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MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON UNIVERSITY

Open Distance and Electronic Learning (ODeL) Policy

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CITATION

This policy shall be cited as the “*Mountains of the Moon University ODeL Policy, 2024*”

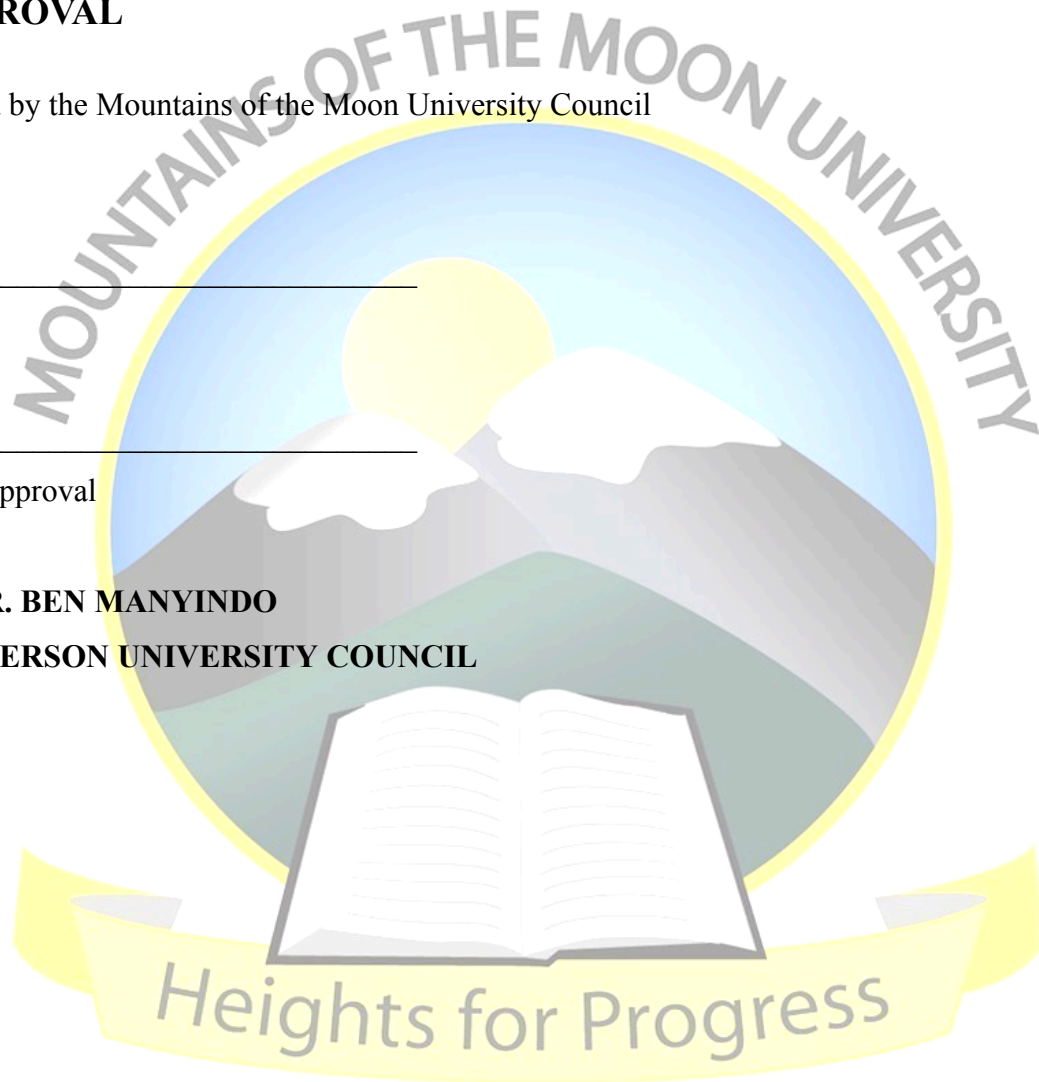
APPROVAL

Approved by the Mountains of the Moon University Council

Signature

Date of Approval

ENG. DR. BEN MANYINDO
CHAIRPERSON UNIVERSITY COUNCIL



FOREWORD

Mountains of the Moon University (MMU) started as a private University in 2005. In July 2022, it attained Public University status. MMU is a growing University with a unique niche in Agriculture, Environment and Tourism.

