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Guideline No: 2022/G-28

GUIDELINES FOR E-LEARNING

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**Maldives
Qualifications
Authority**

GUIDELINES FOR E-LEARNING

AUGUST 24, 2022



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1. Introduction

This Guideline for E-learning is adopted pursuant to Section 22 (c) and Section 71 (c) (4) of the Maldives Higher Education and Training Act (Law No. 7/2021) and Regulation for Conducting Higher Education and Training Programmes (Regulation No: 2022/R-76), to set out rules for higher education institutions and training institutions to conduct distant or e-learning programmes. This Guideline is formed in line with the Maldives Higher Education and Training Act and the Regulation No: 2022/R-76 (Regulation for Conducting Higher Education and Training Programmes) and shall be read in conjunction with the Act and the Regulation.

The use of technologies and platforms for learning using Internet has become an integral part of higher education and increasingly higher education providers are relying on these alternative means in their delivery. As the Maldives Qualifications Authority (MQA) is mandated by law to regulate the quality assurance of higher education in the Maldives, this guideline/ policy outlines the standards and requirements when a technology-based modality is used for delivery of instruction.

With the COVID-19 and the forced closures of the higher education institutions for regular face-to-face classes for prolonged periods of time, it has become obvious that e-learning as a delivery mechanism for the higher education is paramount. Hence, need for quality assurance of e-learning has been further felt and has become a key issue to be addressed by the MQA.

2. Objectives

To address issues related to quality provision of higher education through e-learning, a guideline is needed to recognise increasing demand for online education and facilitate provision of higher education programmes through various online platforms and methods. Furthermore, it is also pivotal for MQA to regulate e-learning delivery to assure quality through such guidelines and policies. One of the most important objectives of such policies and regulations of MQA is to protect and safeguard students from degree mills and accreditation mills with ill intentions as well as from an influx of practices that compromise quality and make profit by providing higher education programmes to students. Hence, it is important to enforce existing minimum

standards as well as introduce new standards to protect higher education provision in the Maldives.

This guideline is developed on the backdrop of the following responsibilities mandated to MQA.

1. Develop a system for the quality assurance of higher education and training programmes (approval, accreditation, and auditing).
2. Assess all the higher education programmes conducted in the Maldives that meet the minimum standards of MNQF and grant approval and management of all required processes.
3. Develop and implement a framework to supervise accredited academic programmes to assess if they are conducted according to the approval conditions.

This guideline is developed to achieve the following objectives:

- a) Provide a comprehensive framework for e-learning in HEIs in Maldives.
- b) Strengthen commitment to e-learning by government and coordinating bodies.
- c) Provide framework for institutional and national standards for integration of e-learning in HEIs.
- d) Ensure educational stability of students in the face of unforeseen natural disruptions.

3. The context for the e-learning guidelines

MQA is created to carry out approval, accreditation, and academic audit as well as qualifications recognition as a system for the quality assurance of higher education.

Apart from the function of qualifications recognition, MQA is mandated to develop, revise and implement the National Qualifications Framework. Within the major function of higher education quality assurance, MQA carries out Programme Accreditation as well as Academic Audit with two variants of Institutional Audit and Programme Audit.

For all these functions, MQA has in place guidelines, standards, criteria, policies and regulations as required. While there are new developments in the provision of higher education, new regulatory interventions and standards are needed to assure quality of higher education. In particular, e-learning has become a delivery modality for higher

education programmes with the increasing reliance on the Worldwide Web and internet in provision of higher education programmes. Hence, this guideline is developed to provide more guidance in the delivery of higher education programmes in the Maldives through e-learning.

4. Existing guidelines, standards and criteria

It would be more comprehensive to develop new guidelines and standards in a way that acknowledges existing standards, thus building on what is already in place. Hence, understanding the existing standards would be vital for provision of e-learning as well. The following guidelines, standards and criteria, are already developed, published and implemented to regulate major functions of MQA.

