APPROVED by

the Resolution No. 15-SN

of September 23, 2020 by the Senate

of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre

**I. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

1. Policy for Organising Digital Studies and Distance Learning at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (hereinafter - “Policy”) defines the rules for the use of electronic means in the study process, requirements for digital studies (e-learning) subjects (modules), and the procedures for organising and conducting distance learning.

2. This Policy aims at fostering a culture of quality by implementing the below-mentioned goals and objectives of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (hereinafter – “the Academy”, or “the LMTA”) Policy of Quality Assurance for Studies, Art and Research; LMTA'2030 Strategy, Strategy for Student-Centred Studies, and lifelong learning activities:

2.1. ensuring student-centredness and lifelong learning opportunities of the studies as well as competitiveness of arts studies by developing new competencies and improving the quality of studies;

2.2. developing virtual learning and teaching opportunities;

2.3. applying new teaching and learning methods: turning passive teaching into active learning; enabling e-learning elements, distance learning and teaching, and other innovative methods.

3. This Policy have been developed in accordance with the LMTA Regulations for Studies, the LMTA Regulations for Study Programmes, and other documents regulating the study process.

4. This Policy is valid for the first-, second-, and third-cycle studies at the Academy, and can also be applied to lifelong learning activities (teacher professional development training, non-formal adult education training programmes, etc.).

**II. KEY CONCEPTS**

5. **Blended learning:** a combination of traditional studies and distance learning.

6. **Moodle**: a virtual learning environment containing sources in a digital format and enabling to perform learning activities (lectures, seminars, discussions, group work, communication among teachers and students, counselling, written assignments, self-study assignments, self-test tasks, tests, etc.) synchronously and asynchronously.

7. **Distance learning**: a way of conducting studies remotely using a virtual learning environment both synchronously and asynchronously.

8. **Asynchronous distance learning:** a study process in a virtual learning environment where the communication between the teacher and the student by electronic means takes place at the time convenient for the both parties.

9. **Synchronous distance learning**: a study process in a virtual learning environment where the communication between the teacher and the student takes place electronically in real time (simultaneously); for instance, livestream classes, seminars, discussions, counselling, group work, etc.

10. **Digital learning (e-learning)**: employing IT- enabled opportunities in the learning process for both traditional and distance learning.

11. **Virtual learning environment**[[1]](#footnote-1): a space for electronic learning containing teaching / learning materials in a digital format and enabling to conduct teaching / learning processes (lectures, learning and teaching experiences, study, assessment of study results, etc.) digitally.

12. **Virtual class**: a remote class that takes place in real time using electronic means of communication (video conferencing) or a video recording of a traditional class.

I**II. DEVELOPING DESCRIPTION OF A DIGITAL (E-LEARNING) SUBJECT (MODULE)**

13. The description of a digital (e-learning) subject (module) is prepared and approved of in accordance with the procedures established in the LMTA Regulations for Study Programmes specifying the type of studies – blended or distance – the subject (module) will be adapted for.

14. A subject (module) that is considered as adapted for distance learning shall include (but is not limited to) the following content elements:

14.1. the abstract of the subject and its content in brief;

14.2. the learning outcomes;

14.3. the plan of the topics;

14.4. the assessment procedure;

14.5. the assessment strategy and criteria;

14.6. the academic calendar specifying study time and deadlines for tests within clearly described topics;

14.7. compulsory learning materials (video recording of classes or digital texts with links to Internet sources, etc.)

14.8. optional study material (texts, Internet sources, *youtube* videos, research publications, etc.);

14.9. a compulsory reading list;

14.10. self-study assignments (essays, written papers, self-tests, synchronous and / or asynchronous virtual discussions, etc.);

14.11. interim and final assessments that the student following the subject (module) has access to (achievement records, mid-term assessments, oral exam in real time etc.).

15. All elements specified in Paragraph 14 shall be present in the Moodle virtual learning environment and accessible for the student following the subject (module).

**IV. ORGANISATION OF DISTANCE LEARNING**

16. The LMTA distance studies are organised and conducted in the Moodle virtual learning environment at http://moodle.lmta.lt using *Microsoft Office 365* user account provided by the LMTA.

17. Moodle virtual classrooms shall be created for all the LMTA teaching staff who have come to a decision to adapt their subject to distance or blended learning.

