

Course Information

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Ice Breaker

Upload your passport and introduce yourself by stating your names, what you do for a living, your hobby, your expectation in this course and the name you would preferred to be called during this course.



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Course Guide

Introduction

Welcome to **GST 107: A Study Guide for the Distance Learner**. GST 107 is a two-credit unit course that has minimum duration of one semester. It is a compulsory course for both undergraduate and graduate students in the university. The course guides you on the techniques of studying to achieve academic success through open and distance learning.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course you will be able to:

1. Study on your own at your pace and time irrespective of the geographical difference
2. Identify studying techniques to adopt towards achieving academic success
3. Demonstrate the skills required of a distance learner in achieving academic excellence.

Working through this Course

To successfully complete this course, read the study units, listen to the audios and videos, do all assessments, open the links and read, participate in discussion forums, read the recommended books and other materials provided, prepare your portfolios, and participate in the online facilitation.

Each study unit has introduction, intended learning outcomes, the main content, conclusion, summary and references/further readings. The introduction will tell you the expectations in the study unit. Read and note the intended learning outcomes (ILOs). The intended learning outcomes tell you what you should be able to do at the completion of each study unit. So, you can evaluate your learning at the end of each unit to ensure you have achieved the intended learning outcomes. To meet the intended learning outcomes, knowledge is presented in texts, video and links arranged into modules and units. Click on the links as may be directed but where you are reading the text off line, you will have to copy and paste the link address into a browser. You can download the audios and videos to view off line. You can also print or download the texts and save in your computer or external drive. The conclusion gives you the theme of the knowledge you are taking away from the unit. Unit summaries are presented in downloadable audios and videos.

There are two main forms of assessments – the formative and the summative. The formative assessments will help you monitor your learning. This is presented as in-text questions, discussion forums and Self-Assessment Exercises.

The summative assessments would be used by the university to evaluate your academic performance. This will be given as Computer Based Test (CBT) which serves as continuous assessment and final examinations. A minimum of three computer based tests will be given with only one final examination at the end of the semester. You are required to take all the computer base tests and the final examination.

Study Units

There are 16 study units in this course divided into four modules. The modules and units are presented as follows:

Module 1 Introduction to the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) System

- Unit 1 History of the Open and Distance Learning System
- Unit 2 Characteristics of the Open and Distance Learning System
- Unit 3 Teaching and Learning in the Open and Distance Learning System

Module 2 Study Skills for the Distance Learner

- Unit 1 Listening
- Unit 2 Speaking
- Unit 3 Reading
- Unit 4 Writing
- Unit 5 Study Strategies

Module 3 Assessment and Evaluation Modes in Open And Distance Learning (ODL)

- Unit 1 Overview of Assessment in ODL
- Unit 2 Instructional-Based Assessment Modes
- Unit 3 Semester Examination
- Unit 4 Assessment of Non-Examinable Courses

Module 4 Learners' Support Services

- Unit 1 Definition and Purposes of Learners' Support Services
- Unit 2 Types of Learners' Support Services
- Unit 3 Sources of Learners' Support Services
- Unit 4 Benefits of Learners' Support Services

References and Further Readings

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Chatpakkarattana, T. & Jintawee Khlaisang. (2012). The Learner Support System for Distance Education. *Creative Education*, 3, p. 47-51.

<https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/24076/Complete.pdf?>

https://empower.eadtu.eu/images/fields-of-expertise/StudentSupport/Student_Support_Services_for_Success_in_OED_SIMPSON.pdf

Ajadi, T. O., Salawu, I. O. & Adeoye, F. A. (2008). E-learning and distance education in Nigeria. The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 7 (4) available at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED503472.pdf>

Jegede, Oluwagbemiro (2016). Open and distance learning practices in Nigeria higher institutions of learning. A paper presented at the Annual Distance Learning Centre Distinguished Lecture and Stakeholders' Forum Held at the International Conference Centre, University of Ibadan. Available at www.olugbemirojegede.com/odl_practices_in_tertiary_institutions_in_nigeria.pdf

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Jheengut, I. (2010). Importance of interactivity in open and distance learning continuous professional development courses, available in <http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/2257>

Mishra, S. (2017). Media and technology in distance education, available in www.egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/6540/1/Unit-5.pdf

Presentation Schedule

The presentation schedule gives you the important dates for the completion of your computer-based tests, participation in forum discussions and participation at facilitation. Remember, you are to submit all your assignments at the appropriate time. You should guide against delays and plagiarisms in your work. Plagiarism is a criminal offence in academics and is highly penalized.

Assessment

There are two main forms of assessments in this course that will be scored: the Continuous Assessments and the final examination. The continuous assessment shall be in three fold. **There will be two Computer Based Assessment. The computer-based assessments will be given in accordance to university academic calendar. The timing must be strictly adhered to.** The Computer Based Assessments shall be scored a maximum of 10% each, while your participation in discussion forums and your portfolio presentation shall be scored maximum of 10% if you meet 75% participation. Therefore, the maximum score for continuous assessment shall be 30% which shall form part of the final grade.

The final examination for GST 107 will be maximum of two hours and it takes 70 percent of the total course grade. The examination will consist of 70 multiple choice questions that reflect cognitive reasoning.

Note: You will earn 10% score if you meet a minimum of 75% participation in the course forum discussions and in your portfolios otherwise you will lose the 10% in your total score. You will be required to upload your portfolio using Google Doc. What are you expected to do in your portfolio? Your portfolio should be note or jottings you made on each study unit and activities. This will include the time you spent on each unit or activity.

How to get the Most from the Course

To get the most in this course, you need to have a personal laptop and internet facility. This will give you adequate opportunity to learn anywhere you are in the world. Use the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) to guide your self-study in the course. At the end of every unit, examine yourself with the ILOs and see if you have achieved what you need to achieve.

Carefully work through each unit and make your notes. Join the online real time facilitation as scheduled. Where you missed the scheduled online real time facilitation, go through the recorded facilitation session at your own free time. Each real time facilitation session will be video recorded and posted on the platform.

In addition to the real time facilitation, watch the video and audio recorded summary in each unit. The video/audio summaries are directed to salient part in each unit. You can assess the audio and videos by clicking on the links in the text or through the course page.

Work through all self-assessment exercises. Finally, obey the rules in the class.

Facilitation

You will receive online facilitation. The facilitation is learner centred. The mode of facilitation shall be asynchronous and synchronous. For the asynchronous facilitation, your facilitator will:

- Present the theme for the week;
- Direct and summarise forum discussions;
- Coordinate activities in the platform;
- Score and grade activities when need be;
- Upload scores into the university recommended platform;
- Support you to learn. In this regard personal mails may be sent;
- Send you videos and audio lectures; and podcast.

For the synchronous:

- There will be eight hours of online real time contact in the course. This will be through video conferencing in the Learning Management System. The eight hours shall be of one-hour contact for eight times.
- At the end of each one-hour video conferencing, the video will be uploaded for view at your pace.
- The facilitator will concentrate on main themes that are must know in the course.
- The facilitator is to present the online real time video facilitation time table at the beginning of the course.
- The facilitator will take you through the course guide in the first lecture at the start date of facilitation

Do not hesitate to contact your facilitator. Contact your facilitator if you:

- do not understand any part of the study units or the assignment.
- have difficulty with the self-assessment exercises
- have a question or problem with an assignment or with your tutor's comments on an assignment.

Also, use the contact provided for technical support.

Read all the comments and notes of your facilitator especially on your assignments; participate in the forums and discussions. This gives you opportunity to socialise with others in the programme. You can raise any problem encountered during your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course facilitation, prepare a list of questions before the discussion session. You will learn a lot from participating actively in the discussions.

Finally, respond to the questionnaire. This will help the university to know your areas of challenges and how to improve on them for the review of the course materials and lectures.

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Module 1 Introduction to the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) System

Unit 1	History of the Open and Distance Learning System
Unit 2	Characteristics of the Open and Distance Learning System
Unit 3	Teaching and Learning in the Open and Distance Learning System

Unit 1 History of the Open and Distance Learning System

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1.0	Introduction
2.0	Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Definition of Open and Distance Learning
3.2	History of Open and Distance Learning
3.2.1	The Distance Learning
3.2.2	Open and Distance Learning
3.3	Open and Distance Learning in Nigeria
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
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1.0 Introduction

As a student of an open university, it is important for you to have a fair idea of the system you are getting involved in. This is because you might not have had the opportunity of studying in an open university before now and your success in this system is heavily dependent on your understanding of the workings of this system. Thus, it is important for you to pay close attention to this course as it would help you to understand the demands of the open and distance learning. In this first unit, you will be go through a brief history of the open and distance learning system both globally and also in Nigeria.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define open and distance learning
- identify the various stages of distance education
- differentiate between distance learning and open learning
- comment on the role of technology in distance learning.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Definition of Open and Distance Learning

The term open and distance learning is made up of two different concepts in education, namely: distance education and open learning. While distance education has been around for quite a long time (as you would soon discover), open learning is a more recent phenomenon. You have to understand that there has been no consensus definition of the twin term, but for the purpose of this course, we will make do with the definition from Commonwealth of Learning (COL). COL (2015) defines open and distance learning as a system of teaching and learning characterized by separation of teacher and learner in time and/or space and uses multiple media for delivery of instruction. It also involves two-way communication and occasional face-to-face meeting for tutorials and learner-to-learner interaction. As you would get to know, this definition has tried to bring all the attributes of the open and distance learning to the fore.

3.2 History of Open and Distance Learning

As stated earlier, the term open and distance learning combines two distinct terms: distance education and open learning. While distance education is not a new concept and thus familiar to most people, open learning is relatively a newer term. In fact, distance education can be said to be the forerunner of open and distance learning, thus a good starting point for the history of open and distance learning is distance education.

3.2.1 The Distance Education

Distance education has been defined as a field of education that focuses on teaching methods and technology with the aim of delivering teaching to students who are not physically present in a traditional educational setting, such as the classroom. It is a system aimed at creating access to learning when time or distance or both separate the source of information and the learners.

Though the various developmental stages of distance education have been variously demarcated to be from three to five, I prefer the three-stage development propounded by Schultz, Schultz and Embry-Riddle (2008) and it would be followed in our history of distance education.

3.2.1.1 Correspondence Stage

The earliest appearance of distance education was in the form of correspondence education. This started in the mid-nineteenth century in Great Britain, France, Germany and the United States. Describing the correspondence phase, Schultz, Schultz and Embry-Riddle (2008) state that, “early correspondence courses, as the first recorded form of distance learning, exemplified participant interaction through the distribution of printed material through the mail” (p. 23). Sir Isaac Pitman taught shorthand by mail

and this can be said to be the first officially recognized attempt at distance education. Pitman's Correspondence courses in shorthand started in the 1840s.

At the degree level, the University of London was the first to offer degrees through distance education. The University of London's External Programme was established in 1828 but was not chartered until 1858. It is important to note that most of the students of the programme were from the British Commonwealth countries including Nigeria. In the United States, "correspondence study has been a noteworthy component of the University of Wisconsin delivery system since 1891" (Schultz, Schultz and Embry-Riddle, 2008).

3.2.1.2 Sound and Video Signal Stage

The foundation of the second stage of distance education was laid during the World War I, through the invention of the radio. In the United Kingdom, the National University Extension Association was organized in 1916 at the University of Wisconsin. The first educational instruction by radio was aired in 1916 and from that point; correspondence students began receiving instruction from both radio and postal services. It was not until 1925 that the use of radio in distance education became global (History of Distance Education, 95). The United States started the experimental radio broadcast with the College of the Air which was later renamed the University of the Air in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin in the early 1960s. By the end of the decade, 200 faculties were participating in various short courses (Gooch, 1968).



Figure 1: A student learning through the Radio (Source: Google Images)

The use of the radio was followed by the use of the television. The television experiment began in 1874 but educational television did not start until after

the depression when State University of Iowa and Kansas State College produced some educational programmes between 1932 and 1934. However, after permission was granted many colleges and universities followed suit. Demiray and Isman (1999) state that “in today’s USA, commercial and public television stations produced educational programmes for distance education. 29 million students are able to receive these programmes at their homes or school” (p. 96).

3.2.1.3 Computer Technology Stage

Computer technology represented the third phase of distance education. Commenting on this phase, Schultz, Schultz and Embry-Riddle (2008) said that, “the new 80s space-age brought technology which included computers and space satellites, thereby allowing universities to offer adult education programs and refresher courses to students situated thousands of miles from the actual campuses” (p. 24). It is important to note the continuous development of technology continues to affect educational delivery from this time onwards. We would not comment much on this as the use computer technology and information technology is an integral part of open learning and would form part of our studies in future units.

3.2.2 Open and Distance Learning

Open learning is an innovative movement in education that emerged in the 1970s. It refers mainly to activities that either enhance learning opportunities within formal education systems or broaden learning opportunities beyond the formal education systems (Wikipedia). The educational philosophy of open learning emphasizes giving learners choices about: medium or media of learning, place and pace of study, support mechanisms as well as entry and exit points. The combination of the philosophy of open learning and distance education gave birth to open and distance learning. Open and distance learning is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education and its potential impact in all educational delivery has been greatly accentuated through the development of Internet-based information technologies, and in particular the World Wide Web (UNESCO, 2002).

The first Open University, The Open University, was established in 1969 as a public distance learning and research university and it’s one the biggest university in United Kingdom. Since this humble beginning, many other open universities have sprung up in the various regions of the world. The current trend in open universities is the movement towards internationalization. In addition to the political and economic driving forces, the internationalization of open and distance education is enhanced by its links to information and communication technologies (ICTs). For instance, educational software is often international, and satellites and electronic networks allow transmission and communication across national borders. The global classroom is no longer a concept only of our imagination or of the future (UNESCO, 2002).

The success of the United Kingdom Open University led to the establishment of other open universities around the world. Jegede (2016) states that these include Athabasca University, and Canada's Open University that were created in 1970 and were followed by Spain's National University of Distance Education in 1972 and Germany's Fern Universität in Hagen in 1974. The success of the open and distance learning system in Asia cannot be overlooked. In fact most successful open universities in the world today are in Asia. For example, there are 41 open and distance learning tertiary institutions in Asia out of which only 5 are private institutions. The private institutions are: Arab Open University, Open University of Malaysia, the Open University of Japan, Venkateshwara Open University and Wawasan Open University. It is worthy of note that out of these 41 universities, 17 are cited in India.

