



# National Open University of Nigeria

Policy Title	Online Facilitation Policy
Policy No:	NQSA/POL/TEL/017
Owner:	National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)
Approved By:	The University Senate
Manager/Driver:	Directorate of Learning Content Management System (DLCMS)
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## 1.0 Introduction

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) stands as a beacon of innovation and inclusivity in the educational landscape of Nigeria. Founded with the vision of providing flexible, quality, and accessible education to all, NOUN has consistently embraced technological advancements to further its mission. As the world becomes more interconnected and digital technologies permeate every facet of modern life, the realm of education is no exception. Online learning and virtual facilitation have rapidly evolved from mere supplements to traditional teaching methods to integral components of contemporary education.

Recognizing the immense potential and challenges of online facilitation, NOUN seeks to harness the power of digital platforms

to offer enriched learning experiences. These experiences are not bound by geographical limitations, rigid timetables, or physical infrastructure constraints. Online facilitation allows NOUN to reach a broader audience, cater for diverse learning needs, and provide education that is in tune with the demands of the 21st century.

## 2.0 Purpose

This policy serves as a comprehensive guide, outlining the principles, practices, and standards that will govern online facilitation at NOUN. It aims to ensure that the digital learning experiences offered by NOUN are of the highest calibre, marked by consistency, inclusivity, interactivity, and excellence.

## 3.0 Scope

This policy covers the online facilitation of academic programmes in NOUN – short courses, undergraduate degrees, and postgraduate degrees.

## 4.0 Definitions

4.1 **Online Facilitation.** The act of guiding, supporting, and enhancing student learning in an online environment, often involving a combination of synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (self-paced) interactions.

4.2 **Lesson Plan.** Organisation of learning activities and resources that will be used to guide learners synchronously or asynchronously in accordance with planned facilitation hours.

- 4.3 **Chat.** This is a technique that allows learners to build community presence in an online class environment. It is an informal way of communicating and exchanging ideas.
- 4.4 **Discussion Forum.** This is a technique used during facilitation to build learners' interpersonal communication skills, prepare learners for collaborative and teamwork. In the discussion forum, a question is created for learners to make contributions. To make the discussion meet its purpose, avoid close-ended questions such as who wrote the novel? Avoid broad questions without direction e.g. what is your opinion of the use of online facilitation? So, ask questions that are open-ended and specific.
- 4.5 **Messaging.** This refers to conveying an announcement or passing information through the use of emails, text, Apps, or other similar devices.

## 5.0 Principles

Online facilitation at NOUN is rooted in a set of core principles that aim to ensure a student-centric approach, fostering an environment conducive to active learning, participation, and meaningful engagement.

### 5.1 Equity and Inclusivity

- a. **Equal Opportunity:** Every student, irrespective of their socio-economic background, geographical location, or unique abilities, will have unobstructed access to online educational resources and facilitation.

- b. **Tailored Support:** Recognizing the diverse needs of the student body, facilitators will provide adaptive support, ensuring that every student can thrive in the digital learning environment.

## 5.2 Engagement and Interaction

- a. **Active Participation:** Facilitators will employ a mix of synchronous and asynchronous strategies to encourage students to actively participate, ask questions, and collaborate with peers.
- b. **Diverse Techniques:** Recognizing that students have varied learning preferences, facilitators will utilize multimedia resources, discussions, quizzes, simulations, and real-world scenarios to enhance engagement and comprehension.

## 5.3 Professionalism and Ethics

- a. **Code of Conduct:** In all online interactions, facilitators will uphold NOUN's standards of professionalism, ensuring that communications are respectful, clear, and relevant.
- b. **Confidentiality:** Facilitators will respect students' privacy, ensuring that personal data and academic performances are handled with discretion and in accordance with data protection guidelines.

## 5.4 Continuous Improvement and Adaptability

- a. **Feedback Loop:** NOUN values the insights of its student community. Regular feedback mechanisms will be established, allowing students to share their experiences, challenges, and suggestions related to online facilitation.
- b. **Tech Evolution:** With the rapid advancements in educational technology, facilitators will stay updated with the latest tools and methodologies, ensuring that NOUN's online facilitation remains cutting-edge and effective.

## 6.0 Policy Statements

- 6.1 Online facilitators shall provide academic support to the learners within the scheduled time.
- 6.2 NOUN shall have Facilitation Assistants that will be supporting facilitators for effective online delivery.
- 6.3 The contact hours of facilitation for each semester shall be eight (8) contact hours of synchronous video conferencing and sixteen (16) hours of asynchronous interaction with the learners on their learning through emails, forum discussions, and meaningful feedback, all which are to support learning.
- 6.4 Facilitator's Workload:
  - 6.4.1 The maximum number of courses to be facilitated per academic staff shall be eight (8) for full-time staff and

four (4) for part-time staff. This is to ensure quality delivery.

6.4.2 Full-time academic staff with major administrative functions such as directors, heads of units, or on deployment to other directorates shall have a maximum of three (3) courses.