18. The maintenance of the Moodle virtual learning environment and the methodological assistance is provided by the LMTA Music Studies Innovation Centre (hereinafter - **MISC**) team. The Annex to this Policy contains methodological recommendations for the adaptation of the study subject (module) for distance learning.

19. Activities and responsibilities of the teacher:

19.1. a teacher who teaches a subject adapted for blended or distance learning follows the topic plan and the planned contact work time as specified in the description of the subject (module);

19.2. the contact hours defined for teaching the subject, as provided for in the teacher's workload, are equal to the hours of synchronous and asynchronous distance learning;

19.3. the teacher has the right to decide on the ratio of synchronous communication with students to asynchronous communication with students, allocating at least 30% of the contact work hours specified in the subject description to synchronous virtual classes while employing video recordings of his/her virtual lectures for the remaining time allocated for synchronous communication;

19.4. in the beginning of the course, the teacher shall introduce the student to the organisation of the studies and the specifics of e-learning; the plan of the topics, academic calendar, self-study assignments, deadlines for mid-term tests, assessment strategy and evaluation criteria specified in the description of the subject (module);

19.5. Synchronous teaching in a virtual learning environment takes place at the time as specified in the class schedule of the given semester and agreed upon with the responsible representatives of the respective faculty;

19.6. the teacher contacts the students at least once a week: provides general information relevant for all the students, informs each student in person about his or her achievements of the learning outcomes;

19.7. the author (s) of the subject shall be personally responsible for the authenticity of the uploaded material and its compliance with the provisions of the Law on Copyright and Related Rights;

19.8. the learning outcomes achieved by students are to be evaluated in the traditional way in classrooms excluding the e-learning cases where it is possible to ensure academic integrity, full-fledged communication when evaluating or providing feedback on the assessment results;

19.9. the content of the subject is to be updated whenever needed, but at least every two years.

20. Activities and responsibilities of the students:

20.1. Students following blended or distance studies shall know the procedures and the specifics of the blended and distance learning; the plan of the topics specified in the subject (module) description; the academic calendar; self-study assignments, deadlines for interim assignments; the assessment procedures and assessment criteria outlined in the subject (module) description;

20.2. students shall follow the established procedures; participate in virtual lectures taking place synchronously; study the self-study material, and submit the required assignments according to the provided academic calendar;

20.3. during evaluation, students shall follow the principles of academic integrity;

20.4. students shall save their login data and use the study materials provided in the LMTA Moodle virtual learning environment only for the study purposes of the subject (module). The materials provided in the LMTA Moodle virtual learning environment may not be published, reproduced or otherwise transmitted to third parties without the consent of the authors.

**V. FINAL PROVISIONS**

21. The protection of data provided by the LMTA is ensured by organisational, programming, and technical means (user identification, passwords, assigning user rights, continuous back-up of databases, auditing, and other means). In addition, other ways of protecting digital content may be applied to restrict possible modification or copying the materials (e.g., printing restrictions).

 22. Students following distance studies shall comply with the LMTA Code of Academic Ethics; respect the copyrights of the authors of the materials; ensure the possibility to identify the user during video conferences or via other means of distance communication; and follow the Etiquette rules.

23. This Policy is approved and may be amended by the Resolution by the LMTA Senate.

Annex to

 the Policy for Organising Digital Studies and Distance Learning

 at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre

**METHODOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FOR ADAPTING A STUDY SUBJECT (MODULE) FOR DISTANCE LEARNING**

1. Modern technologies allow for innovation of traditional teaching (learning) methods by conducting distance and blended learning synchronously and / or asynchronously. This document provides general guidelines for the principles of developing LMTA study subjects (modules) for e-learning.

**Planning the development of an e-learning subject (module)**

2. The development of e-learning subjects (modules) and using them for distance and / or blended learning requires a clear understanding of how learners will have to participate in the learning, taking into account:

2.1. the traditional practice of the subject teaching / learning process, and

2.2. integration of appropriate e-learning tools and technologies into the subject.

3. The stages of subject (module) development are based on planning of the teaching / learning process, taking into account the contact hours and the student’s independent work. At each stage, the following aspects are to be considered:

3.1. the student’s needs;

3.2. the objectives of the subject (module) (and / or study programme);

3.3. the assessment and evaluation methods

3.4. the consistency of presenting the materials;

3.5. the teaching practice and specifics of the subject (module);

3.6. the efficiency of the technologies and tools applied.