1. Maldives National Qualifications Framework (MNQF)
2. Guidelines Programme Accreditation
3. Guidelines for Institutional Audit
4. Manual for Institutional Audit
5. Guidelines for Programme Audit
6. Regulation for Programme accreditation
7. Regulation for Institutional Audit
8. Regulation for Programme Audit
9. Regulation for Qualifications Recognition
10. Policy for student enrolment and teaching
11. Minimum Entry Criteria for MNQF Qualifications
12. Implementing Language Requirement
13. Regulation for Implementing MNQF
14. Regulation of MQA's Advisory Board
15. Regulation of MQA's Qur'an Panel
16. Regulation of MQA's Teacher Education Panel
17. Policy for recognising foreign Doctoral degrees
18. Timeframe for Course Approval
19. Information to be submitted to get approval to conduct a programme through Virtual Mode.
20. Covid-19 and Aftermath: Guidance for Higher Education Providers on Standards and Quality

It should be noted that many aspects of e-learning delivery are already regulated by MQA through some of the above-mentioned guidelines, standards and criteria. Refer to Appendix 1 for detailed information about these documents.

5. Key principles

Even though the delivery modality is e-learning, there are basic principles of quality assurance that apply to all delivery modalities as explained below.

- a) e-learning shall be understood with its distinct features and advantages such as flexibility, internet accessibility, and cost-effectiveness and shall not be likened to traditional face-to-face learning where students attend universities, colleges and institutes.
- b) quality of higher education shall be maintained across all delivery modalities and each delivery modality (face-to-face, e-learning, etc.) shall be implemented within the boundaries defined.
- c) e-learning delivery modality is used to provide a pathway for students who are unable to attend a HEI because of various reasons in which students choose to study through e-learning.
- d) e-learning shall be held to the same standards set by MQA to assure quality of academic programmes delivered. As such, for the purpose of e-learning delivery, there shall not be different interpretations of contact hours, credits, learning hours, duration, examinations, assignments, etc.

6. Definitions of e-learning and related terms

Quality assurance measures inherent to e-learning delivery are covered under existing guidelines, standards and criteria of MQA. Many aspects of e-learning in conducting MQA accredited academic programmes, are already regulated and covered within the existing guidelines, standards and criteria. For example, even in the e-learning delivery, while the concerned matter is conducting MQA accredited academic programmes in ways that compromise quality, existing guidelines, standards and criteria, already provide required minimum criteria for qualifications. As such, regardless of the delivery modality, whether it is face-to-face, distance learning or e-learning, blended learning that incorporates a hybrid system of face-to-face learning and e-learning, the existing guidelines, standards and criteria of MQA shall apply. In addition, this guideline/ policy outlines additional processes of quality assurance that

will be applicable to alternative modes of delivery. It also provides more clarity of MQA's quality assurance mechanism for e-learning.

The definition of e-learning and its characteristics may differ and in order to share a common understanding, it is necessary to clarify the e-learning and related terms and educational methods relevant for the quality assurance in e-learning.

Distance education Distance education courses are those where no classes are held on campus – all instruction is conducted at a distance. Distance education courses may use a variety of delivery methods, such as video/audio conferencing and those which are internet- or print-based.

E-learning A form of distance education where the primary delivery mechanism is the internet/ intranet. These could be delivered as blended learning, and a combination of synchronous online learning and asynchronous online learning. All instruction is conducted at a distance. The types of e-learning are defined as the following.

- **Blended Learning:** Course that blends online and face-to-face delivery. Substantial proportion (between 30%-80%) of the content is delivered online, typically uses learning management system, online discussions, and has a reduced number of face-to-face meetings.
- **Synchronous online learning:** Course where all the content are delivered online using real-time conferencing tools in which students can participate from anywhere.
- **Asynchronous learning:** Course where all the content are delivered using a learning management system and/or online discussion tools.

Online programmes. A fully creditable programme that can be completed entirely by taking online courses, without the need for any on-campus classes. These could be delivered synchronously or asynchronously.

For the purpose of this document, considering the definitions stated above, e-learning is understood as encompassing every form, including blended learning and that which is facilitated through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Since e-learning is a very dynamic and innovative field of learning, the definition of e-learning will be updated and adapted regularly to reflect the new reality.

7. Eligibility for e-learning delivery

Even though we acknowledge the need for e-learning delivery modality in all its types, we should also accept that e-learning delivery needs to be properly regulated. There are so many platforms, methods and techniques in utilizing internet and the Worldwide Web in delivering online education; some are better than others and some have serious flaws in it. Similarly, there are huge differences in the way e-learning is carried out by HEIs. Whilst some HEIs are doing it in a responsible manner, serious questions are raised by the public regarding the way some HEIs carry out the modality.

The following eligibility criteria has to be adhered by MQA in approving e-learning delivery of MQA accredited academic programmes. Any HEI that submits for approval of an academic programme with e-learning delivery modality, must meet these requirements.