3.3 Open and Distance Learning in Nigeria

It is important to note that the development of the open and distance learning in Nigeria is rooted in a policy. The 1977 National Policy on Education (NPE) has anticipated the coming of open and distance learning. The 1977 edition of the NPE states: "maximum efforts will be made to enable those who can benefit from higher education to be given access to it. Such access may be through universities or correspondence courses, or open universities, or part-time and work study programme". It is unknown however if this was as a result of the role of distance education in the lives of some early Nigerians.

As in all countries with distance education history, Nigeria also had her fair share of correspondence education. As Jegede (2016) notes:

- a. The Oxford University of the United Kingdom's extra mural studies at the University College, Ibadan, which commenced in 1947 enabled a good number of Nigerians thirsty for higher education, but who are unable to get a place in the limited admissions into the University College, Ibadan, to do so through correspondence study.
- b. Many Nigerians sought admission as students of Correspondence College in Universities and Institutions in the United Kingdom while others registered as external candidates for the General Certificate of Education (GCE) both Ordinary and Advanced Level of the University of London and Cambridge.
- c. The Rapid Results College and Wosley Hall correspondence studies may be cited as the first set of 'organised' Distance Learning Programmes in Africa. They are termed 'correspondence' because they had their studies mailed from England while the students equally mailed their answers overseas to be marked.

Nigeria also had her fair share of the radio/television stage of distance education through the English by Radio programme of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) in 1960. The Educational Television

Programme of the National Television of Nigeria then followed the NBC 1960 initiative.

The open and distance learning mode was first employed at the tertiary level by Ahmadu Bello University when it established the University of the Air in 1972 and this was used for the Teachers In-Service Educational Programme in 1975. The University of Lagos followed the Ahmadu Bello University's initiative in 1974 by establishing Correspondence and Open Studies Unit (COSU) that later became known as Correspondence and Open Studies Institute (COSIT) and now known as Distance Learning Institute (DLI). With this act, University of Lagos became the first Nigerian tertiary institution to operate the dual mode of the open and distance learning.

The decision to set up an open university in Nigeria was first conceived in 1976. To put this decision into practice, the Federal Government set up a Presidential Planning Committee under the chairmanship of Professor Afolabi Ojo to advise the government on the initiative. This committee was inaugurated on May 1 1980. The Act to back up the establishment of the Open University was passed by the National Assembly on April 20 1983. To demonstrate the seriousness of the Federal Government, after three months, precisely on July 22 1983, the then President of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari assented to the bill as passed. This led to the establishment of the Nigeria Open University (NOU) with Professor Afolabi Ojo as its Vice-Chancellor. By 1984, NOU went into full-scale activities of screening candidates in 1984. Unfortunately, on April 25, 1984, General Muhammad Buhari, who had become the Head of State of Nigeria, after the civilian government have been toppled in a coup d'état, suspended the NOU during a budget speech. Consequently, Nigeria had lost several years of the use and practice of open and distance learning (Jegede, 2016).

However, in 2002, a new Open University, with the name, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) was established during the tenure of another civilian president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. It has to be on record that Chief Obasanjo not only established the NOUN, he demonstrated the relevance of the university by enrolling as a student of the university immediately he left office as the President. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo started with the Post Graduate Diploma in Christian Theology after which he went ahead to the Masters' Degree and capped it up with a Doctor of Philosophy degree. Today, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo has made history by becoming the first doctoral graduate of Christian Theology and of NOUN.

It is important to note that after the establishment of NOUN, Commonwealth of Learning (COL) partnered with the university to establish the Regional Training and Research Institute for Open and Distance Learning (RETRIDAL) in 2003. RETRIDAL was established with the aim of identifying and meeting the needs of open and distance learning related research and capacity building for the West African sub-region.

Currently, Nigeria has many dual mode open and distance learning institutions as Jegede (2016) states that "institutions of higher learning that

now have or are working on becoming dual mode systems to use both open and distance learning and the traditional face-to-face as institutional modes” are 20. However, National Open University of Nigeria is the only mono-mode open and distance learning university in Nigeria as of today.

3.3.1 The Need for Open and Distance Learning System in Nigeria

As a result of the feelings in some quarters about the necessity of an open university in Nigeria, it is important to state the reasons for the establishment of the university.

3.3.1.1 The Carrying Capacity of the Conventional Universities

The continued increase in the population of Nigerians demanding university education in the last decade revealed that Nigeria has more university applicants unabsorbed than those admitted despite the increase in the number of universities in the country. Umar (2006) opines that about 80% of qualified prospective students could not gain admission into the conventional universities. To support this position, the table below gives a graphic depiction of the situation.

Table 1: Admission Statistics of Nigerian Students

Year	Number of Universities	Number of Applicants	Number Admitted	% Admitted	No. not Admitted
2008	94	1,054,053	118,691	11.3	935,362
2009	96	1,306,005	190,786	14.5	1,115,219
2010	102	1,404,111	192,255	13.7	1,211,856
2011	112	1,493,611	450,000	30.13	1,043,611
2012	117	1,503,933	500,000	33.25	1,003,933
2013	128	1,735,729	520,000	29.96	1,215,729
2014	129	1,015,504	550,000	54	465,504
2015	141	1,475,477	600,000	40.7	875,477
2016	147	1,272,284	700,000	55	572,284
2017	152	1,736,571	750,000	43.1	986,571

The table above provides the stark reality of the Nigerian higher education situation. Considering the role and importance of education in a developing country, this is a dangerous trend. If necessary steps were not taken to address this trend, by democratising education through the use of open and distance learning, the population of Nigerians without higher education would continue to soar and realization of any millennium developmental goal in Nigeria would be a mirage.

3.3.1.2 Continuous Demand for Higher Education

In the last few decades, there has been a continuous demand for higher education by the employers of labour for promotion and also assessment

purposes that has thrown the employees into a kind of frenzy to acquire higher education. This demand for higher educational qualification by employees coupled with the recent high rate of unemployment in the country has made the open and distance learning system the best viable option. This is because those who are expected to improve their educational status could not risk resigning or embarking on study leave (which are rarely approved) because they are not sure they would have their job back on completion of higher educational status.

We can use the educational requirement to teach in Nigeria as an example here. Sometimes ago, the minimum qualification for teachers of the primary school in Nigeria is the Teachers' Grade Two Certificate. This has currently been moved up to the Nigeria Certificate of Education. According to Omo-Ojugo (2009) as at 2009, over 400,000 primary school teachers in Nigeria do not even possess the previous minimum of Teachers' Grade Two Certificate. This means that unqualified 400,000 either improve their educational level or risk losing their jobs. Thus, the only viable option left for them is to use the open and distance learning system that would allow them to work and learn at the same time.

3.3.1.2 The Need for Lifelong Learning

According to Jegede (2016), lifelong learning is another factor that is making open and distance learning an indispensable element in Nigeria. Describing this phenomenon, Jegede (2016:22) has this to say:

The third index of indispensability is life-long learning which has taken the world by storm and now making its way to mainstream educational provisions in many countries of the world. Lifelong Learning is characterised by making learning a continuous lifelong activity, learning through a flexible, easily accessible mode, development of a 'Learning' or 'Knowledge Society, a global movement towards ODL, and the fact that we all need to make to cope with the constant change in life.

Self-Assessment Activity

Outline the various stages in the development of open and distance learning.

Forum Discussion 1

1. Using your context, what would you regard as the importance of open and distance learning institutions in today's Nigeria?
2. In not more than 40 words, state why you choose to study in NOUN.

4.0 Conclusion

From the above, it is clear that open and distance learning is the most current phase of distance education, an educational element that can be traced back to over a century and a half, 177 years ago, to be precise. Open and distance learning is the product of the union of distance education and the philosophy

of openness cum current information telecommunication technologies development and it has a global spread. It is also worthy of note that Nigeria did not just plunge into participating in the open and distance education phenomenon, but has paved the way for her participation since 1977 through a policy statement in the National Policy on Education. Like every other country too, Nigeria has been part of distance education since the days of correspondence education and is also in the forefront of open and distance learning activities today.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

Video

Audio

6.0 References/Further Reading

Ajadi, T. O., Salawu, I. O. & Adeoye, F. A. (2008). E-learning and distance education in Nigeria. The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 7 (4) available at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED503472.pdf>

Jegede, Oluwagbemiro (2016). Open and distance learning practices in Nigeria higher institutions of learning. A paper presented at the Annual Distance Learning Centre Distinguished Lecture and Stakeholders' Forum Held at the International Conference Centre, University of Ibadan. Available at www.olugbemirojegede.com/odl_practices_in_tertiary_institutions_in_nigeria.pdf

Unit 2 Characteristics of the Open and Distance Learning System

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 - 3.1.8 Interactivity
 - 3.1.9 Learner-Centredness
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- 6.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 Introduction

In the previous unit, you have been taken through a brief history of the development of open and distance learning. You have learned about its evolvement from the humble stages of correspondence education to the point of becoming driven by the technological breakthrough of information telecommunication technology. You have also learnt about the operations of open and distance learning in Nigeria especially its modes of operation in mono and dual modes. In this unit, we are going to examine the things that makes open and distance learning unique and differentiate it from the well-known conventional face-to-face learning system.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- List the characteristics of open and distance learning
- Discuss the characteristics of open and distance learning
- Compare open and distance learning with conventional system
- Evaluate the concept of openness.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Characteristics of Open and Distance Learning

As indicated above, there are certain traits that distinguishes open and distance learning from the conventional universities. In this unit, we will examine these qualities one after the other.

3.1.1 Separation of Teacher and Learner

One major distinguishing feature of open and distance learning system from the conventional system is the distance between the teachers and the learners. This separation occurs in two planes: place and time. By place, we mean that the teachers and the learners do not live or meet at any time. Let us take NOUN as an example, while the headquarters, which houses most of the faculties where the lecturers are, is situated at Abuja, the students are literally scattered across the country. In fact, most of the students may never meet any of the lecturers till they graduate from the university. This is distance in place.

Distance in time in the real sense, may not exist when learners and teachers are in the same country (except for countries where more than one time zones exists) but when we have them in two different countries, it would exist. For example, when a student in Nigeria studying Masters in Instructional Design and Technology at the Open University of Malaysia, The Nigerian student and other students in Africa are at a different time zone from the lecturers and other students at Malaysia. Malaysia is 7 hours ahead of Nigeria. When they are at the office in the morning, let's say by 8:00am, Nigeria is at 1:00am (in the early hours of the day when in Nigeria people are sleeping). Distance in time could also occur in study time. Unlike the conventional method of teaching where students are expected to meet with their teacher at a particular time, in Open and Distance Learning, you can study at your pace. Let assume you have two NOUN students – Amadi and Gambo admitted into M.Ed. Educational Administration and Planning in the Faculty of Education. Since Amadi and Gambo are in the same programme, it means they will be using same course materials. But by the virtue of ODL they may not be studying course materials at the same time. Amadi may choose to study at nights while Gambo may prefer early hours. So they have the opportunity of setting out the time that is best for them to study. This separation between teachers and students in place and or time is usually constant in open and distance learning system.

3.1.2 Openness

Openness is the keyword behind the philosophy of open and distance learning. To make you understand the concept of openness, look at Mishra (2012) explanation of openness. She opines that to open something, must to admit that it has been closed before, thus by default, we must accept that education system have been closed before now and there is the need to open it up. Openness in open and distance learning can be discussed in three major areas: people, places and ideas (Kanwar, 2015). Go over these briefly.

3.1.2.1 Openness as to People

At this level, openness is directed to the people that are seeking higher education. It means that access to higher education has to be increased. Sometimes, this is done by reducing the rigidity in entry requirements or by



removing them entirely. While in most countries like Nigeria, it has been difficult to enforce the practice of open entry, according to Mishra (2012) Asian open universities have been practicing the concept of open entry. Other ideas included in openness as to people include the provision of opportunity to study subjects of choice to earn a degree as well as learning at one's pace and time. These would be discussed later when flexibility is being discussed.

3.1.2.2 Openness as to Place

Openness at this level means the removal of the boundary of the educational institution. In open education, it has become the norm that learning does not have to take place within the walls of the classroom in a university campus. In open learning, learning can take place anytime and anywhere. In other words, the learners are allowed to learn where it is most convenient to them with no regards to the place and the time. This philosophy has been given impetus by the use of smart phones that allows students to access their materials in the bus, train, car or office and as well as their homes. They can also do this any time.

3.1.2.3 Openness as to Ideas

In opening discussion on openness to ideas, Mishra (2012) has this to say, "In the field of computer science, the word open connotes free and unrestricted distribution of the source code with rights to create derivative works". Translating this to the field of education, it means that educational institution should also open up on their courseware. This led to David Wiley to coin the term open content in 1998. Open content refers to educational content that can be reused, revised, remixed and redistributed without violating copyright laws. This movement eventually led to the birth of the Open Educational Resources (OER) movement and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) concept. It is important to note that NOUN is a participant in both OER and MOOCs.

3.1.3 Flexibility

Flexibility is another distinguishing factor for open and distance learning. For Musingafi, Mapuranga, Chiwanza & Zebron (2015), flexibility is one of the major benefits of open and distance learning. Flexibility too can be examined in three areas: place, time and pace.

3.1.3.1 Flexibility in Time

There are times when learners would not be available when learning activities would be going on. Through the use of asynchronous learning methods, the learners could still go back and participate in what has been taught. Asynchronous learning still open wide the possibility of peer learning and tutor interaction unlike in the conventional system when absence from class makes it impossible to participate again.

3.1.3.2 Flexibility in Place

Open learning has made it possible for learners to learn wherever they are at any point in time. In a research carried out by Ndudzo and Nyatanga (2013), it was discovered that “employed professionals may be moved occasionally as part of their work. Respondents (97%) indicated that they are attracted to ODL because their education is not adversely affected by temporary migration which takes place as a result of job transfers” (p. 25). This is also true of NOUN as we have heard students transferred to other cities and they are permitted to write examination in the centres where they find themselves during the examination period.