4. The planning process of an e-learning subject (module) is recommended to be conducted in the following stages:

4.1. defining the needs and abilities of the students taking into account the relevance of the subject (module);

4.2. developing the concept of the e-learning subject (module) by specifying which objectives of the subject (module) will be met applying digital tools and technologies (including but not limited to digital resources, interactive and video conferencing tools, self-assessment and assessment tools, etc.) and specifying the role of the teacher and the format of her work during the e-learning process;

4.3. Choosing appropriate tools and technologies to achieve the objectives and delivering the e-learning subject (module) using the selected tools and technologies.

 The use of technology shall not be perceived as a goal in itself nor shall be excessively applied. Digital tools offer a variety of opportunities for education, yet the rise of technological functionality has to serve the purposes of the subject (module) and not otherwise.

4.4. evaluating the completed e-learning subject (module), thus enabling to see whether the students have been satisfied with their e-learning experience, measure (e.g. using tests) the added value to the teaching / learning process. This evaluation shall ensure continuous improvement of the implementation of the e-learning subject (module).

5. The implementation of an e-learning subject (module) can be categorised under the following levels:

5.1. use of e-learning tools and technologies for organising the teaching / learning process, communication with learners, etc. (e-mail, e-calendar, uploading of tests and / or their results to the e-system, etc.);

5.2. presentation of unstructured information to the students in the virtual learning environment; unstructured use of video conferencing, testing and other tools, etc.;

5.3. presentation of partially structured information to the learners in the virtual learning environment according to the objectives of the subject (module); the planned and purposeful use of video conferencing tools, etc.;

5.4. the e-learning/blended learning subject (module) that has been developed following the objectives of the subject (module) and thoroughly prepared methodology and conducted according to all the above-recommended stages.

**Defining the needs and abilities of the students**

6. Prior to the development of the e-learning subject (module), detailed information about the students is to be collected. You will have many more opportunities to develop an efficient and relevant e-learning subject (module) if you are able to reveal and understand the major factors stemming from the needs and abilities of the students. These include:

6.1. the motivation,

6.2. the needs,

6.3. the most common ways of learning taken in the context of the subject,

6.4. the available resources, and

6.5. the initial level of preparation of the students.

7. Your prospective students may have different levels of their initial knowledge, abilities, and goals. E-learning technologies and tools allow for taking into account these differences, and, as a consequence, blended and / or distance learning, more than other types of learning, has to be learner-centred. If you are trying to tailor your course to the individual needs of your students, please follow the principles below:

7.1. consider your previous work experience and plan to use only those tools and technologies you personally perceive as the most appropriate;

7.2. meet some of your prospective students and discuss what they would like to achieve from participating in the e-course and what they already know about your subject;

7.3. give a questionnaire to the prospective participants of your course.

8. In the questionnaire, you can ask the prospective students about their learning needs, expectations, learning motivation, and experience; ask questions to give you information on the student’s level of knowledge and skills in the subject, his or her current technology skills, learning possibilities and resources (time, tools). In the questionnaire, make sure the prospective participants of the course have a possibility to express their views and opinions. You may as well analyse the information received from the students building on your previous teaching experience. From the information obtained, try to specify the main factors (the characteristics of the students) that will influence your choice of the teaching methods. The analysis of answers provided by the prospective students will enable you to present the subject (module) materials in the most appropriate way and be ready to provide necessary support to the students. The information about the characteristics of your prospective students can be used to increase the effectiveness of the course by

8.1. improving the scope and level of complexity of the knowledge presented in the course;

8.2. revealing potential barriers in the learning process.

9. Taking into account the opinions expressed by the students, adjust the pre-planned ways and means of delivering the course; think about the measures of individual assistance needed for your students (additional resources, self-check tests, e-learning materials, etc.).

**Developing the concept of the e-learning subject (module)**

10. When developing the e-learning subject (module), it is crucial to carefully analyse the current situation and the expected outcomes and thus prepare a preliminary plan, or a concept. It is particularly important to establish appropriate links between:

10.1. the teaching / learning strategies and the experience of the student;

10.2. the learning objectives and the assessment/ evaluation;

10.3. the teaching content and the teaching methods;

10.4. the roles of the teacher and the student.

11. Considering these criteria, you will have to decide how to organise the learning process in the virtual environment. When developing the concept, you have to:

11.1. set the teaching and learning goals;

11.2. develop the structure of the e-learning subject (module);

11.3. according to the objectives, define the functions of the subject (module) parts and their sequence;

11.4. provide the mechanisms for monitoring the achievement of the learning objectives.