The use of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) to enable Open Distance and eLearning (ODEL) in teaching and learning is very important in order to deliver flexible education to students. At MMU, we use ICT as one of the enablers that engage and enable students to be successful learners and communicators. We value the potential of ICT to support students' learning in new and complex ways. We therefore view ODeL as a valuable addition to our pedagogy.

The policy guides the implementation of ODeL as a mode of delivery at MMU. It spells out the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in ODeL Delivery. The university's ODeL policy is a living document that will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to reflect changes in technology and the University's needs.

I encourage all members of the university community to read and understand the ODeL policy. By following the policy, we can all help to ensure that ODeL mode of delivery is effectively implemented at MMU. I wish also to acknowledge the contributions of the ODeL Department and the Directorate of ICT towards the development of this policy.

ENG. DR. BEN MANYINDO
CHAIRPERSON UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

Definition of Terms

Open Distance and Electronic Learning (ODEL):

Open Distance and Electronic Learning (ODEL) is an instructional strategy that offers an opportunity to students to follow courses and study online whereby, due to numerous reasons, they are unable to attend full time campus-based teaching. ODeL also include learning using different modes, that is, open learning, distance learning, eLearning and blended learning.

eLearning:

eLearning is an approach to teaching and learning, representing all or part of the educational model applied, that is based on the use of electronic media and devices as tools for improving access to training, communication and interaction and that facilitates the adoption of new ways of understanding and developing learning.

Distance Learning:

Distance Learning is learning carried out remotely by using electronic communication and is not bound by geographical locations. Distance learning provides a more flexible course schedule for those that have a family and/or are working students. In distance learning the teacher is separated from the learner in both time and space.

Online Education:

Online Education is a form of distance learning providing an opportunity for learners to use a computer network (internet) to distribute educational content via two-way communication among teachers and learners in an educational institution.

Hybrid/Blended courses:

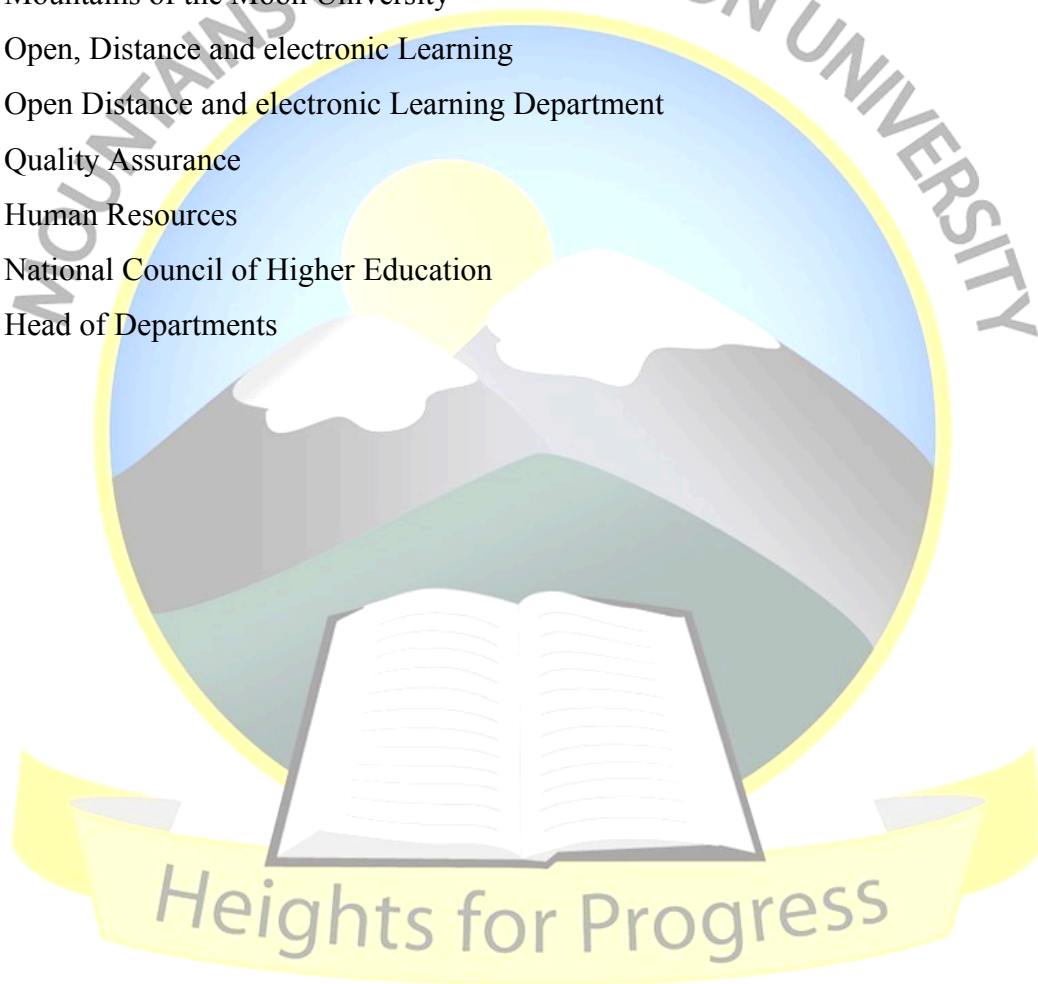
Hybrid or Blended courses are series of lectures or lessons that provide an opportunity to take advantage of both online learning and face-to-face interaction utilizing Video Conferencing and/or LMS. It also includes blending pedagogies and technologies on top of modes.

