



ODL COMMUNIQUÉ 18, 16 JUNE 2010

AN OVERVIEW OF THIS WEEK'S COMMUNIQUÉ

1. *Some interesting statistics and general information regarding the Open University*
2. *Third Conversation Forum offered by the DCLD*
3. *ODL repository and blog*

1 SOME INTERESTING FACTS AND GENERAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE OPEN UNIVERSITY (OU)

I am writing this communiqué from my temporary office in the Michael Young Building of the Open University Business School (OUBS) on the main campus of the OU in Milton Keynes. The OU is regarded by many as being an excellent example with the regard to the offering of student support, the appropriate and effective use of technologies and its acclaimed partnership with the British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC). The following provides an overview of some of the interesting aspects of the OU which may inform practices at Unisa, but more importantly, allow us to realise that there are also vast differences between the OU and Unisa.

- The OU offers more than 600 university-level undergraduate courses in around 60 subjects serving around 60 degree programmes.
- Postgraduate studies are offered in more than 50 subjects.
- With regard to access to networked computers, the following is an extract from the guidance to students:

Using computers and the internet to enhance your study is an essential part of our undergraduate programmes. Unless you're studying an Openings course, you'll need regular and reliable access to the internet and a computer so that you can take full advantage of our online services, including online forums and our vast library, and get access to support from your tutor and fellow students... For most courses you will be expected to spend at least a couple of sessions a week working on computer-based activities and some of this work may be assessed. We'll also ask you to provide an email address so that we can send you important information relevant to your studies. If you don't have an email account of your own we can provide one for you.

- The OU has around 150,000 undergraduate and more than 30,000 postgraduate students. 10,000 of the OU's students have disabilities.
- 70 per cent of the OU's undergraduate students are in full-time employment. More than 50,000 students are sponsored by their employers for their studies.
- More than 25,000 OU students live outside the UK.
- A third of our UK undergraduate students have entry qualifications lower than those normally demanded by other UK universities.
- Nearly all of the OU's courses have no entry requirements except that students must be 16 years old on registration and full-time students at another higher education institution need permission from that institution to study at the OU.
- With regard to requirements in the language of tuition, the following guidance is provided:
The OU does not require you to have a qualification in English language or to take a specific test before you can register for a course. However, you do need to have a reasonable standard of English to study with us successfully. A poor understanding of English language makes study much more difficult and you will need to allow extra time for study. If you are concerned about your level of understanding visit our Skills for Study website at <http://www.open.ac.uk/skillsforstudy/english-for-learning.php> Here you will find a range of information on the level of English required and links to tests that will help you to test your ability.
- Each student is linked to a tutor on registration. The tutors are selected based on their qualification in the field of study and their tutor modality eg face-to-face tutorials, online tutoring, etc.
- Course materials are developed in multi-stakeholder teams and once developed, stand for up to 8 years.
- All assignments are marked by tutors. Academics' core functions are to do research and to develop learning experiences.
- Most student support is delivered through decentralised regional centres.

2 THIRD DCLD CONVERSATION FORUM

The theme for the conversation forum will be "Preparing Unisa graduates for an unflat world...". The forum will be hosted in Pretoria on 24 June in the Dr Miriam Makeba Concert Hall, and in Florida on 29 June in the Genmin Auditorium. Both of the conversation forums will take place from 09:30-11:30.

This forum has as background the following:

How do we prepare graduates for an unflat world, where ...

- The degree that they have received this year will be obsolete within the next 7 years.
- Innovation will be happening on the periphery of industry and society often possible due consideration for the ethical implications of the innovation.
- Graduates will change occupations at least 3-5 times in the next ten years, picking up different habits, skills, and vocabularies.
- Access to natural resources will be contested and be the reason for wars and massive migrations.
- Water will be the scarcest resource and countries will disappear and appear.
- The rich will be richer and the poor, even poorer.
- The HIV virus may mutate and new diseases and pandemics will spread faster than ever
- Medical science will produce artificial life forms
- Those with access to medicines and healthcare will become older than ever before; those without access will die younger than ever before; and because the poor have nothing to lose, they will form vigilante groups; poor nations and individuals will pirate on the rich and the affluent.
- Today's cutting edge technologies will be laughed at, with new technologies pushing constant change. People will migrate easily to using new technologies and those excluded today will be more excluded and marginalized than ever before.
- New geopolitical and cultural formations and alliances will develop, often with closed borders.
- Increasing religious and cultural fundamentalism will polarize and stratify society.

The panel on the Pretoria campus on 24 June will include Dr Gugu Moche (Mathematics), Mr Jason Ming Sun (ICT), Prof Petrus Potgieter (Decision Sciences), Dr Neil Eccles (Centre for Corporate Citizenship) and Mr Tsepo Constable (Library). The panel for the Florida campus will be communicated closer to the date.

Bookings for the Forums on **both** campuses can be done by sending an e-mail to Ms Liz van der Westhuizen (vdwesesj@unisa.ac.za) or reserve a seat by phoning her at 012-429 6244.

4 ODL REPOSITORY AND BLOG

All the ODL task team reports, the overview of the recommendations of the STLSC and other ODL documents are available on the Unisa Library's Institutional Repository at <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/dspace/handle/10500/3072> (accessed 15 June 2010). The repository is updated on a regular basis and if you register on the repository, you will get notifications of any new uploads.

You are also most welcome to comment on this (and previous) ODL Communiqués on the Unisa Staff website. On the right hand side of the Unisa Staff website, you will see a section titled "Important links" under which you must then click on "Blogs". On the blog page, you will notice two links namely "E-connect" and "Open Distance Learning". If you follow the latter you will be able to read and comment on the ODL Communiqués.

Drafted by Dr Paul Prinsloo

ODL Coordinator

Office of the Vice-Principal: Academic & Research, Unisa

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+27 (0) 12 4293683 (office), +27 (0) 823954113 (mobile), prinsp@unisa.ac.za