



VYTAUTO  
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UNIVERSITETAS  
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THE ORDER BY THE RECTOR OF  
VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY

**ON THE APPROVAL OF THE DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURE FOR  
ORGANISATION OF ONLINE AND BLENDED STUDIES AT VYTAUTAS MAGNUS  
UNIVERSITY**

30 April 2020, No 237

Kaunas

1. I hereby a p p r o v e the Description of Procedure for Organisation of Online and Blended Studies at Vytautas Magnus University (attached).
2. I hereby d e c l a r e Order of the Rector of Vytautas Magnus University No. 457 of 13 June 2019 “On the Approval of the Description of Procedure for Organisation of Online and Blended Studies at Vytautas Magnus University” to be invalid.

Rector

Juozas Augutis

## DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURE FOR ORGANISATION OF ONLINE AND BLENDED STUDIES AT VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY

### TERMS

**Online studies** are studies organised using digital technologies, whereby the learner studies courses adapted and certified for online studies implemented at a distance. Study courses are adapted and certified for online studies when they allow the learner to access the study material at a distance, communicate and collaborate with peers, carry out assignments, report on study results, give feedback and ask questions, and receive support and guidance from the teacher via online studies. Study courses shall be certified for online studies when at least 90% of the course material and contact time is implemented in a virtual learning environment.

**Blended studies** are studies organised using digital technologies, where the learner studies courses adapted and certified for blended studies. Some of this study material is available, or part of the contact time between teacher and student is realised remotely. Study courses shall be certified for blended studies when at least 50% of the learning activities, assignments, and contact time are carried out at a distance, and at least 50% of the course material is accessible in a virtual learning environment.

**A study course** is part of a study programme consisting of one or more content-related and integrated study courses with a defined aim and oriented towards study outcomes.

**A study programme** means a description of the results, content, methods, assessment of achievements, material resources, academic and professional staff used for studies in a particular field of study.

**Contact time in online studies** is the time when students interact with the teacher synchronously or asynchronously via digital technology. In online studies, contact hours are delivered in a virtual learning environment. Digital technologies for contact time implementation in a virtual learning environment are regulated by the Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) [Quality Assurance Methodology](#) for Online and Blended Studies.

**A study course description** is a summary of the essential information for studying a course, presented in VMU virtual learning environment on the front page of the course. The purpose of this summary is to seek agreement between the teacher and the students on how the course material and learning activities will contribute to the achievement of excellent learning outcomes, the frequency of classes, the assignments students will be required to complete during the course and the criteria by which the assignments will be evaluated. This document provides information on when, where and how students and the teacher will interact and communicate, as well as how, where and when mid-term and final examinations will take place.

**Teamwork** means students working together, with specific roles and responsibilities, with leadership and accountability to themselves and the team, making decisions together towards a common goal in a specific learning task.

**Independent work** means planned activities carried out by students individually, in groups or in teams, using various forms and methods of study and assessing their progress against the course's intended outcomes.

## I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The Description of Procedure for Organisation of Online and Blended Studies shall regulate the assessment and attestation of the suitability of study courses for online and blended studies, the registration of users and their counselling in VMU virtual learning environment, defines the activities of study units, teachers and students, defines interim and final settlements in VMU virtual learning environment, and specifies the requirements for the environment of online and blended studies and the videoconferencing system.
2. Forms of study and forms of delivery of courses provided for in VMU Study Regulations may be organised remotely.
3. The procedure for organising online and blended studies is based on VMU Study Regulations and other procedures approved by the Rector.
4. The organisation of online or blended studies shall start with the assessment and certification of the quality of the course or study programme developed for online or blended studies. The duration of the attestation of study courses adapted for online and blended studies shall be determined by the Commission for Quality Assessment and Attestation of Online and Blended Study Courses.
5. Online or blended studies are organised according to VMU Academic Calendar. Online and blended studies are administered by the academic study units. During the implementation of online and blended studies, the Institute of Innovative Studies (ISI) provides consultations and administrative and methodological support to the study units; didactic and methodological support to teachers; administrative and methodological support to students.
6. Online or blended studies shall be organised using: a) VMU virtual learning environment, b) videoconferencing, c) other multimedia technologies complying with the requirements of VMU Quality Assurance Methodology for Online and Blended Studies.
7. All forms of delivery of study courses and all modes of study organisation can be fulfilled by means of blended studies (traditional modes of study organisation combined with elements of online education):
  - 7.1. Face-to-face classes (lectures, seminars, laboratory work, practicals, consultations, etc.) in the traditional way, in VMU virtual learning environment and/or via synchronous<sup>1</sup>/asynchronous<sup>2</sup> videoconferencing;
  - 7.2. Independent work (through individual student support, assignments, assessments, practicals, practice and individual learning activities, etc.) in a face-to-face, VMU virtual learning environment and/or by asynchronous video conferencing;
  - 7.3. Practice (or part of practical training), study courses of course paper and thesis, using VMU virtual learning environment and/or videoconferencing tools for student consultations, submission of thesis and practice documents in VMU virtual learning environment.
8. In online studies, all forms of delivery of study courses and all modes of study can be carried out by organising:
  - 8.1. Face-to-face classes (lectures, seminars, laboratory work, practicals, consultations) organising in a virtual learning environment and by synchronous/asynchronous videoconferencing;
  - 8.2. Independent work (individual support for learners, exercises, assignments and individual learning activities, etc.) in a virtual learning environment, by asynchronous videoconferencing, and

