



UNIVERSITY of  
RWANDA

## **Open and Distance Learning Policy**

**Approved by the Board of Governors of 16 August /2017**

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### **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

CoL	Commonwealth of Learning
DE	Distance Education
DL	Distance Learning
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
LMS	Learning Management System
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOOC	Massive Open Online Courses
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
ODeL	Open, Distance and eLearning
ODLC	Open and Distance Learning Centre
OER	Open Education Resources
QA	Quality Assurance
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UR	University of Rwanda



## **Definitions**

**Accountability** pertains to defining roles and responsibilities assigned to various partners to enable them to explain and account for success or failure with regard to performance

**Blended learning** – is a teaching and learning approach that uses different methods, technologies, and resources to improve student learning. This may include a blend of distance education and online interaction; face –to-face practicals supplemented by distance learning and online interaction; Face-to-face supplemented by a variety of media and technologies. Students can choose the learning mode that they consider most favourable for their learning needs and lifestyle. In a given programme, some courses will be classroom-based while others are taught at a distance (CoL, 2015)

**Contact Institutions** offer higher education programmes on a face to face classroom based setting. These institutions are widely accepted traditional form of teaching and learning with rigid format of set dates and place.

**Dedicated ODL institutions** are set up to offer programmes of study at a distance; therefore their teaching and learning is mediated by different types of media and in some cases face-to-face teaching and learning. Dedicated ODeL institutions depend on economies of scale for their survival. The outstanding examples of the models are open universities and the colloquially called mega universities, some with more than 100 000 students.

**Distance education** is a field of education that focuses on the pedagogy, technology, and instructional system designs that aim to deliver education to learners who are physically separated from their lecturers and the institution

**Distance learning** is the process of creating an educational experience for the learners who are studying on their own. They are separated from their learning experience by time, space but are guided through various support including media.

**Dual mode institutions** offer the same programmes in both distance education and face to face formats. In dual mode provision, an existing contact institution such as UR sets up a distance education department to facilitate and provide support for programmes taught at a distance. Usually, dual mode programmes are tailor made for two kinds of students: the ones who attend regular classes and the ones who study by distance. Sometimes they do allow cross-over registrations.

**E-learning** is an umbrella term that refers to the use of any digital device for teaching and learning, especially for delivery or accessing of content. Thus e-Learning can take place without any reference to a network or connectivity. The digital device including cell phones, computers and tablets are by learners to access materials.

**Flexible learning** is the creation for learning which has the following attributes: learner- centred philosophy, convergence of open distance learning methods and fostering of lifelong learning habits and skill, media and classroom strategies, use of a variety of learning resources and media, recognition of diversity in learning styles and learners methods. Flexible learning may include use of online learning, work place-based learning, part-time learning, distance learning,



and many forms of face-to-face teaching and learning with options to fast track and defer courses.

**Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)** refer to a range of technologies and tools used to create, collate and communicate information and knowledge. ICTs are used in daily life to prepare documents, talk to others through phone, listen to radio and watch television programmes. Some ICTs are one-way, while others facilitate two-way communication. Some can include only one medium (telephone), while others can handle more than one medium (computer and television).

**Learning Management System (LMS)** is a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting and delivery of programmes and courses. There are thousands of VLEs and LMSs available for use, some proprietary (e.g. *Blackboard*) and some open source systems (e.g. *Sakai* or *Moodle*).

**Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)** are courses designed for large numbers of participants, that can be accessed by anyone anywhere as long as they have an internet connection, are open to everyone without entry qualifications, and offer a full/complete course experience online for free (Openuped 2015).

**Mixed mode or blended or hybrid institutions** uses combinations of delivery methods such as online, face-to-face and distance. In this mode, curriculum, including study materials and activities, is often *divided* into online/ distance and face-to-face components according to the relevant strength of the available resources. Students can choose the learning mode that they consider most favourable for their learning needs and lifestyle. In a given programme, some courses will be classroom-based while others are taught at a distance (CoL, 2015)

**Open access publishing** usually refers to the worldwide electronic distribution of peer-reviewed journal literature in order to give free and unrestricted access to it.

**Open Content** open content' and 'open courseware' are sometimes used to mean the wide range of resources to support learning and teaching

**Open Educational Resources (OER)** are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. Open licensing is built within the existing framework of intellectual property rights as defined by relevant international conventions and respects the authorship of the work, according to the 2012 Paris OER Declaration (CoL, 2015)

**Open and Distance Learning (ODL)** - The terms *open learning* and *distance education* represent approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. Open and distance learning systems can usually be described as made up of a range of components such as: the mission or goal of a particular system, programmes and curricula, teaching/learning strategies and techniques, learning material and resources, communication and interaction, support and delivery systems,

learners, tutors, staff and other experts, management, housing and equipment, and evaluation. (UNESCO, 2002).

