative and summative assessment aspects that will be used for making a judgment about the achievement of the learning outcomes,

d) will assist students and tutors to monitor their learning in relation to formative assessment tasks and feedback.

8.0 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

8.1 Institutional Framework

8.1.1 Role of Management

a) The University, through Senate and Council, shall determine and approve online and Distance Learning Programs for all Schools.

b) University Management shall champion the implementation of e-learning within all KCU programs as a gradual process.

c) The University Management shall ensure that students taking E-Learning courses have equal opportunities with those taking courses delivered in traditional ways and that its marketing, recruitment, administrative and support procedures and provision are fully aligned to the needs of the e-Learner.

d) The University Management shall establish a University e-Learning Unit under the KCU ICT Services. The unit shall be adequately staffed with professionally trained staff to provide and support eLearning at the university.

e) The University shall ensure that, by using effective costing models and market research, the pricing of e-learning offerings is competitive and appropriate to the target populations.

8.1.2 E-Learning Support Unit

The unit shall ensure;

a) That e-learning growth is in line with the strategic focus of KCU in respect to teaching and learning.

b) That there is continuous provision of a reliable E-Learning Platform Management System.

c) That there is a robust E-Learning Infrastructure Management strategy.

d) Provision of E-Learning Support Services including continuous training of both staff and students.

e) Security of both Infrastructure and E-Learning Content.

f) Provision of Remote Access of the E-Learning Platform for both staff and students.

g) The return on investments in e-Learning, like all forms of teaching, should be monitored and evaluated.

h) Monitoring and reviewing progress made against target outcomes at least every three months.

i) Assistance in the management of the student enrolment processes.

j) Assistance in the management of improvements related to student and course management.

k) There is a point of contact for platform users who may have queries.

l) That communication of support issues is done promptly and escalated where necessary.

m) That support emails and calls from users are answered on a day-to-day basis.

8.1.3 Role of the Deans and Directors

Deans and Directors shall;

a) Provide strategic direction that will encourage all academic staff to utilize ODeL in the teaching and assessment of learners.

b) Ensure provision of pedagogy training for staff as the major influencing factor for a given ODeL technology.

c) Develop positive leadership and change management strategies towards ODeL implementation.

d) Ensure that e-Learning is utilized to enhance other teaching and learning approaches such as lectures, seminars and therefore should be linked with learning, course delivery and assessment.

e) Provide support and facilitation to staff to ensure successful implementation of ODeL.

f) Develop effective methods of internal communication, collaboration and consultation about ODeL.

g) Recognize and reward best practice staff involved in using e-learning technologies (content development, training).

8.1.4 Role of the Academic Staff

Academic staff shall;

a) Manage the teaching and learning of their respective courses using available technologies

b) Manage and guide all course activities, processes and tasks

c) Impart information to students using different media types

d) Provide assignments, tests and exams to students

e) Enable active participation of learners and engagement of ideas

f) Lead discussions among students

g) Host and manage live class sessions

h) Record and upload lectures and tutorial sessions

i) Seek technical help, if need be, from the eLearning Support Unit

8.1.5 Role of Students

Students shall;

a) Personally, acquire the necessary electronic devices required to participate in their respective course eLearning activities

b) Enroll for courses

c) Attend live class sessions

d) Access and download learning materials posted by academic staff

e) Undertake assignments, tests and exams

f) Participate in online class discussions

g) Seek technical help, if need be, from the eLearning Support Unit

8.2 Action Plan

Some staff members in the University are already implementing some form of ODeL with excellent examples of the use of e-learning. However, in order to completely rollout ODeL across the entire University, there is a need to undertake its implementation in clear key phases, namely:

8.2.1 Phase 1–Consolidation of existing capacity and infrastructure
i) Launch the ODeL Policy.

ii) Enhance infrastructure to ensure stability of ODeL platforms

iii) Provide training and support to academic staff and students.

iv) Appoint person(s) in-charge pf ODeL support under the University Computing Services Unit

v) Explore advances in ODeL methods and tools through case studies.

vi) Explore opportunities for integrating ODeL in at least three degree and diploma courses for each department/faculty across the University.

vii) Explore at least two content authoring techniques and have them adopted across KCU.

viii) Report on impact of rolling out the ODeL Policy and E-learning platforms.

