

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR ONLINE EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION



To be used as a supplemental resource to the Standards and Guidelines for
Global Evangelical Theological Education (SG-GETE)

<https://icete.info/resources/sggete/>

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The Standards and Guidelines for Global Evangelical Theological Education (SG-GETE) are intended to be modality neutral, and thus to be equally applicable to varying types of theological institutions and instructional models without presupposing any one in particular. The applicability of the SG-GETE to online programmes is therefore assumed and serves as the basis for more specific standards and guidance offered here in Appendix F with regards to what are minimum accreditable and aspirational levels of quality for programmes and institutions that offer online and blended theological education.

Although the scope of this Appendix does not permit a detailed development of each standards area and their sub-sections, a more comprehensive treatment is presently being prepared by the ICETE Workgroup on Standards for Online Evangelical Theological Education. This is projected for completion in late 2019.

In the discussion that follows, it will be helpful to keep the following definitions and distinctions in mind:

- **Online Learning (also referred to as electronic or e-Learning¹).** Online Learning as a mode of delivery commonly refers to educational programmes that are mediated by the Internet and are taught online with little or no physical face-to-face interaction between instructors and students. Virtual interaction takes place in a variety of ways and may be either synchronous or asynchronous. In the SG-GETE and this Appendix, “online learning” or “online education” will be used generically to embrace multiple modes and types of online educational delivery.
- **Technology Enhanced Learning.** Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) refers to the use of computers, the internet and other technological means as tools to improve the quality of teaching, learning and research. TEL is an integral part of online education, but is also commonly used in other delivery models, including face-to-face instruction.
- **Distance Education.** For the purposes of SG-GETE and this Appendix, Distance Education is understood as referring to any instructional model in which the teacher and learners are geographically separated during part or all of the learning process. Under this broad definition, diverse instructional models may be classified as subsets of distance education, including correspondence studies and programs mediated totally or partially online.²
- **Blended Learning (also referred to as Hybrid Learning or B-Learning).** Blended Learning refers to a hybrid instructional model that combines face-to-face instruction with periods of online or other modes of distance learning. It should be noted that many theological programmes popularly classified as “fully online” actually possess a blended element, in the sense that student learning involves formal, informal and nonformal interaction with on-the-ground components, such as the student’s context of life and ministry, participation in the local church, a mentoring or discipleship relationship. From a holistic formative perspective³ that pursues learning outcomes related to being, doing and living in community, as well as knowing, intentional strategies of blended learning are a necessary complement to online theological education.
- **Situated Learning.** Situated learning refers to learning that takes places in the various spheres of regular life-situations of students, usually outside their formal education programmes. While not in itself a form of online learning, situated learning is an appropriate and often essential complement to various forms of online study for the creation of blended learning opportunities. The most significant of these for theological students is often the church or believing community

¹ In this Appendix “e-Learning” is deliberately spelled with a lowercase “e” and upper case “L” to emphasize the notion that [student] *learning* is more important than the use of technology.

² This definition is broader than that proposed by the United States Department of Education, which draws a distinction between Distance and Correspondence Education. According to this more narrow understanding, Correspondence Education is not Distance Education because it does not involve “regular and substantive” interaction between students and their instructor. USDE, “Accreditation in the United States,” https://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg12.html, 602.3.

³ See above, Programmatic Standard B1: Holistic Integration.

that they belong to. Through active partnerships with local churches and community groups education providers can intentionally draw upon situated learning opportunities for their students in holistic formation areas that they may not otherwise be able to address adequately through formal online studies.⁴

This Appendix identifies six major areas that should be taken into consideration in applying the SG-GETE Institutional and Programmatic standards to the assessment of online theological education programs. Although the Appendix specifically deals with online education, some parts may be applicable to quality assurance and evaluation in other models of distance education.⁵

- F1: Institutional support for e-Learning
- F2: Academic preparation for quality e-Learning
- F3: Online educators and their qualifications
- F4: Holistic educational programme
- F5: Educational components in the online medium
- F6: Support for online students and educators

For each of these six standards areas, the Appendix includes specific reference to:

- The philosophy or educational rationale behind the online standards;
- Representative standards and guidelines for online theological education, divided into “threshold standards” and “quality standards”;⁶
- Evidentiary measures that would help to demonstrate compliance with the standards; and
- Suggestive examples of evaluation tools and rubrics for Visiting Evaluation Teams.

Finally, the SG-GETE Bibliography at the end of this document also contains a selection of excellent references pertaining to online learning for further consideration by accrediting agencies. The ICETE Online Standards Workgroup leaders welcome further input into these Standards and Guidelines to make them more effective and relevant within the rapidly growing and changing sector of online theological education.

F1. Institutional support for e-Learning

F1 - Philosophy/educational rationale. To ensure effectiveness, quality and adequate support, online learning must be fully integrated into the institution’s regular systems of planning, budgeting, administration and evaluation. Teachers and learners should be prepared for and supported in their respective roles through adequate policies, expenditure, services and technical infrastructure (see below, Section 6).