**Open and distance learning** is a way of providing learning opportunities that is characterised by the separation of teacher and learner in time or place, or both time and place; learning that is certified in some way by an institution or agency; the use of a variety of media, including print and electronic; two-way communications that allow learners and tutors to interact; the possibility of occasional face-to-face meetings; and a specialised division of labour in the production and delivery of courses (CoL, 2000)

**Open Distance eLearning definition of the the University of Rwanda:** ODeL is a learner-centered competence based education system delivered at a distance. It enhances access to equitable quality education through the use of different instructional technologies and occasional face to face sessions. It allows learners to study on their own time and at a place of their choice to achieve the expected learning outcomes

**Open learning** is an educational philosophy based on the principles of access, flexibility and student centredness. The aim is to remove all barriers of access to learning that takes place anywhere, anyplace and anytime. It provides the opportunity for students to learn throughout their lives, and recognizes prior knowledge and experience

**Programme Coordinator** is the Centre's academic staff responsible for conducting ODeL academic and administrative duties in the university.

**Student/Learner Support** is a range of services that are designed and developed to assist ODeL learners to meet their learning objectives and gain the knowledge and skill to be successful in their studies

**Tutoring in ODL** is a process that includes teaching, coaching, counselling, mentoring and providing guidance as well as advice on academic and personal issues to learners by part-time or full-time staff members

**Regional Campuses** serve as an extension arm of the Institute to provide support services to learners learning at a distance.

**Virtual Universities** are based on an electronic network which is capable of performing the same functions as higher education institutions. It offers instructional programmes using ICTs to connect students, teachers, researchers, funders and administrators. They can vary from being strictly a university that offers programmes online or a department offering a programme online or a broker-type organisation obtaining and offering online programmes for other institutions or they can award credentials or any other services.



## 1.0 Introduction

Most contact institutions that adopted ODeL delivery mode did so to address the social mandate of opening up access to education. The main principle of openness in education is to address the fundamental right of access to education as outlined in the UNESCO's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In response to this call, several education policy documents set out clear priorities of ensuring that Rwandan children receive free and universal primary education as well as expand opportunities in the secondary and post-secondary education sector. Academic and skills training has great importance and relevance in developing countries such as Rwanda where there is a huge need for skilled and trained workforce to enhance productivity and remain competitive in the global economy.

Classroom based delivery of teaching and learning cannot reach large numbers of students who want to study. Therefore distance education has been identified as the only feasible approach to improving professional and academic skills for people who are both in the workplace and those who are developing their careers but could not access contact institutions. The Open Distance and eLearning (ODeL) based model has proved to be efficient in expanding access into higher education by providing cost effective training to a large number of unskilled work force.

The role of distance education in a contact setting is to:

- Open up access to higher education to those students who may not have the opportunity to attend full time classes, some may be inhibited by the employment conditions and other cannot afford to attend conventional universities.
- Offer programmes for students who are located far from the campus
- The qualifications are the same as the contact qualifications that are already recognized
- ODL or online component of the delivery of programmes uses existing staff and management
- students enjoy the autonomy to choose when to be on-campus or in direct contact with their peers and when to work independently away from the campus. They have more control over their time, place, pace and mode of study.

## **1.1 Background**

In Vision 2020, the government of Rwanda sets out ambitious plans to create a growing knowledge system based on skilled workforce which will operate in a knowledge based economy. To fulfil this goal, higher education is expected to develop high level skills needed for performance in the knowledge economy. This vision and plan can only be realized if higher education institutions capacitate people with the necessary skills needed for the knowledge economy. To improve the quality of the provision of higher education in Rwanda, seven public institutions were merged into The University of Rwanda in 2013. The merged institutions were the National University of Rwanda (NUR) which was established in 1963; the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology; the Kigali Institute of Education; Higher Institute of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry; School of Finance and Banking; Higher Institute of Umutara Polytechnic and the Kigali Health Institute. The institutions were merged to rationalize resources and to increase the visibility of the university in terms of practice and research outputs..

The challenge of UR as the only public university in Rwanda is to provide higher education to large numbers of people including those who live in remote rural communities. Rwanda, like many countries in Africa, is also faced with a huge shortage of qualified teachers. As a result, many teachers who are in classrooms are not qualified to teach and this contributes to low quality of education. To address this challenge, the former Kigali Institute of Education provided training programme for teachers through distance mode. UR established the School of Open and Distance Learning to extend and coordinate open distance learning provision in all UR colleges. Now, the school becomes a Centre of Open and Distance Learning.

Although many people including policy makers appreciate the role of ODeL in expanding access, there is generally inadequate understanding of what distance education entails. The problem arises when distance education entities are expected to use the same systems, structures and processes that are meant to support contact institutions activities. At UR, the infrastructure and resources that are meant to support technology enhanced teaching and learning are often inadequate. Since CODEL does not have adequately qualified and experienced personnel to support ODeL, they rely on UR academics to develop courses, facilitate learning, set examinations and mark assignments. Academic and administrative staff often perceive ODeL work as extra, as a result, they tend to require extra remuneration for the services provided. In some instances, they neglect ODeL students.

The success of ODeL provision depends on how systems are put in place to support teaching and learning that occurs when a student is physically separated from teacher. However, little is known about the organisational structures that are needed to provide for the flexibility of online and distance learning provision. Although there are policies that guide institutional systems and processes, they do not consider the operations of distance education.; this constitutes major barrier to the development of



distance learning. The lack of institutional policy to guide the practices of open and distance education was identified as a major hinderance to the functions of ODeL Centre.

