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1. This Blended Learning Strategic Plan is developed in the context of IICP College's Institutional Strategic Plan, which is in turn grounded in the Mission, Values and Vision of the College. The aim is to make use of technological advances to contribute to the College achieving its strategic objectives, through developing and imbedding a Blended Learning Strategy across the College. In accordance with the College's core values, this plan fosters learner-centred teaching and learning and contributes to the widening of participation in high-quality, transformative education in counselling and psychotherapy.

2. This strategy is supported by IICP College's Blended Learning Policy Suite. This policy suite outlines IICP College's approach to the development, approval, delivery, monitoring and review of blended programmes of study, including learner support and assessment. This policy suite should be used by all stakeholders involved in the development, delivery and support of Blended Learning Programmes and modules.

3. Strategic Context: This Blended Learning Strategic Plan aligns with the College Vision as articulated in its Strategic Plan (2018–2020):

   3.1. **A quality education:** Providing recognised and accredited Professional Education and Training, that meets the standards of Professional and Statutory bodies.

   3.2. **An education that is flexible:** Widening participation and providing flexible education opportunities and progression pathways to address issues of participation for those most affected by economic and social difficulties.

   3.3. **An education that is learner-centred:** Capturing and acting on feedback from learners, understanding what matters to them, and acting to enhance their learning experience.

   3.4. **An education that is responsive:** Responding to changes arising from professional, educational, health, social and economic contexts.

   3.5. **An education that is transformative:** Enriching graduate attributes so as to equip them with a balance of academic, professional and essential generic skills to help them realise their full potential as professional practitioners, and as members of society.

4. This Blended Learning Strategic Plan strengthens, supports and enriches the College's following Strategic Goals:

4.1. <u>Strategic Area No. 1. Accreditation and Recognition</u>

Strategic Goal 1: To develop the College's profile as an innovative and cutting-edge research institution.

4.2. <u>Strategic Area No. 2. Access and Progression</u>

While the overall strategic plan for IICP College has 6 goals, the following are particularly pertinent to Blended Learning:

Strategic Goal 1: To educate and train diverse learners for entry into and progression through the disciplinary field of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Strategic Goal 2: To develop access routes into the programme, including through RPL.

Strategic Goal 4: To incorporate within programmes opportunities for learners to develop appropriate generic skills including communication, computer literacy, quantitative analysis and cross-cultural awareness as well as professional skills.

Strategic Goal 5: To enhance professional diplomas and Continuous Professional Development training.

4.3. <u>Strategic Area No. 3: Civic Engagement</u>

Strategic Goal 1: To benefit the locality through contributing to the education and training of counsellors and psychotherapists who contribute to the local community.

4.4. <u>Strategic Area No. 4: Teaching and Learning</u>

Strategic Goal 1: To introduce a range of new online services, including quality assurance, examination results, assessment timetables, job vacancies.

Strategic Goal 2: To enhance academic advising and learner care.

5. <u>Teaching, Learning and Assessment Context:</u> This Blended Learning Strategic Plan strengthens, supports and enriches the College's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy (QAM Policy 1.2) vision, objective and goals. In particular, the College community vision of blended learning:

- Integrates academic, research and professional fields of knowledge in its programmes.
- Is grounded in caring, curiosity, critical engagement and reflexivity.
- Contributes to personal as well as professional development.
- Encourages civic engagement.
- Includes a learning environment that promotes active learning, critical thinking, collaborative learning, skills development and knowledge creation.

6. The definition of blended learning adopted by the College is aligned with and strengthens the College's institutional vision, objectives and goals. In defining blended learning, the College draws on a number of sources, including QQI Policy definition. As a number of authors point out, how integration occurs is of central importance. It must be both pedagogically sound, and consolidate the most contextually effective elements of both face-to-face and online learning[1]. Therefore, IICP College utilises the following definition:

"[B]lended learning is the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences."[2]

This emphasises that blended learning is more than an addition of online modes of learning, and instead is a thoughtful process which considers learner needs, disciplinary requirements and pedagogic practices.

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[1] See for example, Glazer, F.S. (Ed.). (2012). *Blended learning: across the disciplines, across the academy.* Sterling, VA: Stylus. p.17; and Krasnova T.A., Paradigm Shift: Blended Learning Integration in Russian Higher Education. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2015, no. 166, pp. 399–403. DOI: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.12.543, p. 401.
[2] Garrison, D.R., & Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended learning: Uncovering its transformative potential in higher education. *Internet and Higher Education*, 7, 95–105. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2004.02.001. P. 96.

7. Vision: Following on from its Strategic Plan, the College has constructed the following vision of its blended learning:

> IICP College has adopted blended learning as a mode of delivery which opens up participation in its programmes, provides diverse learning experiences for its learners, develops digital literacy, encourages active participation and places the learner at the centre of the learning process.