6.4.3 A Facilitator or Facilitation Assistant who carries more than the stipulated number of courses may earn an amount for excess workload as may be determined by the University Management. For excess workload to be approved, the Head of Department must provide evidence showing the dearth of human resources in the course(s) in that semester and the capacity of the Facilitator or Facilitation Assistant to carry the excess without being overloaded and reducing quality.

6.5 To be assigned courses as an online facilitator in NOUN, the academic staff must complete the self-paced online course on facilitation.

6.6 Training will be held for NOUN facilitators at intervals to keep them abreast of new developments and skills.

6.7 NOUN will be committed to providing adequate infrastructure that support online facilitation.

## **7.0 Policy Implementation**

### **7.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Online Facilitators**

#### **7.1.1 Preparation and Training**

- Facilitators will undergo comprehensive training sessions to ensure proficiency in the tools, platforms, and methodologies relevant to online facilitation. This will empower them to effectively guide students through the digital learning journey.

#### **7.1.2 Clear Communication**

- Facilitators will establish transparent guidelines regarding course objectives, assessment criteria, and student expectations. They will also communicate the appropriate channels for student queries, concerns, and feedback.

#### **7.1.3 Academic Advising**

- Facilitators will offer guidance on academic pathways, assist students in course selection, and provide insights on maximizing their learning experiences within the curriculum.

#### **7.1.4 Feedback and Evaluation**

- Timely, constructive feedback is crucial. Facilitators will review student submissions and participation,

offering insights that help students improve and grow.

### **7.1.5 Ensuring a Conducive Learning Environment**

- By monitoring online interactions, facilitators will ensure that the digital classroom remains respectful, inclusive, and conducive to constructive discussions.

### **7.1.6 Instructional Support**

- Beyond the standard curriculum, facilitators will address student queries, clarify complex topics, and provide additional resources. They'll guide group discussions, assist with skill development, and offer remedial support or directions to appropriate resources.

### **7.1.7 Assessment Management**

- Facilitators, in consultation with the Head of Department (HOD), will design and assign tasks to gauge student understanding. They will clarify assessment objectives, and grade submissions, and provide feedback that aids in student development.

### **7.1.8 Maintaining Supportive Communication**

- Facilitators will initiate contact at the course's outset and maintain consistent communication, addressing any concerns or hurdles students might face,



ensuring they feel supported throughout their learning journey.

### **7.1.9 Liaison with the Head of Department**

- Regular communication with the HOD is vital. Facilitators will stay informed about administrative procedures, crucial deadlines, and any other institutional directives that impact students.

## **7.2 Expectations from Online Facilitators**

### **7.2.1 Creation of Comprehensive Course Resources**

- Facilitators are expected to curate or develop a comprehensive set of resources that enhance the learning experience. This may include readings, multimedia elements, and interactive activities that align with the course objectives.

### **7.2.2 Facilitation Plan for Duration of the Course**

- A well-structured facilitation plan spanning eight (8) weeks should be devised. This plan will outline the weekly objectives, topics to be covered, and associated activities, ensuring a coherent learning progression.

### **7.2.3 Timely Uploading of Course Resources**

- Facilitators must ensure that all essential course materials are uploaded in advance, allowing

students ample time for preparation and engagement.

#### **7.2.4 Integration of Instructional Videos**

- Videos can offer a dynamic way to explain concepts, provide demonstrations, or give insights. Facilitators should integrate relevant instructional videos to supplement textual content.

#### **7.2.5 Inclusion of Visual Presentations**

- PowerPoint presentations and other visual aids can help break down complex ideas, making them more accessible. Facilitators should provide these resources to aid comprehension.

#### **7.2.6 Curate a Rich Repository of References**

- In the virtual library, facilitators should provide a robust list of references, further readings, and resources. This allows students to delve deeper into topics of interest or gain a broader understanding of the subject matter.

#### **7.2.6 Archive of Past Facilitation Sessions**

- Links to recordings of previous facilitation sessions should be made available. This ensures that students who missed a session or wish to revisit a topic can easily access the content.

## **7.2.7 Consistent Communication with Students**

- Regular communication is pivotal to student success. Facilitators are expected to communicate with students weekly, updating them on upcoming topics, addressing queries, and providing feedback. This fosters a sense of community and support in the online environment.

## **7.3 Facilitation Infrastructure**

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) has prioritized the deployment of cutting-edge infrastructure to facilitate an optimized online learning experience.

Infrastructure required to ensure seamless facilitation are:

### **7.3.1 Learning Management System (LMS) – eLearn**

- Description: A dedicated platform where course materials, assignments, quizzes, and interactive sessions are hosted. The LMS allows facilitators to manage, track, and assess student progress.

### **7.3.2 Enterprise Video Conferencing System**

- Description: A virtual meeting platform tailored to NOUN's needs. Facilitators are equipped with accounts that can host up to 500 participants. For larger sessions, webinar options are available for 1,000, 3,000, or 5,000 participants. All sessions can be recorded and stored on NOUN's dedicated cloud storage.