This policy will assist the university in understanding the rationale for using distance education and the systems and structures needed to support distance education. ODeL works better in a system based organisation that allows for flexibility in organisation, management and implementation.

## **1.2 Vision and Mission**

### **Vision Statement**

Make Rwanda a country with a world class learning system where learners have equitable access to lifelong learning through the provision of quality and relevant ODeL programmes

### **Mission Statement**

Provide access to educational opportunities by offering high quality, innovative, responsive and affordable educational programmes through ODeL.

## **1.3 Purpose of the ODeL Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to guide decision and actions taken by administrators, academics support/professional staff and management. The ODeL policy is designed to contextualize, regulate and operationalize the format, scope, approach and strategic implementation of ODeL practices among all the role players including staff and students.

- 1.2.1 To guide and give direction to all ODeL practices at UR
- 1.2.2 To ensure that the ODeL practices are aligned to the Strategic Plan.
- 1.2.3 To form the basis of the ODeL business model at UR
- 1.2.4 To streamline ODeL processes within UR

Strategies to be followed to operationalize the objectives of this policy are shown in Table 1

**Table 1. Policy objectives, Strategies and Points of Responsibility**

<b>Objective/Issues</b>	<b>Implementation Strategy</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
<b>1.To guide and give direction to all ODeLpractices at UR</b>	Develop a set of guidelines for ODeL practice Provide support for the development of course materials in the form of instructional designers, educational technologists and course developers	Direct Principal

	Assess the status of ICT in relation to supporting ODeL provision	DVC VC
<b>2 To ensure that the ODL practices are aligned to UR strategic plans.</b>	Institutionalise the policy by marketing it throughout the UR	Principal VC
<b>3.To form the basis of the ODeL business model in UR</b>	Develop a business model for ODeL Carry out a situational analysis of programmes that could be converted into ODeL Assess the viability of ODeL provision	Director Principal
<b>4. To streamline ODeL processes within UR</b>	Appoint ODeL coordinators based in faculties Facilitate workshops on curriculum development for ODeL Participate in ODeL initiatives in colleges Develop networks and collaborative activities with colleges and administrative departments Market ODeL initiatives throughout the university Dissemination of ODeL information through workshops Train academic and administrative staff on supporting ODeL teaching and learning Decentralise student support services Develop teaching and learning strategies to incorporate two modes regarding examination and moderation Adopt ICT strategies to support teaching and learning in ODeL	Principal Director

#### **1.4 Scope of policy application**

The policy will cover the core definitions and functions of ODeL, the role of ODeL in a contact institution, system and structures that govern the operations of ODeL within a dual-mode institution..

#### **1.5 Guiding Principles**



- 1.4.1 **Openness** to reduce barriers to access education
- 1.4.2 **Flexibility** in the provision of ODeL at UR by ensuring that systems and structures accommodate the dynamic nature of ODeL
- 1.4.3 **Accessibility** is wide concept spanning from elimination of physical distance and other barriers such as admission criteria; it is also about access to learning materials through technology by all potential distance learners including people with disability.
- 1.4.4 **Affordability**– Courses that are delivered through ODeL courses mode tend to be less expensive than those delivered face-to-face. Large student numbers help to reduce the costs of the course. Economies of scale take effect with increased student numbers. The cost drivers in ODeL are linked to costs of producing study material and the student enrollment.
- 1.4.5 **Student centredness** - CODEL shall ensure that the environment is conducive to learning and that basic resources are available for distance and online students
- 1.4.6 **Quality and Relevancy** refers to the provision of ODeL programmes that are addressing the social mandate of the country,
- 1.4.7 **Equity and Equality** places emphasis on providing educational opportunity to students who may have limited or no access to education. This is based on the right of individuals to access to education irrespective of the age, gender, race, socio-economic background or physical ability.
- 1.4.8 **Training and Upgrading** is about enabling people who are unable to attend university full time to improve their knowledge and skills.

## 2.0 Existing Institutional and Legal Framework

This policy is guided by the national, institutional and legal frameworks. To address the educational needs of the country, the government developed strategic documents: the Vision 2020 and the Economic development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Education Sector Strategic Plan; ICT in Education, the National Information Communication Infrastructure Plan; and the 7 year government plan, and the Draft National ODeL Policy aimed at creating an educated workforce with technological skills, that were alluding to the need of widening participation through accessible, affordable and flexible provision of education to conceptualise the Centre of Open Distance and eLearning.

Based on the abovementioned policy documents, UR is expected to carry out a social justice mandate by broadening the provision of quality education to all citizens irrespective of where the education takes place. The development of this policy will be guided by the above documents.

