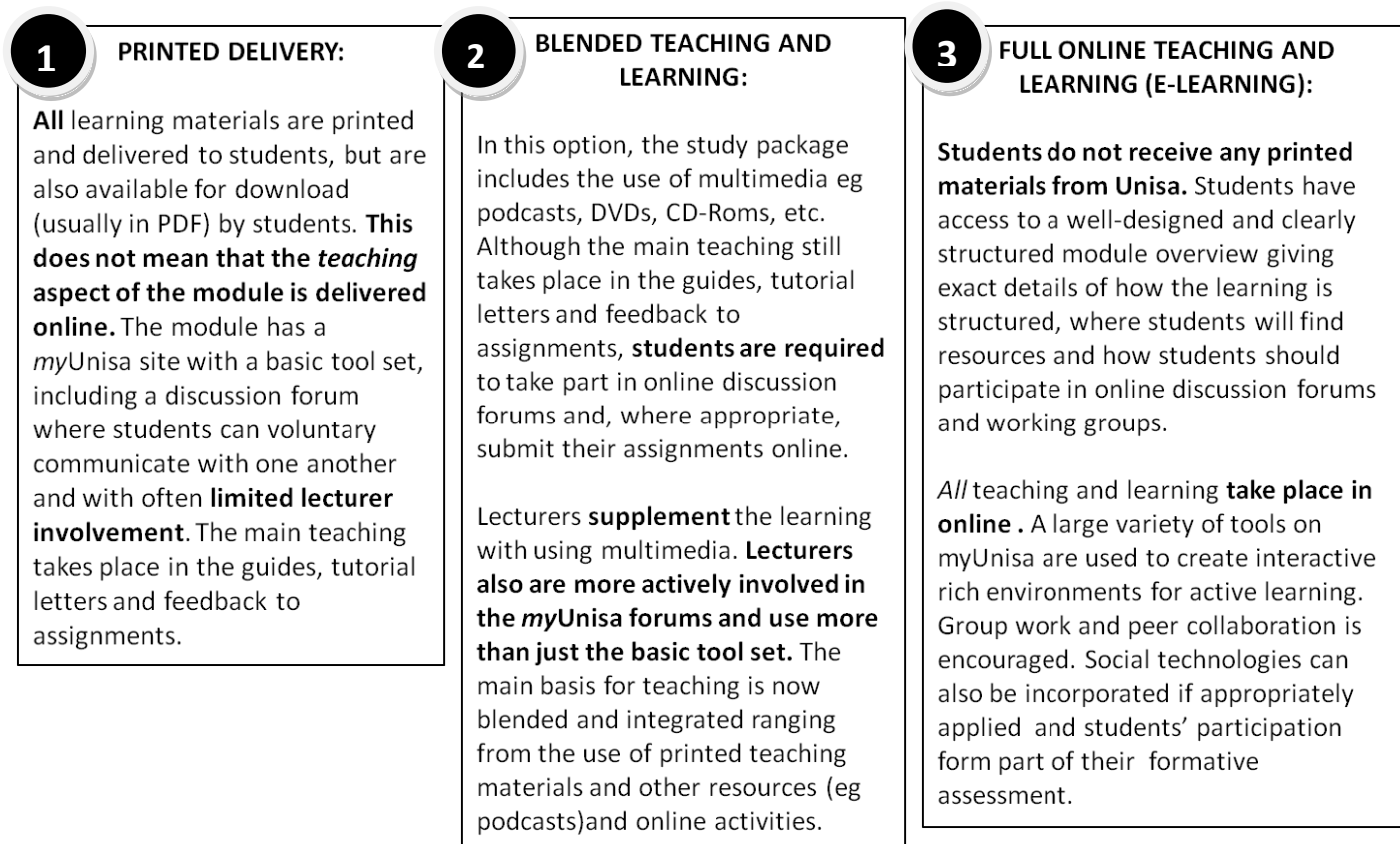


ODL COMMUNIQUÉ 2, 17 FEBRUARY 2010

This Communiqué is aimed at clarifying some of the issues surrounding the initiative to increasingly, over a time period, offer all postgraduate modules fully online.

1. All modules offered at Unisa can be plotted on a scale of how they employ multimedia and online technologies in order to facilitate teaching and learning. On the left-hand side of the scale (1) are modules with very limited use of online technologies relying on printed materials delivered to students. On the right hand of this scale (3) are modules which are *totally* offered online, with *no* printed materials provided to students. The following diagram provides a simplified illustration of the range of delivery and teaching options available at Unisa. There are definitely more variations than just this three, but the illustration attempts to define the main points of difference, namely the role of printed materials and the use of online and multimedia:



Printed materials with limited non-compulsory online

No printed materials provided and all teaching and learning take place online

2. The Senate Higher Degrees Committee approved in 2009 (ODL Implementation Plan, Point 13) that a number of **Masters'/Honours** degree modules are identified that will be developed in **2010** and offered fully online in **2012**. Colleges have *already* selected those modules and these modules are currently in the development process.
3. Full-online delivery (E-learning) is not "paper behind glass". Full-online delivery does therefore not mean that the study materials are made available as PDFs and students have the responsibility to download and print these materials. Full-online delivery means that the module has been developed making optimal use of a variety of online tools and resources such as links to online data bases, articles, and links to other resources, online discussions forums, and online assessment (eg E-Portfolios). *Full-online delivery is a different way of teaching and learning than is the case in the design and delivery of printed learning materials to students.*

4. International research has shown that teaching and learning fully online is often more effective than traditional methods. There are also, however, examples of online teaching initiatives that have dismally failed. Colleges and departments have therefore the responsibility to seriously engage with and consider the following issues:
- 5.1 Under what conditions is online learning more successful than blended options/print-based delivery?
 - 5.2 What are the different options in fully online teaching and their implications for staff: student ratios?
 - 5.3 How will academic, administrative staff and students be prepared for fully online delivery?
 - 5.4 What is the optimum development time for an online offering on postgraduate level? Should the development be completed when delivery starts or is there a possibility of developing while delivering? How do we ensure that online delivery does not exceed the notional hours per module?
 - 5.5 What are the ethical implications that we need to consider when teaching fully online? What are the privacy and copyright issues?
 - 5.6 What are the development and delivery costs (financial but also time, for students and the departments) embedded in fully online delivery?
 - 5.7 What administrative/technical support does academic departments and Unisa need to plan/budget for to ensure optimal support for lecturers and students?
 - 5.8 What are the quality standards for online development/delivery in a developing world context?
 - 5.9 How will students be informed prior to registration of the fact that the module will only be delivered fully online?
 - 5.10 Should departments offer students an option between fully online and more traditional delivery options, departments should ensure that students (and lecturers) are treated equally and fairly.
6. There is nothing that prevents colleges or departments from identifying modules to be offered fully online on provision that they have seriously considered the questions offered in Point 5 and are fully aware of and prepared for the implications for themselves, students and have other stakeholders such as their students, ICT, the Library, Student Support, Assignments, Examinations and others. Full online delivery requires a total rethink of the learning journey. *It is not putting existing course materials online.*