Web-Enhanced Courses:

Web-Enhanced Courses are series of traditional face-to-face lectures or lessons that use tools in the E-learning environment to expand student learning beyond the boundaries of the classroom. Study materials. These are in the form of notes, text books, handouts and modules or any other multimedia content that can uploaded on the Learning Management system to be accessed by all registered students.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DICT	Directorate of Information Communication Technology
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LMS	Learning Management System
MMU	Mountains of the Moon University
ODeL	Open, Distance and electronic Learning
ODeLD	Open Distance and electronic Learning Department
QA	Quality Assurance
HR	Human Resources
NHCE	National Council of Higher Education
HODs	Head of Departments



PREAMBLE

Mountains of the Moon University acknowledges the transformative potential of technology and the evolving landscape of education in the 21st century. The university is committed to providing accessible and high-quality learning experiences, recognizing the importance of Open and Distance Learning (ODEL) in expanding educational access. ODeL, as embraced by the university, breaks down geographical barriers and promotes inclusivity, allowing individuals to pursue education on their terms. The learning materials will be accessed on the institutional learning management system and through the approved open distance resource centers.

MMU embraces ODeL as a means to empower learners, enhance equity in education, and facilitate lifelong learning in line with its vision for sustainable development. This commitment called for the development of a comprehensive ODeL policy that guides the Implementation of ODeL at MMU. This policy seeks to establish a clear and robust framework that will guide the planning, design, delivery, and assessment of ODeL programmes and activities at MMU. It provides the guiding principles for governance, quality assurance, the roles of different stakeholders as well as procedures for enforcement, monitoring and evaluation to ensure effective ODeL Delivery. In the development of this ODeL policy, stakeholders from across our academic community, including our academic staff, administrative staff, Top University management and external experts in the eLearning and ODeL were consulted. Their invaluable insights, rich experiences, and diverse perspectives have profoundly influenced the principles and strategies articulated in this policy document.

In formulating this ODeL policy, the NCHE ODeL minimum standards, MMU's vision and Uganda's Vision 2040 were adhered to. Through this policy, MMU reaffirms its dedication to advancing education through ODeL, aligning with its core values, and striving for excellence across all dimensions of the learning experience. Ultimately, this commitment aims to create a future where education transcends geographical and temporal boundaries, while contributing to the broader goals of sustainable development through active engagement with the community and stakeholders.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Mountains of the Moon University Philosophy

Transforming minds to enhance community engagement

1.1.2 Mountains of the Moon University Vision

To be a center of excellence in teaching, research and community engagement for Sustainable development

1.1.3 Mountains of the Moon University Mission

To Provide Innovative and Transformative Education, Research and Community Engagement for Social-economic Transformation.

1.1.4 Mountains of the Moon University Core values

- i. Professionalism
- ii. Innovativeness
- iii. Integrity
- iv. Team Work
- v. Social Responsibility

1.1.5 Mountains of the Moon University Mandate

To teach, research, facilitate learning and undertake engagement with local communities for socio-economic transformation.

1.2 Policy Challenge

Mountains of the Moon University (MMU) recognizes the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as valuable tools for enhancing education flexibility and student success through ODeL. However, MMU faces challenges in effectively integrating ICTs into its educational framework. These challenges encompass limited ICT infrastructure, pedagogical expertise, resource constraints, quality assurance, faculty development needs, student readiness issues, and monitoring difficulties. Addressing these obstacles is imperative to fully leverage the benefits of ODeL, ensuring MMU's commitment to delivering quality education and fostering success among its diverse student population.