F1 - Threshold standards. The following are the threshold standards for this area:

- Online learning is reflected in the mission, vision and goals of the institution and is embraced by the administration, with support from the governing body, as a strategic means toward the accomplishment of these ends.
- Online learning is fully represented in institutional planning, budgeting, fund-raising, and quality assurance processes.

⁴ For initial (and further) reading in the field of Situated Learning, see references to S. D. Lowe & M. E. Lowe, S. J. Kemp, and M. B. Nicholls in the Bibliography below.

⁵ One such model, which may or may not include online learning elements, is Theological Education by Extension (T.E.E.). It should be noted that, formally speaking, Theological Education by Extension is not considered as “distance education” due to the presence of local (face-to-face) learning groups led by trained facilitators.

⁶ In each major section, the first standards listed are considered to be “threshold” standards, meaning they would normally be considered as essential or minimum standards for accreditation to be achieved. Other standards listed are regarded as “quality” standards or measures, describing better practice, but which are not necessarily required for accreditation.

- Institutional planning and budgeting take into account the needs of online education with regard to both current operations and future development.
- Online learning is supported by adequate technical infrastructure and by qualified personnel who assure that all related systems function correctly, safely and reliably.
- Online learning is fully integrated into the institution's structure of academic administration.
- Online learning meets the same institutional and programmatic standards as other modes of instruction at the same academic level, although these standards may be evaluated in different ways that take into account the particular characteristics of each delivery model.
- Online learning is supported by mechanisms and policies that provide for technical and pedagogical support to faculty and students.
- An appropriate system for managing course payments and enrolment online is in place.
- Program and other types of information that are provided online are updated and accurate.

F1 - Quality Standards. The following are the quality standards for this area:

- Online learning is evaluated systematically and included in the institution's regular processes of program, course and faculty evaluation.
- The institution applies a benchmarking methodology to assess and promote quality in both programmatic and institutional aspects of online learning.

F1 - Examples of evidential measures to demonstrate compliance

- Mission and Vision statements
- Planning, budgetary, and fund-raising documents concerning the online programmes
- Organizational charts
- Program, Course and Faculty evaluations
- Policy statements and orientation for online academic and student services
- Institutional Website
- Academic Catalogue or Handbook
- e-Learning Benchmarking initiatives being used for by the Institution for quality assessment and enhancement

F1 - Examples of evaluation tools/rubrics for Visiting Evaluation Teams. The selected rubrics in each of the following six online standards areas are adapted from the Pick&Mix benchmarking tool. Pick&Mix is an open content resource that includes nearly a hundred benchmarks that institutions and accrediting associations can select from according to their relevance, and which can then be applied to the evaluation of nearly every aspect of online learning.⁷

Another recommended resource that is freely available for use by institutions and accrediting associations is the OLC Scorecard Suite, a free collection of benchmarking tools developed by the Online Learning Consortium that covers both institutional and programmatic aspects of online education.⁸ Additional helpful resources are included in the Bibliography at the end of the SG-GETE.

⁷ "Pick&Mix." <http://bela.referata.com/wiki/Pick%26Mix> (accessed 26 March, 2019). Pick&Mix is offered freely under a Creative Commons BY-SA 3.0 License, which allows users to share and adapt without restrictions. "Attribution-Sharealike 3.0 United States (CC BY-SA 3.0 US)" <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/us/> (accessed 26 March, 2019).

⁸ "OLC Quality Scorecard Suite," <https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/consult/olc-quality-scorecard-suite/> (accessed 26 March, 2019).

The selected rubrics which follow are provided as representative, illustrative examples of evaluative criteria related to each area. They are neither intended to be comprehensive rubrics nor to describe every standard specified in this Appendix.

Evaluation criteria	Indicators of Inadequate Practice			Threshold Practice	Indicators of Highly Effective Practice	
	Level 1 statement (Minimal or Nil Practice)	Level 2 statement (Inadequate practice)	Level 3 statement (Marginally inadequate practice)	Level 4 statement (Accreditable practice)	Level 5 statement (Better practice)	Level 6 statement (Excellent practice)
(13) Planning Annually	Annual plans do not mention e-Learning at all.	Annual plans in some departments mention e-Learning.	Annual plans correlate with major e-Learning initiatives in most departments.	Annual plans correlate with most e-Learning initiatives in most departments.	Integrated annual planning process for e-Learning integrated with overall course planning.	Integrated planning process allowing, for example, trade-offs of courses versus buildings.
(23) Leadership in e-Learning	Leaders play no role in decisions affecting e-Learning.	The capability of leaders to make decisions regarding e-Learning is moderately developed at department level but not institutionally.	The capability of leaders to make decisions regarding e-Learning is moderately developed at departmental and institutional level.	The capability of leaders to make decisions regarding e-Learning is adequately developed at departmental and institutional level.	The capability of leaders to make decisions regarding e-Learning is fully developed at departmental and institutional level.	In addition, leaders are able to mentor other leaders in their own and other institutions.
(99) Benchmarking	The institution has not recently undertaken a benchmarking e-Learning project and has no plans to do so in the near future.	The institution is planning its benchmarked its e-Learning project.	The institution is in the active phase of its benchmarked its e-Learning project.	The institution is in the reflection phase of its benchmarked its e-Learning project.	The institution has recently benchmarked its e-Learning and is working through the implications of the results.	In addition, the institution is planning the next round of benchmarking at institutional or departmental level.