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<sup>1</sup> Synchronous – occurring in the same time frame as other related processes occurring at the same time.

<sup>2</sup> Asynchronous – occurring in its own time frame that is not coordinated with other related processes occurring at the same time.

assessments and evaluations by synchronous videoconferencing;

8.3. Practice, study courses of course paper and thesis, using virtual learning environments and/or videoconferencing tools for student consultation, support, the submission of examples and requirements, and the submission of thesis and practice documents in the virtual learning environment.

## **II. ASSESSMENT AND ATTESTATION OF THE SUITABILITY OF THE STUDY COURSE FOR ONLINE AND BLENDED STUDIES**

9. The course description for online or blended studies shall be prepared by the study unit conducting them in accordance with the forms of course descriptions approved by VMU. The course description shall specify the allocation of contact hours and other study hours for each form of study in the traditional, online or blended mode.
10. The organising unit adapts the course to online or blended studies and submits it to the ISI for quality assessment and attestation. The ISI shall organise the evaluation of the adaptation of the course to online or blended studies in accordance with [VMU Quality Assurance Methodology for Online and Blended Studies](#).
11. The Quality Assessment and Attestation Commission shall assess the applicability of the courses for online and blended studies. The Commission shall be approved by the order of the Rector on the recommendation of the Director of ISI. The Commission shall assess the adaptability of the courses of study according to the [Quality Assurance Methodology for Online and Blended Studies](#), which also defines the roles of the members of the Commission and the attestation procedure.
12. A course shall be certified for online studies when at least 90% of the course material and contact time is implemented in a virtual learning environment.
13. Study courses shall be certified for blended studies when at least 50% of the learning activities, assignments, and contact time are carried out at a distance and at least 50% of the course material is accessible in a virtual learning environment.
14. The decision on the attestation of a course shall be taken at a meeting of the Commission for Quality Assessment and Attestation of Online and Blended Study Courses. The record of the decision shall be submitted to the Study Department and to the study unit that submitted the request for attestation of study courses.

## **III. USER REGISTRATION AND CONSULTATION IN A VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

15. Students are registered for studying courses in VMU virtual learning environment in accordance with the course registration lists in the StudIS system.
16. Teachers are registered in VMU virtual learning environment and are assigned to study courses on the basis of the study unit's provision or after receiving a request to create a study course.
17. ISI introduces the teachers and students of the study course to video conferencing tools, the specifics and rules of working in VMU virtual learning environment, maintains and administers VMU virtual learning environment, video conferencing systems and their users.
18. The tools needed for communication, collaboration and consultation during online or blended studies are integrated in VMU virtual learning environment or through VMU video conferencing tools.
19. ISI provides advice and support to teachers and students in the application of technology-driven learning innovations in their studies (virtual mobility, Open Educational Practices, Open Educational Resources, digital badges etc.).

20. In VMU virtual learning environment, the teacher has access to information about the student's behaviour in this environment and study progress, which is used confidentially and only for the purposes of monitoring and improving study performance related to the study of the course.