- The applying HEI for MQA's approval to conduct an academic programme through e-learning and blended learning, shall have the technical requirements outlined under section 10 (technical requirements for e-learning delivery) of this guideline.
- To be eligible to conduct academic programmes through e-learning, the HEI must have successfully operated with MQA accredited academic programmes for at least 5 years.

8. Guidelines for Internal e-learning Quality Assurance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

8.1 Guideline for Institutional E-learning Policy

Every higher education institution wanting to deliver MNQF qualifications through e-learning delivery should have a written policy on e-learning. The policy document should include:

- a) an explanation as to why e-learning has been selected as an appropriate learning strategy for a particular programme;
- b) educational objectives, pedagogical models and innovation strategies to be used in delivering the programme;
- c) institutional support for e-learning;
- d) course development process for e-learning;

- e) teaching and learning methods for e-learning;
- f) student support mechanism for e-learning;
- g) compulsory e-learning training for teaching staff;
- h) technological infrastructures;
- i) student assessment;
- j) electronic security measures; and
- k) e-learning coordinator.

Quality Indicators

- a) Existence of an e-learning policy
- b) A clearly articulated policy framework and governance structure when deciding on the adoption of new technologies to ensure the expected quality of e-learning provision
- c) Institutional policies, structures, processes, and resources are in place to guarantee the successful teaching and learning process of students, including those with special educational needs when using e-learning delivery modality
- d) A policy and code of practice to ensure academic integrity and freedom and ethical behaviour
- e) Electronic security measures are considered by the institution's policy/code of practice

8.2 Guideline for Design and Approval of Programmes

The design and approval process within the institution should outline how the programmes objectives and intended learning outcomes will be achieved through the alternative model of delivery. The design and approval process should consider:

- a) teaching methods for students in a specific context, taking into account pedagogical practice, innovation, and the specific goal of the programme;
- b) programme modularity;
- c) online assessment methods;
- d) building online academic communities; and
- e) offering personalised instruction to meet different learning needs and aspirations.

Quality Indicators

- a) A clear strategy for digital innovation including e-learning delivery
- b) Curricula design reflects pedagogical practices and innovation
- c) Course designers of e-learning programmes have expertise in academic and technical aspects
- d) Teaching staff are familiar with the advantages/disadvantages of using e-learning in particular course contexts
- e) Student needs are considered when developing the learning model and the curricula design

8.3 Guideline for Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach. Hence the strategy should:

- a) encourage the use of flexible learning paths, different modes of delivery, a variety of pedagogical methods, and giving a sense of autonomy to each student;
- b) encourage student-to-student interaction online;
- c) create spaces for communication between teacher and students;
- d) employ methods to increase the student-to-content interaction;
- e) select an appropriate e-learning methodology for the content and level;
- f) develop appropriate of learning materials and update them regularly;
- g) establish procedures for validating online assessments; and
- h) use measures that guarantee learner authentication and work authorship.

Quality Indicators

- a) Teaching methodologies and learning activities are chosen with the aim of achieving learning outcomes.
- b) Learning materials fit the pedagogical model and facilitate student learning.
- c) Authors of learning materials are relevant for the subject.
- d) Learning materials are reviewed and updated periodically.
- e) The technical infrastructure is aligned with the teaching methodology, learning activities, and e-assessment methods, and it eases the teaching and learning process.

- f) Assessments through e-learning platforms or e-assessment methods are fit for purpose
- g) Students are clearly informed about the e-assessment.
- h) Students are aware of academic misconduct such as contract cheating and plagiarism.
- i) Students are trained in how to appropriately paraphrase, cite, and reference, regarding both online and print resources.
- j) The institution gives advice on appropriate online behaviour (netiquette rules).

8.4 Guideline for Student Admission, Progression, Recognition, and Certification

Institutions should have pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle”, e.g., student admission, progression, recognition and certification. These regulations should focus on:

- a) Orientation of the respective e-learning environment and provision of information about the e-learning courses;
- b) mechanisms for dissemination of course materials;
- c) assignments, e-assessment;
- d) Information Technology requirements; and
- e) estimate of the amount of time that students will need to dedicate to the course.

Quality Indicators

- a) Students/prospective students are informed about requirements concerning equipment, e-learning and digital skills, pre-knowledge and prerequisite subjects, and attendance.
- b) Students are informed about the workload and pedagogical model of the e-learning programme.

8.5 Guideline for Teaching Staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff. Such a process should include the following.