F2. Academic preparation for quality e-Learning

F2 - Philosophy/educational rationale. Institutions venturing into various modes of online learning need to ensure that its lead educators and programme directors are well aware of what constitutes quality online pedagogy, appropriate educational philosophy for teaching and learning **online** and best practices in the field. Those involved in online education should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the online medium and its strengths and limitations for TE in comparison to more traditional delivery methods. Such an understanding must include an awareness of the relative strengths and weaknesses of face-to-face, blended, and so-called “fully online” approaches. Curricular planning, design and implementation at all levels needs to be built upon such an understanding and awareness. Pedagogically speaking, how technology is to be used to enhance learning is more important than what technology is to be used.

Part of the preparation for quality e-Learning is also the intentional commitment to holistic educational outcomes, which itself necessitates a commitment to active partnerships with local churches, organisations and mentors for each student. For this aspect please see Section 4 of this Appendix below.

F2 - Threshold standards. The following are the threshold standards for this area:

- Senior educators and online programme directors can demonstrate that they are conversant with the literature of the field of online learning and are aware of what constitutes best practices in the field. They can demonstrate an understanding of the various strengths and weaknesses of face-to-face, blended and “fully online” approaches.
- Curricular design shows a high level of pedagogical insight into the online medium for TE delivery. Instructional design parameters and philosophy are clear, and a rationale is provided for the choice and balance of blended and online learning elements in the programme.
- Educational leadership has clearly identified the target audience for the online programme and is aware of the diversity of their students’ digital experience and accessibility.
- Online learning tools are selected according to their effectiveness in helping to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme. A rationale for all technological choices made can be supplied, including any learning (or content) management system adopted.
- Graduate outcomes for online programmes are consistent with those expected for regular programmes offered by the institution.
- Plans for the provision of holistic learning elements in the programme are clearly articulated.

F2 - Quality Standards. The following are the quality standards for this area:

- Pedagogical awareness includes an appreciation of best practices in the use of online videos (especially of “talking heads”), and of the inherent weaknesses of video lectures (whether live or recorded). This awareness can be demonstrated, and strategies are in place to ensure that student learning is constantly active (rather than passive) learning.
- Awareness of the respective strengths and weaknesses of both face-to-face and online discourse can be demonstrated by senior educators.
- A system for internal review and clear evaluation and assessment procedures are in place.

F2 - Examples of evidential measures to demonstrate compliance

- Table of educators involved in online curricular development, listing their qualifications and experience, alongside any specific training received or courses taken in online learning
- An illustrative bibliography of sources used by senior educators to develop their pedagogical understanding of online learning.
- Internal strategy and planning documents for the online programmes, and reports to executive and board leadership
- Published curricular documentation for the online programmes
- Academic Catalogue or Handbook
- Graduate profiles of both online and non-online programmes
- Training tools developed by the institution for its online educators in all roles
- Self-assessment tools and reports

F2 - Examples of evaluation tools/rubrics for Visiting Evaluation Teams.

Evaluation criteria	Indicators of Inadequate Practice			Threshold Practice	Indicators of Highly Effective Practice	
	Level 1 statement (Minimal or Nil Practice)	Level 2 statement (Inadequate practice)	Level 3 statement (Marginally inadequate practice)	Level 4 statement (Accreditable practice)	Level 5 statement (Better practice)	Level 6 statement (Excellent practice)
(9) Pedagogy	Terms to do with pedagogy related to e-Learning not understood in the institution.	Terms understood within the learning and teaching core team and among a few academic staff outside that.	Terms well understood within the learning and teaching core team and among some academic staff.	Terms well understood within the learning and teaching core team and among most academic staff.	Pedagogic guidelines for the whole institution with permitted variants, and understood and acted on by all staff.	A culture where techno-pedagogic decisions are made naturally, within guidelines.
(10) Training	No systematic training for e-Learning.	Some systematic training for e-Learning, for example, in some departments.	Institution-wide training programme set up but little monitoring of attendance or encouragement to go.	Institution-wide training programme set up with monitoring of attendance and strong encouragement to go.	All staff trained in e-Learning, appropriate to job type - and retrained when needed.	Staff increasingly keep themselves up to date, "just in time", except when discontinuous system change occurs, when training is provided.
(62) Pedagogical Research	The institution is not aware of outcomes of research which will enhance the experience of its students by suitable use of e-Learning.	Some departments are aware of outcomes of research which will enhance the experience of its students by suitable use of e-Learning.	Many departments are aware of outcomes of research which will enhance the experience of its students by suitable use of e-Learning.	Most departments are aware of outcomes of research which will enhance the experience of its students by suitable use of e-Learning.	The institution is fully aware of outcomes of research which will enhance the experience of its students by suitable use of e-Learning.	In addition, the institution makes full use in its programmes of its own research into pedagogy of e-Learning.