### **7.3.3 Quick Mail for Rapid Communication**

- Description: Quick Mail serves as an efficient communication platform within the NOUN ecosystem. It facilitates swift and direct communication between facilitators, students, and other staff. The platform ensures that urgent updates, announcements, or clarifications are disseminated promptly, fostering a cohesive online learning environment.

### **7.3.4 Facilitation Timetable**

- Description: A comprehensive timetable outlining facilitation sessions, ensuring students and facilitators are aligned in terms of schedules.

### **7.3.5 Instructional Video Repository**

- Description: A dedicated platform hosting instructional videos, offering visual explanations and demonstrations on various topics.

### **7.3.6 Status of Instructional Videos**

- Description: A platform allowing facilitators to check the production status of instructional videos, ensuring timely availability.

### **7.3.7 Instructional Video Production Studios**

- Description: NOUN boasts five state-of-the-art studios dedicated to the production of high-quality

instructional videos, ensuring content is both informative and engaging.

### 7.3.8 Essential Tools for Facilitators

To ensure effective online facilitation, facilitators should be equipped with:

- **Computer Setup:** A laptop or desktop with an integrated webcam and microphone. Modern laptops typically come equipped with these features.
- **Reliable Internet Connection:** A stable and fast internet connection is crucial for smooth facilitation, ensuring real-time interactions without disruptions.

## 7.4 Training and Development for Facilitators

To ensure that NOUN's online facilitators are equipped with the latest skills and knowledge, a comprehensive training and development strategy has been put in place:

### 7.4.1 Orientation for New Facilitators

- **Overview:** All newly onboarded facilitators will undergo a comprehensive orientation programme.
- **Content:** This will introduce them to the institution's ethos, the intricacies of online learning platforms, and best practices in digital facilitation.
- **Objective:** The goal is to ensure that every facilitator begins their journey with a clear

understanding of their roles, the tools at their disposal, and the expectations set by the institution.

#### **7.4.2 Continuous Professional Development**

- **Periodic Training:** To keep pace with the evolving landscape of online education, regular training sessions and workshops will be organized.
- **Scope:** These sessions will cover new technological tools, innovative facilitation strategies, emerging pedagogical approaches, and updates on institutional policies or guidelines.
- **Benefit:** Such continuous training ensures that facilitators are always at the forefront of online education, delivering the best possible experience to students.

#### **7.4.3 Collaborative Learning and Peer Support**

- **Mentoring System:** Experienced facilitators will mentor their less-experienced peers, providing guidance, sharing experiences, and offering solutions to common challenges.
- **Collaborative Sessions:** Facilitators will have opportunities to engage in collaborative learning sessions, where they can share insights, discuss challenges, and jointly develop new facilitation techniques.

- **Objective:** This system fosters a sense of community among facilitators, promotes the sharing of best practices, and ensures that collective wisdom is harnessed for the betterment of the institution's online learning experience.

## 7.5 Assessment and Feedback in Online Facilitation

Effective feedback mechanisms are crucial to the continuous improvement of online facilitation. The following multi-faceted approach ensures comprehensive evaluation and constructive feedback:

### 7.5.1 Student Evaluation

- **Mechanism:** At the end of each course or module, students will be provided with a structured evaluation form to assess the effectiveness of online facilitation.
- **Scope:** This evaluation will cover areas such as clarity of instruction, responsiveness of the facilitator, effectiveness of teaching methods, and overall satisfaction.
- **Outcome:** Gathering feedback directly from the learners ensures that the facilitation process remains student-centric, and any gaps in delivery or content are promptly identified and addressed.

## 7.5.2 Facilitator Self-assessment

- **Reflection:** Facilitators will periodically engage in introspective sessions, reflecting on their teaching methods, student engagement levels, and overall facilitation experience.
- **Areas of Focus:** This self-assessment will cover their preparedness, adaptability to student needs, effectiveness in addressing queries, and innovative methods employed.
- **Benefit:** Such self-reflection promotes personal growth, allowing facilitators to recognize areas of strength and potential improvement, thereby continuously refining their teaching approach.

## 7.5.3 Collaborative Peer Review

- **Process:** Facilitators will participate in a peer review system where colleagues observe and evaluate each other's online sessions.
- **Feedback Channels:** Constructive feedback will be provided, highlighting areas of excellence and suggesting improvements where necessary.
- **Objective:** This collaborative approach not only helps to identify best practices but also fosters a culture of continuous learning and mutual support among facilitators.



## **7.6 Technical Support**

### **7.6.1 Helpdesk**

- A dedicated support team will be available to assist facilitators with any technical issues or challenges they encounter.

### **7.6.2 Resources**

- Facilitators will have access to a repository of resources, including tutorials, guides, and best practices for online facilitation.

## **8.0 Sanctions on Violating this Policy**

Any staff that violates this policy may receive a written warning, denial of three months' salaries, suspension from duty that may last up to one year, and/or released from holding an administrative position as may be decided by the University Management.

## **9.0 Policy Alignment**

- 9.1 NOUN Blueprint
- 9.2 Getting to know your university.
- 9.3 NOUN Strategic Plans
- 9.4 NOUN Open, Distance and eLearning Policy.

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