#### **IV. TEACHING ACTIVITIES**

21. For each online study or blended study course, the teacher prepares a description of the course, which provides information on the implementation of the course, and makes it available in the virtual learning environment on the course homepage.
22. A teacher conducting a course of study at a online or blended method shall comply with the contact time and the plan of study forms and methods set out in the course description.
23. In the case of online or blended studies, the teacher may flexibly choose classroom and synchronous sessions in accordance with the course description and timetable without violating the other clauses of these Regulations and the provisions of the Regulations on Study.
24. The form and time of the study session specified in the student's description shall be provided by the teacher in the timetable and calendar in VMU virtual learning environment. Changes to the timetable shall be coordinated by the teacher with the students while fully respecting the duration of the course and the methods of organising the teaching/learning as stipulated in the course outline.
25. All forms of course delivery and methods of studying are carried out by video lectures and conferences in a synchronous manner, recorded at the request of the teacher or the study unit, and made available in VMU virtual learning environment for students' later viewing. The teacher or ISI specialists can prepare and make recordings available in VMU virtual learning environment.
26. Intermediate and final evaluation tests shall be carried out by the teacher in accordance with Section VI of this Procedure.

#### **V. STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

27. Students log in to VMU virtual learning environment with the same login details as to other university systems. Under no circumstances may login data provided by students to VMU virtual learning environment, videoconferencing or other technology-based learning systems at the University be transferred to third parties. Students are personally responsible for keeping these login details secure.
28. After joining the study courses in VMU virtual learning environment, students get acquainted with the description of the study course, the timetable for online or blended studies, and during the introductory lecture – with the features of online or blended studies and the necessary information related to the availability of the study content, the methods of organising the teaching(s) and the assessment strategy, the tools for monitoring the study achievements in VMU virtual learning environment, communication and collaboration tools.
29. Students who choose courses adapted to online or blended studies shall comply with the requirements and provisions set out in the course outline.
30. The course material is available to students during the relevant semester of studies, according to the information in VMU Academic Calendar.
31. For online or blended language studies, the participation of students in video lectures using audio-visual means is compulsory.
32. Students shall carry out intermediate and final examinations in VMU virtual learning environment in accordance with Section VI of this Procedure and the instructions of the teacher given in the descriptions of intermediate and/or final examinations.

#### **VI. INTERMEDIATE AND FINAL ASSESSMENTS IN A VIRTUAL STUDY**

## ENVIRONMENT

33. Intermediate and/or final examinations (intermediate assessment test, examination) for online and blended studies and certified study courses may be organised in VMU virtual learning environment.
34. When preparing a course for attestation of online or blended studies, the teacher shall select methodological tools in accordance with the requirements for intermediate and/or final evaluation in VMU virtual learning environment, in accordance with VMU [Quality Assurance Methodology for Online and Blended Studies](#).
35. During the meeting of the Commission for Quality Assessment and Attestation of Online and Blended Study Courses, the Commission is familiarised with the task descriptions for the intermediate and/or final assessment and the solutions of VMU virtual learning environment for the organisation of the intermediate and/or final assessment, in accordance with the [Quality Assurance Methodology for Online and Blended Studies](#). During the course attestation, a decision is made on the organisation of intermediate and/or final examinations in VMU virtual learning environment.
36. Intermediate and/or final settlements carried out by videoconferencing and/or in VMU virtual learning environment shall be recorded or otherwise recorded and made available to the Study or the Study Unit upon request. Written work or other assignments completed in VMU virtual learning environment shall be kept for the period of time specified by VMU Study Regulations.
37. Student identification and authentication are carried out in accordance with the provisions of VMU [Quality Assurance Methodology for Online and Blended Studies](#). The student undertakes to provide the information required for remote identification in accordance with the instructions given in the student or course manual. If the identity of the student cannot be determined, the teacher may prohibit the student from taking part in the assessment remotely.
38. In exceptional cases, when a course of study is not certified for online or blended studies, if the teacher and the study unit decide to organise the final examinations remotely, the final examinations may take place in VMU virtual learning environment and/or by videoconference. The teacher shall prepare for such examination in accordance with the provisions of VMU [Quality Assurance Methodology for Online and Blended Studies](#) and shall inform the students about the examination at least 2 weeks before the examination.
39. For intermediate and final assessments conducted entirely remotely, it is recommended that academic units prepare separate guidelines for ensuring academic integrity in remotely conducted settlements (a sample of the guidelines is provided in Annex 1 to this procedure; the guidelines are adapted or supplemented by the heads of the academic units, as appropriate, depending on the nature of the unit's settlement and the specific nature of the studies).