F3. Online educators and their qualifications

F3 - Philosophy/educational rationale. The "unbundling" of the educator's role into several different responsibilities, often carried out by an interdisciplinary team, is one of the most significant shifts that has accompanied the growth of online higher education. In this scenario, the creation and teaching of a single online course may involve the participation of (i) a content expert (developer, author or writer), as well as (ii) persons experienced in online pedagogy and e-Learning course design (instructional designers), (iii) multimedia production experts, (iv) online teachers, tutors or facilitators, (v) local mentors,⁹ and (vi) technical support staff. In smaller institutions, a single person might occupy several or all of these roles.

Quality online learning requires that those involved in each aspect of the creation and teaching of online learning be adequately equipped and resourced for their respective

⁹ Local mentors include local church and organisational leaders residing in the local physical context of each online student, who are able to help students achieve a programme's holistic learning outcomes. See further the Holistic Educational Programme standards in the next section (F4).

roles. The standards listed below also apply to those who are contextualizing or adapting courses originally derived from other programs and situations.

F3 - Threshold standards. The following are the threshold standards for this area:

- The institution recruits suitably qualified educators and administrators with adequate experience and ideally with specialized training in online education.
- Content experts, authors or writers meet the qualifications expected of faculty in the main body of the Standards and Guidelines. They are qualified at one degree level higher than the level they are writing or developing content for.
- Course development team members who have a role in instructional design have completed studies at the level of the course they are designing.
- Course development team members receive adequate training in best practice for their role, in adult learning, and instructional materials design for student self-study, which are relevant to the media being used for course delivery.
- Course development team members do not necessarily need to be content experts themselves, provided they have appropriate access to such context experts.
- There is a well-documented process of course development including rigorous field testing, editing and revision.
- Online tutors or facilitators have completed studies at least at the academic level that they are facilitating or demonstrate a similar level of learning and maturity. However, if they are teaching or facilitating online Masters or Doctoral level courses, they either have a doctoral degree with specialisation or appropriate experience in the subject areas being taught or work alongside an SME (with a doctoral degree) during the delivery of their course.
- Institutions provide adequate orientation and training in online education and Technology Enhanced Learning for all educators and staff involved in the design and teaching or delivery of online courses, appropriate to the medium of course delivery being used.
- Online facilitators are given specific training in the facilitation of group discussion. They are assessed during training and demonstrate appropriate ability before being officially appointed for their role. Trainers of online facilitators have a rich experience in online learning.
- For under-graduate level studies (Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor) it is not always the case that online facilitators must also be subject matter experts (SMEs), provided that course learning content has been developed by an SME, and that course materials have been designed appropriately for student self-study. In this case the online teaching role is one of facilitating learning through the already prepared self-study materials and group discussions, rather than one of instruction in a field of expertise.
- Where they are needed to facilitate the achievement of holistic learning outcomes, local mentors may be identified by students during their course and/or programme application procedures, and institutions create and implement an appropriate approval process for these mentors.

F3 - Quality Standards. The following are the quality standards for this area:

- Interdisciplinary team course development is encouraged and practiced, though with clearly defined leadership and role responsibilities.
- Designs for e-Learning programs, courses and courseware as well as other aspects of online teaching and learning are subjected to mechanisms of quality control and systematic evaluation.
- Special attention is paid to ensuring that all courses include tested and contextualized guides for online tutors/teachers/facilitators, including helps to facilitate online group discussion, and the application and assessment of learning.

- Online course development includes the provision of two types of simple, well-tested student guides that: (i) (on a per course basis) help the student progress through each step of the course, and (ii) (on a per program basis) offer practical assistance in using the technological tools and resources employed by the program.
- The institution pays particular attention to continuing encouragement, support, evaluation and further training of online facilitators.
- Appropriate training of local mentors is provided, and suitable assessment, evaluation and feedback tools developed to assist in the process. Additionally, institutions also liaise closely with those local mentors.

F3 - Examples of evidential measures to demonstrate compliance.

- Table of educators involved in online curricular development and course delivery, listing their qualifications and experience, alongside any specific training received or courses taken in online learning
- Lists of educators involved in creating/developing each online course, highlighting their respective roles and any subject matter expertise
- Educator job/role descriptions
- Academic Catalogue or Handbook
- Faculty Handbook
- Training Tools for training educators for various online roles
- Educator evaluation tools and sample reports
- Technical guide for students and facilitators
- Illustrative student learning guides for individual courses