3.1.3.3 Flexibility in Pace

Flexibility in pace has to do with the learning speed of the learners. Though seldom used by students in NOUN, learners have the opportunity to take the number of courses they can cope with as long as they register for nothing less than 10 credit units in a semester. Ndudzo and Nyatanga (2013) also confirm this as their research shows that “90% indicated that they chose ODL because of its flexibility on the speed required when pursuing their degree and diploma programmes” (p. 25).

3.1.4 Accessibility

Apart from accessibility due to relaxation of entry requirements discussed under openness, open and distance learning offers “learning opportunities to individuals who are disadvantaged because of their location or gender or economic constraints” (p. 11). The disadvantaged people include prisoners. NOUN has study centres in many prisons in Nigeria and some of the prisoners have graduated from their chosen courses. Hitherto, prisoners in Nigeria have no access to higher education due to the closed nature of universities and the closed nature of the prison too. Apart from prisoners, women in purdah too have been securing access to higher education because of the accessibility offered by the open and distance learning. The physically challenged, especially the blind are being given access to higher education by NOUN. This is because the university has brailled some of her course materials and still in the process of brailling others.

3.1.5 Affordability

In a research carried out by Rupanda and Nyenya (2014) in Zimbabwe, 90% of the students agree that open and distance learning is affordable. And “many of the respondents, who argued that open and distance learning is affordable, were highlighting the flexible payment plans” (p. 26). It is important to know that NOUN also run flexible payment plans in two streams. Firstly, a student is allowed to pay the compulsory fees at once and defer the payment of the course registration and the examination fees. These can also be paid separately. The most important thing however is that the fees have to be paid completely before the registration closes and this usually takes between 2 to 3 months. Secondly, a student can just register for a minimum of 10 credit hours per semester till he completes all the required credits for graduation. It is also a credit to NOUN that no other forms of payment are made by the students as long as they have paid their fees. No lecturer sells books or materials to them and no one is harassed for any other fees.

Referring to the Rupanda and Nyenya (2014) research, the remaining 10% that thinks that open and distance learning is not affordable thinks so because “the student still has to budget for travelling from his home to the regional centres for tutorials” (p. 26). However, unlike Zimbabwe Open University, NOUN allows tutorials in all centres, thus there is no need for students to travel to another centre for tutorials. Apart from this, NOUN has many study centres and students are encouraged to register at the centre closest to their home or office as the case may be, thereby avoiding huge transportation cost.

3.1.6 Technologically Driven



Even in the days of distance education, technological advancement had always contributed to the development of the educational industry. We have also stated in Unit 1 that technological development accelerated the coming of open and distance learning. Fozdar (2015) also says that the advancement of information and communication technologies “have given rise to new opportunities for sharing information, resources, and experiences, as well as providing network opportunities with student peers, tutors, and the instructors” (p. 9). Describing the variety of opportunities opened up for educational delivery through the use of technological advancement, Pena-Bandalaria (2007) has this to say:

Fourth generation DE can be aptly described using terms e-Learning (electronic learning), m-Learning (mobile learning), and u-Learning (ubiquitous learning). The fourth generation can also be viewed as an ‘empowered phase.’ For teachers, the use of ICTs helped enhance their skills and knowledge. For students, use of ICTs enabled them to assert more control over their learning environment, specifically the ‘how,’ the ‘when,’ and the ‘where,’ and sometimes even the ‘what’ they will learn. Both students and

teachers now have more flexibility to shape and structure their learning/teaching environment to take full advantage of fellow participants' prior experiences. This dynamic of 'sharing prior knowledge and skills and contextualizing within the course materials' makes the educational experience far richer and more conducive to critical and higher-order thinking.

Though not all these media are available yet in Nigeria, but you will agree that open and distance learning is technologically driven.

3.1.7 Use of Mixed Media Courseware

The use of various types of media to pass on instruction to the learners is a major feature of the open and distance learning system. The mixed-media courseware includes print, radio, television broadcast, audio, video, computer-based instruction and telecommunications. Though we have to admit that this feature is just partially operated in NOUN currently, it has been clearly stated in the university's blueprint that it is the way to go about instructional delivery. We also have to admit that the university is striving to ensure that this is done in the nearest time possible.

You need to know that the aforementioned media can be synchronous or asynchronous and interactive and non-interactive. Mishra (2017) gives a graphic view of this as shown below:

Media	Non-Interactive	Interactive
Print-based (text and graphics based)	Text books	Self-instructional print materials (partially interactive). <i>An example of this is the NOUN course materials.</i>
Audio-based	Audiocassette and radio broadcasts.	Telephone, audio conferences, audio-vision and interactive radio.
Video-based	Video and television broadcasts	Video conferencing and interactive television
Computer-based	Textual delivery of materials in Compact Discs (CDs), floppy and static web-pages	Integrated multimedia, computer-mediated communication, e-mails, chats, discussion groups, automated response system

Source: S. Mishra (2017). Media and Technology in Distance Education

3.1.8 Interactivity

One of the major criticisms against all odds is the lack of contact between students and lecturers on the one hand between learners on the other. To resolve this problem, practitioners of open and distance learning have touted interactivity. Speaking in this vein, Nakpodia (2010) believes that the

separation of student and teacher imposed by a vital link of communication between these two important stakeholders in open and distance learning. The link is what is being reintegrated through interactivity. Jheengut (2010) defines interaction as a “kind of action that occurs between 2 or more ‘objects’ where the action creates an impact” (p. 2). For Tomei (2008) interactivity is the silent, critical, creative conversation within a student’s mind that is spurred on and supported by the learning environment. There are four kinds of interactivity, namely: learner-to-content, learner-to-instructor, learner-to-learner and learner-to-technology interactivities.

3.1.8.1 Learner-to-Content

This is the interactivity that comes when the learner studies or examines the course content (Moore & Keasley, 1996) and other instructional activities. The content can take any or a combination of the following forms: text, audio or videotape, CD-ROM, computer programme or an online communication. Zimmerman (2012) says that, in its most basic definition, learner-content interaction refers to time spent with course content including textbooks, PowerPoint, web pages and discussion forums.

3.1.8.2 Learner-to-Instructor

This is the interaction that transpires between the learners and the lecturers that is intended to reinforce students’ understanding of the course contents. Sher (2009) says that the interaction can take the following forms: instructor’s delivery of information, encouraging the learner or the provision of feedback. It also includes the learners’ interaction with the instructor by asking questions or communication with the instructor regarding course activities.

3.1.8.3 Learner-to-Learner

This is the interaction that occurs among learners in a web-based instruction. It can be between one learner and another learner or among several learners. For effective learning to take place, four types of peer behaviour are necessary: participation, response, provision of effective feedback and short focused messaging. Learner-learner interactivity is expected to promote the understanding of the course content and to stimulate critical thinking. Sher (2009) defines learner-learner interactivity as the “exchange of information and ideas that occurs among students about the course in the presence or absence of the instructor” (p. 104). This interaction can take the form of group projects or group discussion. Thus it fosters learning through student collaboration and knowledge sharing.

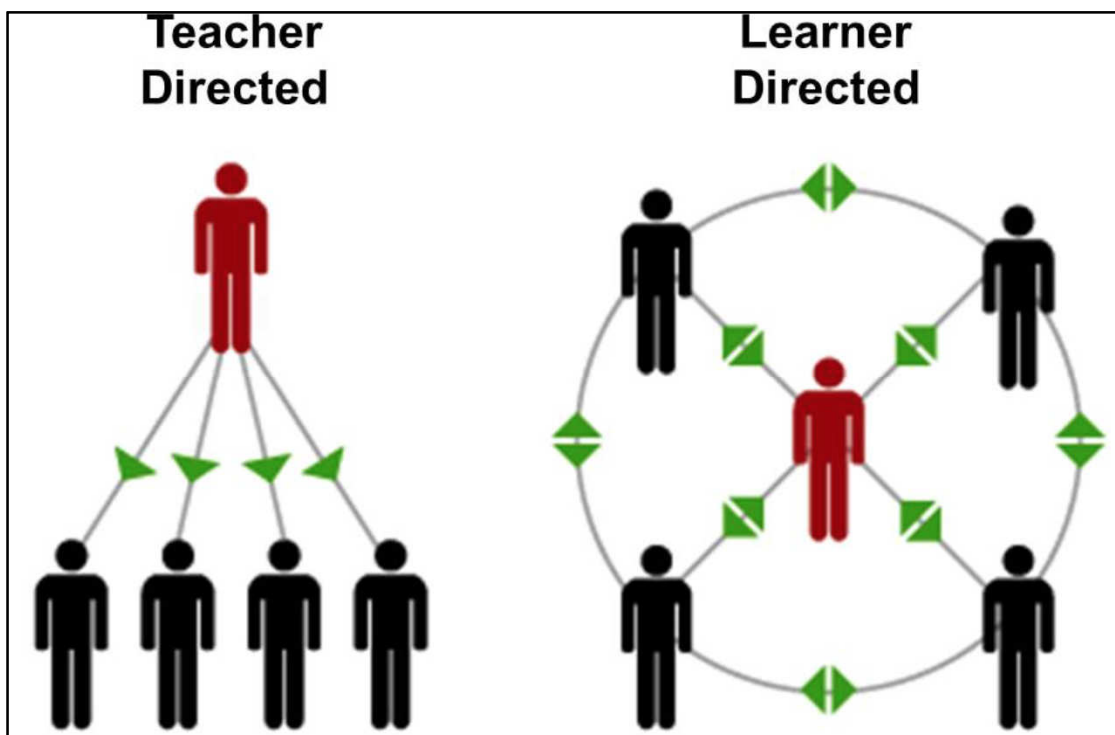
3.1.8.4 Learner-to-Technology

At the beginning of research in interactivity, the earlier named types of interactivity were the ones usually named as held as the basics or foundation of interactivity (Moore, 1989; Anderson, 2003; Conrad et al., 2013). However, it has now dawned on more scholars that in the open and distance learning

system, most of the time, technology is the major, if not the only medium. For example, the instructor uses technology to present the content to the students and the students also make use of technology to access the content. Consequently, learner-to- technology came up as the fourth type of interactivity. You need to note that other scholars call this learner-to-interface interactivity (Hillman, Willis & Gunawardena, 1994). Learner-to- technology is the interactivity between the learners and the technological tools that has been used to present the content that is to be learnt by the learner.

3.1.9 Learner-Centeredness

Mykrä (2015) defines learner-centred teaching as a learning activity in which “learners must be actively engaged in the processing of information and that the teaching and learning process involves an interaction among the teacher, the students and the content” (p. 7). Learner-centred learning shifts focus of instruction from the teacher to the learner. It aims at improving students’ learning and success rather than the transmission of information. Below is a graphic illustration of the traditional teacher centred learning and learner-centred learning:



Source: atlascorps.com

From the above illustration, you can see the flow of interaction in learner-centered approach in comparison with same in the teacher-centered approach.

Self-Assessment Activity

Differentiate between an open and Distance University and a conventional university.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, you have taken a brief overview of the characteristics of open and distance learning from the general characteristics like separation of teacher and learner (which has been a dominant feature of distance learning from correspondence learning to open learning) to learner-centeredness, a more recent approach to learning. Other characteristics include: openness (which is expressed in three categories: openness as to people, place and ideas); flexibility (which is also expressed in three categories: flexibility in time, place and pace); accessibility, affordability, interactivity (which is also expressed in four categories: learner to content, learner to instructor, learner to learner and learner to technology interactivities) and learner-centeredness.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

Video

Audio

6.0 References/Further Reading

Conrad, D., Mackintosh, W., McGreal, R., Murphy, A. & Witthaus, G. (2013). Report on the assessment and accreditation of learners using OER. Retrieved 14 February 2018 from <http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/232>

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Unit 3 Teaching and Learning in the Open and Distance Learning System

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1.0 Introduction

In the previous unit, you have examined the unique features that characterize the open and learning system of education. By now, you should be able to define accessibility, affordability and flexibility and also write extensively on the various dimensions of openness such as openness to ideas, openness to ideas as well as openness in terms of contents. In this unit, you would be introduced to teaching and learning in open and distance learning system. In the open and distance learning system, learning and teaching takes place in what is known as the learning environment. You will also be exposed to the two important people in the system: the teacher and the learner.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Define learning environment
- Navigate any given learning environment
- Identify the roles of the teacher in the open and distance learning
- Identify functions of a learner in the open and distance learning

- Demonstrate the skills required as an open and distance learner.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Learning Environment

Learning environment is a broad term and it refers to the physical (or virtual) locations, contexts and cultures in which students learn. Hall (2001) defines it as follows:

A learning environment is software designed as an all-in-one solution that can facilitate online learning for an organization. It includes the functions of a learning management system for those courses within the learning environment, but it may not be able to track online courses that were not created within this particular learning environment.

A learning environment is characterized by an interface that allows students to register and take courses, staying within that environment for the duration of the course. The program will usually include some self-instructional portions, along with an academic model of a multi-week course. An instructor often facilitates this model, where a group can proceed on a week-to-week basis into seminar assignment. Most learning environments include an authoring capability for creation of additional courses for the instructor.

The learning environment has been seen largely as the ‘third teacher’ that can either enhance learning, optimize students’ potential to respond creatively and meaningfully or detract from it. Researchers have come to an understanding that the learning environment is more than the physical space (Fraser, 2012). This is the basis for Warger and Dobbin’s (2009) definition of learning environment:

The term *learning environment* encompasses learning resources and technology, means of teaching, modes of learning, and connections to societal and global contexts. The term also includes human behavioural and cultural dimensions, including the vital role of emotion in learning, and it requires us to examine and sometimes rethink the roles of teachers and students because the ways in which they make use of spaces and bring wider societal influences into play animates the educational enterprise. The focus on information technology in education is expanding from the enhancement of learning spaces to include factors beyond hardware, software, and the network. The learning environment is a composite of human practices and material systems, much as an ecology is the combination of living things and the physical environment.

3.2 The Teacher in Open and Distance Learning

As you would have noticed, there is a world of difference between conventional institutions and distance learning institutions. These differences are not restricted to the characteristics alone, it affects the role of the teachers

too. There is no question that the role of the teacher is changing in the contemporary world. “The teacher is no longer the ‘dispenser of information’ (O’Neil, 2006), unlike in traditional education where the teacher has absolute control of the learning environment and information. Commenting on the changing role of the teacher in the open and distance learning system, Beaudoin (1990) says the emergence of the increasingly student-centered learning activities in the 1990s, facilitated by new instructional technology introduced in the 1980s, is contributing to a dramatic evolution in faculty roles. The following are the major roles of the teacher in the open and distance learning system.