### **VII. REQUIREMENTS FOR AN ONLINE STUDY OR BLENDED STUDY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND VIDEOCONFERENCING SYSTEM**

40. ISI is responsible for the implementation and maintenance of VMU virtual learning environment, the administration of study courses and users, the support system for teachers and students, consultancy on the development and organisation of online or blended study courses, and the implementation of technologies and innovations in studies.
41. VMU virtual learning environment shall meet the following quality assurance and didactic requirements:
  - user interface and authorisation,
  - user administration options,
  - means of monitoring learning outcomes, learning achievements and participation,
  - user activity report and identification,

- means of linking learning outcomes to learning achievements,
  - opportunities for linking learning outcomes to study content,
  - tools for organising learning activities,
  - tools for presenting study content, integrating video, audio and other multimedia material,
  - tools for synchronous and asynchronous discussions,
  - tools for assessing digital achievement,
  - the evaluation system is linked to the user,
  - organising group work,
  - a system that meets the criteria for organising the assessment of learning outcomes.
42. VMU videoconferencing system shall meet the following quality assurance and didactic requirements:
- multipoint videoconferencing options,
  - synchronisation of the message (video or audio commentary) with the submissions,
  - multipoint video or audio recording capabilities for conferencing,
  - the ability to present the archive in any environment,
  - interactivity, either by contacting the teacher during the lesson or by viewing the recording,
  - the possibility of conducting a short survey during the study classes or during the viewing of the recording.

### **VIII. FINAL PROVISIONS**

43. The Description of Procedure for Organisation of Online or Blended Studies shall be followed by all University units organising online and blended studies.
44. Teachers conducting online or blended studies, and students conducting online or blended studies, undertake to abide by VMU Code of Academic Ethics, to respect copyright provisions for digital resources used in the virtual learning environment, to ensure the possibility of identifying the identity of the user by videoconferencing or by any other means, and to observe the rules of etiquette in digital environments. Users of VMU virtual learning environment are personally responsible for protecting their login data to VMU technology-based study systems.
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**GUIDELINES FOR ENSURING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN ONLINE ASSESSMENT [EXAMPLE] <sup>3</sup>**

1. Teachers and students shall make every effort to ensure compliance with the norms governing academic integrity (the relevant legislation of the Republic of Lithuania, VMU Statutes and Regulations, VMU Code of Academic Ethics) during remote assessments (examinations, midterm tests).
2. In all examinations conducted at a distance, every effort shall be made to ensure, as far as possible, that students will complete individual examination tasks independently, without taking notes, conferring, assisting, or otherwise deceiving examiners as to the individual nature of the individual task.
3. Whenever possible (especially for small-group assessments), video/audio monitoring and support for students during assessments is provided.
4. If the content of the course permits, and taking into account the deadlines for marking, the number of students in the course and other relevant circumstances, it is recommended that assignments of a creative nature (essays, in-depth and original problem-solving exercises, analytical papers, etc.), where the original contribution of the author of the work is identifiable, should be given priority. In such cases, students will be informed how and to what extent other sources (including any online sources) may be used for the assignment and that overlapping work (in whole or in part), work that is plagiarised or otherwise does not represent the author's contribution authentically or ethically (plagiarised work), will be considered as a breach of academic ethics.
5. If a test (including short answer questions) is chosen as a form of assessment, and in particular if one or more groups/variants of the same questions are used and video/audio monitoring of students is not possible, it is recommended that the following conditions are met: (1) an individual sequence of test questions is generated for each student; (2) the entire test is not immediately available; (3) time is limited both for the entire test (in accordance with the requirements of the Framework) and, if this is not sufficient, for the specific test question; (4) all students take the test simultaneously.
6. In any other form of assessment, teachers and students shall make every effort to observe the principles and rules of academic honesty.
7. Before the assessment (but no later than 1 week before the assessment), teachers in the virtual learning environment will inform students in detail about the format and the rules for the upcoming assessment.
8. It is recommended that everyone (both teachers and students) log in to the assessment environment at least 20 minutes before the start of the assessment, during which time everyone should make sure that the environment is working properly.
9. If there are still technical problems during the assessment, students may, with proof of this (screenshots or similar), apply to the teacher for a retake of the assessment by submitting a reasoned request.
10. In order to address the issues of online studies and those not covered in the



recommendations, methodological support for the preparation and provision of information to students can be found in [VMU virtual learning environment](#), on [the Teachers' Support Portal](#), as well as during individual consultations with ISI specialists.

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<sup>3</sup> This example is for guidance only. It is adapted or supplemented as necessary by the head of academic units, taking into account the nature and characteristics of each unit's assessment.