8. IICP College acts to achieve its vision for blended learning in the following ways:

8.1. Quality: IICP College strives to develop and implement a college-wide system of blended learning-specific quality assurance that ensures that each online programme or programme component is compliant with relevant legislation and regulation, reflects best practice in online and blended delivery, and is systematically reviewed and enhanced.

8.2. Flexibility: IICP College fosters diversity of the learner body through providing flexible participation opportunities through blended learning modes of delivery.

8.3. Learner-centred: IICP College utilises blended learning to promote learner-centred education and training through facilitating learners to shape their own learning paths and placing responsibility on learners to actively participate in making their educational process meaningful and effective. The College is committed to utilising feedback from learners for quality improvement, acting on the basis of their input to enhance their learning experience.

9. Blended Learning: Our Strategic Plan

This plan provides strategic direction for IICP College's Blended Learning Programmes through articulating a broad set of goals, and identifying the actionable items that provide targets for activity areas that are intended to be the means of achieving strategic objectives. This is a dynamic vision that is open to change as the College develops, and as the wider context of professional development in the Health and Social Care areas evolves. This plan is intended to guide us, focus our priorities, and inspire us to move forward, while adapting to the changing context in which the College operates.

10. Strategic Areas, Goals and Activities 2019–2020

10.1. The headings – <u>Strategic Areas</u> – encompass the areas which the College will monitor on a continuing basis during the lifetime of this plan.

10.2. For each Strategic Area a series of <u>Goals</u> are identified to help us deliver our strategy. These are concrete steps towards achievement in the Strategic Area.

10.3. For each strategic goal, a series of <u>Key Actions</u> are identified. These provide a measurable and identifiable guide to the College community in choosing and prioritising activities. They also link tasks to overall goals and strategies.

11. <u>Priority Strategic Areas</u>

11.1. Drawing on IICP College's Strategic Plan 2018–2020 the College identifies the following Strategic Areas, Goals and Actions in the area of blended learning.

11.2. <u>Strategic Area No. 1. Accreditation and Recognition</u>

11.2.1. Our **Strategic Goal** is: To establish and enhance the standing of the College as a Higher Education Institution for the provision of blended learning training in the field of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

11.2.2. Our **Strategic Actions** are:

11.2.2.1. To instigate and develop the College's capacity and profile as a provider of Blended Learning Programmes of education and training through:

11.2.2.1.1. Strengthening institutional support for blended learning through the development of an Institutional Blended Learning Strategy.

11.2.2.1.2. Ensuring that policies, guidelines and practices of pedagogically sound blended learning are in place throughout the College.

11.2.2.1.3. Ensuring that the College provides the appropriate investment in technical infrastructure and technical support for programmes with a blended learning delivery mode.

11.2.2.1.4. Strengthening technology-enhanced learning, assessment and feedback practices.

11.2.2.1.5. Supporting staff and learners to use a diverse range of technology for learning and teaching.

11.2.2.1.6. Engaging with learners to discover and respond to their expectations and experiences of technology.

11.2.2.1.7. Seeking and achieving professional recognition and QQI Accreditation for Blended Learning Programmes/Programme Components.

11.3. Strategic Area No. 2: Access and Progression

11.3.1. Our **Strategic Goal** is to utilise blended learning to enhance access and progression opportunities for learners.

11.3.2. Our **Strategic Actions** are:

11.3.2.1. To utilise the potential of blended learning to access and develop entry into and progression through all College programmes, in particular through:

11.3.2.1.1. Encouraging a wider demographic of learners to apply for College programmes.

11.3.2.1.2. Supporting teaching delivery that is available to new communities.

11.3.2.1.3. Providing personalised learning supports that enhance learner engagement and support individual progression.

11.4. Strategic Area No. 3: Civic Engagement

11.4.1. Our **Strategic Goal** is: To utilise blended learning in enhancing and expanding community and civic engagement activities, in particular in the local community.

11.4.2. Our **Strategic Actions** are:

11.4.2.1. To utilise the potential of blended learning to increase higher education enrolment and completion rates for those from disadvantaged social backgrounds.

11.4.2.2. To utilise the potential of blended learning to foster in all learners an acceptance and understanding of diversity.

11.5. Strategic Area No. 4: Teaching and Learning

11.5.1. Our **Strategic Goal** is: To utilise blended learning to enhance teaching, learning and support.

11.5.2. Our **Strategic Actions** are:

11.5.2.1. To introduce a range of new technological services and practices, in particular:

11.5.2.1.1. Utilise technology to enhance curriculum design and pedagogical practice where appropriate.

11.5.2.1.2. Establish an institution-wide approach to improving digital literacy.