1.3 Justification

The use of ICTs in teaching and learning systems is one of several important means through which flexible education can be offered to students. MMU, we use ICT as one of a range of strategies for engaging and enabling students to be successful learners and communicators. The potential of ICT to support students' learning in new and complex ways is highly valued and ODeL is viewed as a valuable addition to the pedagogy of MMU.

Therefore, this Policy guides the implementation of ODeL at MMU. The Policy applies to all matters related to conceiving, designing, developing and implementing/running ODeL programmes and eLearning activities at MMU.

1.4 Specific MMU ODeL Policy Objectives

1. To provide a flexible and cost-effective education framework for mainstreaming ODeL into different academic programmes at MMU.
2. To increase access to university education in Uganda through multiple modes of delivery.
3. To provide a framework for assuring quality of ODeL delivered programmes.

1.5 Guiding Principles

- a. **Uniqueness:** MMU acknowledges that ODeL operates in its own unique environment different from that existing for campus-based programmes and requires distinctive and special structures and conditions for operation within an environment of flexibility.
- b. **Remoteness:** ODeL offers learners an environment with limited or no physical contact with instructors at the main campus or learning centers.
- c. **Transparency:** Staff and students have a right to know about the modes of delivery and delivery requirements of each course and programme offered by MMU.
- d. **Consistency with Mission and Vision:** ODeL delivered courses and programmes are consistent with the Vision and Mission of MMU.
- e. **Trained ODeL Staff:** Staff participating in the running of ODeL delivered courses and programmes must be trained in ODeL pedagogy.
- f. **ODeL all-encompassing:** ODeL is an alternative and complementary mode to conventional teaching at MMU.
- g. **Decentralization:** ODeL delivered programmes are delivered in a decentralized off-campus mode.

- h. **All around Support:** eLearning can support both learners on ODeL delivered programmes and conventional programmes.

1.6 Legal Framework

This policy outlines the framework for the implementation of ODeL at MMU. The Policy applies to all matters related to conceiving, designing, developing and implementing/running ODeL programmes and eLearning activities at MMU. The ODeL policy is in line with all MMU Institutional policies; ICT policy, ICT policy, MMU strategic & master plans and the following National Policies, standards and guidelines:

1. The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) as Amended
2. Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001 (As amended)
3. National ICT Policy (2014)
4. The Computer Misuse Act, 2022
5. The Electronic Transaction Act 2011
6. Data Protection and Privacy Act, 2019
7. NCHE Minimum standards for ODeL Programmes 2019
8. The National e-Government Policy Framework (2011)
9. Digital Education Standards and Guidelines for the Education and Sports Sector 2021
10. The National Development Plan III
11. NCHE Quality Assurance Framework

