



ODL COMMUNIQUÉ 21, 6 JULY 2010

1 *A LUTA CONTINUA*

Now that the Soccer World Cup is reaching the final stages, it is time to set the stage for the next stage of the implementation of ODL for 2010. Looking back at the last 20 weeks, I really sense that we have come a long way. As I reflected about the next steps, I however also became aware of the importance of the next three months in the implementation of ODL.

As stated in last week's communiqué, the aim of the ODL implementation plan for 2010 is to have a considerable progress report tabled at the STLSC meeting of **23 August**, with some clear recommendations to serve at the STLSC of **20 September** (agenda closes 6 September). This will allow the recommendations, if approved by the STLSC, to serve at the last Senate meeting of this year which will take place on **28 October** 2010. If I take the STLSC meeting of 20 September as the last date to table recommendations, we are left with **43** working days left to wrap up our proposals! The pace for this last semester will therefore be fast and intense. Despite the pace, this phase of the implementation of ODL will need to find creative ways to harvest input from a range of stakeholders, especially from the regions. So let us briefly look at what lies ahead:

ODL Task team 1 will reconvene as soon as possible with the expanded scope to

1. Reopen the discussion on minimum admission requirements
2. Refine the content of the notion of an "extended curriculum" for students not meeting the proposed raised minimum admission requirements
3. Pay attention to creating *alternative* pathways for students who will be affected by raising the admission requirements
4. Ensure alignment with enrolment planning and management
5. Link to the discussions on the possibility to introduce a number of higher certificates

On **6 August 2010 from 14:00-16:00** there will be a meeting in TVW 10-24 (Kopanong) to discuss the possibility of collaboration for all colleges envisaging the development of **higher certificates**. The meeting will look at the specific needs of different colleges (those who expressed an interest) and look for ways in which we can collaborate in developing the different curricula.

The Deputy Registrar, Prof Divya Singh will convene a smaller working team to build on the work of **ODL Task team 3: Assessment** to formulate processes and criteria for the implementation of **alternative assessment strategies**.

One of the most important issues to resolve is the **nature of tutoring** offered by Unisa. Building on the conceptual model for student support accepted by Senate, it is urgent to *rethink* tutoring. A major part of the work of **ODL Task teams 5 (Technology)** and **ODL Task team 6 (Student Success)** depends on the proposal for an effective, personalised, technology enhanced, proactive tutoring system at Unisa. A smaller team comprising of team members of ODL Task Team 4, 5 and 6 will therefore meet on **20 July** to start the conversation. The aim is for this smaller team to draft a proposal by **mid-August**. Once we have a clear idea of what an effective tutoring system will look like (more about that in the next communiqué), we will finalise the bigger picture of how technology can help us to implement an effective tutoring system and in the bigger picture, to increase student success and retention. This proposal should be finalised by **mid-September**.

Another crucial aspect of the implementation of ODL is the role and infrastructure of the **regional offices**. Once we have a clear idea of tutoring at Unisa, we should be able to plan more clearly possible changes to regional functions and infrastructures. Therefore the idea is that from mid-August the focus will change to technology and the regions. A proposal regarding the roles and infrastructure of the regions should be finalised by **mid-September**.

While tutoring and the role of the regions are crucial parts of the student success and retention picture, there are also issues specifically pertaining to student success that **ODL Task team 6** will look at and finalise by mid-September, such as

- A proposal regarding the structure, functions and scope of a responsible “body” to oversee student success and retention at Unisa
- Solving the need and practicalities of pre-registration assessment of students’ potential and risk (academic and non-academic)
- Solving the issue for the need to provide students with a range of effective and appropriate contact possibilities at Unisa
- Increasing the nature and impact of feedback on assignments
- Looking at the impact of the complexity of our PQM and the scheduling of examination dates
- Increasing the capacity in statistical analysis, data mining, profiling and predictive modelling
- Rolling out the student tracking system and institutional responses to the data
- Optimising the use of appropriate technologies in teaching, learning and student support
- Improvement of on-time delivery of study materials

Outstanding issues of ODL Task team 5 (Technology enhanced teaching, learning and student support) include

- Increasing affordable access to the Internet for students and tutors
- A well-indexed e-learning object repository
- a synchronous online white boarding system

A number of *other* outstanding issues are:

- The DCLD was tasked to develop the curriculum for mandatory training for all academic staff in the effective and optimal use of Virtual Learning Environments. The proposal will serve at the STLSC of September.
- Prof Peter Havenga will draft a proposal for the establishment of a centre of excellence in the use of technologies in teaching and learning.
- I will convene a meeting on the implications of Intellectual Property Rights, Copyright and the use of social networking sites. The meeting will take place on **5 August from 14:00-16:00 in TVW 10-24** (Kopanong).

And, just in case you wondered, all of this will take place in the next **43** working days... In the next communiqué I will share some thoughts about a possible tutoring system at Unisa. Watch this space... The battle continues...

2 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 6 July 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

6 July 2010

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