- a) Define the structures, profiles, and roles of teaching staff.

- b) Professional development for the teaching and facilitation in the e-learning context.
- c) Training on transitioning from a traditional face-to-face teaching environment.
- d) Technological support for teaching staff.
- e) Pedagogical support for teaching support.
- f) Training in the use and mastery of learning technologies.

Quality Indicators

- a) The institution has defined the structure, profile, and role of the teaching staff that is aligned with the pedagogical model.
- b) The institution uses appropriate instruments to guarantee that the profile of the teaching staff corresponds to their duties.
- c) The teaching staff is trained and proficient in the use of learning technologies, e-learning environment and e-assessment methods.
- d) The institution has developed procedures to identify the support requirements of the teaching staff.
- e) Technological and pedagogical support services for teachers are adequate, accessible, and timely.
- f) The teaching staff-student ratio avoids excessive workload for teachers and tutors.
- g) The institution has implemented appropriate procedures for recruiting and hiring teaching staff.
- h) The teaching staff is coordinated effectively.

8.6 Guideline for Learning Resources

Institutions should design the learning and teaching activities that are adequate and make sure that readily accessible learning resources are provided. Learning resources should include the following.

- a) A robust Learning Management System (LMS) together with a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
- b) A technology development plan that includes electronic security measures (password protection, encryption, back-up systems, etc.) to ensure standards of quality and information integrity and validity as well as a centralised system

that provides support to the building and maintenance of the infrastructure for online education.

- c) Guarantee the effectiveness of delivering an e-learning programme by acquiring, operating and maintaining a computer-based system capable of: registering students for programmes; distributing e-learning materials to students; maintaining and updating records of student performance; conducting aspects of e-business; and facilitating communication between the institution, its students and staff.
- d) Adequate library resources.

Quality Indicators

- a) Internationally recognised Learning Management System (LMS).
- b) The VLE supports a variety of methods and tools.
- c) The VLE is based on non-proprietary web standards and is constantly updated to reflect technological changes.
- d) The technical infrastructure ensures the accessibility of the e-learning programme by students with special educational needs.
- e) The institution provides students with an adequate e-library.
- f) Disclosure of intellectual property, policy, procedures and content re-use to MQA or assigned experts by MQA.

8.7 Guideline for Student Support

Institutions should ensure that adequate and readily accessible student support is provided. Student support should:

- a) be addressed in institutional policies and strategies;
- b) cover aspects such as tutoring, pedagogical, technological, and administrative-related needs;
- c) be enhanced by analysing the profile of e-learning students (including, for instance, their cultural backgrounds, technical experiences, technological equipment, etc.);
- d) uses it to meet the specific needs of its students (for example, students with disabilities); and
- e) consider encouraging the virtual mobility of students and academics.

Quality Indicators

- a) The institution has procedures in place that cover student support, including tutoring, pedagogical, technological, and administrative elements.
- b) Student support is offered according to the student's profile and their specific needs.
- c) The student support reflects characteristics of e-learning.
- d) Support for the development of learning, as well as digital skills (students are guided towards reflection, developing time management skills, etc.), is provided.
- e) Students receive guidelines/training in using e-learning resources (VLE, e-library, etc.).
- f) Hours of support are transparent and suit the needs of students; for instance, periods of peak demand (evenings, weekends, holidays, etc.) are considered.
- g) Institutions provide opportunities for the virtual mobility of students and academics.

8.8 Guideline for Information Management

Institutions should collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities. The information management system should:

- a) enable the agile, complete, and representative collection of data and indicators derived from all aspects related to e-learning; and
- b) include indicators of completion rates, dropout rates, key results, etc.

Quality Indicators

- a) Collected data is used in order to evaluate e-learning programmes
- b) There is a strategy on the use and purpose of learning analytics within the institution
- c) The information management system includes relevant, updated, and reliable information concerning the institution and its programmes.

8.9 Guideline for Public Information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible. Public information includes:

- a) Information on issues of recognition of qualifications of programmes, pedagogical development, teaching and learning methods, and resources technology; and
- b) Technological requirements, learning resources technology, and available technical support.

Quality Indicators

- a) The institution publishes reliable, complete, and up-to-date information on study programmes.
- b) The institution publishes reliable, complete, and up-to-date information on institutional technical support.
- c) Technical requirements to enable the full and effective use of the system are clearly identified and published.
- d) The institution publishes information on completion rates, pass rates, and dropout rates.

