



PHEC Committee Recommends Policy Guidelines for Blended and Online Education in Universities

In pursuance of the instructions by the Government of Punjab in the wake of declaration of COVID-19 pandemic, all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have suspended their academic operations and closed down till 31st May, 2020. A meeting of following committee constituted by Punjab Higher Education Commission was held on 31st March, 2020 to discuss online teaching learning process during this period and to assess readiness of universities for preparation to upload lectures/course materials/assignments on Learning Management System (LMS). PHEC is coordinating with all stakeholders to provide necessary support to universities in Online Courses, Smart Classrooms and IT facilities.

The following committee members attended the meeting convened by Prof. Dr. Fazal Ahmad Khalid Chairman, Punjab Higher Education Commission:

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| i. | Prof. Dr. Syed Mansoor Sarwar
Vice Chancellor, University of Engineering & Technology, Lahore | Member |
| ii. | Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ashraf
Vice Chancellor, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad | Member |
| iii. | Prof. Dr. Khalid Masud Gondal
Vice Chancellor, King Edward Medical University, Lahore | Member |
| iv. | Prof. Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar
Vice Chancellor, Information Technology University, Lahore | Member |
| v. | Prof. Dr. Talat Naseer Pasha
Vice Chancellor, University of Education, Lahore | Member |
| vi. | Dr. Naeem Tariq
Rector, Virtual University of Pakistan, Lahore | Member |
| vii. | Prof. Dr. Rukhsana David
Principal, Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore | Member |

The Convener welcomed the members who then appreciated the efforts made by PHEC for coordination to work with all universities and to engage students in online and blended mode of teaching and learning process. The committee concluded with following policy guidelines for the universities for online education facility to the students:

1. The universities can start online and blended teaching learning process ensuring compliance to minimum requirements and facilities available at the campus such as availability of Learning Management System (LMS), use of different software such as Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Class, Hangouts etc.



PUNJAB HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

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2. Universities should provide training to facilitate faculty members involved in blended mode of learning and also ensure access to the students to engage them in lectures, provision of course material, guidance and counselling sessions, assignments and projects' supervision as part of attainment of course learning outcomes.
3. In case of some remote areas and access issues, those students who are unable to attend online sessions specified for a course should have an opportunity to access course material and join counselling sessions as specified by the course instructor through email/WhatsApp. The university can also decide to give them a chance for semester freeze or makeup classes during summer as soon as normal academic session is resumed.
4. As the universities are autonomous they can revise their academic calendar as required and formulate policies to ensure quality, maintenance of minimum requirements for online education and revision of assessment and grading policy for assignments/quizzes, midterm and final exams.
5. In case of practicals, labwork and projects the faculty members are advised to provide online guidance and advice to the students so that they can complete their practical work and projects on resumption of academic session.
6. It was agreed that institutions like UET Lahore and Virtual University that already have good Learning Management Systems (LMS) can help other institutions. A sub-committee is constituted to work out software and hardware requirements of universities.
7. Issues of storage capacity, bandwidth, and hardware were also discussed to get support from HEC and PITB.
8. PHEC will work with HEC and HED to update on policy matters and check with universities in order to evaluate their needs of IT infrastructure, automation, assessment and LMS to assess financial requirements for inclusion in the next financial year budget.
9. Vice Chancellor, KEMU, Prof. Khalid Masud Gondal, offered online psychological support to faculty and students for counselling and stress management through following email address (kemu.psy@gmail.com).