## 3.0 The Centre of Open Distance and eLearning(CODEL)

### 3.1 The Centre is mandated:

- 3.1.1 To administratively and academically support schools and departments that are offering programmes for students who are attending classes full-time.
- 3.1.2 To facilitate the development of content to be delivered through ODeL.
- 3.1.3 To train academics, administrative and technical staff on ODeL practices
- 3.1.4 To develop ODeL systems and technologies to cater for ODeL students
- 3.1.5 To provide demand-driven ODeL courses and programmes
- 3.1.6 To raise awareness about ODeL practices and processes

### ***3.2 The role of CODL is to:***

- 3.2.1 Administratively and academically support schools that are offering programmes for ODeL students
- 3.2.2 Provide lifelong skills based learning programmes
- 3.2.3 Support distance and online systems that are geared towards supporting distance teaching and learning.
- 3.2.4 Guide and support all the distance education and online initiatives at UR
- 3.2.5 Manage all distance education processes and practices
- 3.2.6 Ensure that distance education initiatives are aligned to UR policies and systems

### ***3.3 Supporting Structures and Systems***

- 3.3.1 Organisational structures need to support the ODeL teaching and learning processes. This includes the teaching methods; the development of the structures at the provincial and study centres; and the way in which the programme will relate to other programmes within the CODEL.
- 3.3.2 Operational systems will need to be designed for producing, storing, and distributing learning materials and for enrolling and supporting learners.
- 3.3.3 Planners of the ODeL project (Centre of ODeL) must determine the sources of funding including a detailed budget and the system that will be used for financial management and control.
- 3.3.4 Decisions about staffing beginning with the job description and terms of service for the people who'll be responsible for ODeL provision should form part of the planning.
- 3.3.5 Planning shall be carried out by a planning committee that consists of people who combine enough expert knowledge and influence to enable the committee to both develop a workable plan and push it forward. Centre ODeL's senior staff members should lead this committee.
- 3.3.6 The structure of CODEL shall have the following departments:
  - Management, Administration and Quality Assurance
  - Course Development, Production and Distribution



- Continuous Professional Development
- Student support services
- Technical Services and Support
- Marketing and Communication

### 3.3.7 The management structure will comprise of

- Director of Centre of ODeL coordinating ODeL systems in all UR colleges.
- College ODeL Coordinator managing ODeL activities at college level
- School ODeL Champion managing all ODeL activities in schools under supervision of the College ODeL coordinator
- Campus ODeL Manager managing ODeL Centres operating in different campuses

## 3.4 Responsibilities of CODEL

### 3.4.1 Management

- Support distance and online systems that are geared towards supporting distance teaching and learning
- Guide and support all the distance education and online activities at UR
- Manage all distance education processes and practices
- Ensure that e-learning and distance education initiatives are aligned to UR policies and systems
- Allocate functions and roles to the Centre's staff members
- Manage and support regional study centres to ensure that they provide support to students
- Develop collaborative and benchmarking activities
- Carry out budgeting and procurement
- Market and promote ODeL programmes to potential students
- Guide the Human Resource Department on recruitment of ODeL staff and tutors.
- Manage financial resources pertaining to distance education activities
- Manage distance learners database
- Ensure that an ODeL coordinator is assigned in every college to ensure that distance learning academic and administrative processes are adhered to
- Evaluate and revise processes, procedures, programmes and courses
- Provide leadership in the implementation of distance and online teaching and learning practices

### 3.4.2 Coordination

- Appraise proposals from colleges which are proposing to offer ODeL programmes.
- Coordinate and facilitate training for material development and the use of online for facilitators and staff
- Coordinate and facilitate the development of distance and online study material

- Coordinate the administration processes of ODeL programmes hosted in colleges.
- Coordinate the administrative processes of assignments and examinations (receive and dispatch assignments and examinations to relevant departments)
- Work closely with host departments and colleges to give support to ODeL activities
- Coordinate the application and registration processes of ODeL students
- Coordinate distance education activities within the institution and provincial centres
- Liase with the provincial directors to ensure the logistical arrangements of examination venues for ODeL
- Coordinate the facilitation of face to face sessions for ODeL students
- Source and provide infrastructure for examination and assessment purposes and work-based learning.

### **3.4.3 Supporting ODeL teaching and learning**

- Support pedagogical initiatives geared towards the improvement of teaching and learning
- Provide systematic ongoing ODeL professional development programmes and support to all staff participating in the delivery of ODeL.
- Provide support and capacity for the development of study material
- Analyse, assess needs, acquire and develop programmes and courses for online and distance education provision
- Appraise proposals from schools and departments that are proposing to offer ODeL programs
- Administer and supervise the provision of all ODeL programmes and monitor the quality of face-to-face tutorials.
- Ensure the production of high quality distance learning materials that are available to learners in a variety of Instructional media.
- Physically produce, provide storage and disseminate materials
- Ensure that study materials (including assessments schedules) are ready when students register
- Provide demand-driven courses for the community
- Ensure that quality assurance is adhered to in ODeL programmes
- Facilitate the integration of technology into teaching and learning
- Conduct reflexive research in order to promote distance education
- Visit provincial and study centres to ensure that systems are in place
- Provide training programmes on distance learning facilitation
- Liase with colleges and department to identify potential tutors and markers