8.10 Ongoing Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned. The distinction between the e-learning programme and other e-learning activities is important, as well as to what extent the e-learning activities are integrated into study programmes as complements or independent components.

Quality Indicators

- a) e-learning programmes are reviewed, updated, and improved.
- b) Pedagogical developments are aligned with the institutional strategy.
- c) ICT and pedagogy developments are analysed and implemented when appropriate.

9. Technical requirements for e-learning delivery

Any higher education provider who delivers MQA accredited academic programmes through e-learning or applies for approval of an academic programme to deliver through e-learning shall have certain technical requirements in place. As stated in Section 7, without these technical requirements – as stipulated below – in place, the concerning HEI will not be eligible to be granted approval to conduct MQA accredited programmes through e-learning.

- a) Must ensure that appropriate technologies outlined in this section and technologies necessary for delivery through e-learning are available for all instructors and students and that there should be enough facilities and sufficient access to these facilities.
- b) Virtual/ video conferencing platform: Where synchronous modality of teaching is used, there should be a platform for video conferencing, in order to conduct online classes. This platform should enable to listen to audio and view video clearly. The video conferencing software should be easy to use and should not utilize too much memory from the computer system.
- c) Learning Management System (LMS): A Learning Management System shall be in place. Such a system must have following features.
 1. Modern and easy to use interface: Designed to be responsive and accessible, with an interface that is easy to navigate on both desktop and mobile devices.
 2. Personalised Dashboard: Display current, past and future courses, along with tasks due.
 3. Social learning / message boards: LMS should include features that will help students learn from each other. This will enable to improve the process, but is an ideal way to reduce the pressure on lecturer. By adding messaging boards and social learning features, students can ask and answer questions in a forum setting.
 4. Collaborative tools and activities: Work and learn together in forums, wikis, glossaries, database activities, and much more.
 5. Smart Scheduling tool such as Calendar: A calendar tool that helps keep track of academic or company calendar, course deadlines, group meetings, and other personal events.

6. Convenient file management system.
7. Simple and intuitive text editor: Users shall be able to format text and conveniently add media and images with an editor that works across all web browsers and devices.
8. Notifications: When enabled, users shall be able to receive automatic alerts on new assignments and deadlines, forum posts and also send private messages to one another.
9. Track progress: Educators and learners shall be able to track progress and completion with an array of options for tracking individual activities or resources and at course level.
10. Security features: Regardless of the LMS software, there should be data security proper protocols set up to ensure your HEI's sensitive information is safe and secure.
 - a) Learning materials for each module prepared to be delivered through an e-learning platform.
 - b) An online library that provides the references required for all the modules including Open Educational Resources (OER).
 - c) A stable internet connection with the minimum speed of 5MBPS is reasonable for lecturers.
 - d) For intranet connections, no internet connectivity is required for instant connections. However, video or audio enabled software is required for intranet connections. VPN or APN is also required through an Internet Service Provider for Intranet connections.
 - e) A mechanism to mark online class attendance.
 - f) A mechanism to record and publish classes – with consent of participants – on LMS for future reference of students is required when online classes are conducted.
 - g) A mechanism in place to protect the security of assessment and exam processes.

10. Criteria for recognition of foreign qualifications delivered through e-learning

Foreign qualifications delivered through e-learning shall be recognised by MQA, based on the following criteria.

- a) Existing criteria for recognition of qualifications shall be applied.
- b) Doctoral degrees delivered through e-learning delivery, shall be recognised by MQA as per the regulation approved by MQA's Governing Board for Recognition of Doctoral Degrees Awarded by Foreign Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
- c) In addition to existing criteria, MQA shall recognise qualifications delivered through e-learning if the following criteria are met.
 1. Exams shall be conducted in an exam centre of the provider or an online exam with MQA recognised proctoring mechanisms.

11. Types of academic programmes for delivery in e-learning

It is important to note that online teaching is better suited to some types of subjects and/ or activities than others. Therefore, some fields of study are not suited to e-learning. While it is difficult to determine exactly which fields should be allowed in e-learning and fields should not be allowed in e-learning, it is safe to say that there are fields that are not possible to be delivered through e-learning. These fields are mostly significantly practical fields.

Due to the practical nature and the need for students to attend for knowledge acquisition, academic programmes in the following fields of study are not allowed to be conducted through e-learning unless the same are approved by the respective statutory councils or regulatory authorities.

