



Republic of the Philippines
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION



CHED MEMORANDUM ORDER

No. 04
Series of 2020

SUBJECT: GUIDELINES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING

In accordance with the pertinent provisions of Republic Act (RA) No.7722, otherwise known as the "*Higher Education Act of 1994*", Republic Act No. 11469, otherwise known as the "*Bayanihan to Heal as One Act*", and by virtue of Commission en Banc (CEB) Resolution No. 412-2020, series of 2020, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) hereby adopts and promulgates the following Guidelines on Flexible Learning (FL) to be implemented by public and private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

I. RATIONALE FOR FLEXIBLE LEARNING

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented disruptions in the lives of people all over the world. It came unexpectedly where no one was ready enough to brace its impact to society.

With an increasing number of cases spreading to various territories and confirmed human-to-human transmission, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) last January 30, 2020.¹

The Philippines in particular, faced a critical situation due to the rise of said health crisis. For higher education institutions, avoiding and limiting the risks of infection of the academic community has become a primordial concern. Hence, with the implementation of community quarantine, conduct of classes needed to be immediately suspended. The herculean challenge then was how to continue teaching and learning beyond the usual face-to-face instruction.

Thus, it has become an urgent need to explore other innovative learning modalities that will facilitate migration from traditional to flexible teaching and learning options. As learners are differently situated in terms of time, pace, and place, these options allow customization of delivery modes responsive to students' need for access to quality education. This shall also give students the option to choose the delivery mode most convenient to them as early as the time of their enrollment.

The paradigm shifts therefore in the teaching and learning process in Philippine higher education necessitates collaboration among stakeholders and strengthening

¹ Department of Health, Department Memorandum No. 2020-0055. Interim Guidelines on 2019 Novel Coronavirus Acute Respiratory Disease (2019-nCoV ARD) Response in Schools and Higher Education Institutions, February 3, 2020, <https://www.doh.gov.ph/sites/default/files/health-update/DC2020-0042-Reiteration-of-DM2020-0055-Interim-Guidelines-on-2019-nCoV-ARD-Response-in-Schools-Higher-Education-Institutions.pdf>

the culture of sharing knowledge, resources, and best practices. Everyone is called to be part of this transition and transformation towards the new normal. To achieve this, “humanity needs leadership and solidarity to defeat the coronavirus”.²

II. SCOPE AND COVERAGE

This document contains the general guidelines on the implementation of flexible learning and teaching options, approaches, strategies, systems, pedagogies and modalities in the higher education programs, both for undergraduate and graduate programs, including those under permit status, by all public and private HEIs in the country. It shall be applicable to all on-going students of the HEIs, including the incoming first year students.

The implementation of flexible learning as a delivery mode shall be adopted beginning AY 2020-2021 and may be extended upon consultation with the stakeholders concerned and upon review of the Commission. HEIs may be subjected to a midyear or annual monitoring and/or assessment by the CHED Regional Offices (CHEDROs).

These guidelines on FL should not be construed as an authority to operate Transnational Education as provided in RA 11448 or the “Transnational Higher Education Act”, and CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 62, s. 2016, Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs) for Transnational Education (TNE) Programs.

III. DEFINITION

Flexible Learning is a pedagogical approach allowing flexibility of time, place, and audience including, but not solely focused on the use of technology.³ Although it commonly uses the delivery methods of distance education and facilities of education technology, this may vary depending on the levels of technology, availability of devices, internet connectivity, level of digital literacy, and approaches.⁴

The design and delivery of programs, courses, and learning interventions address learners’ unique needs in terms of place, pace, process, and products of learning⁵. It involves the use of digital and non-digital technology and covers both face-to-face or in-person learning, out-of-classroom learning modes of delivery, or a combination of modes of delivery. It ensures the continuity of inclusive and accessible education when the use of traditional modes of teaching is not feasible, as in the occurrence of national emergencies.⁶