### **3.4.4 Supporting ODeL students**

- Coordinate all activities that supports distance learners



- Support distance and online systems that are geared towards supporting online and distance teaching and learning
- Provide student support services (academic, technical, face-to-face and administrative support)
- Plan and prepare schedules for face to face sessions.
- Provide orientation sessions for distance learners
- Inform students about face to face sessions and examination dates
- Provide information on ODeL courses and programmes.
- Provide guidance and counselling to ODeL students
- Send examination results to students
- Develop and manage the database for ODeL students

#### **4.0 Open and Distance eLearning systems**

ODL systems are usually made up of a range of components such as: “the mission or goal of a particular system, programmes and curricula, teaching/learning strategies and techniques, learning material and resources, communication and interaction, support and delivery systems, students, tutors, staff and other experts, management, housing and equipment, and evaluation” (UNESCO, 2002). Understanding different parts in the system requires an examination of the inter-relations between the parts. In fact, a critical aspect of the systems approach is that all components of a system are inter-related and inter-dependent. This requires careful planning.

In this system the Centre will be responsible for coordinating and facilitating the processes of curriculum design, materials development, materials distribution including online, tutoring and counseling, assessment management and student database administration. The Centre should work collaboratively with teaching departments to convert their learning materials and programmes into the distance and online mode. The department will be responsible for providing expertise in curriculum design and material development for ODeL and online provision. The Centre should also provide administrative support for all ODeL related systems as outlined below.

The success of ODeL is dependent on a number of subsystems :

- Academic systems
- Student Support systems
- Administrative systems
- Infrastructure
- Management systems

## **4.1 Academic systems**

The academic systems are a core function of higher education. This is made up of a curriculum which indicates what should be taught and how. It has the aims of why learning should be done in that way and what are the outcomes that learners are going to get. In the provision of ODeL courses, distance education providers must constantly give attention to the needs of students in diverse and remote locations- among other things this suggests the need for complete study packages, open ended assessment tasks that allow for contextualised responses, face-to-face support, mentoring and/or peer collaborative learning.

### **4.1.1 Curriculum Design**

**4.1.1.1** Curriculum design encompasses issues such as course content, teaching and learning methods, assessment strategies, aims and objectives or intended outcomes of the course and how these objectives tie in with the national imperatives, as well as who is to be involved in the curriculum design process (SADC, 2012). In ODeL, curricula vary in terms of design, structure, flexibility and the delivery mode used.

**4.1.1.2** The starting point of curriculum development in ODeL is the student profile, then followed by the intended outcomes of the course, and then the teaching and learning including assessment strategies that are embedded in the learning material. In dual-mode institution, such as UR, this process may also include re-designing contact based learning of the existing courses into ODeL and online provision. A curriculum should help a student get from where they are, what they learn and how they are assessed, It should provide the learning programme that include independent self- study, in-text activities, assignments and feedback provided.

**4.1.1.3** In ODeL programmes need to be flexible, encourage access and be responsive to the social and economic needs of the country. However, the curriculum development activities should be done in line with the UR Teaching and Learning guidelines.

### **4.1.2 Development of learning materials:**

**4.1.2.1** The distance learning materials must be designed, written, produced in advance and be ready for delivery to learners as soon as they register.

**4.1.2.2** The study material are developed by a team involving academics, curriculum and course designers, language specialists, tutors, relevant external stakeholders where possible. However, the curriculum design and development is predominantly done by academics and they are the owners of the content of the material.



- 4.1.2.3** The study material should prepare the student for learning, develop the necessary skills, attitudes and knowledge that the student needs, guide the student through the learning process and include sufficient and appropriate learning activities to enhance knowledge.
- 4.1.2.4** Open Education Resources (OER) can also be used to enhance the content of the study material. OER can include full courses/programmes, course materials, modules, student guides, teaching notes, textbooks, research articles, videos, assessment tools and instruments, interactive materials such as simulations and role plays, databases, software, apps (including mobile apps) and any other educationally useful materials. OERs are available under an open licence that specifies that resources can be used, re-used and repurposed used for educational purposes. OER can be used to supplement contact sessions, existing text-based resources with other media such as audio and video resources that can be accessed through computers or cellphones.
- 4.1.2.5** In developing material for ODeL, the academic and the administrative components are seen as equally important and dependent on one another. The production and printing of the study material is done after the development of the material
- 4.1.2.6** Study material including assessments (assignments), a calendar, a programme of the study should be made available when a student applies for a course and registers.
- 4.1.2.7** Training and Reskilling – The Centre will develop and provide demand driven skills based courses address the need for upgrading people in knowledge and skills they need to perform in work environments

#### **4.1.3 Assessment**

- 4.1.3.1** Assessment strategies should include both summative (examinations) and formative assessment (Tutor Marked Assignments) used for making judgments about the achievement of the learning outcomes. Deciding on the assessment strategy is an essential part of providing evidence that the purpose and the intended outcome of the programme have been met.
- 4.1.3.2** Formative assessment include assignments, research project, group work project, portfolio of evidence, online participation contribute towards a final mark.
- 4.1.3.3** Formative assessment should be integral to the development of the study material where students are encouraged to engage with the content through a range of activities. Courses developers should also provide feedback on the activities so that ODeL students experience a form of discussion that takes place in the classrooms.