F3 - Examples of evaluation tools/rubrics for Visiting Evaluation Teams

Evaluation criteria	Indicators of Inadequate Practice			Threshold Practice	Indicators of Highly Effective Practice	
	Level 1 statement (Minimal or Nil Practice)	Level 2 statement (Inadequate practice)	Level 3 statement (Marginally inadequate practice)	Level 4 statement (Accreditable practice)	Level 5 statement (Better practice)	Level 6 statement (Excellent practice)
(22) Adoption by Staff of Enhanced Learning	Innovators only are delivering “enhanced learning” via appropriate use of e-Learning and can evidence their claims.	Early adopters are delivering “enhanced learning” via appropriate use of e-Learning and can evidence their claims.	Early majority are delivering “enhanced learning” via appropriate use of e-Learning and can evidence their claims.	Late majority are delivering “enhanced learning” via appropriate use of e-Learning and can evidence their claims.	All staff except laggards are delivering “enhanced learning” via appropriate use of e-Learning and can evidence their claims.	All staff are delivering “enhanced learning” via appropriate use of e-Learning and can evidence their claims.
(24) Teaching 2.0	Only a few staff are comfortable using web 2.0 tools and most cannot judge appropriateness.	Some staff are comfortable using web 2.0 tools where appropriate.	Many staff are fully comfortable using web 2.0 tools where appropriate.	Most staff are fully comfortable using web 2.0 tools where appropriate.	The institution is fully comfortable using web 2.0 tools where appropriate.	The institution is a source of wisdom on using web 2.0 tools where appropriate.

(35) Recruitment of Staff	The institution has little understanding of the staff roles that require staff knowledgeable and enthusiastic about e-Learning.	The institution has categorised the staff roles that require staff knowledgeable and enthusiastic about e-Learning.	The institution has processes designed to attract, for appropriate roles, employees knowledgeable and enthusiastic about e-Learning, but they are not adequately effective.	The institution has processes designed to attract, for appropriate roles, employees knowledgeable and enthusiastic about e-Learning, but they are not fully effective.	The institution has effective processes designed to attract, for appropriate roles, employees knowledgeable and enthusiastic about e-Learning.	In addition, the institution is a source of wisdom on recruitment of staff with enthusiasm for e-Learning.
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F4. Holistic educational programme

F4 - Philosophy/educational rationale. The need for holistic integration (see SG-GETE B1. above) is no less important for online theological education than for other instructional models. All too often, institutional plans to offer programmes more widely and at less cost through online education do not give adequate consideration for the provision of those holistic learning elements. At times, holistic learning outcomes are deliberately sacrificed in online programs.

Where holistic learning elements are an integral part of an award programme (e.g. specific training for Christian ministry in the church), providers of “fully online” or online distance education courses will not usually be able to achieve adequate holistic integration by themselves. This is where situated and blended learning becomes very significant, and especially for accreditation purposes. As such, it is generally necessary for online education providers within evangelical theological education to incorporate sufficient blended learning elements so that holistic graduate outcomes can be fulfilled in the lives of their students, and for the programme to merit accreditation.¹⁰

Provision for holistic learning elements will normally involve face-to-face learning activities and practical/field ministry opportunities that are rooted in the local communities of each student. Therefore, online TE providers must make *intentional* provision for holistic learning elements in situated learning opportunities through *active* partnerships with local churches, local community or para-church organisations, and local mentors, for each of their online students. Generally speaking, the capacity of the institution to provide these holistic learning elements by itself is in inverse relation to its need for such local partnerships.

Accrediting agencies, therefore, need to guard very carefully against compromise and mere “lip-service” in this area by their member schools. It is *not* appropriate for institutions to assume that since spiritual, character and ministry formation generally take place more effectively in the local church, then as a result the institution no longer carries a responsibility to ensure that those holistic learning elements are being realised in the lives of their students. The opposite is in fact true, and intentional, active commitment in this area is crucial.

F4 - Threshold standards. The following are the threshold standards for this area:

¹⁰ Exceptions to this, for narrowly focussed award programmes, including post-graduate programmes, that do not require such holistic learning outcomes may be permitted, on a case by case basis.

- Institutions can demonstrate a strategic pastoral and educational commitment to active partnerships with local churches, organisations, and mentors to facilitate aspects of holistic learning that cannot adequately be provided to students online.
- Providers of online programs can demonstrate that these holistic learning activities are integrated into their overall educational delivery.
- A clear process and system to identify, approve, train, and resource local, on-the-ground, partners and mentors is in place and implemented for each enrolled student. The institution has a liaison officer to supervise this process. Students and local mentors are made aware of the process, its rationale and their responsibilities through published documents.
- Remedies are in place for cases where students are unable themselves to identify local mentors.
- The institution can demonstrate, for any of its enrolled students, how local feedback and evaluation tools are being used to determine whether course and graduate outcomes are being achieved, and that growth in these areas is demonstrable in students' lives.

F4 - Quality Standards. The following are the quality standards for this area:

- Individual online courses are designed intentionally to tap into these local partnerships for fulfilment of holistic learning outcomes.
- Online facilitators have a means to communicate with local mentors, and are informed about and supportive of the role of those local partners in the holistic educational process.

F4 - Examples of evidential measures to demonstrate compliance.

- Graduate profiles for each programme
- Online learning strategy plans and documents, relating to holistic formation and achievement of the graduate profile
- Academic Catalogue or Handbook
- Documentation related to the approval and training of local mentors
- Student evaluation/feedback tools used by students and local mentors
- Tabulation of student numbers for whom local mentors have been identified and contacted, and for those without any local mentors; identification of local mentor data for any given student

F4 - Examples of evaluation tools/rubrics for Visiting Evaluation Teams.