² COVID 19 Pandemic, Humanity needs Leadership and Solidarity to Defeat the Coronavirus. *United Nations Development Programme*. Retrieved from <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/coronavirus.html>

³ Cassidy, A., Fu, G., Valley, W., Lomas C., Jovel, E., & Riseman, A. 2016. Flexible Learning Strategies in First through Fourth-Year Courses. *Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching*. Vol. IX

⁴ Presentation of Dr. Robertino Macalde during the CHED-SEAMEO Joint Webinar on May 22, 2020

⁵ Presentation of Dr. Edizon Fermin to the CHED Commission en Banc on May 12, 2020

⁶ Presentation of CHED Chairman J. Prospero E. De Vera, III to the 36th Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases on May 13, 2020

Here learners and teachers are co-creators of knowledge and have control of customization of the learning experiences for enhancement of learning grounded on the realities of our learning and teaching environment. Hence, flexible learning is a convertible teaching and learning design that considers the student needs for various access to course content and recognition of their diverse learning styles.⁷

IV. GENERAL GUIDELINES

In the implementation of flexible learning, HEIs shall be guided by the following:

1. Flexible learning is a learner-centered approach that is deeply rooted in the needs of the students. The main objective should be to provide learners with the most flexibility on the learning content, schedules, access, and innovative assessment, making use of digital and non-digital tools.
2. HEIs shall continue to exercise their judgment in the deployment of available flexible learning and other alternative modes of delivery in lieu of in-campus learning or face-to-face modality. The exercise of discretion by the HEIs and their faculty must be reasonable, transparent, and outcomes-based validated. (*CHED COVID-19 Advisory No. 6*)
3. HEIs shall formulate decisions using data-driven and participatory approaches on determining and implementing the most viable form of flexible learning and teaching that they will utilize based on their capability, existing condition, national government agency guidelines, and local government unit advisories.
4. As a sustainability and monitoring mechanism, HEIs should submit, for information, their Learning Continuity Plan (LCP) to the CHED Regional Offices at the beginning of the Academic Year 2020-2021. It shall reflect the framework and system for the transition and integration of flexible learning approaches and overall absorptive capacity of the HEI to articulate its preparedness and response interventions that reduces disruption of classes and impact of natural calamities making continuity of learning more resilient.

As far as the implementation of the flexible learning component of the LCP, the following may be included:

- a. executive summary;
- b. systems and procedures adopted for the transition to Flexible Learning including key people, modalities, resources, and support services for students and faculty, assessment of effectiveness, teaching and learning activities and requirements, expected outcomes, including On-the-Job Trainings (OJT) and practicum, among others;
- c. policies on enrollment, attendance, reporting and updating of student-teacher engagement, grading system, teaching complement, Intellectual

⁷ Presentation of Dr. Grace Javier Alfonso on Flexible Convertible Learning and Teaching on May 21, 2020 CHED Webinar

Property Rights (IPR), Open Educational Resources (OERs), plagiarism, among others;

- d. constant dialogue with the Local Government Unit (LGU), Regional Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) and other relevant stakeholders to be updated and a possible partner in the preparation during the COVID-19 crisis considering the different situation of the Regions in the Philippines;
 - e. health and safety protocols in accordance with the IATF and LGU advisories;
 - f. overview and orientation guide for students, teachers, and other school administrative and support services staff; and
 - g. mechanisms for continuous quality improvement.
5. Flexible learning should complement outcomes-based education approach which allows flexibility for the HEIs to employ various means of delivery and assessment as long as they can show the achievement of the set learning outcomes for each course or subject for the program.
6. In terms of Learning Content, HEIs shall review all their curricular offerings and make the necessary adjustments or modifications in the curricular structures or program of study considering the prerequisites and corequisites, determine alternative options in the design, delivery, pedagogy, and assessment mechanisms that can be delivered to the students through various modalities.