**4.1.3.4** Particular emphasis should be placed on student feedback to ensure that students are supported throughout their studies. Feedback should be prompt, personal and specific; supportive and encouraging; and also include an explanation on how the grade was arrived at.

**4.1.3.5** Summative assessment is a formal examination at the end of the course

#### **4.1.4 Teaching and learning methods**

**4.1.4.1** The teaching and learning methods used will be determined by the nature of the programme; the students' profile; and the students' access to resources

**4.1.4.2** The methods will include independent study of learning materials, completion of various activities, formative assessment tasks, tutorials, practical work and opportunities to interact with others as well as research activities.

**4.1.4.3** The methods will also include work-integrated learning as a planned component of a curriculum when outcomes can only be achieved through work-based experience.

#### **4.1.5 Delivery channels**

To support teaching and learning, Centre of ODeL should use a wide range of delivery channels, ideally they should use a best possible mix of media as listed below.

**4.1.5.1 Print media** - remains the practical choice since it is inexpensive, reliable and accepted as a medium for studying purposes. Study material should be well designed to facilitate access to information. Good quality course design and study material will provide effective in-text student support.

#### **4.1.6 Technology-enhanced learning modes of delivery**

**4.1.6.1 Information technologies** - such as audio, podcasts, CDs, DVDs, satellite broadcasting and online distribution are used to provide content and **information**. Websites, audio and video podcasting and streaming, and possibly radio and television can also be used to facilitate the process of providing content for teaching and learning purpose.

**4.1.6.2 Communication Technologies** such as telephony, multimedia CDs and DVDs, video and audio conferencing, SMSs and MMSs via cell phones, e-mail and discussion forums/chat facilities via Learning Management Systems offering interaction in supporting print based study material. Highly interactive of the technologies that are asynchronous such as wikis, blogs, social networking facilities and e-portfolios can be used effectively to support teaching and learning.



**4.1.6.3 Learning Management System** can be used -Any ICT tool to be used also needs to integrate with other institutional systems (e.g. student registration systems).

**4.1.6.4 mLearning or mobile learning** is defined as the provision of education and training using mobile devices such as tablets, smartphones and mobile phones. While learning is not mobile, it is about teaching and learning through use of mobile devices, anywhere, anytime.

**4.1.6.5 E-learning** provide wide ranging possibilities of delivery of learning programmes. E-learning can be categorised as internet-supported; internet- dependent; and fully online.

- In *Internet-supported programmes*, participation in an online programme is optional. They can use the internet to access additional information or resources to enhance learning.
- In *Internet-dependent programmes*, students use the internet to access their study material or they participate with their peers and their lectures online through discussion forums.
- In *fully online programmes*, all interactions with staff and students, educational content, learning activities, assessment and support services are integrated and delivered online.
- *Blended programmes* use a wide range of delivery channels that use a best possible mix of media including online and/ or digitally supported offline technologies such as CDs/DVDs/flash drives and mobile devices where course content is preinstalled. These different channels can also be supported through face-to-face instruction or via print based material.

#### **4.1.6.6 Multimedia with interactive possibilities**

Many of the above technologies in combination with rich media and multi-directional, multi-user, collaborative toolsets in a distributed web-based environment can be used to enhance teaching and learning in ODeL. The appropriate use of technology is essential to the support of teaching and learning. Technology makes it possible for employees, students and other stakeholders to interact with UR anytime and from anywhere in the world. Therefore, it forms an essential part of the skills base of UR students who have to compete in a knowledge-driven globalized society.

The multimedia approach with interactivity between students and lecturer(s), students and tutors, students and students, and student and institution is much more effective than a single medium. Criteria for the selection of media should include:

- Costs, access and availability
- pedagogical appropriateness
- integration of the media into a coherent experience.

## 4.2 *Student support systems*

Student support is one of the essential sub-systems in ODeL delivery. It includes a range of services for individual and groups of students which complement mass-produced print-based materials or learning resources. Student support is often perceived as an add on or a service for students with learning difficulties. It is therefore important that student support activities are integrated into the learning material.

**4.2.1** Student support services are a range of services that are designed and developed to assist ODL students to meet their learning objectives and to gain the knowledge and skills to be successful in their studies. To achieve this it takes into consideration the diverse needs of students as well as the level of study. It includes mechanisms designed to bridge the gap by enhancing communication between the student and the lecturer(s), student and peers, student and study material, student and administrative support and student and institution

**4.2.2** Students support services may be summarised as typically including:

- Student enquiry about the programme
- Registration, admission and pre-study advisory services
- Assessment of prior learning and credit transfer
- Counselling and guidance
- In-text support in the learning material
- Student-centred feedback on assignments
- Face-to-face teaching or facilitation of learning
- Study and examination centres
- Library services
- Record keeping, information management, and other administrative systems
- Materials which support the development of study skills, programme planning or career development

**4.2.3** Student support can be done through ...

- in-text support in the form of detailed, individualised and timely feedback to formative assessment via the assignments. In-text support should be well-designed well-integrated study material creating rich environments for active learning and promoting dialogue between teacher



and student in order to decrease the distance between student and study materials. It is important in ODeL materials to engage in a dialogue with the students. All interactions within the study material (print or online) should consciously model appropriate lecturer–student behaviours.