3.2.1 Creator and Manager of Learning Environment

In the sub-unit above, you have studied about the learning environment in the open and distance learning system. The first role of the open and distance learning teacher is hinged on the learning system. According to Berge (1995), the teacher in the open and distance learning system has the “responsibility of keeping discussion tracks, contributing special knowledge and insights, weaving together various discussion threads and course components, and maintaining group harmony”. To perform this function, a function that may be regarded as the core function, the teacher becomes a team member and loses the total control of the learning environment (O’Neil, 2006). As Muirhead (2001) opines, the role of the teacher changes from that of information transmitter to that of a guide who meaningfully arrange the learner-centered experiences. This function is what Bull (2013) referred to as that of a tour guide. He says:

... the online teacher plays the role of guiding students through one or more online learning experiences. These experiences are most often designed and planned long before the course starts so that the teacher can devote more time to guiding the students and less time preparing lessons. Within this role, the teacher directs and redirects the attention of learners toward key concepts and ideas.

This undoubtedly is the most important or the basic function of the teacher within the open and distance learning system.

3.2.2 Instructor

Another role the teacher takes up in the open and distance learning system is to be an instructor. Pereira (2005) says that the teacher has to “provide instruction about the contents of the learning; to clarify specific items to students; and to provide individual support to the students so that they can recognize their abilities, gain self-confidence, identify the best study methods and self-evaluate acquired learning” (p. 52).

The functions of the teacher as an instructor include the motivation of students to perform planned tasks and activities. To enable the motivation of learners, the teacher has to “clarify the learning programme in advance, make the target explicit and, if possible, provide an indication about how to achieve

the goals” (Pereira, 2005:52). Sometimes this would involve giving the students an academic calendar of the course from the beginning and giving out rubrics when assignments are given.

Another activity that the teacher has to undertake as an instructor is the maintenance of interaction with the learners and this can be done mostly through the e-mail and the telephone where desirable.

3.2.3 Facilitator

In the open and distance learning environment, learning is usually collective. The teacher in this environment functions as a facilitator. In the collaborative learning model, interaction occurs among learners about the content. Thus, “the teacher assumes the role of facilitator of interactive process among learners, trying to manage this interaction in order to achieve high learning standards” (P. 53). Consequently, the teacher features often in the discussion forums acting like a compere of the discussion.

3.3 The Learner in Open and Distance Learning

3.3.1 Learners’ Demography

When dealing with the issue of learner characteristics in open and distance learning, the demography is very important because it gives insight to the nature of student population of the institution. Exposing you to these details would help you as a student to have an idea of the demographical analysis of the people you would be relating with during your course of study. In the first sub-unit of this section, three demographic elements, namely: gender, age and employment status would be examined.

3.3.1.1 Gender

In a study carried out at the Lagos Study Centre, Adewale (2014) discovered that 40% of the respondents were male while 60% were females. Though while the overall difference in gender may not be high as ratio 40:60, this shows that National Open University of Nigeria has more female students than male. Lagos Study Centre, being the largest study centre of the university in terms of student’s population can actually be representative of the entire university.

3.3.1.2 Age

In the same study referred to above, the age distribution of the students is as follows:

S/N	Age Range	Percentage
1.	16 – 20	5%
2.	21 – 30	40%
3.	31 - 40	25%
4.	41 - 50	20%
5.	51 and above	10%
Total		100%

This implies that nearly half of the respondents are in their youthful age. This finding corresponds too with Gao (2012) who also concludes that most of the students in China’s open and distance learning institutions are young adults within the ages of 21 to 40. The importance of this finding for you as a student is that no matter your age range, you have your mates to identify with. This means that no one is excluded or isolated in terms of age.

3.3.1.3 Employment Status

The same study also showed the employment status as follows:

S/N	Employment Status	Percentage
1.	Unemployed	30%
2.	Self-Employed	24.8%
3.	Employed	45.2%
Total		100%

The above table shows that the working class students in NOUN are about 70% of the total population while 30% are not in any form of employment. This thus shows that many students are really gaining in the university’s work and learn opportunity. As a student, you would know that whether you are working or not, you would always have students in your employment category to mingle with and work with.

3.3.2 Learning Characteristics of ODL Learners

It has always been indicated among scholars that there are certain characteristics that marked out the distance learners, and these have been used in deciding the pedagogical approach. However, some or most of these qualities are no longer tenable or can be said to be in contention. For example, Cranton (1989) have suggested that most students of open and distance learning institutions are adult students. In the past, this assertion is correct but across the globe today, this characteristic is changing fast. Let us refer to Adewale (2014) and Gao (2012): the two were able to show that currently, young adults from 16 to 31 form the majority of open and distance learning institutions’ student population. This fact is attributable to the low carrying capacity of conventional institutions on one hand and the problems of unemployment on the other. Thus, in this section, we would be examining the

current characteristics expected of a learner of an open and distance learning institution with a view of letting you know the qualities you need to have to succeed.

3.3.2.1 Independence versus Collaboration

Traditionally and to a large extent today, the open and distance learner can find himself isolated and independent (if he or she chooses to). It is easy to find yourself isolated as you may not even go to the study centre except during registration as a new student. However, “the independence and isolation characteristic of the industrial era of distance education is being challenged by the collaborative approaches to learning made possible by learning networks” (Anderson and Garrison, 1998:100). This means that rather than suffer the pains of being isolated and studying alone; you can have the luxury of collaborating with other students in your course. As Dabbagh (2007) opines, you can share your work, “interact with small and large groups in virtual settings and collaborate on projects online or otherwise risk isolation in a community growing increasingly dependent on connectivity and interaction” (p. 219).

3.2.3.2 Motivated

Most learners in the open and distance learning institutions are said to be intrinsically motivated and thus do not require a lot of motivation to get them interested in their course of study. It has been argued that the physical absence of the teacher and other peers usually leads to distraction and discouragement, therefore, as a student in the open and distance learning institution you need to keep yourself motivated. To successfully keep yourself motivated, it is important to connect with other classmates (Littlefield, 2012). Also, “collaborating with peers in the discussion groups can be an effective way to motivate learners to stay on task (Seckel, 2007:23).

3.2.3.3 Adaptation to Technology

For most of the young adults who have found their way into the open and learning institutions, working in an online environment may not be a problem as they are all digital natives. However, if you are above the age of 50 (you belong to the group that are either digital illiterates or digital migrants), there is the need for you to adapt to the use of technology. As you would have discovered, there is no way you can survive in NOUN if you are not computer literate or computer savvy. From your admission process to registration for courses and examination registration, you have to go through an automated process. Apart from this, all Tutor Marked Assignments as well as the 100 and 200 levels, examinations are administered electronically. If you know you are not good on technology, my advice is that you begin to train yourself until you are able to do most of these technologically based tasks on your own.

3.2.3.4 Discipline

If you want to be successful as a distance-learning student, you must be able to discipline yourself. As Cheurprakobkit *et al.* (2002) reports, students in online learning environments must possess “self” behaviours such as “self-discipline, self-monitoring, self-initiative, and self-management”. For example, as a result of the physical absence of a lecturer, it is very easy for learners to feel tired and skip reading assignments. It takes a lot of self-discipline to be able to read, complete assignments or participate in online discussion forums that may be demand usually on a daily basis. As Dabbagh (2007) rightly asserts, “given the physical absence of an instructor in online learning, the ability of learners to monitor and regulate their own learning is critical” (p. 220). As part of your self-discipline, you should be able to draw a personal study time-table to ensure that you study daily and systematically cover all the courses as well as topics you are supposed to cover. You should also be able to check if you are achieving the objectives as set forth in the course.

3.2.3.5 Active Participation

This means that as a student you must participate actively in all the demands of the course as directed by your facilitator. This includes participation in the discussion forums as well as the chat forums. To participate actively means you would have to make you comments on the discussion topic as well as comment on the contributions of the other students. This is an essential process of learning in the open and distance learning environment. This is confirmed by Seckel (2007) who says “active participation is the essential element in engaging in the learning process” (p. 25). He states further that when students participate actively in collaborative discussion, provide positive feedback and encourage others to build a collaborative learning community as “peripheral or passive participation can give the student insight into a topic, it does not allow for mastery of a concept” (Seckel, 2007:25).

3.2.3.6 Effective Communication

To be able to keep up with the demands of your course and active participation in online discussion forums and chat rooms, you must learn to be an effective communicator. Since the major avenue that you have to express your learning and mastery of concepts is communication with the others you must be good at communication. For example, you must avoid monosyllable responses like ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers and use enhanced discussions. In describing effective responses to online discussion forums, Seckel (2007) has this to say: the content must “relates to the key concepts, provokes ... peers to think more insightfully about the concepts, and provides examples or readings to enhance their peers’ understanding of the material” (p. 24). This aspect is what Dabbagh (2007) termed discursive or dialogical skills. This he said “include ability to discuss issues (being discursive), share and debate ideas, negotiate meaning, demonstrate openness to multiple perspectives, and possess good articulation and listening skills” (p. 221).

Apart from the above concept of communication, there are two other aspects. The first is that you should avoid keeping mute when you have issues either with the technology or with the course contents. In Seckel's (2007) words: "e-learners must be responsible for locating, reading, and analyzing their assignments, understanding the expectations involved, asking questions when they arise, and communicating with the instructor to clarify requirements" (p. 24).

The other issue is that of netiquette.

3.2.3.7 Reflective Skills

Reflective skill is one of the important skills expected of an open and distance learning institution's student. Dabbagh (2007) defines reflective skills as the ability to apply frequent and substantive consideration and assessment of one's learning process and products. Through this process, the learner can identify their strengths and weaknesses and then build up an improvement. As Seckel (2007) says, these types of assessment takes the form of "diaries, online blogs, or [reflection assignments](#) and are useful in revisiting the material they have covered in the course, and reflect on what was gained from the experience and from the materials covered" (p. 25).

Self-Assessment Activity

In your context, list the characteristics of open and distance learning students and compare yourself with those to determine if you fit in.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, you have seen the various definitions of the learning environment and you have also been allowed to explore characteristics and learning environment of the distance learner. In fact, your participation in this course is taking place through a learning environment. You have also examined the role of a teacher in the open and distance learning system as a manager of the learning environment, instructor and facilitator. You have also looked at the characteristics required of an open and distance learning system which is expected in seven areas: independent and collaborative learning, motivated learning, self-disciplined learning, technologically savvy, active participation, effective communication and reflective skills.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

Video

Audio

6.0 References/Further Reading

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MODULE 2 STUDY SKILLS FOR THE DISTANCE LEARNER

Unit 1	Listening
Unit 2	Speaking
Unit 3	Reading
Unit 4	Writing
Unit 5	Study Strategies

Unit 1 Listening

Contents

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1.0 Introduction

Listening is considered to be the first of the four basic language skills (viz: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing). It is an activity we perform daily which involves receiving sounds through the ears, and processing it into meaningful bits. When we listen, it is not only the ears that are at work, but the brain too. When we receive sounds through our ears, our brain converts these messages for proper assimilation and understanding.

Can you think of situations where you have listened? Of course! You listen in the classroom when lectures are going on, or to your course mates when you are having group class discussions. You also listen to your parents, siblings and friends at home and many other people you meet every day.

Often, we interchange listening with hearing but while both words may have similar or common grounds for understanding, they are primarily different. Hearing is the most basic level of the use of our ears. It involves a simple physical act of sounds filtering into our ears automatically as long as there are no hearing impairments while listening is a more intense and mental activity whereby meaning is assigned to the sounds received by the brain. This

means that listening will entail much more than simply hearing but also a concentrated effort to assimilate and to understand what is heard. Hearing is said to be a physiological process (passive and physical) while listening is a cognitive process (active and mental).

As a student, you should strive to be a good listener, as your success will hinge on it. You are expected to listen with rapt attention to all cues, both verbal and non-verbal and remember always that your main objective of listening is to comprehend what you are hearing.

In this unit, you will be studying about listening, what it entails and how you can effectively improve your learning through listening.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- List the importance of listening as a study skill
- Identify strategies that will enhance effective listening
- Define listening
- Explain types of listening
- Distinguish between listening and hearing.
- Identify the type of listening that could be applied to various speaking situations.
- Identify factors that may influence the effectiveness of your listening
- List the characteristics of a good listener
- Identify the barriers to effective listening
- Demonstrate the skills of listening in acquiring new knowledge.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Listening as an Essential Study Skill

Listening is one very essential skill that you must acquire to be able to succeed in your study. It is in fact, an essential part of your daily activity. As a student, listening is considered to be your primary medium of learning because you have to listen to lectures.

Your unique situation as an Open and Distance Learner means you could listen to your lectures through a variety of resources. You could listen to your lectures via online virtual classroom, tape recorders, radio, television etc.

You listen in two major ways. You either listen in general or you listen for specific purposes. When you listen in a social setting, you are listening in general but when you listen to get information or direction, you are listening for a specific purpose. As a student, when you listen to lectures, you are also listening for a specific purpose.

There is no doubt that listening is an essential skill that you must consciously develop if you desire efficiency in your study. It will help you as a student to

become an active learner and this will significantly improve your interpersonal and *verbal communication* skills.

3.1.1 Strategies for Efficient Listening

Have you ever felt disturbed after listening to a 2 hour lecture and still feel like you have gained nothing! Perhaps you have been listening the wrong way. Let us look at some strategies that encourage efficient listening.

3.1.1.1 Stop Talking and Pay Attention

The first step towards listening effectively is to stop talking. When someone else is talking, be attentive and prepared to listen. Do not interrupt their speech or try to complete their sentences because you think you know what they want to say. Ideally, you should let the speaker finish talking then you can clarify to actually confirm that you have received the actual message they have passed and not what you think it should be.

3.1.1.2 Maintain Eye Contact with the Speaker

When you are genuinely interested in what someone is saying, you face the person and occasionally make eye contact while they are talking. In addition to this, you nod and smile at appropriate times to let the speaker know that you are following them.