The HEI's implementation of its flexible learning strategy must be anchored with their institutional objectives which is to produce graduates who are globally competitive, locally responsive, innovative, and technologically driven.

7. On the management of learners, HEIs shall provide mechanisms to inform and orient learners on the learning system to be implemented — which may be in a form of course packages for students and are accessible through offline and online modes. Course packages may include course syllabi, study guides, learning activities, available repository of learning resources, schedule of lessons & consultations, assessments, monitoring of student engagement, schedule & mechanics of submission of requirements, grading system, feedback portals, and student support systems — to assist students in managing their study time and maximizing their learning.

The systems and procedures for the transition to Flexible Learning should be disseminated to all students, officials, teaching and non-teaching staff, which may be in the form of a policy document such as a guidebook, manual, briefer, or may be incorporated in the institution's student handbook. HEIs should implement mechanisms for students to receive and access printed or digital course packages and instructional materials through courier, designated pick up points or through digital platforms.

8. HEIs shall establish means for student and teacher engagement or communication which may include Short Message Service (SMS), electronic mail (email), online chat, instant messaging, and other means whichever is convenient, appropriate, and available in order to ensure personalized, effective, efficient, and timely mentoring and feedback mechanisms.

9. HEIs shall explore establishing linkages with relevant national and local government agencies, civil society organizations, telecommunication companies, professional organizations, international organizations, and other institutions to strengthen and/or complement existing resources, infrastructure, or connectivity to ensure uninterrupted learning of the students.

10. HEIs are encouraged to maximize the use of technology to support learning and teaching, which may include the following:

a. Determination of the level of technology to be used for the delivery of programs based on connectivity of students. Example:

CATEGORIES	AVAILABILITY OF DEVICES	INTERNET CONNECTIVITY	LEVEL OF DIGITAL LITERACY	APPROACHES
High Level Technology	laptops, mobile phones, tablets, desktops	Fast	Proficient	Online learning or Blended learning technology
Medium Level Technology	mostly available phones	Slow	Advanced	Macro and micro learning approach (a mix of online and offline activities)
Low Level Technology	some mobile phones or no technology	Poor or no Internet connection	Beginner	Self-instructional modules /mostly offline activities

(Source: Presentation of Dr. Juan Robertino Macalde, SEAMEO Innotech, "SEAMEO Innotech Flexible Learning Management Systems" during the CHED-SEAMEO Joint Webinar on 22 May 2020)

b. Establishment of a multi-media or learning resource centers to provide technical support to faculty members in the development of IT-enabled and IT-mediated instructional materials.

c. Access and utilization of electronic library and/or available OERs as reference in various flexible learning pedagogies and disciplinary content.

d. Utilization of a Learning Management System (LMS), either proprietary or non-proprietary.

11. HEIs shall implement or explore grants and/or support capacity-building programs for administrators, faculty, and staff on transitioning to flexible learning.

12. HEIs shall ensure that health and safety protocols are always maintained. HEIs shall also establish means to remind students, teachers and other school personnel of the health and safety protocols through the display of reminders in conspicuous areas within the school premises.



13. HEIs are encouraged to form consortia, coalition, or networking to facilitate capacity-building programs and sharing of resources.

14. The implementation of flexible learning by HEIs for both undergraduate and graduate programs should still be guided by the principles of Outcomes Based Education (OBEs) and by applicable PSGs to assure quality of teaching and learning.

V. VARIOUS MODALITIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING AND TEACHING

The table below describes the components of the various learning modalities which HEIs may consider in implementing Flexible Learning Strategies.