- face-to-face contacts are used to guide students through their courses, mediating the packaged learning materials and facilitating the learning process. They also give students an opportunity to engage in argument and debate with their peers and lecturers.
- peer support is essential in ODeL where students can form study groups to support one other. This can be encouraged through group work assignments or students who live around the same area can work together to help each other. Students can also form virtual communities of practice where they participate in discussion forums
- administrative support in the form of timely, accurate and accessible information from institution to students about all aspects of the learning process, from registration to graduation;

**4.2.4 Recognition of Prior Learning(RPL)** is an important component of addressing the need to open access .RPL acknowledges that people never stop learning whether it takes place formally at an educational institution or informally at a workplace or nonformally. The process of RPL includes matching the students' knowledge, skills and experienceacquired in informal settings to outcomes. Then the students' knowledge is assessed against the outcomes; and given credit for skills, knowledge and experience acquired in the past. In most RPLcases, candidates need to be carefully assessed to ensure that they are appropriately placed within a programme.

### **4.3 *Administrative Systems***

#### **4.3.1 Multimedia with interactive possibilities**

- 4.3.1.1** After the materials have been developed the course material is then marketed to the interested students who are at a distance through the use of newspapers, television, radio and other electronic media.
- 4.3.1.2** This marketing is only done after making certain that all the necessary learning resources are available, such as study materials, dates for contact sessions, assignment questions, due dates for assignments, dates for examinations
- 4.3.1.3** Marketing should be both general and targeted to meet specific national needs e.g. for more potential students based in rural areas; or urban students who are no comfortable with face-to-face sessions etc.

### **4.3.2 Admission and Registration:**

- 4.3.2.1** The office of the Centre's Registrar will handle the admissions and registration of distance education students as well as the processing of other academic related issues.
- 4.3.2.2** Considering that ODeL students are working adults, UR should develop admission requirements specific to the needs of these students
- 4.3.2.3** Immediately after the student has been admitted, he or she has to make payments to the UR Finance before registration. This can be done online or in regional centres.
- 4.3.2.4** Students must receive a complete study package on registration. Once registration has been completed, the processes of teaching and learning commences.
- 4.3.2.5** Accurate data bases must be established and maintained from registration data to allow the ongoing analysis of trends in the changing student profile for each programme
- 4.3.2.6** **Graduation and alumni:** After the student has received this continuous support throughout his/her studies, the last step is graduation after which he/she will be accepted as one of the university's alumnae. The database of graduate will be built in order to keep regular contact with alumni through e-newsletter; and this can also be used to recruit graduates as e-tutors.

### **4.4 Facilities, Infrastructure, and Resources (Enablers)**

Both the academic and administrative processes are made possible by enabling systems such as:

#### **4.4.1 Information Communication Technology (ICT)**

ICT can be used to support administrative systems. Introduction of ICT systems should be tailor made to address students needs. For example: It could be anticipated that mature working students will probably be more comfortable with computer based interaction and print-based material, and some student populations may be actively resistant to the use of new technologies for reasons like the added cost for some of the students of getting access and/or because their profession itself is premised on direct human interaction.

ICT infrastructure can also be used to support Virtual Learning Environments for supporting teaching and learning. Business Information Management Systems is also used for student administration and finance purposes.

#### **4.4.2 Production of study material and delivery**

After the final go-ahead, the materials need to be reproduced to meet the latest estimate of enrolments – print and audio-visual and/or digital, as agreed at the outset. If audio-visuals are to



be broadcast, they must be produced in their final form and broadcast schedules must be publicised. Audio-visuals should also be loaded onto an LMS.

After the reproduction process, the distribution logistics need to be finalised and full tutorial and student support services put in place. This will include the training of tutors and facilitators face-to-face and online sessions.

**4.4.3 Library-** The library allows the student to have an access to information manually or electronically. For a student to have an access to library facilities, he or she, must first of all have registered so that he/she could be able to use all facilities provided by this important enabler. The Libraries will also offer services to distance learning community designed to meet a wide range of informational, instructional and user needs. Students may access electronic resources through databases ebooks, e-journals and OERs.

**4.4.4 Human Resource-** The Centre is responsible for the management and administration of human resources in the Centre. However, other personnel such as lecturers and administrators may be sourced from other departments to support the activities of the Centre. The Centre has the task of making sure that all the resources for online and distance learning are properly administered.

The management of the Centre should ensure that all the resources at the university's disposal are properly administered with the aim of assisting the students and lecturers in their teaching and learning so that they could be successful.

**4.4.4.1** The Centre will also be responsible for training staff on development of study material; on ODeL-related assessment practices; on facilitation of learning; on designing for online learning; on administration and management of ODeL processes and systems.