Evaluation criteria	Indicators of Inadequate Practice			Threshold Practice	Indicators of Highly Effective Practice	
	Level 1 statement (Minimal or Nil Practice)	Level 2 statement (Inadequate practice)	Level 3 statement (Marginally inadequate practice)	Level 4 statement (Accreditable practice)	Level 5 statement (Better practice)	Level 6 statement (Excellent practice)
Spiritual formation	The institution assumes or ignores spiritual formation for online students but provides no curricular strategies that promote spiritual development.	Some courses and instructors emphasize spiritual formation through online or blended curricular strategies.	Many courses and instructors emphasize spiritual formation through online or blended curricular strategies.	A programme-wide, coordinated emphasis promotes spiritual formation for online students through a variety of complementary	Blended curricular strategies for spiritual formation are refined through stakeholder feedback and closely related to course and program	The institution is a source of wisdom in the use blended strategies to promote spiritual formation in online students.



				blended strategies.	learning outcomes.	
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Character development-Academic integrity	The institution assumes or ignores the issue of academic integrity for online education.	Some courses and instructors incorporate policies and mechanisms to promote academic integrity and protect against cheating.	Many courses and instructors incorporate policies and mechanisms to promote academic integrity and protect against cheating.	Programme-wide policies and mechanisms are used to promote academic integrity in online studies and protect against cheating.	The institution uses WCET’s “Best Practice Strategies” ¹¹ (or similar) as a model in developing its own academic integrity policy and safeguards.	The institution is a source of wisdom in the use of appropriate policies and mechanisms to promote character development in online students and the academic integrity of programs.
Competence for ministry	The institution assumes or ignores ministry competence for online students but provides no curricular strategies that promote ministerial development.	Some courses and instructors emphasize training for ministry through online or blended curricular strategies.	Many courses and instructors emphasize training for ministry through online or blended curricular strategies.	A programme-wide, coordinated emphasis promotes training for ministry through a variety of complementary blended strategies.	Blended curricular strategies designed to develop competences for ministry are refined through stakeholder feedback and closely tied to course and program learning outcomes.	The institution is a source of wisdom in the use of blended strategies to prepare online students for competency in ministry.

F5. Educational components in the online medium

F5 - Philosophy/educational rationale. The pedagogical awareness of senior educators concerning best practices for effective online learning now needs to be translated into the design and delivery of individual courses. Various structural elements should be in place, and a wide variety of learning activities employed, in the delivery of each course so that student learning will be made more effective, more engaging, and more enjoyable. Online learning elements must enhance student learning, and content “dumping” (simply uploading large chunks of reading or content to be merely read or watched by students) will thus be studiously avoided. Both the instructional design and delivery of each course will be integrated with the overall curricular aims and desired outcomes for the programme they contribute towards. And both design and delivery of courses should be carried out with an awareness of the strengths and limitations of the online medium.

Library and learning resources provided or made available to students must be adequate to support the academic level being studied. The higher the academic level the greater the resource provision must be. Post-graduate awards that are offered fully or in part online are expected to conform to normal expectations for the various types of awards that might be offered by a theological education provider. The general requirement for learners studying at this level to achieve a degree of mastery of their subject area should not be lessened with the online delivery of their courses.

¹¹ WCET, “Best Practice Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education, Version 2.0, 2009,” <https://wcet.wiche.edu/sites/default/files/docs/resources/Best-Practices-Promote-Academic-Integrity-2009.pdf> (accessed 27 March, 2019).

At the same time, there is a danger for online programmes at lower levels of academic study to be unrealistic in their expectations of student abilities and capacities. For Certificate and Diploma studies that are below Bachelor level, higher-order thinking skills (analysing, evaluating, creating), should not be assumed by instructors but rather encouraged and developed gradually.

F5 - Threshold standards. The following are the threshold standards for this area:

- Welcome, orientation and introduction elements are presented for each course, helping students to feel that they belong in the class, are encouraged and listened to, and so they know how to access technical, pastoral or administrative support when needed.
- Content delivery methods are chosen to ensure frequent active and varied student engagement with learning materials. A variety of different learning activities is present in each course.
- Learning activities chosen contribute intentionally to meeting lesson and course learning objectives and outcomes.
- Assessment of student growth through the learning activities is planned as they are designed, and mechanisms are created to provide prompt, regular feedback to students.
- Special provisions to support holistic educational outcomes (for both the course and the overall programme) are included in each course.
- A high level of student access to one or more Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) is provided for online post-graduate studies, though SMEs do not necessarily need to be the online teacher or facilitator.
- Access to necessary learning resources is supplied to all students, including access to research tools and an adequate range of relevant learning resources for higher degrees.
- For post-graduate studies, learning resources provided or made available enable students to achieve mastery in the subjects being studied by giving students access to an adequate range of critical literature dealing with their field of learning, especially for the case of research-based post-graduate degrees. Online course providers ensure that all their students have access to an adequate range of relevant critical sources at the Masters level and an extensive range of such sources at the Doctoral level, and can demonstrate this to outside evaluators.
- Appropriate policies and mechanisms are in place to safeguard against cheating and ensure the academic integrity of online programs.