- Medicine and Dentistry
- Practical disciplines of health sciences that require licensing for practice
- Nursing
- Qur'anic and related fields
- Technical and vocational education
- Engineering

- Architecture
- Teaching

Practical components/ modules of MQA accredited programmes shall only be delivered through face-to-face delivery modality.

12. Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in e-learning must be carried out with careful consideration. The following teaching and learning standards must be adhered.

- a) Learning activities need to be designed and structured with the same care as direct teaching as online teaching and assessment are not simply a matter of placing classes and lectures onto a virtual learning environment (VLE).
- b) Support students to access Information Technology systems more than usual and that includes checking whether they have access to broadband services if students are being asked to undertake online learning and assessment as an alternative. Also, providers should have sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
- c) Teachers/ lecturers should be properly trained to carry out teaching through e-learning. As such specific training must be given to handle teaching activities on the video conferencing platform used for online classes as well as the use of Learning Management Systems.
- d) Online classes must be conducted with proper readiness to deliver. Students must be given clear information about the units and topics to be covered during the classes. Also, teachers must be ready with teaching materials needed for lessons.
- e) Technical support shall be properly given to students.
- f) While conducting online classes, through video conferencing platforms, both audio and video should be used.
- g) Number of students in any given online class should be manageable by one lecturer.

13. Criteria for assessments in e-learning

Assessment methods of e-learning programmes must be included in respective programme documents submitted to MQA for approval. The following criteria must be met in conducting assessments for e-learning programmes.

- a) All examinations must be conducted preferably face-to-face in a controlled and supervised venue or an online exam with MQA approved proctoring mechanisms.
- b) All assessments other than exams such as assignments, projects, presentations, etc., must be done as described in the programme document submitted to MQA unless otherwise amended after approval.
- c) Students must be warned about the dangers and illegality of plagiarism and contract cheating. If a student is found plagiarising in writing assignments, dissertations, and theses, appropriate penalty shall be given or if required, necessary legal action shall be taken in accordance with the related laws and regulations.

14. Implementation of this guideline

Proper Implementation of this guideline is crucial for assurance of quality in higher education in the Maldives. This guideline must be implemented fairly for all and without compromising quality standards outlined in this guideline and other existing guidelines, standards and criteria at MQA. Hence, this section provides provisions for (1) application for e-learning delivery modality, and (2) implementation of e-learning at HEIs.

14.1 Application for e-learning delivery modality

Eligible HEIs that want to conduct any MNQF compliant academic programme, must apply to do so within the programme accreditation process of concerned programmes. The criteria for application for e-learning delivery is as the following.

- a) Approval for e-learning delivery and blended learning delivery shall be sought for each academic programme separately through the normal programme accreditation application.
- b) When applying for approval of an academic programme to be delivered through E-learning, in addition to information about the curricular content of the modules, online teaching materials for each module covering the topics written

in module outline must be prepared and submitted to MQA for verification by MQA as proof of readiness to deliver an e-learning programme.

14.2 Entry into Force of this guideline

Approval for e-learning delivery and blended learning delivery of MNQF compliant academic programmes shall be given according to this guideline. Implementation and conduct of e-learning delivery and blended learning delivery shall be according to the following criteria/ rules.

- c) This guideline shall come into force from the date it is published in the Gazette of the Government of the Maldives.
- d) Any new approval to conduct a programme through e-learning delivery – including advertisements – shall be in accordance with this guideline and as accredited by MQA.
- e) Previously accredited programmes for e-learning delivery and blended learning delivery shall be adjusted to fit requirements of this guideline and submitted to MQA within 18 months from the day of publishing on the Gazette of the Government of the Maldives.
- f) All HEIs who conduct MQA accredited e-learning programmes and blended learning programmes, shall adhere to the standards and criteria stipulated in this guideline without any failure. If the Ministry of Higher Education or MQA finds a breach of this Guideline by any HEI or if such a breach is identified through a complaint issued by a student or a lecturer, or any other party, MQA should take the following actions against the related HEI, depending on the severity of the breach.
 - 1. Inform the HEI – in writing – of the breach with a notice to rectify the issue(s).
 - 2. If the issue is not rectified within the given time period, fine the HEI with an amount not exceeding MVR 10,000/- (Ten Thousand Rufiyaa).
 - 3. If the HEI is found to have breached this Guideline in conducting a programme, revoke the accreditation granted for the programme in addition to charging the fine stated in (1).
 - 4. Issue a public announcement informing the public of the breach and revoking of an accreditation stated under (3) of this section.