3.1.1.3 Empathize with the Speaker

You should make the speaker feel free talking to you. You can achieve this when you have an open mind. You should let go of pre-conceived ideas or notions on particular subjects, while you try to understand the speaker's perspective. Even when you disagree with the speaker, do not jump in or interrupt, wait to the end to bring out your disagreements constructively.

3.1.1.4 Remove Physical and Mental Distractions

When you want to optimize your listening ability, you are encouraged to cast away other infiltrating thoughts and focus on the speaker. The tendency for other things to stream through your thoughts while you are listening to another thing may be there, but do not let your mind wander from the topic or speech. Endeavour to make a conscious effort to be in the present, to be there for the speaker alone.

3.1.1.5 Be Alert to Non-verbal Cues from the Speaker

When you are truly listening, you will notice that the speaker communicates much more through unspoken cues, gestures, facial expressions, voice tone, body language etc. It is important that you understand the motives and the attitudes behind a speaker's message. For example, your friend says "I'm fine thank you" while wearing a long face and a shrug of the shoulders in response

to your enquiry about his wellbeing could mean that things are not really as fine as should be.

3.1.1.6 Take Notes

A good listener puts down important points while listening to enable him to remember, summarise and clarify whatever doubts that may arise. Note taking will reinforce in you, what you have heard from what have been said and as such, provide a permanent record that you can refer back to.

3.1.2 Types or Purposes of Listening

As mentioned earlier, listening is an integral part of our daily life as students and as individuals. We listen for different purposes. As a student, you listen for academic purposes; an example is when you listen to your lecturer teaching. You could also listen at seminars, workshops and during class presentations. Let us look at some other reasons for listening.

3.1.2.1 The Active or Attentive Listening

This describes situations when you listen intently to learn. In Active or Attentive Listening, you are expected to listen attentively to understand the actual message the speaker is delivering. Here, you are expected to focus on understanding the speakers words and message accurately; taking in both the verbal and non-verbal cues. Instances are when you listen to classroom lectures or other academic lectures.

3.1.2.2 The Critical or Analytical Listening

The Critical or Analytical Listening involves listening to be able to evaluate and analyse received message or what you are being told. The focus is to evaluate whether the message is logical and reasonable to enable you decide on either accepting or rejecting it.

3.1.2.3 The Emphatic or Therapeutic Listening

This type of listening takes place when you listen to provide emotional support to the speaker. Instances are when you give ear to friends, relations and acquaintances that need to pour out their feelings to someone. The focus of the Emphatic or Therapeutic Listening is to understand the speaker's feelings without delivering judgments.

3.1.2.4 Appreciative Listening

Appreciative Listening involves listening for pure pleasure and for enjoyment. It is also described as the process of listening with an intention to appreciate what the speaker is talking about. It is mostly used when you are listening to various entertainment packages, like listening to certain music or radio/television for the purpose of enjoyment, and to some speakers because

you like or admire them. You should note that in appreciative listening, it is your response as a listener that defines it not the source or speaker.

3.1.3 Advantages of Learning through Listening

3.1.3.1 Increased Academic Understanding

When you listen, you are in a better position to understand the speaker's content and can easily identify the main ideas expressed in the speech or teachings. You are better equipped to concentrate, retain information in your memory and are able to recall and build upon this knowledge when the need arises.

3.1.3.2 Improved Communication Skills

Learning through listening greatly enhances a students' communication skill. Intensive listening will enhance your ability to absorb and transmit information given during a communication exchange. As a student, you are able to show your ability to listen and comprehend when you can interact with fellow students and the tutor or speaker at the end of a lecture. A well-developed listening skill will improve your communications and offer your future listeners greater clarity and empathy.

3.1.3.3 Ability to Block out Distractions

This is an essential aspect of active listening. Intensive listening teaches you to block out distractions that are present where you are communicating, to enable full concentration and comprehension.

3.1.3.4 Increased Retention

A good listener will develop an increased ability to process and retain ideas and information heard. As you listen, you build on previous learning and experiences thereby deepening your comprehension on the ideas or topics discussed and consolidating a long-term memory of the topic.

3.1.3.5 Large Vocabulary Development

Active Listening exposes you to new words and vocabulary daily. When you encounter these words in the course of listening, you may decide to ask questions or look them up in the dictionary, thereby effortlessly increasing your vocabulary. This is a technique you intrinsically develop in the process of listening.

3.1.4 Barriers to Effective Listening

A number of factors could pose as barriers to effective listening. We would look at some of these barriers to enable identification and possible resolution.

3.1.4.1 Physical Barriers

One major constraint to effective listening is hearing impairment. Imagine you have a deaf student in your class and your teacher cannot use sign language. This spells disaster for the student because he will not be able to actively listen and participate in class except he is equipped with hearing aid.

A noisy non-conductive environment is another barrier. Let us look at two examples. Firstly, if your classroom is close to a busy road with its attendant blaring horn and sirens from motorists, your listening will certainly be affected. Secondly, if you find yourself sitting at the back of the class during lectures and surrounded by a noisy group, certainly, your listening will be affected. To avoid this situation, always come early to classes so you can get comfortable sitting with little or no distractions.

3.1.4.2 Physiological Barriers

When the mental/physical state of the individual is compromised e.g. the listener could be ill, tired and/or sleepy. Imagine you had an all-night prayer vigil and you are still required to attend class the next day, your listening will be greatly impaired as you will be fighting sleep all through the lecture period.

3.1.4.3 Psychological Barriers

We view psychological barriers as thoughts or feelings that could cause distractions when we are trying to listen. This could be as a result of anxiety, preoccupation, egocentrism or prejudice.

3.1.4.4 Linguistic Barriers

Language plays a very significant role in communication. A listener might be deprived of getting the full impact of a speech when there arises a disconnect between the speaker and listener based on linguistic challenges. Some of these challenges are: use of specialized language, unfamiliar words or jargons, complex sentences, pace of speech delivery (either too fast or too slow) among others.

3.1.4.5 Perceptual Barriers

The experiences of perceptual barriers arise when the speaker and the listener possibly view the same situation from varying points. This could be because of socio-cultural differences, intellectual expectations etc. There are also instances where individual perceptions are limited or become selective. This results in the listener taking-in what he wants only and discarding the rest. All these invariably affect understanding.

3.1.5 Essential Components of Listening

Listening might appear to be a simple process, but it is actually a complex aspect of the communication process. It is made up of several core components as featured below.

3.1.5.1 Hearing or Receiving

This refers to the physical response process of receiving the sound filtering into the ears. It involves focusing on hearing first, the message from the speaker and being able to filter out other intruding stimuli. Effective learning requires attentiveness and concentration at the hearing stage.

3.1.5.2 Comprehending or Understanding

At this point, you are able to truly understand the speaker's verbal message and other subtle mannerisms and unspoken cues. Comprehension is usually

influenced by differences in our backgrounds, previous knowledge, perception and experience.

3.1.5.3 Remembering

The process comes to bear after the listener has received messages through hearing, interpreted and understood the messages and then stored it in his memory to enable future recall.

3.1.5.4 Evaluating

Evaluating consists of judging or deciding the value of information received. Often times we unconsciously evaluate a speaker's underlying intentions or motives based on our personal biases and prejudices. The result is that evaluations of the same information may vary from one listener to another.

3.1.5.5 Responding or Feedback

The feedback, which happens at the end of the communication, helps the speaker to determine if his message has been received. This is the only way to determine the degree of success in information transmission. Feedback can both be given verbally and/or nonverbally

3.1.6 Steps to Becoming an Effective Listener

The art or skill of effective listening requires practice as well as developing an awareness of what is happening in and around you when you are listening to others. You must understand what is involved in the listening process and develop the necessary techniques required for effective listening. There are a good number of procedures you can utilise towards becoming an effective listener. But for the purpose of this course, we will only treat four.

3.1.6.1 Be Prepared to Listen

You should prepare yourself mentally to listen and assimilate as best as you can what you are listening to with an overall intention of understanding the topic. You are here advised to quieten the wandering of your inner thoughts and make room for the speaker's agenda. It is also good to have a pre-knowledge of what you have come to listen to, that way, you can construct a mental outline of where the speaker is going in his speech without being overtly pre-emptive.

3.1.6.2 Concentrate on the Speaker's Content and Context

While listening, you should keep in mind the background and theme of speech. This strategy will trigger residual knowledge and enable you to absorb the content quickly and efficiently. That way, you will be more in tune with the speaker, picking out key words, phrases and emotions.

3.1.6.3 Ask questions when the Time is Right

You should ask the right questions at the right time. This is quite different from interruption. When you are following the progress of a speech or lecture, you should be able to determine the appropriate time to interject with your questions. Questioning ensures you have clarification of what has been said so far and this is necessary so that you can find out more as well as test your

understanding of the topic. Asking questions demonstrates that you have been listening to the speaker.

3.1.6.4 Take Notes

Note taking is a study activity that involves writing down information given by another through speech. In note taking, you are expected to have written down a summary of your understanding of the concepts and ideas you have listed to, so that you can make use of them at a later date. You can take notes at a lecture, meeting, workshops /conferences or at other oral discussions.

Research has shown that the process involved in taking notes can impact positively on a student's ability to retain information for a longer period. That is why it is an essential study skill that you must learn and utilize.

3.1.7 Note-Taking Methods

Note taking can be done in various ways. You can take linear notes where your key points and ideas are written in simple and short sentences/lists or you can take notes in form of diagrams, where you link the different ideas as concept maps or spider diagrams.

3.1.7.1 The Cornell Method

The Cornell Method is a special form of note taking drawn up based on two unequal columns. The narrow left side is used to enter the cue or keywords/concepts while the wider right side is meant for short descriptions or notes and recording of ideas learnt. The lower part of the page is for summarizing the information on the page.

3.1.7.2 The Outline Method

This method involves the use of dash or indented outline. Here, you write and identify your topics and sub-topics, by indenting the text and numbering the lines, or using bullet points.

3.1.7.3 The Mapping Method

Mapping is done as a diagram that gives a graphic representation of the ideas and concepts from a lecture. The mapping method helps you organize your notes in a way that would create impact visually, linking each idea, from the central concept to every other one discussed in the lecture.

3.1.7.4 The Charting Method

As the name implies, the Charting method is actually a table of rows and columns. It gives room for chronological comparisons or contrast of ideas and topics. The top row is used to classify the concept while descriptions are written in the rows below.

3.1.7.5 The Sentence Method

This method requires that you write every topic or new thoughts and concepts on separate lines that are often numbered. You should note that the goal of note taking is to be able to recall and retain what you have learned over a

period of time hence, you are encouraged to use a method that you are most comfortable with.

Discussion Forum

From your own personal experience, explain how your environment has or can affect your listening skill.

4.0 Conclusion

This unit has exposed you to the nature of Listening as an essential study skill. It is also considered to be the first of the four basic language skills. You are now aware that Listening is one very essential skill that you must acquire and utilize daily to be able to succeed in your study. Remember also that for an effective listening to be achieved, you must adopt the strategies you have been taught for efficient listening, isolating and removing barriers that might hinder effective listening so that you evolve into a successful student.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

Video 

Audio 

6.0 References/Further Reading

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Wong, L. (2014). Essential Study Skills, 8th Ed., Cengage Learning, Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.ng/books>

Unit 2 Speaking

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- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)
- 3.0 Main Content
- 4.0 Conclusion
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1.0 Introduction

Speaking is a fundamental part of human communication. It is an activity we engage in daily. Often times, we speak much more than we read, write or listen. As a student, you are at an advantage if you have effectively developed your speaking skills, as this will come handy throughout your study period in the University and beyond.

You can describe speaking as a means of conveying information or expressing one's thoughts and feelings in spoken or verbal language. Speaking occurs when you engage in conversations with your friends and acquaintances. A formal or academic speech presentation like the President's address on Worker's Day or a Professor's inaugural lecture, are examples of speaking. In this unit, you will learn about speaking as an essential study skill, its importance to your studies and how you can achieve this effectively.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the concept of speaking as an essential skill
- Apply the components of speaking to your own speech
- Organize and express your ideas through speaking
- Enumerate what it takes to be an effective speaker
- List the different types of speaking skills encountered in the course
- Identify the challenges that might be encountered while speaking.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Speaking as an Essential Study Skill

Speaking is one of the key study skills that support effective learning. Having a good speaking skill is not about showing off your sophisticated diction or bedazzling folks with your presence; rather, it is your ability to effectively convey to your listeners your thoughts and ideas effectively. Has it occurred to you that you are actively involved daily in the act of speaking when you converse with friends and family, or when you interact with your tutors and course mates? Why then does the term "speaking" often cause anxiety and panic attacks in a lot of you? This unit will help you learn the concept and

rudiments of speaking skills and how to employ them for effective communication so that you will be at home with the concept.

3.2 How to be an Effective Speaker

To be an effective speaker, it is expected that you should know the basics of the language of communication. Your grammar and linguistic competence should be acceptable to your audience.

- You should know, anticipate and engage your audience.
- You should have a purpose or reason for speaking.
- You must be prepared for the speech. This could be by acquiring items or devices that will aid speaking. (A situation where notes and visual aids like projectors are needed, such should be provided etc.).
- As an effective speaker, you should use good and acceptable language i.e. your choice of words should be appropriate to your audience. For example, you should not use verbose words or language when addressing high school students.
- You should endeavour to repeat key ideas or concepts discussed to enable better understanding and assimilation.
- You should make your speech more conversational and less complex.

3.3 Types and Purposes of Speaking and its Related Situations

3.3.1 Informative Speaking

Informative speaking like the name implies is meant to inform the listener. It describes a situation where the sole purpose of the speech is to share fact-based knowledge, by describing, demonstrating, and explaining issues and in so doing, educate you on a particular topic without any personal bias attached. This can be achieved either by simplifying the topic or presenting a different viewpoint on the same topic. A Chemistry lecture delivered via NOUN FM, will certainly have the attributes of Informative speaking or when you are narrating an event that just happened to your friend who just walked in. If you are the anchor for the Lecture series on NOUN FM, you must certainly practice informative speaking. This is because the lecture series are designed to share and impact knowledge.

It is important for you to note that in informative speaking, you do not take sides or sway your listeners to accept your point of view. Instead, you should provide enough details on the topic so that your listener will be adequately educated or be able to make his own decisions on the issue.