F5 - Quality Standards. The following are the quality standards for this area:

- Learning guides are prepared for each course, guiding students through the various steps they need to complete each lesson of each course. Ideally such guides are printable.
- Large chunks of passive reading materials and lengthy video lectures are generally avoided.
- Where possible provision for students to construct their own learning is built into course design and delivery.
- Course components and activities are developed using a suitable taxonomy for e-Learning, such as the “Five Stage Framework” proposed by Gilly Salmon,¹² that seeks to help students move from lower levels of engagement (Access and Motivation, Online Socialisation and Information Exchange) to more advanced levels of interaction and learning (Knowledge Construction and Development).
- Group, collaborative learning activities and projects are employed in most courses.

¹² Gilly Salmon, “The Five Stage Model,” <https://www.gillysalmon.com/five-stage-model.html> (accessed March 28, 2019).

- Instructional designers and online facilitators have an awareness of what constitutes quality online discourse, and facilitators are well trained in online group dynamics.
- Facilitators have adequate support to assess student work and to provide suitable feedback to students on tests, assignments and other learning activities.
- Facilitators are trained to genuinely “facilitate” student learning and group discussion, rather than taking the role of being an online lecturer.
- For Bachelor level studies employing already prepared course materials, access to an SME for at least part of a course is strongly encouraged and regularly provided.
- Fully online courses, for Bachelor and post-graduate levels of study, have at least an asynchronous vehicle for online group discussion, led by an online facilitator, and normally ensure at least a weekly asynchronous discussion forum during a synchronic course.
- Generally speaking, learners studying below Bachelor level are not required to engage in substantial asynchronous online discussion forums, and alternative forms of discussion (whether synchronous or face-to-face) are provided where class discussion is deemed important.

F5 - Examples of evidential measures to demonstrate compliance.

- Academic Catalogue or Handbook
- Curricular design documentation
- Graduate profile
- Course syllabi (and syllabus template)
- Access to representative online courses, and representative online discussion forums
- Interviews with instructional designers and online tutors/facilitators
- Interviews with students
- Training tools used for online facilitators
- Lists of SMEs wherever used for each course
- Assessment tools used to assess achievement of course and programme learning outcomes

F5 - Examples of evaluation tools/rubrics for Visiting Evaluation Teams.

Evaluation criteria	Indicators of Inadequate Practice			Threshold Practice	Indicators of Highly Effective Practice	
	Level 1 statement (Minimal or Nil Practice)	Level 2 statement (Inadequate practice)	Level 3 statement (Marginally inadequate practice)	Level 4 statement (Accreditable practice)	Level 5 statement (Better practice)	Level 6 statement (Excellent practice)
(25) Collaboration for e-Learning	The institution does not have collaborations to gain additional benefit from sharing e-Learning material, methodologies and systems.	A few departments or projects have a reasoned approach to collaboration to gain additional benefit from sharing e-Learning material, methodologies and systems.	Many departments and projects have a reasoned approach to collaboration to gain additional benefit from sharing e-Learning material, methodologies and systems.	Most departments and projects have a reasoned approach to collaboration to gain additional benefit from sharing e-Learning material, methodologies and systems.	The institution has a reasoned approach to collaboration at various levels to gain additional benefit from sharing e-Learning material, methodologies and systems.	The institution is a source of wisdom on its approaches to collaboration in respect of e-Learning.
(76) Library	No students have electronic resources	Some students have electronic resources	Many students have electronic resources	Most students have electronic resources	All students have electronic resources	All students have electronic resources

Services e-Resources	appropriately embedded within their curriculum.	appropriately embedded within their curriculum.	appropriately embedded within their curriculum.	appropriately embedded within their curriculum.	appropriately embedded within their curriculum.	appropriately embedded within their curriculum and also in informal learning support beyond the curriculum.
(97) Learning Objects	The institution makes no use of learning objects and has no plans to do so.	The institution makes some use of learning objects but no recognition of the problems they cause and how to overcome them.	The institution makes some use of learning objects and has some recognition of the problems they cause and how to overcome them.	The institution makes considerable use of learning objects when appropriate but has not a good understanding of the literature on them.	The institution has an approach to use of learning objects which balances pedagogy and technology within an agenda of cost-effectiveness, quality assurance and the research literature.	The institution is a source of wisdom on learning objects.

F6. Support for online students and educators

F6 - Philosophy/educational rationale. Quality online education requires various types of institutional, pedagogical and technical support for both students and educators. At the institutional level, the same range of academic and student services that are available on campus should be provided in ways that are accessible to online students.¹³ Educators should be supported by the institution by policies that recognize and compensate, financially or otherwise, the additional investment of time that preparing and teaching online courses requires (see above, Section 1).

From the pedagogical and technical standpoints, both faculty (see above, Section 3) and students must receive adequate orientation and support for their respective roles in online teaching and learning. Beginning students may have no prior experience with online learning and, depending upon their age and background, only minimal experience in the technology used for course delivery. Pedagogical and technical support must be adequate to meet the foreseeable needs of such beginner online learners, as well as those who are more competent with the technologies and practices of online learning. In a similar fashion, instructors may possess varying levels of experience and familiarity with online pedagogy and the application of different forms of information and communications technology (ICT) to teaching and learning online. Both new and seasoned instructors require adequate initial orientation and ongoing support to be effective.