8.2.2 Phase 2 – Embedding

i) Enhance learning to support tools and templates from phase1.

ii) Seek to embed new ODeL practices within the entire University degree and diploma courses.

iii) Seek to produce one new distance learning course, as a pilot of training from a distance.

iv) Embed e-assessment in at least three degree and diploma courses across the entire University.

v) Introduce training and support activity to raise the base level of ODeL provision across all courses.

8.2.3 Phase 3 – Main Streaming of Enhancements

i) Introduce policies to encourage and support mainstream ODeL provision.

ii) Mainstream use of e-assessment as a formative and summative evaluation instrument across all degree and diploma courses within the University.

iii) Review and update ODeL policy and guidelines to support mainstream use of ODeL.

8.2.4 Enforcement Guidelines

i) Staff who breach the provisions of this policy shall be liable to sanctions in accordance with the KCU Human Resource Manual.

ii) The University Community shall not use the E-Learning Platform for personal reasons, otherwise this, shall be an offense liable to sanctions in accordance with other relevant KCU policies and Ugandan Laws.

iii) Transmitting, retrieving, downloading, or storing messages or images that are offensive, derogatory, sexual in content, or otherwise inappropriate in a business environment shall be an offense liable to sanctions in accordance with other relevant KCU policies and Ugandan Laws.

iv) Making threatening or harassing statements to another employee or to a student, or other outside party shall be an offense liable to sanctions in accordance with other relevant KCU policies and Ugandan Laws.

v) Transmitting, retrieving, downloading, or storing of images relating to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, citizenship status, age, handicap, disability, sexual orientation, or any other status protected under the Uganda Government laws shall be an offense liable to sanctions in accordance with other relevant KCU policies and Ugandan Laws.

vi) Communicating confidential University information to individuals inside or outside the University or to other organizations, without specific authorization from relevant university authorities shall be an offense liable to sanctions in accordance with other relevant KCU Policies, Manuals and Ugandan Laws.

vii) Sending or receiving confidential or copyrighted materials without prior authorization shall be an offense liable to sanctions in accordance with other relevant KCU relevant policies and Ugandan Laws.

viii) Soliciting personal business opportunities, or personal advertising, gambling, monitoring sports scores, or playing electronic games shall be an offense liable to sanctions in accordance with other relevant KCU policies and Ugandan Laws.

9.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

9.1 Role of the University Quality Assurance, Gender and ICT Committee

The University Quality Assurance (QA) Committee will:

a) Develop guidelines for monitoring and evaluation of ODeL based programs.

b) Evaluate implementation of ODeL in all academic programs yearly.
c) Find out whether ODeL provisions meet the standards set by the University and other stake holders.

d) Carry out regular university-wide ODeL self-assessments and provide reports to Senate every two years.

Below are some indicators that will be used by QA committee for monitoring and evaluating ODeL policy implementation;

a) Number of courses created on university ODeL platforms

b) Number of students enrolled in courses offered through university ODeL platforms

c) Number of ODeL programs accredited and implemented

d) Number of students enrolled on to ODeL based programs

e) Number of staff trained to teach using ODeL technologies and platforms

f) Number of content types uploaded onto university ODeL platforms

g) Number of lecturer-student interactions using university ODeL platforms

h) Number of assessments done using university ODeL technologies and platforms

i) Number of staff and students who use / log-in to university ODeL platforms

10.0 Communication of the Policy

This policy shall be made known to the staff, students, and other stakeholders by the office of DVC-AA assisted by the Academic Registrar and Computing Services Unit;

a) Making it visible on and downloadable from the university's main website

b) Sending soft-copies to the relevant stakeholders by e-mail

c) Printing and circulating copies.

d) Organizing workshops and seminars for staff and students.

11.0 Interpretation

The provisions of this Policy shall be interpreted in accordance with the laws governing the Government of Uganda including the 1995 Uganda Constitution, Employment Act, 2006, The Public Service Act and the Public Service Standing Orders, existing university policies inter alia.

12.0 Commencement and Amendment

This Policy shall come into force on the date of approval by the University Council. The policy can be amended by the University Council as and when deemed necessary.

13.0 Conclusion

This policy is just a guide on how e-learning should be streamlined across the entire University. Having stipulated out what should be done by KCU in order to effectively implement ODeL, it is apparent that resources have to be committed by all stakeholders. Establishing and staffing of an E-Learning Unit is essential for effective implementation and monitoring of the policy. The eventual establishment of the eLearning Directorate at KCU shall streamline timely reporting to KCU management on the progress of the implementation of the ODeL based programs and the success of this policy.