COMPONENTS	OFF-LINE	BLENDED	ON-LINE
1. Technology	<p>printed modules, audio tapes, video tapes, CDs, storage devices, learning packets</p> <p>television or radio broadcasting networks</p> <p>Learning Management System (portable/cloud)</p>	<p>desktop computer, laptop, smartphone, mobile applications</p> <p>if virtual or collaborative learning is to be implemented, LMS must be set-up</p> <p>printed modules, audio tapes, video tapes, CDs, storage devices, learning packets</p> <p>television or radio broadcasting networks</p> <p>Learning Management System (portable/cloud)</p>	<p>desktop computer, laptop, smartphone, mobile applications</p> <p>learning packets</p> <p>Learning Management System</p>
2. Content/learning materials: • Learning Objects (LOs)	<p>printed or electronic modules, video, audio, podcasts, webcasts, OERs in storage devices</p> <p>OERs, learning modules/materials</p>	<p>printed or electronic modules, video, audio, podcasts, webcasts, OERs</p> <p>The use of digital platform or the HEIs' LMS</p>	<p>electronic modules, video, audio, podcasts, webcasts, OERs</p> <p>Mainly the use of internet-based technology, modules, and the like.</p> <p>The use of digital platform or the HEIs' LMS</p>

<p>3. Evaluation/ assessment (both formative and summative assessment)</p>	<p>proctored non-conventional assessment</p> <p>performance-based assessment (e.g. portfolio, research papers, video recorded student reports, laboratory reports)</p> <p>project-based or task-based assessment</p> <p>use of assessment rubrics</p>	<p>performance-based assessment (e.g. portfolio, research papers, automated exams with pool/bank of questions, video recorded student reports, laboratory reports)</p> <p>project-based or task-based assessment</p> <p>use of assessment rubrics</p> <p>use of adaptive testing</p>	<p>performance-based assessment (e.g., portfolio, research papers, automated exams with pool/bank of questions, video recorded student reports, laboratory reports)</p> <p>use of assessment rubrics</p> <p>use of adaptive testing</p>
<p>4. Support services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● library ● guidance and counselling ● student support (health, psychological) ● technical support for faculty ● enrollment and registry ● assessments and grade ● payment system (tuition and salary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● use of other delivery options for student services (digital or non-digital), when necessary and appropriate 	<p>If 50% of program is online, then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● online library and subscriptions ● online enrollment ● guidance and counselling ● online technical support staff/ help desk ● online assessment and grades monitoring ● online payment (tuition and salary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● online library and subscriptions ● online enrollment and curriculum monitoring ● guidance and mental and psychological support ● technical support/ support staff, help desk ● online assessment and grades monitoring ● online payment (tuition and salary)
<p>5. Policies on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) ● Open Educational Resources (OER) ● plagiarism, ● student attendance, reporting and updating ● teaching complement attendance, reporting and updating 	<p>must be available</p>	<p>must be available in printed and electronic copy</p>	<p>must be available in electronic copy</p>
<p>6. Overview and Orientation Guide</p>	<p>must be available</p>	<p>must be available printed and electronic copy</p>	<p>must be available in electronic copy</p>

for Students and Teachers			
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VI. CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CONSORTIA

Principles

Given the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is very relevant to address the challenges it brought to higher education by mobilizing HEIs as one team, for the purpose of sustaining learning and teaching. This will generate synergies of action from among them, despite being differently situated, to co-create, and innovate in order to align with demands of the new normal.

The establishment of a consortium is bounded by a common vision and mission to ensure quality and excellence in the delivery of the various academic programs. This engagement of the HEIs is anchored in the *spirit of bayanihan* and culture of cooperation as a way of achieving goals. It entails strengthening partnerships, co-production and sharing of resources, building capacities, and facilitating mobility, while maintaining a sense of ownership to outcomes and accountability to the processes and impact to stakeholders.

The consortium project revolves around the concept of social inclusion for which everyone is provided with equal opportunities, regardless of background, in order to achieve full potential.⁸ Essential to this is for educational institutions to converge and harmonize efforts in order **to assist learners who were not able to access their home institution**⁹ to complete their courses and programs.

Consequently, the consortium will contribute to the building of an agile, resilient, and transformative higher education system. The community of practice for collective knowledge and good practices will be institutionalized, thus ensuring responsiveness and inclusivity in higher education at all times.