#### **4.4.5 Decentralised /regional/ provincial support**

**4.4.5.1** The Centre shall use the existing decentralised provincial study centres and establish some in other regions to provide face-to-face facilitation of learning opportunities as well as give administrative support and provide infrastructure for any support systems distance students may require.

**4.4.5.2** The Centre can also use existing structures such as municipal halls, churches, Centres in places where they do not have study centres to facilitate the process of taking examinations. The Centre is expected to appoint examination invigilators, ensure that the venue is available and ensure the security of examination integrity.

**4.4.5.3** Regional networks of this kind afford a variety of advantages:

- they provide localised, personalised service to learners;

- they strengthen the local identity of the programme or institution;
- they can be an important marketing tool;
- they can reduce turnaround time in the return of feedback to students on assignments;
- they can provide enhanced support to learners via laboratories, library resources, computing facilities, and audio and video conferencing;
- they provide sites for regular meetings and tutorials; and
- they provide the programme with direct feedback on its performance.

## **4.5 Planning and Scheduling**

Planning is very important in the ODeL system. A preliminary planning and scheduling activity has a direct impact on the launch of any programme. In the planning phase it is necessary to examine the broad goals of the programme; the educational activities that flow from them; the organisational ways of meeting them, including finance, staffing, and the phasing of the development of the programme.

### **4.5.1 ODeL Planning involves:**

- Profiling students to enable student-centred support
- Recruiting and promoting distance education programmes
- Structuring of the programme in terms of its educational needs and the characteristics of potential learners.
- Educational activities that needs to be taken; the teaching methods to be adopted; and the way learning materials are to be developed.
- Enrolling and registering students
- Sourcing buildings and facilities
- Ensuring that ODeL calendar is different from the academic calendar of face to face provision
- Flexible dates of application, registration, submission of assignments, examination and graduation to accommodate ODeL students

## **4.6 Costing and budgeting**

- 4.6.1 ODeL programmes are usually less expensive than contact programmes when they enrol large numbers of students on a module. Increases in student numbers tend to drive up the overall costs of producing, storing and distributing study materials. However, it may reduce the unit costs, that is, all costs associated with the designing and developing of the study material. By so doing, economies of scale will take effect when student numbers high.
- 4.6.2 Budgeting for ODeL programmes should include fixed costs that entails setting up buildings, equipments, ICT infrastructure and printing facilities. Variable costs such as the costs of producing and dissemination of study material - this may include salaries of outside writers,



people who are preparing and disseminating the study material including editing and graphic designers, production and storage of study material (print, CD Roms, USB etc.). Direct costs are associated with the delivery of teaching including study materials; facilitators of learning (lecturers, tutors and markers); coordination of student support; and administrative staff costs; indirect costs include .Indirect costs include administration, personnel and security costs.

- 4.6.3 Recurrent expenditures are primarily salaries that are determined by the extent to which the programme needs its own staff or can share or contract staff from other programmes; part-time lecturers and ICT and media specialists
- 4.6.4 Operational costs will vary with the number of courses offered in ODeL, including salaries for course developers; face-to-face lecturers; transmission costs; and preparation costs for study materials, including editing and graphic design; production of audio, video and online material; travelling costs to different study centres and costs of distributing materials to students; administrative costs for processing students enrolments and servicing them.

#### **4.7 *Research and Development***

Research and development is one of the pillars of the academic enterprise. SODL shall conduct and produce reflexive ODeL-related research with the aim of improving practice, knowledge generation. Other members of staff may also be encouraged to conduct research on their ODeL practice.

#### **4.8 *Quality Assurance***

Quality Assurance plays an important role in ensuring that UR distance students are given quality education throughout their stay at the university. Quality management is about improving, supporting and developing quality processes that are meant to improve practice. ODeL programmes should go through the same rigorous standards required of contact programmers. Quality assurance entails all teaching and learning processes including curriculum development, student support, enabling facilities. Every course and programme needs to be quality assured in terms of:

- Content – knowledge and skills; learning outcomes
- Pedagogy – sound teaching and learning methods;
- Motivational strategies – intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for students;
- Degree of student autonomy;
- Access to the learning environment (including issues of cost, technology and culture);
- Management strategies, including administration.(CoL, 2015)

To ensure quality monitoring and evaluation, UR should use quality toolkits developed specifically for distance education such as the African Council for Distance Education and the Commonwealth of Learning toolkits.

#### **4.9 Policy Implementation**

4.9.1 The implementation of ODeL depends on the factors such as:

- The knowledge of the comprehension of the policy by stakeholders
- Raising awareness about ODeL systems and practices
- Structures and systems that support ODeL need to be put in place to support the policy
- Management and staff buy-in
- Training of staff on ODeL processes and practices

4.9.2 The owner of the policy is UR and the implementing department is the Centre of ODeL. The Director of CODEL is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the policy.

4.9.3 The Quality Assurance tools will be used to evaluate the quality of the systems, structures and processes that support ODeL programmes and the Internal Audit will evaluate the systems to ensure compliance.

4.9.4 This policy document will be binding to any members of staff and stakeholders of the university.

4.9.5 The policy will be evaluated and reviewed after five years.

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**Prof. Philip Cotton**

Vice Chancellor