3.3.2 Persuasive Speaking

Persuasive speaking is meant to persuade. In persuasive speaking, the onus is on you as the speaker to influence your listener. You are expected to attempt to change or reinforce the position or stance of your listener's belief, values, attitudes etc. on an issue.

If you have participated in your high school debate, and won, then you have a good experience of persuasive speaking. As a persuasive speaker, you convince your listeners by presenting well-reasoned arguments. These arguments may contain facts, narration of personal experiences and testimonies, statistics etc. The basic ideology used here is to influence people enough to change characteristics that initially would seem naturally ingrained and unchangeable.

3.3.3 Entertainment Speaking

When your primary purpose of speaking is to get your listener to relax and enjoy the occasion, you are most probably delivering an entertaining speech. Entertaining speeches are meant to catch a listener's attention, as well as amuse and at the same time deliver a clear message. It is often a mix of humour, stories and illustrations of experiences and serious issues. But do not forget that Entertaining speeches must still have a central theme while creating a relaxing ambience.

3.4 Learning through Speaking

Speaking is one of the essential skills you require to become successful in your academic pursuit and learning environment. There is an urgent need for you to develop this skill because you will need it in almost every area of your study.

The importance of a well-developed speaking skill cannot be over emphasized when you are living and studying in a culturally and linguistically diverse nation like Nigeria. When you acquire an effective speaking skill, you will be able to engage fellow learners, develop beneficial relationships and engage in clear communication with your fellow students.

A continued practice of your speaking skill will equally improve your communication; enhance your confidence and your ability to understand other people. Also, since speaking is interrelated with the other skills like, reading, writing and listening, then its development will equally result in the development of these other skills. And most importantly, speaking will enable you improve upon your overall knowledge base.

3.5 Challenges you may encounter while Speaking

Like I mentioned earlier, some of you become jittery when the term 'speaking' is mentioned. Let us discuss likely challenges you may encounter in the process of speaking and how you can effectively combat these.

3.5.1 Inhibition or Anxiety

This is the most common problem associated with speaking in a classroom environment. Perhaps because speaking will require some degree of physical exposure to an audience, some of you shy away from it. You worry about making mistakes, facing criticisms or the attention that will be drawn to you.

3.5.2 Lack of Knowledge of Subject Matter

Some students might not be inhibited but they simply do not have information on the subject matter and this will impede their speaking skill. If you have no knowledge of the subject in review or have not researched or studied it, you might not have much to say or offer. When you do not have ample information on the subject matter, it will certainly affect/impede your speaking skill.

3.5.3 Accents or Mother Tongue Interference

The performance of most student speakers is affected by the mother tongue interference on the target language. It is prominent in Nigeria as our cultural diversity makes for a multitude of variations on our speaking styles, intonations and inflections. We tend to unconsciously think first in our local dialects before translating to English. This affects all our communication skills, which include speaking.

3.6 Essential Components of Speaking

These are the aspects of language that influence how well people speak and are understood. These components discussed below will help you become an effective speaker.

3.6.1 Grammar

Grammar is an essential part of language study. It comprises of the way the sentences of a language are constructed or the distinctive features of a language construction. The proper use of grammar is essential in speaking. Grammar is an important part of speaking and writing. You are advised as a student to keep it simple. Your grammatical errors and imperfections stand out especially when you try to over-impress.

3.6.2 Vocabulary

We can describe vocabulary as an individual's stock of words. It is the appropriate diction which is used in communication and which has the power to greatly influence your speaking skills. Your ability to be able to use the most appropriate word in a given context to express your ideas is the key to effective communication. A limited vocabulary will greatly impact on your ability to communicate and share resources.

3.6.3 Pronunciation

Pronunciation is basically the way a word is pronounced or articulated. You are encouraged to be mindful of your pronunciations because wrong pronunciations could be misleading. When you pay attention to your pronunciations, you are able to produce distinctly clear words.

Pronunciation deals with the phonological processes that make up the organization of sounds in any language or the principles that determine the pattern and variation of sounds in a given language.

3.6.4 Fluency

Your ability to easily speak a language while maintaining reasonable speed and accuracy is what we describe as Fluency. A speaker fluent in a particular language has a good repertoire of diction as such; his breaks and pauses while speaking is greatly minimized.

3.7 Becoming a Confident Speaker

The first step towards becoming a great and confident speaker is to be a positive and proactive thinker and listener. Good speakers have the ability to quickly absorb and assess information they have received, take decisions on it, and then communicate these decisions to others. Some other good qualities that could be ascribed to a confident speaker are as follows:

3.7.1 Integrity

A good speaker tells the truth. He believes in himself and in what he has to say. A good speaker will share his idea or pass information in a truthful and supportive manner.

3.7.2 Be Yourself

A confident speaker is relaxed and at home with his personality. He thinks about how best to share his ideas and experiences; carrying every one along on the process. He does not pretend to be someone else since there is no one single way to be a good speaker.

3.7.3 Focus more on Contributing rather than Seeking Approval

Let your mind dwell on how you can put in your best effort and not seek for unnecessary attention. Work on letting your audience or listeners feel your impact, and marvel at your intelligence.

3.7.4 Practice Often

The more you practice speaking, the better you get; the more comfortable and confident you become. With constant practice, you will become more at ease when you face any audience.

3.7.5 Know your Content

Study well and go through your key points. Familiarize yourself with your content, that way, you are truly at home with your topic. Panic and nervousness stay at bay when you are confident with your preparations

Self-Assessment Activity

What are the attributes of a good speaker? And which of these do you possess?

4.0 Conclusion

Speaking is one of the key study skills that support effective learning. It is the second of the four basic language skills. Speaking involves conveying information or expressing your thoughts and feelings to a listener using your vocals. In the process of speaking, you generate words that can be understood by your listeners. You should note that because of its spontaneity, speaking gives you little or no room for errors. This means that you must strive to perfect your speaking skills.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

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Unit 3 Reading

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1.0 Introduction

In the preceding units, you studied about listening and speaking. In this unit, the focus will be on reading. Reading is classified as a receptive skill. This is because you take in or receive information through reading. Listening is also in this category. Both listening and reading skills are receptive skills also known as passive skills; when you listen or read, you are at the receiving end. A look at the nature of reading will reveal that numerous questions come to mind when we talk about reading: what we read, how do we read and the purpose or reason we read. This unit on reading will take us through all those pertinent questions that come to mind and help us resolve them all.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- List the importance of reading as a study skill
- Identify various purposes for reading
- Distinguish between study, reading and recreational reading
- Mention and explore some of the advantages of reading
- Identify and adopt a reading strategy
- List the components of reading
- Identify bad reading habits and how to overcome them
- Demonstrate good reading habit towards passing your examinations.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Reading as an Essential Study Skill

The word 'reading' has been a part of our vocabulary as long as we can remember but we never really look into the technicality of the word and its actions. So, what exactly is reading? Some will say reading is when we read texts, but this explains nothing actually. A better explanation can be put this way; reading is the ability to understand words contained in a document and make use of the knowledge for personal growth and development (Dadzie, 2008). It is a process, a skill we acquire that enables an understanding of written words. Through reading, we deduce meaning or grasp information from written materials stored as texts in books and other materials.

Reading is an essential skill that involves ones perception and thought process. This is because in reading, you are expected to recognise and comprehend words. You use background knowledge to make meaning of the connected words that make up the text. For your reading to be effective, you must comprehend what you have read. So what is reading comprehension? This is your ability to read any material and be able to process and understand its meaning and contents.

In reading, you use your eyes but the blind or visually impaired will use the hands on the Braille. The *Braille* is a system of printing in which the letters of the alphabet and numbers are printed as raised dots that can be read with the fingers by people who are blind or partially sighted.

As a student you must read both recommended and additional texts. The aim is to improve your academics and also to broaden your vocabulary. When you do this, your speaking, listening and writing skills will equally improve. Reading therefore is a highly valuable skill and activity you must undertake for your success.

You can read silently, or you read aloud such that other people can hear you but whatever style you choose will be dependent on the type or your purpose of reading.

3.2 Why do we Read?

We read for different reasons and purposes. It could be for pleasure, information or general understanding.

3.2.1 Reading for Pleasure

Reading for pleasure, which is also referred to as independent, leisure or recreational reading is reading done at your own time and own free will with the intention of getting personal satisfaction.

A leisure reader's purpose is simply geared towards entertainment. You read to savour the language, ideas, images, conflicts and its resolutions. You read

for the fun you derive in it. In leisure reading you independently choose what you read. It could be novels, newspapers, magazines, comics etc. You do this for personal and social purposes and reading can take place anywhere any time.

3.2.2 Reading for Information

Reading for information will involve a more articulated and attentive reading. You are expected to be attentive enough to understand the information expressed in the text, or to locate the information you are looking for. You should be able to identify the main idea of the text and other details. You can read for information in materials like non-fiction texts, newspapers, text books, research papers, essays, reports for information and also in memos, signs, notices, bulletins, policies, etc.

Reading for information will help you:

- Identify features of the text (Topic/titles, sub-headings, graphics)
- Recognise the Structure of the Text (definition, cause/effect, comparison/contrast, chronology)
- Summarize and Paraphrase the text
- Identify and Organize important points
- Understand the author's purpose.

3.2.3 Study Reading

Study reading is a form of reading for information. It entails a more serious and intense reading. The purpose of *study reading* is for you to gather more detailed information from texts and to be able to remember the main ideas, facts and opinion expressed as well as being able to make meaningful connections/associations among them.

3.2.4 Reading for General Understanding

This will involve reading to get a general overview of the text. You can apply it to any text as it is not limited to any particular form. When you read for general understanding, you read to familiarize yourself to the basic information contained in the text and to get a general impression of what the material is all about. At the end of your reading, you are free to form your own impression. Below are different types of reading or different approaches to reading that you may adopt based on your purpose for reading. They are:

- Previewing
- Skimming
- Scanning
- Detailed Reading

3.2.4.1 Previewing

In previewing a text, you get a general idea of what the text is about without really reading the whole text. This approach will help you decide whether the book will be useful for your intended purpose.

You can preview by reading the title, author details, introduction or abstract if there is one. Next you read the main headings, sub headings, chapter summaries (where available), and any highlighted text, illustrations, graphs, tables or diagrams and their captions.

3.2.4.2 Skimming

Skimming is a selective reading method where you read only the main ideas within a passage to get an overall impression of the content of a reading selection. When you only need the main points and not the details to enable you review vast amounts of material quickly, you adopt the skimming method.

The purpose is to extract only the essence or the finer points of the text. This is quite different from previewing because in skimming you read parts of the paragraph that make up the text.

3.2.4.3 Scanning

Scanning involves quick reading with quick eye movements; focusing only on locating specific information by sweeping your eyes over part of a text to find specific pieces of information. You use it when you want to quickly retrieve specific information relevant to a purpose from a large amount of written material such as a name, formula, phrase, etc.

Note:

- Skimming is reading a text quickly to get a general idea of meaning. It can be contrasted with scanning, which is reading in order to find specific information, e.g. figures or names.
- Skimming involves a thorough overview of a text and implies a reading competence. Scanning is more of a limited activity, only retrieving information that is relevant to a purpose.
- Skimming is quite a fast process. It may only take a few minutes to complete a chapter of a book.

3.2.4.4 Detailed Reading

This is a more focused and concentrated reading. You read a text slowly and carefully, paying close attention to all the details because you want to understand everything since the purpose is to understand the concepts and arguments that is contained in the text. Detailed reading will allow you understand what you are reading thoroughly and also monitor your comprehension.

3.3 Reading Strategies

For your reading to be efficient and effective, you must apply certain strategies. These strategies will help you understand what you read before, during and after reading.

Before reading:

- You should employ prior knowledge in assessing the topic you are about to read.
- You then make predictions about its probable meaning.
- Next, you preview, skim and scan to get a sense of the overall meaning.

During reading:

- You should evaluate your understanding and comprehension of the text. You can do this by questioning, thinking, and reflecting on the ideas and information found in the text.

After reading:

- You should reflect on the ideas and information you have thus gathered
- You can then relate what you have read to your own experiences and prior knowledge
- Next, you clarify your understanding of what you read
- And then extend this understanding in very creative and critical ways.

You should bear in mind that these strategies are meant to suit different reading purposes. Your purpose for reading is what will determine the strategy to adopt. You can look at this like a driver. A good driver will not drive the same way or maintain the same speed on every road. The same applies to reading. Depending on your purpose, you can choose a reading strategy that will be complementary. For the purpose of this course, we will explain the SQ3R Method of Study Reading.

3.3.1 The SQ3R Method of Study Reading

The SQ3R is an acronym for the five stages of this reading process: Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review. It is a reading and study system that enhances information retention and absorption. It will help you create a mental framework that you can use to focus and to prioritize your reading.

3.3.1.1 Survey

Before you start your reading, survey the material first to have an overview of its contents. By so doing, you can gain insight to a text before you even begin reading. Approach the reading of the document by scanning its contents,

gathering necessary information to focus on topics and help you set study goals.

- Look at the title, subtitles and introduction to get a general idea of what the text is all about and how it is broken up into parts. Observe the relationship between topics.
- Go through the heading and subheadings as this will help you create a mental structure of the topic.
- Read through the chapter outline; this is the blueprint to the chapter.
- Check the reading aids and footnotes (if any), look out for emphasized text (italics, bold font, etc.) This is used to catch the reader's attention or to provide clarification.
- The end of the chapter aids - questions, summaries etc. will give you an idea of what is important and help you select the main ideas as you read.
- Read the first paragraph and the last; It will give you the purpose of the chapter and a summary of key information.
- Don't forget to look at the pictures and charts and their captions. Take note of questions at the end of the chapter if any.

3.3.1.2 Question

Your reading will be more memorable if you question the material as you read. To achieve this, you should formulate questions that will guide your reading. This way, your mind is actively looking for answers rather than passively reading along.

Write out the questions so that as you read you can periodically look at the questions and check to see if you can answer them or recall the information. You will also use them during revision to help you remember what you have read.