12. As soon as you have developed the concept, you can then proceed to develop the teaching / learning materials, required e-learning tools, tests, etc.

**Choosing appropriate tools and technologies to achieve the objectives and delivering the e-learning subject (module) using the selected tools and technologies**

13. The subject (module) that you are developing taking into consideration the needs of the students and the objectives of the subject (module) may include a number of elements in terms of selecting appropriate e-learning tools and technologies.

14. **Information about the module (subject)** has to be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the LMTA subject (module) description, i.e. the abstract of the subject; its learning objectives, assessment principles; teacher contact information; learning support including technical assistance services and administrative support; the rights and obligations of the student and those of the institution, including the rights and obligations regarding copyright and privacy; and be readily accessible for the students.

15. **The structured teaching / learning materials** consist of sections reflecting the topics of the subject, the repertoire, the sequence of the teaching / learning process and / or the academic calendar. The level of complexity of an individual section has to correspond to the overall level of complexity of the whole subject (module). It is recommended to provide short self-test questions that correspond to the learning objectives of the section. At the end of the section, we recommended to provide a reading list or other sources of **reference information**. Links to literature and Internet sources (video and audio, scores, etc.) can be integrated into the learning material. Depending on the specifics of the subject (module), a glossary of terms and a list of frequently asked questions may be additionally provided.

16. An e-learning module / subject can employ a variety of **learning resources**. The students can be provided with texts, illustrations, scores, audio and video material. The provided resources have to be very clear and purposeful. When preparing the course materials, try to use simple language and clear formatting, which will enable the students learn the materials easier. It is essential to ensure that the student can clearly perceive the purpose of the learning resources. It has to be made clear what the student can expect to learn by participating in the specific activity. This will provide the students with more flexibility and motivation. The students have to be provided with the resources in such a manner that they have a genuine opportunity to develop their competence in various ways. It is recommended to supplement these resources with additional materials the student can work with and continue learning after having completed the course.

17. The students may also be provided with **interactive activities** developed using innovative digital tools (e.g., interactive videos and illustrations). These activities give an opportunity for better intake of new information better. You can test and consolidate the knowledge using **self-check questions**, organising discussions (in the forum or via video conferencing tools), encouraging the students to share their thoughts, etc. Self-check questions and activities test the achievement of the intended learning objectives. By answering self-check questions and performing activities independently, the student checks whether he or she has understood the materials and realises what his or her level of knowledge and abilities is. Avoid providing too many self-check questions. Usually, you will want to provide one question or activity corresponding to one learning objective. Such self-check questions can be presented in various parts of the learning materials. Try to use the following verbs in the self - check questions: *remember, make, create, analyse, check, apply*, etc. The wording of the questions has to be clear and unambiguous. The materials may contain brief and / or detailed answers to the self-check questions and / or material that may help the student complete the activity. Where the self-check activities are completed in an interactive manner, incorrect answers may be followed by a comment or, if necessary, a reference to the location or source of the learning material containing direct and indirect answers to the question.

18. For each subject (module), it is necessary to develop the **strategy for testing and evaluating the achievements of the student**. The level of knowledge and competence acquired by the student must correspond to the level of knowledge and competence obtained by the students following analogous traditional studies. It is important to know whether the chosen system of teaching, learning and assessment/ evaluation ensures that the students acquire the necessary knowledge of the subject as well as cognitive, practical and transferable skills and abilities; whether the procedures of cumulative assessment/evaluation applied in the learning process comply with e-learning methods, learning environment, and evaluation criteria. The evaluation must be unbiased, recorded, and meet the academic standards of knowledge.

19. When planning general assessment/ evaluation of the students' knowledge, abilities, and learning progress, the attention should be paid to whether the amount and the nature of assessment/evaluation is adequate; whether different assessment/evaluation techniques are used in a comprehensible manner; whether the assessment/evaluation tools are presented in a variety of formats (in order to ensure diversity and relevance); whether the assessment/ evaluation tools correspond to the chosen learning objectives and the level of the student; whether a variety of self-check methods are regularly used to assist the students; whether the tests and examinations correspond to the learning objectives; and how the accuracy, fairness, and consistency of feedback and evaluation are ensured.

20. The provided assignments and tests have to be described in a clear way: the parts that the answer has to consist of; the format and the scope of the answers; the way how to provide the answer / assignment to the teacher, the evaluation criteria of the assignment, and the impact of the evaluation on the overall course grade. The tasks can be assigned to individual students or to groups of students. The deadlines for completing tasks must be always announced in advance giving sufficient time for the students to complete them.