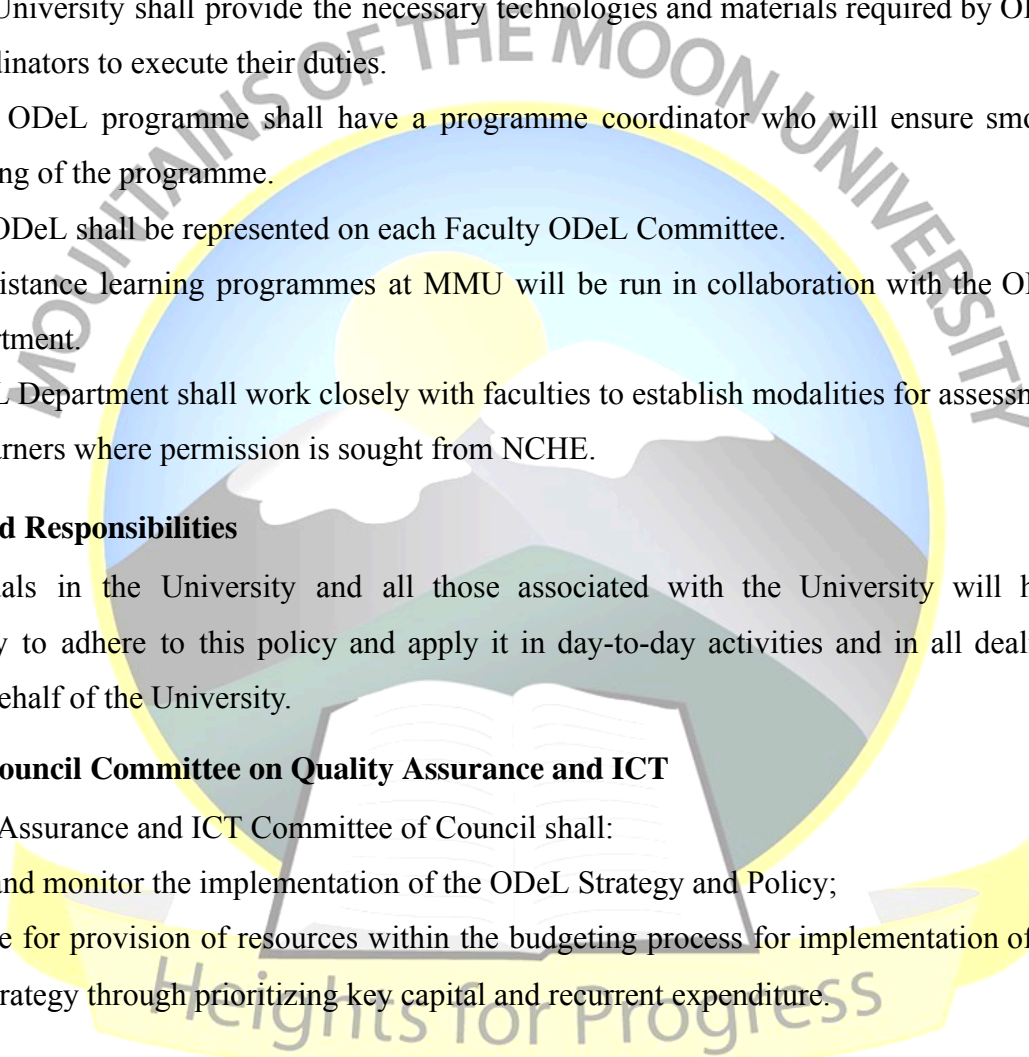
2. ODEL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

2.1 The Open Distance and Electronic Learning Department

- a. The University has an Open, Distance and e-Learning Department [ODELD] which is responsible for coordinating and managing ODeL functions in the entire University.
- b. The ODeL department is a non-teaching academic unit having ODeL academic and professional staff. There shall be an approved staffing structure that recognizes the unique functions required to efficiently and effectively manage and deliver ODeL programmes and e-Learning support.

2.2 Relationships Between ODeL Department and Other Academic Units

- a) The ODeL Department shall provide ODeL backstopping support services to academic units running ODeL delivered programmes and courses.

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- b) There shall be an ODeL Coordinator for each Faculty who shall serve as a link between the academic unit and ODeL department. The coordinator will be appointed by the faculty and may receive allowances for these additional responsibilities in accordance with the HR manual.
 - c) The University shall provide the necessary technologies and materials required by ODeL coordinators to execute their duties.
 - d) Each ODeL programme shall have a programme coordinator who will ensure smooth running of the programme.
 - e) The ODeL shall be represented on each Faculty ODeL Committee.
 - f) All distance learning programmes at MMU will be run in collaboration with the ODeL department.
 - g) ODeL Department shall work closely with faculties to establish modalities for assessment of learners where permission is sought from NCHE.

2.3 Roles and Responsibilities

All individuals in the University and all those associated with the University will have responsibility to adhere to this policy and apply it in day-to-day activities and in all dealings with, or on behalf of the University.

2.3.1 The Council Committee on Quality Assurance and ICT

The Quality Assurance and ICT Committee of Council shall:

- a) Advise and monitor the implementation of the ODeL Strategy and Policy;
- b) Advocate for provision of resources within the budgeting process for implementation of the ODeL strategy through prioritizing key capital and recurrent expenditure.

2.3.2 Top University Management

The Top University Management shall ensure the effective management and implementation of the policy and shall ensure;

- a) Policy Communication and Awareness; Top University Management shall ensure that the policy is effectively communicated, easily accessible, and understood by faculty, staff, students, and other relevant parties. Management shall ensure that staff are aware of their

responsibilities, accountabilities and training needs; ensuring that appropriate action is taken against staff or students who breach or violate the Policy

- b) Policy Implementation and Compliance; Top University Management shall be responsible for overseeing effective the implementation of the ODeL policy across the University.
- c) Monitoring and Evaluation; Top University Management shall monitor the effectiveness of the ODeL policy and evaluation of its impact on the University teaching and Learning processes.
- d) Collaboration and Partnerships; Top University Management shall foster collaboration and partnerships with internal and external stakeholders to enhance the governance of the ODeL policy

2.3.3 University Senate

The University Senate as a custodian of all academic programmes in the University is responsible for ensuring that all provisions of this Policy are adhered to in order to ensure quality in all aspects related to the provision of ODeL at Mountains of the Moon University.