To formulate questions that will guide your reading:

- Think about specific questions that you would like to find answers for.
- Read any focus questions at the end of the text.
- Turn headings and sub-headings into questions.
- Create questions from Learning Objectives, Chapter Summary or Key Points.
- Create questions for each graph, chart or illustration presented.
- Note questions on the subjects contained in the document.
- Write your questions down so you can fill in the answers as you read.
- Make sure you answer the questions in your own words, and not copy answers directly from the text.

These questions are meant to be your study goals and they will become information you will actively search later on while going through each section in detail

3.3.1.3 Read

Read each section thoroughly. Concentration and attention to detail are essential to active reading and comprehension. You may need to read more slowly for difficult parts and faster for easier ones. Try to visualize as you read along that is, make pictures in your head to go with what you have read. Do not forget to read the section headings or items on the margins; they are all essential parts of your reading not mere decorations.

- Look for the author's plan through the headings, abstracts, etc.
- You must locate the main idea of each paragraph as you read
- Identify the topic; this is usually the idea that is repeated.
- Identify the sentence that summarizes the details; this is the main idea
- Look for the supporting details like key words, or key points.
- Look out for the answers to the questions you had written down.
- Compare the diagrams (graphs, charts, pictures, illustrations) with the content of the written text. This gives you better understanding.
- Make sure you understand what you are actually reading. Increase or reduce your reading speed, depending on the difficulty level of each section of the text. Stop and re-read unclear sections.
- You can look up difficult words in the dictionary and then re-read.
- Remember to make notes while you read.

3.3.1.4 Recall (or Recite)

At the Recall (or Recite) stage, you are expected to go through all that you have read so far, and then try to answer the questions that you had written down earlier. You can write down a summary of what you have read and understood so far. The process of jotting down the main ideas and other details you have garnered from the reading will help you understand and absorb what you have read. You may also need to teach or tell someone (or yourself) about what you have read; this will help you crystallize your understanding of the topic and uncover the weak areas of your understanding.

- Make notes of what you remember or a summary of the main idea in your own words
- At this stage, you should try to associate what you have read with life experiences for a better recall
- Try and answer the questions you had earlier developed
- Tell someone about it (or pretend and explain to an imaginary listener)

Reciting strengthens your understanding. You will most certainly remember more for longer as it is rare not to learn when you teach someone else. Reciting will also reveal grey areas so you can go back and re-read them.

3.3.1.5 Review

This is the final step of the SQ3R process. You should review what you have read. After your study, check the notes you had made against the original text to confirm accuracy.

Review your notes periodically; do this in short sessions to avoid an overload of information or a situation where you mix up information. This will help you during exams because the more you revise during the semester work, the less need for cramming during examinations.

- Read through your notes to reacquaint yourself with the main points.
- Review your summaries and all other notes taken
- You can also expand the notes you had made
- Read through the questions you wrote down and try to answer them from memory (try to do this often).
- It is always helpful to revisit what you had read for a quick refresher
- You can equally discuss the topics with colleagues and other experts

If you are able to abide to these processes, you will be sure of a rich comprehension of your study material. Note that the more you review and recite your material, the better your recall.

3.4 Advantages of Learning through Reading

3.4.1 Vocabulary Expansion

It is a fact that readers have a richer vocabulary. The more you read, the more words you are exposed to. These words inevitably make their way into your everyday vocabulary. So, the more you read, the richer your diction becomes.

3.4.2 Improved Language Skills

Exposure to well-written works will have a noted effect on your language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). With the expansion of your vocabulary, you will observe that you will gradually experience an improvement in your writing and speaking capabilities. You subconsciously absorb details on how to structure sentences and how to use words and other language features effectively. As you read and observe the writing styles of other authors, this will invariably influence your own style.

3.4.3 Expansion of Knowledge Base

Books enable the rapid transfer of knowledge from one person to another. With the vast amount of reading materials available on very different and diverse topics, there is an endless sea of knowledge and information available for your consumption.

3.4.4 Exploration of New Ideas

Reading encourages you to think. Through reading, you can get new ideas and inspiration about something you previously knew. By implication, new perspectives on a concept can be explored so that you may try something new or different, inspired by the things you have read.

3.4.5 Stimulation of Imagination and Creativity

Reading sends the mind into a flurry of creativity. A diverse reading culture will expose you to new ideas and help develop the creative side of the brain as it imbibes innovation into your thinking process. As you read, your brain translates the descriptions of people, places and things into pictures. You are also able to feel their emotions. Your mind thus creates these images of things, people or places you never even knew. Thus, reading strengthens the imaginative and creative abilities of your mind.

3.4.6 Memory Improvement

The process of reading implies that your memory is activated. You try to remember different things you have just read; characters, backgrounds, themes, history, plots, attitudes etc. Usually while you are reading, you get to think about the things you have just read and in the process, commit them to memory. Also, reading offers you ample opportunity to stop and take a moment to reflect on the content of what you have just read.

3.4.7 Improved Focus and Concentration

While reading, you are drawn to concentrate on the thoughts expressed or contained in the book or material you are reading. Usually because reading takes time, you unconsciously learn how to pay attention and focus on a particular task.

The longer you read the more concentration you build. With this in mind, you can say that reading is an investment in one's ability to concentrate and by implication, a basis for successful learning. As you already know, effective learning requires focus and concentration.

3.4.8 Strong Analytical and Thinking Skills

Reading greatly improves your critical thinking and analytical skills. You are able to develop an ability to analyse details. When you read, you notice even subtle nuances expressed by the author and you consciously or unconsciously analyse these ideas in your mind and in the process develop yours. When given the opportunity to discuss what you have read, you will be able to state your opinions clearly, as you have taken the time to really consider all the aspects involved and can intelligently determine or take a stance.

3.5 The Essential Components of Reading

3.5.1 Phonics

Phonics is all about you understanding the relationship between letters and their sounds. It is your ability to make the connection between the sounds that each letter represents in written language and the sounds in spoken

language. Your understanding of the combination of these sound-symbol connections will aid your ability to create and read words.

3.5.2 Phonemics

Phonemics refers to your ability to recognize and use individual sounds (called phonemes) to create words. These phonemes are the smallest units that make up the spoken language. You combine them to create syllables and words. This means that you develop phonemic awareness by learning about sounds (phonemes), syllables and words. For example, the word 'bent' is made up of four individual units of sound; b/e/n/t, 'mop' is made up of three while 'odd' has two.

Phonemic awareness and Phonics could be seen as being related because both involve a connection between sounds and letters/words. But the difference lies in that while Phonics is used only in written language because it involves letters, Phonemes are centered on the sounds of language rather than on written words.

3.5.3 Vocabulary Development

We must first recognize words to be able to read them. If the words in your book are all unfamiliar, it will certainly be a fruitless venture trying to read. **Vocabulary development involves your ability to identify and understand the words you read. It is** closely connected to comprehension. You will observe that the more words you know, the better you become at reading and understanding your course materials. So make it a duty to always improve on your vocabulary acquisition.

3.5.4 Fluency

Fluency comes with the development of your phonemic awareness, phonics skills and vocabulary. At this level, your ability to read with speed, accuracy and an understanding of the expressions becomes evident. When you read, you are able to quickly grasp and create an overall picture in your mind of what the text is saying. This ability to read as well as you speak and at the same time, make sense of what you are reading without having to stop and decode each word is the locus of Fluency

3.5.5 Comprehension

This is an indication that you have a full and rich understanding of the text you have read. Comprehension is the main reason why we read; we read to understand. To do this effectively, you should immerse yourself in what you are reading, be able to visualize the characters and happenings of the book in your head and yet, relate it to your immediate environment if possible. Good readers are able to expand their information base, increase their vocabulary and link what they have read with other sources of information thereby, deepening their level of understanding of new concepts and topics.

3.6 Bad Reading Habits and How to Overcome Them

3.6.1 Regression

The practice of skipping back or re-reading the same information over and over is known as regression. This is often not necessary because it is a huge waste of reading time. When you adopt good reading strategies, you will understand your text well enough not to go back but if you require more information or further reading, please try reading another text on the same topic. This will more likely improve your knowledge of the topic and bring up additional information!

3.6.2 Vocalization and Sub-Vocalization

This is when you pronounce the words while reading. In vocalization, you pronounce the words out-loud such that someone else may hear while sub-vocalization means that you pronounce the words in your head. This method also slows down your reading. You should try to visualize what you read. That way, you will be able to overcome vocalization or sub-vocalization as it applies to you.

3.6.3 Reading One Word at a Time

Some of you while reading focus your eyes on one word at each interval before moving to the next word. This makes reading slow. You should practice reading in chunks or groups of words as opposed to individual words. This technique will encourage faster reading and at the same time, train your eyes and mind to work in agreement.

3.6.4 Distractions and Loss of Attention

We often face so many distractions from within and around us. These distractions may come externally as noise, family/friend interferences, TV, social media etc. It could also be internal, whereby our thoughts and worries affect our reading. Make the effort of choosing a conducive environment for reading so that some of the physical distractions will be removed, then work on maintaining your concentration for the purpose of reading to eliminate internal interferences.

Forum Discussion

Practice reading Module 1 of your course material using the SQ3R study method and write down your observations. Post your observations on the forum page. Critique the observation of two posts that is not your post.

4.0 Conclusion

You have studied about Reading as an essential study skill; you have seen the types, purposes and benefits of reading. You must have observed the

various reading skills available to you as a student and you should be able to structure that which will suit you as a distance learner.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

Video

Audio

6.0 References/Further Reading

Student Academic Services. (2011). Note taking systems. California Polytechnic State University. Retrieved from <http://www.sas.calpoly.edu/asc/ssl/notetakingsystems.html>

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Unit 4 Writing

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)
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1.0 Introduction

In this unit, you will be introduced to writing skills. You may be wondering why you need to learn special writing skills. You may feel that you have been writing all your life and that you have been communicating your ideas to your audience. Also, you believe that you have been writing to pass your examinations. Yes, you have been writing but you may not have been writing the right way. It is equally necessary for you to acquire writing skills because it is said that “of all aspects of studying, writing is perhaps the most challenging” (Northedge, 245) and that “... you may eventually discover that the most significant thing you have gained from your studies is the ability to write more effectively” (p. 246). These and more are some of the reasons why you need to acquire writing skills.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you would have:

- Learnt the basic steps in acquiring writing skills
- Demonstrated the skills in writing
- Differentiated the types of writing
- Demonstrated the skills of note taking, drawing outlines, revising and presenting a final draft.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Writing as an Essential Study Skill

It does not matter the language in which you write or what you want to write; an assignment for a course, an essay, an answer to an examination question, a term-paper, an application, an article for a newspaper, a letter, a story, a play, a novel, a speech, or even a text book, you must know how to write

effectively in that language to get the best out of your writing. In as much as you can write in any language, for the purpose of this course, we shall focus on writing in English Language. You must know what to write about even when you are given what to write.

In either case, practice, they say makes perfect. You need constant practice to perfect your writing skills. This means that you must learn to write regularly. Writing is a skill that you develop as you progress with constant practice in writing. You need different skills for different types of writing. For instance, in writing a poem, you need peculiar skill that will enable you to say so much in a few lines through the use of imageries and figures of speech. This is different from your assignment or answer to examination question where you are expected to present specific points and elucidate them. Constant writing helps you to develop your power of expression. The most important factor in the acquisition of writing skills is clarity. You need to present your writing in such clear terms that your reader will not be in doubt about the idea you want to communicate.

You also need to learn from the masters. This means that the more you read good works the more you learn. This is one of the best ways of acquiring writing skills. You are not to copy what others have written but by reading their works you inadvertently acquire basic skills. In reading voraciously, you enrich your vocabulary, which also aids you in the acquisition of the basic writing skill. The richer your vocabulary, the more options you have in the choice of the most appropriate words. This way, you write with ease; but with scant vocabulary, you are limited in your expressions. For instance, you want to tell your reader or audience about a man, with scant vocabulary, you may simply say that he is a bad man. Another writer with a richer vocabulary will have the following options from which to pick the most precise description for what he/she has in mind: wicked, depraved, immoral, dishonest, corrupt, unprincipled, evil and so on. You see, the right words, expressions and sentences help your writing to flow effortlessly. A rich vocabulary also prevents you from excessive over flogging of certain words and expressions. So you must make an effort to enrich your vocabulary. How can you enrich your vocabulary? As stated above, by reading voraciously you can also enrich your vocabulary by listening. You can learn a lot from public lectures, from the electronic media and private conversations.

In addition, you must be acquainted with the rules of English grammar like subject-verb- agreement etc. As a matter of fact, you must ensure strict compliance with these rules. This is necessary because you require a mastery of the language for you to acquire the skills that enables you write well and enhance your writing skills. This involves having a rich vocabulary and the capacity to use it effectively and also to utilize imageries, figures of speech and other devices characteristic of the language.

3.2 Writing as a Process of Discovery (e.g. Creative Writing)

Writing is seen as a process of discovery. You may ask what you would discover in writing. You discover a lot of things through writing because every

act of writing is a new experience. You are actually writing something new each time you write. Even if you are revising or updating an old piece of writing you discover new ideas to add or irrelevant ones to expunge. You will discover a new style with each fresh writing. You also discover new words. Above all you discover yourself, your environment, individuals and events that inspire you if you venture into creative writing.

Writing is a process of discovery as you find yourself explicating ideas from your perspective in different types of writing from your essays, and even while answering your examination questions. In writing, you may try to present facts, argue a point, persuade your audience on a particular issue, or simply present a story for edification and entertainment. In each case, it is a process of discovery: discovery of how effective you can do that. In addition, you discover how much you know about each subject and how much you can relay that to your audience.

Writing is a process of discovery because you have to think of what to write about, discover what you want to write about. You do not just pick a pen or sit before your laptop, desktop, or even tablet or phone to write unless you have something to say or to write about. Honestly, in writing, there are times you think that you have something to say but when you try to write, you might not do much or go far. You get stuck. The reason is that although something must have prompted you, you did not give it serious thought before setting out to write. This phenomenon is part of writing as a process of discovery. You should be able to gather information on your proposed subject matter. Discover all you can about it.