These diverse needs require a dedicated, trained team of support personnel to provide necessary administrative, technical, pedagogical and pastoral/spiritual support to online students, as well as to tutors or teachers facilitating online courses. While the institution may be able to provide pastoral and spiritual support to students itself, it is likely that it will need local partners, primarily in the context of the local churches of students, to do that. Intentionality in providing and empowering such local support is crucial.

¹³ Academic services would include such things as online access to academic advising, orientation and remediation, library and research materials and grades. Student services would include online mechanisms for enrollment and payment of tuition, application for financial aid and access to counseling and chaplaincy.

F6 - Threshold standards. The following are the threshold standards for this area:

- Adequate provision is made for academic and student services for online students, although not at the same level as those available on campus.
- Policy governing faculty workload and compensation gives due consideration to the implications of online education.
- Institutional and program administrators are sensitive to student and faculty needs with regards to online education and are proactive and creative in the development of policies, mechanisms and strategies that serve to provide different types of support.
- Instructors are adequately trained in the use of the LMS and other technologies used in the online programme.
- Students are provided with technical guides and instruction that explain the use of the LMS and other technologies used in online learning.
- Students are provided with learning guides that detail the steps to follow in each course (i.e. a course syllabus).
- Online learning is supported by digital library and learning resources that are accessible and appropriate to the academic level of the program.
- Students receive timely and effective technical assistance from the institution's IT department.
- Online instructors and instructional designers are assisted as needed throughout the school year by the IT department.
- The institution ensure that the technologies that undergird online programmes and Technology Enhanced Learning (i.e. LMS, Internet access, a dedicated server or web hosting service, cyber security) are available, functioning properly and appropriate to meet the demands of the size of the institution and the number of users.
- Local partners who assist in the development of holistic outcomes in students receive adequate orientation and ongoing support as needed.

F6 - Quality Standards. The following are the quality standards for this area:

- Online learners are supported by academic and student services that reasonably approximate the level of quality and access of those offered to residential students.
- The institution offers extensive online resource support through subscription to a provider of research databases, journals and books.
- Frequently asked technical questions are answered step-by-step through help videos created using screen capture technology.
- Faculty and student satisfaction with regards to teaching and learning online and the quality of available support is periodically evaluated by the institution and improvements are made in response to feedback and requests.
- Student progress and drop-out rates are closely monitored with a view to remove unnecessary obstacles to student success and satisfaction in online learning.
- Where not provided through local learning support, spiritual support is offered to online students through asynchronous (i.e. email) and synchronous (i.e. chat, video conference) technologies.

F6 - Examples of evidential measures to demonstrate compliance.

- Academic Catalogue or Handbook
- Student Handbook
- Faculty Handbook
- Technical how-to guides and videos
- Student learning guides
- List of support personnel, qualifications, job descriptions, and hours worked
- Employment policy
- Faculty and student satisfaction surveys

- Training tools used to equip support personnel
- Interviews with support personnel
- Statistics for course enrolment, course completion, and course/programme drop-outs

F6 - Examples of evaluation tools/rubrics for Visiting Evaluation Teams.

Evaluation criteria	Indicators of Inadequate Practice			Threshold Practice	Indicators of Highly Effective Practice	
	Level 1 statement (Minimal or Nil Practice)	Level 2 statement (Inadequate practice)	Level 3 statement (Marginally inadequate practice)	Level 4 statement (Accreditable practice)	Level 5 statement (Better practice)	Level 6 statement (Excellent practice)
(11) Academic Workload	No allowance given for the different workload pattern of e-Learning courses.	Some allowance given, but distortions in the system, of concern to staff.	A work planning system which makes some attempt to cope, however crudely, with e-Learning courses.	A work planning system which makes a reasonable attempt to cope with e-Learning courses.	Work planning system which recognises the main differences that e-Learning courses have from traditional.	Full Activity-Based Costing or similar system used and adapted to e-Learning work planning.
(85) Staff Satisfaction	No attempt made to measure staff satisfaction in respect of their activities involving e-Learning.	Staff satisfaction survey done occasionally which contains some relevant e-Learning questions.	Staff satisfaction survey done every few years which contains some relevant e-Learning questions.	Staff satisfaction survey done every year which contains many of the most relevant e-Learning questions.	Annual Staff Satisfaction survey which explicitly addresses the main e-Learning issues of relevance to staff (e.g. support, workload).	Annual Staff Satisfaction survey which explicitly addresses all e-Learning issues of relevance to staff and is regarded as a sector exemplar.
(93) Student Help Desk	Help Desk is not functional for all students, or is but is widely viewed as unhelpful.	Help Desk exists for all students, with many lapses from service levels.	Help Desk is adequate but has some lapses.	Help Desk is viewed by students as “quite good” at solving their e-Learning related problems.	Help Desk is viewed by students as “good” at solving their e-Learning related problems.	Help Desk is viewed by students as “excellent” at solving their e-Learning related problems.