21. Common mistakes in designing and presenting tests and tasks:

21.1. too many questions or assignments given at once;

21.2. the teacher asks questions and then herself provides the answers;

21.3. complex questions or tasks provided too early;

21.4. irrelevant and unnecessary questions or tasks presented;

21.5. questions or tasks of the same type regularly asked;

21.6. no thinking time given;

21.7. answers containing inaccurate wording.

22. One of the key elements of e-learning is **design**. It should be simple and clear, and not to distract from the content. Avoid redundant user interface elements; be consistent. The learning materials should employ a variety of modern tools (illustrations, graphics, audio-visual material, interaction, etc.). You should build the blocks of the learning material so that each of them fits into the window of the computer screen. The layout and structure of the material must ensure good readability: try to use no more than three different font types and sizes, and use low contrast background. All e-learning subjects (modules) must have the same design. The audio, video, and graphic material used must be of good quality.

23. When designing the course content, you should think how you are going to organise the e-learning process and plan the most appropriate ways of assisting your students. By conducting the learning needs analysis, you can assess the learning motivations and obstacles that may have influence on the student’s participation in the learning process and that need to be taken into account when planning the level and ways of the assistance. For the student, one of the major advantages of e-learning is flexibility. For the course provider, the main advantage is efficiency which increases by involving a larger number of participants in the course.

24. In the beginning of the e-learning process, the students are usually introduced to the structure of the subject (module), the procedure of submitting the assignments for evaluation, the evaluation criteria, and the academic calendar. The learning needs analysis enables us to find out what kind of assistance the student requires prior to the start of a certain course and which needs of the learners cannot be met. Before the start of the course, it is also possible to conduct a diagnostic test which will show the students' initial knowledge and determine the effectiveness of the course. At the beginning of the course, the teachers or supervisors should organise face-to-face seminars or meetings enabling to initiate the relationship between the teacher and the students.

25. The learning material and interaction shall provide the necessary information on how the learning process is organised and help the students to prepare and perform the test assignments. In the distance and / or blended learning, assistance is understood as a possibility to exchange questions and answers of general nature and those related to the course material. For example, general questions can relate to the study schedule, testing, problem-solving procedures, etc. The students are also given help in order to create a safe learning environment atmosphere where the teacher clearly structures the learning process, encourages, motivates the students, etc. Mutual support among the students is also important: they can solve problems not only with the teacher, but also by communicating with each other via e-mail, forums, chats, etc. Yet another effective form of assistance is regular self-check questions and interactive activities that can enable the course participant to become aware of the progress that he or she is making.

26. **Editing** is the key to the quality assurance of distance and / or blended learning. Once the materials are ready, they have to be reviewed and edited. The materials are recommended to be edited by another experienced specialist in the field of the subject, an editor, a proof-reader, etc.

**Evaluating the completed e-learning subject (module)**

27. After the e-learning subject (module) has been developed, it is important to evaluate its effectiveness. It is also recommended to carry out regular student surveys to update and improve the course.

28. It is recommended to make sure that:

28.1. the content, methods, and activities of the learning material have met the objectives;

28.2. the level of the individual parts of the course, its resources, and activities correlate;

28.3. the concepts and ideas are presented in a consistent and appropriate manner;

28.4. the students build on their previous knowledge;

28.5. the practical tasks, interactive activities, etc. are of adequate complexity and scope;

28.6. the self-check activities, tasks, and tests make it possible to test whether the objectives have been achieved.

29. In assessing the e-learning subject (module), the following tools are usually used:

29.1. The Attitudes Towards Thinking and Learning Survey (ATTLS) is used to find out whether a person thinks on the group level (i.e. tends to enjoy the learning process, is eager to work in a team, is agreeable and tends to rely on the ideas presented by other team members) or individually (i.e. in the learning process, is more guided by critical thinking and reasoning);

29.2. Academic Milestone Checklists that enable to measure the student’s experience;

29.3. Constructivist Online Learning Environment Survey (COLLES) aims to identify the effectiveness of e-learning and the student involvement.

30. The teachers can also develop their own survey that will allow for the improvement of the subject according to its specifics.

1. The main virtual learning environment used in the Academy is Moodle. Where necessary and possible, other virtual learning environments can be also used. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)