2.3.4 ODeL Committees

1. Top University Management shall constitute a University ODeL committee composed of; Faculty ODeL Coordinators, representatives from: ODeL teaching Staff and professional staff, eLearning unit, the Directorate of Graduate Studies, Research & Innovation, Directorate of Quality Assurance and the Director ICT. The ODeL committee shall act as an advisory organ to Top University Management and shall be a platform for ensuring quality in ODeL teaching and Learning processes.
2. Every Faculty shall have an ODeL Committee on which the ODeL department shall be represented. The committee should have at least 4 members and each department in the faculty should be represented. The Faculty ODeL coordinator shall be the chairperson of the committee. All ODeL programme coordinators shall be members of this committee.

2.4 Financing of ODeL at MMU

The University shall finance ODeL delivered programmes and eLearning through:

- i. Internally generated resources
- ii. Government and development partners' support

- iii. Writing grants and winning proposals

3. POLICY PRIORITY AREAS AND STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

3.1 QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM FOR ODeL

The University shall promote and support provision of quality ODeL programmes in line with the goals of the University QA Framework.

The University shall establish an ODeL Committee to support the Directorate of Quality Assurance on ODeL aspects and to advise the quality of ODeL services required in the University

The University through QA Directorate shall:

- a) Develop guidelines for monitoring and evaluation of ODeL based programs.
- b) Carry out compliance monitoring to ensure ODeL provisions meet the standards set by the University and other stakeholders
- c) Carry out regular University wide ODeL self-assessments and provide reports to Top University Management.
- d) monitor and ensure the provision of quality learning through the ODeL mode is adhered to.

3.2 Staff Development and Capacity Building

The University shall

- a) provide equitable ODeL training and capacity development programmes for all its academic staff.
- b) Implement a system for performance evaluation with content development and the use of the Learning Management System (LMS) serving as integral components for staff performance appraisal.

3.3. ODeL Programme delivery

All programmes in the university shall be candidate programmes for running in the ODeL mode and having eLearning Support. The university shall use eLearning support both learners on ODeL and campus programmes. All programmes to be delivered under ODeL shall be accredited by ODeL department and approved by Senate internally before approval by NCHE.

3.4. ODeL Programme Assessment

The university shall adopt both face to face and online assessment system depending on the nature of the programme and resource availability. Each programme delivered under ODeL will sufficiently state the mode of assessment.

3.5. Technological Support for ODeL

The University shall:

- a) Continuously equip academic units with appropriate educational technologies for delivering ODeL programmes.
- b) Ensure that there is adequate bandwidth to support ODeL and eLearning programmes.
- c) Through DICT ensure that educational technologies and tools are up to date and in good and working condition.

4. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

4.1 Policy Implementation

ODeL policy guidelines shall be prepared and reviewed from time to time to address the prioritization and implementation procedures. The ODeL Department shall be the focal point in the implementation of the policy and responsible for initiating projects, implementation, and monitoring. The Council Committee on Quality Assurance and ICT shall provide oversight of all eLearning related activities in the University and the University ODeL Committee shall act as an advisory body to the Top University Management. The ODeL Department shall work closely with the quality assurance directorate, Faculty ODeL coordinators and Faculty ODeL committees to ensure smooth running and assure quality in ODeL delivered programmes.

4.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular and timely monitoring of progress regarding this policy shall be carried out by ODeL department and where appropriate with the Human Resource Directorate, Directorate of Quality Assurance, Planning and Development directorate, Office of Academic Registrar, Office of DVC Academic Affairs and Outreach, DICT under the oversight of Council Committee of ICT and Quality Assurance.

Commencing with the approval of this policy, after every five years the University Senate shall initiate and carry out a review process to ascertain the need for updates or modifications of this policy. Senate will consult Faculty quality assurance committees, ODeL committees, Deans, Hods, DICT, ODeLD, Top University Management, facilitators of ODeL programmes, graduates, students and community in the review process.