Definition

A **consortium** is a reciprocal and mutually beneficial arrangement among universities that seeks to build on the culture of shared responsibility, expanding inclusivity, promoting quality and empowering capacities in the Philippine higher education system.¹⁰

Further, a consortium refers to a collaboration or agreement of at least two or more HEIs to share human and physical resources, funding for program development, production of learning materials, and delivery of courses in the different programs of study.

⁸ Social Inclusion. *United Nation, Department of Economic and Social Affairs Poverty*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/issues/social-integration.html>
⁹ Student Mobility (AIMS) retrieved from <https://rihed.seameo.org/programmes/aims/>
¹⁰ Prof. Lilian A. De Las Llagas, MScTM, Ph.D., LLB, CHED Commissioner, June 2020



Deriving from the principle of Massive Open On-Line Courses (MOOCs), a consortium of universities may come together to pool faculty resources in providing course modules and other learning materials. The current context of transformation of the educational landscape offers an opportunity to reconcile all learning spaces by creating synergies between formal education and training institutions and other educational experiences. It also offers new opportunities for experimentation and innovation.¹¹

Guidelines

To achieve mutually beneficial goals of transitioning into flexible learning, HEIs may create consortia/partnerships/coalition/networking.

1. To operationalize the consortium, there may be lead and member HEIs, and/or delivering HEIs (DHEIs) and sending HEIs (SHEIs), as may be appropriate.
2. All CHED-recognized Philippine Higher Education Institutions, both public and private, that are willing to collaborate with each other and commit and obligate counterpart appropriation of human and/or physical resources for institutional capacity building in the use of flexible teaching and learning may be part of a Consortium/Consortia.
3. HEIs may form consortia, partnerships, or coalition among each other on various areas including but not limited to the following:
 - a. Development and production of Open Educational Resources and Massive Open Online Courses, Open Online Courses, course materials, or lecture videos on different disciplines that can be shared with other HEIs for flexible teaching.
 - b. Development of websites and/or LMS for delivering flexible learning through sharing of curricula, syllabus, study guides, and learning resources.
 - c. Sharing of flexible learning strategies, learning resources and modes of delivery for all types of learners, including the most disadvantaged ones
 - d. Development of ICT-based assessment tools.
 - e. Research on best practices on Flexible Learning Strategies per discipline or program.
 - f. Development of learning hubs/innovative ways to maximize, promote use of library resources digital and printed materials like discipline-specific readers that contain curated content from a variety of resources subject to compliance to IPR.
4. To effect the above premises, there has to be a binding agreement to be carried out through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the parties to provide a common understanding, stipulating the roles and responsibilities

¹¹ Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good? *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. Retrieved from <https://unevoc.unesco.org/e-forum/RethinkingEducation.pdf>

the parties entering into the consortia, areas for collaboration, implementation mechanisms, guidelines and procedures, among others. The respective CHEDROs shall be furnished with the MOA for information and reference purposes.

VII. CHED'S INITIATIVES

CHED shall implement developmental projects to assist institutions, faculty members and students transition to flexible learning. CHED shall likewise closely collaborate with its stakeholders and partners to ensure effective teaching and learning outcomes such as provision of support services through capacity building trainings, continuous enrichment of the PHL CHED Connect with diverse Open Educational Resources, grant of financial support/awards for research and materials development subject to availability of funds and specific guidelines, creation of a mechanism for communication between and among CHED stakeholders, review of the curriculum, and collaboration with other government and non-government agencies to enhance use of technology and improve internet connectivity.

VIII. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

If any part or provision of these Guidelines shall be held unconstitutional or invalid, other provisions hereof which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

IX. EFFECTIVITY

These Guidelines shall take effect immediately.

Quezon City, Philippines, Sept. 2, 2020.

For the Commission:



J. PROSPERO E. DE VERA III, DPA
Chairman