In writing, you are free to choose your subject and in some cases, a subject is given to you. Whether the choice of subject is yours or it was made for you, ensure that it is a subject that you have good knowledge of or have access to information about it because you have to share this knowledge with others. You should therefore ensure that it is something others will be interested in. In accessing information, you should gather material you need from all available sources, consult as widely as possible, search for all relevant data from books, journals, internet, people and places. The material you require and the method of collecting your data depends on your subject and type of writing. Some of it might be obtained through library research, from certain individuals through formal and informal personal interviews, questionnaires or from your own experiences. So a period of meditation may help you recall some relevant experiences in your life.

3.3 Writing as a Means of Communication (communicating ideas)

Any time you sit to write, you are about to communicate to an audience. By audience here, we mean your reader. Ideally, no one writes to or for him/herself only. This means that any piece of writing is a channel of communication. In print journalism, the journalists use the medium of newspaper or magazine to inform the public of what is happening in their environment. Thus, communicate to the people who are their audience. Even at that, each article is presented in a unique style. The language used for core

news reporting is different from that used in feature articles. Apart from the language, the style of presentation of each article differs. These writers have acquired their writing skills over the years through constant practice and are now able to communicate their ideas effectively to their audience.

Just like the journalist, when you write an essay, a class assignment or even answer an examination question, you communicate your ideas to your lecturer. You cannot give what you don't have, so if you don't have an idea, what will you communicate? This brings us to a vital point in writing as a means of communication. What is your goal? What is your objective? Why do you want to write? What do you want to achieve through your writing? Your honest answer to these questions will help you not only to communicate but also to communicate effectively. So, when you choose a topic to write on, it is important for you to decide what you want to write. It is only when you decide what to write that you will be able to decide how to present it and then be in a position to communicate effectively to your audience.

3.4 Types of Writing

There are so many types of writing. Each type is designed to convey a certain message, in a certain way, and to perform a certain function. We used journalism, writing of articles in newspapers or magazines as an example above. Other types of writing include:

3.4.1 Essays

There are over a dozen types of essays but I will only briefly explain the four most basic which are Descriptive, Narrative, Argumentative and Expository. A descriptive essay provides in detail, a description of how something looks, feels, sounds or how something is, or happened etc. It provides a sensory detail of what is actually being described.

A narrative essay tells a story. A narrative essay is generally conversational in style and could be used to tell about a personal experience. More importantly, narrative essays are generally written in the first person, using 'I'.

An argumentative essay attempts to persuade your reader to accept your point of view. You can do this by convincing your reader about the validity of your opinion.

Expository essays are mostly opinion based writing that require extensive research on an idea or issue to be written. You must present an evaluation of the issue raised and the conclusion based on your findings.

- Term Papers and Class Assignments
- Thesis
- Examination
- Letters
- Applications
- Articles
- Speeches
- Reports

- Minutes of Meetings
- Memos
- Circulars
- Recipes (and many more)

In all these, you should bear in mind that each type of writing has its own guidelines. You should therefore discover and learn the guidelines of the type of writing you wish to undertake. Then, ensure strict adherence to the specified guideline while at the same time imputing your own style. The first step in acquiring your own style is to use your own words. No matter how narrow your vocabulary is, just continue to use your own words and not to copy from your textbook. You may not realize it then but with constant practice you will improve beyond your imagination.

3.5 Note Taking and Note Making

3.5.1 Note Taking

When you take notes, you listen and write what you have heard in your own words. This means that you paraphrase so that it makes sense to you instead of simply writing down what you have heard word for word. Effective note-taking will allow you to develop a better understanding of the topic you are listening to because you will be capturing the key message in your own words. This way, you would have succeeded in recording what you have heard and learnt and remembering them. You can go back to unit 2 of this module, for a revision of this topic.

3.5.2 Note Making

This is an individual study activity. You make notes during your private study time. In making notes, you create meaning for yourself while engaging with a topic. Note making is done when you read and write. It is different from note taking which is done in the process of listening. Note making is said to be 'thinking on paper' or ('thinking on screen'). (Northedge 129). You can either make notes using a book or your computer. When you make notes, there is an interaction between your mind and the text you are studying. You are able to process the new ideas gathered and organize them in a way you will best understand.

3.6 The Writing Process

We have agreed that writing is a medium of communication. It follows that the quality of your writing will be greatly influenced by the nature of your thoughts. Effective communication through writing should be based on your ability to present your thoughts, ideas, and experiences coherently.

The first step is to decide on your topic. Most of the time in a written assignment you are given a specific topic but at other times, you may be allowed to choose your own topic. Writing is easier or simpler when a topic is given, however, if you are to choose your own topic, you should bear the following in mind:

- The occasion
- Your audience
- The topicality of the topic
- The time at your disposal for preparing the write-up
- The required length (NUC, 231)

The second step is to collect materials for your writing. You can read up all you can on the topic, consult books, journals, encyclopaedias, magazines, newspapers, and the internet. You can even obtain information through verbal discussions with knowledgeable people. These steps depend on the scope of your writing. In some cases especially in advanced research projects, you might need to administer questionnaire.

The third step is to prepare your outline. This is a list of ideas, thoughts or information that come to your mind or you come across on your proposed topic. Do not leave out any information but jot down everything. You can sieve and select the most relevant ones later as you start and continue with your writing. After jotting down the points, joggle them as you organize them, formulate your thesis or thesis statement. You should try to select and arrange supporting details in a chronological and logical order.

Once you have arranged your information and ideas in a seemingly logical sequence, you can now start your writing. Note that you must not necessarily follow your outline strictly. As you write and fresh ideas come to your mind, don't hesitate to fix them appropriately to enrich your writing. Ensure that you observe the grammatical rules of the English language. As you write, pay particular attention to "... your tenses, sentence construction, spellings, thought patterns, paragraph types and so on (NUC 320) and continue writing until you get your first draft, revise, edit and present your final draft.

3.6.1 Prewriting/Outline

Prewriting/outline involves brainstorming and putting down ideas haphazardly before arranging them as draft. Once you decide to write, you need to plan your writing. This is because, "failure to plan your writing before actual writing exercise results in poor presentation of materials. Such writing is prone to poor organization as it does not adhere to basic principles of unity, coherence and mechanical accuracy" (e-Modules: 68). So you need to plan and the first step in planning is to choose your topic and thereafter formulate your thesis or thesis statement. You know that the thesis statement is the sentence that summarizes the contents of your writing and it is around it that all other sentences revolve.

You also need to have your audience in mind. Your audience determines your topic and style in a situation where you are free to choose your topic. As you prepare to write, make an "assessment of what is involved in expressing your idea and conveying it to your audience in a captivating manner" (Iwuchukwu 30 Creative Writing II).

In preparing your outline, it is necessary to brainstorm on the topic. Brainstorming is the act of thinking widely on a particular topic and coming up with varied ideas. As you brainstorm and ideas come to your mind, put them down as they come. Don't bother about the relevance of any of the ideas but just put them down at random. After you must have listed all, you can then take another look at what you have jotted and start an elimination process. At this stage, you delete or drop ideas that are not relevant. The next step is to arrange the relevant ideas in a logical order as stated above.

3.6.2 Writing a First Draft

By now, you have your topic, your thesis, and an outline but you are confronted with the problem of how to begin. You stare at the blank sheet and you have the pen in your hand or sit before your computer with several options of how best to begin in your head. No venture no success, so take the plunge. Just start writing. Remember that what will be uppermost in your mind will be how to rouse the attention of your reader, so that he or she can hardly wait to reach the end of the writing to find out what it is all about (Iwuchukwu 33).

Sometimes, what you want to write does not seem to flow in the way you want it or your mind becomes blank and you are unable to coordinate or synchronize your ideas. Don't worry; put it down especially in a write up that needs to be completed over a long time. Go back to it later then you may have some ideas spring up. If however it is in answering examination questions, leave that particular number, go to other questions that you are more at home with. You will find out that while you are answering those questions, something might strike you on that particular question and you go back and put it down. By the time you are through with the questions where you have more ideas, and go back to the one you left, more ideas must have come to your mind. You will then answer it more correctly. What this means is that in writing your assignments and answering examination questions, you need to brainstorm and also draw an outline. Once you acquire and perfect the skill of drawing an outline, it comes easily and very useful in whatever type of writing you undertake.

Apart from assignments and examination questions, you have other forms of writing in form of essays of varied lengths. In such cases, after you must have produced a workable outline or synopsis, you proceed to write your first draft. In most cases, we write to explore an idea; to understand a concept; and to demonstrate certain experience or make our reader understand certain issues or adopt a particular perspective on an issue. In whatever case, we should try to write with clarity and present the writing in such a way that our readers will not only understand our point of view but also enjoy reading the piece

3.6.3 Revision

In all your writings, try as much as possible to subject your work to one or more revisions because it helps you to ensure that your work is of a very high quality. As you revise your draft, try to answer the following questions:

- Have I brought out my idea clearly, made it central in my work and argued it successfully?
- Do other sentences revolve around it thereby help to elucidate it?
- Is my work effectively organized, coherent enough to enable my reader to follow my argument without difficulty?
- Is the finished work sufficiently interesting and convincing. If not, what remedial actions do I require? How do I rework it to make it better?

If you have enough time, revise your work over and over again until you are convinced that you have produced a coherent, well-organized written work and that you have convincingly argued your idea in a unified manner. You can revise your work as many times as possible before you submit it.

3.6.4 Editing

Editing is just like pruning your work. In so doing, you check if there are words, sentences, paragraphs and illustrations that are irrelevant or redundant and you delete them. Editing helps you to ensure that your writing is well organized, clear and coherent. It also helps to ensure that each paragraph expresses one unit of thought and that they are so linked that the entire write up is presented as a coherent whole. If you edit your work very well, you will see that your central idea is explicated in such a way that your reader will enjoy reading it because you have presented it in a convincing manner.

3.6.5 Final draft

Once you have started your writing, try as much as possible to follow your outline. It helps you to get focused and avoid unnecessary digressions. As you write, you may develop new ideas or have reasons to modify the existing ones, do not hesitate to do that. Alternatively, you can prune everything at the point of revision. You may be aware of some gaps, if you can correct immediately, do so but if not, go ahead with your writing.

You may need to revisit your outline, juggle some ideas and plan more thoroughly. You may skip a particular point (Iwuchukwu 38). Just continue writing until you get your first draft. After your first draft, revise as many times as possible and edit your work thoroughly. After that, what you have is what we refer to as the final draft. Your work is ready for submission or for release to your audience.

3.7 Basic Steps in Writing

3.7.1 Title

Sometimes, you give your write up a title before writing. In most academic writing-like assignments, essays, examination questions, term papers and many more, you have your title or topic before you start your writing. But in

creative writing, your title could emerge after the story is completed. In such cases, the title may change from the first draft through other drafts until you get the final piece.

If you are given the privilege of choosing your title, choose a title that will give your reader an idea about your subject matter. If you choose an appropriate title before you start writing, it will help you to ensure that you do not digress.

3.7.2 Thesis (the main idea)

Have ever read a novel or a play? Did you enjoy the story? Did you notice that there is a central idea around which the story revolves? The creative writers, through these media communicate their ideas to the public to educate, to inform and to entertain. That central idea is called thesis. Some call it controlling idea; some call it themes while others call it purpose. Whatever you call it, make sure that you bear it in mind while planning for any piece of writing. It is therefore necessary for you to formulate your theses before you start your writing.

In formulating your thesis, you should bear your audience in mind because your audience should influence what you write and how you write it. As part of your preliminary planning, you should ask yourself for whom are you writing or for what audience? Your answer should guide you on how best to communicate your ideas, your style/language use and the level of information to communicate. Your writing will make the greatest impact if it is written within the reach of your audience and written in the language they can understand.

3.7.3 Link paragraphs (using words to link paragraphs)

Paragraph is a unit of thought comprising one or more sentences. One sentence paragraph is possible but not common. It is commonest in dialogue but could also be used in any form of writing to create an effect. The sentences that make up a paragraph must be held together by a common idea or topic. This idea or topic could be explicitly stated, or it could be implicit with the reader left to figure it out. Where it is explicit, it is expressed in the topic sentence that could be placed at the beginning of the paragraph or elsewhere in the paragraph. This topic sentence is supported with other sentences that further expand the main idea, give more information or details.

Paragraphing is a way of “showing division of thoughts in writing” (NUC 69). The most important sentence in a paragraph is the topic sentence, which expresses the central idea of the paragraph, and the other sentences revolve around it. In most cases, the topic sentence comes first in a paragraph, but this is not compulsory as it could also appear in the middle or in the end. It all depends on your style.

A good paragraph is expected to be characterized by unity, coherence and must be developed adequately to give the desired information. The relationship between the sentences in a paragraph must be made clear to highlight their relevance to the topic sentence. There should therefore be a

logical and sequential arrangement of the thoughts conveyed by various sentences that form the paragraph.

It may not always be possible to develop an idea fully in one paragraph. This means that in some cases, it could take an entire essay to develop an idea that was introduced in the opening paragraph. In that case, you advance this idea from one paragraph to the next “with each paragraph serving as a building block” (Olaofe 11).

Although each paragraph contains one unit of thought, all of them must be linked together to support or expand the central idea, which is your thesis or thesis statement. So you need to use transitional devices that are in form of words or phrases to link your sentences as well as your paragraphs. Some of them include the example below culled from your course material, GST 101:

- i. Express result: *therefore, as a result, consequently, thus, hence*
- ii. Give example: *for example, for instance, specifically, as an illustration*
- iii. Express comparison: *similarly, likewise*
- iv. Express contrast: *but, yet, still, however, nevertheless, on the other hand*
- v. Express addition: *moreover, furthermore, also, too, besides, in addition*
- vi. Express sequence: *first, second, third, then, next, finally*
- vii. Indicate time: *now, later, meanwhile, since then, after that, before that time (Olaofe 11).*

As you develop your paragraph, it is necessary to capture your reader’s attention straightaway in the opening paragraph so that he/she does not drop your work without giving it the desired attention or even a fair chance. This is very important especially when you are answering examination questions. This is why you are advised to start with the question you know very well. In doing so, the opening paragraph of your answer should capture and sustain your lecturer’s attention.

Also, your closing paragraph is as important as your opening. Try as much as possible not to conclude your essay by inflicting your reader with a boring summary of what you have presented and already known to your reader. The closing paragraph gives you an opportunity to bring a refreshing new insight into some of the issues already considered. You could also use it to raise an entirely new issue calculated at whetting your reader’s appetite for more or to resolve an issue over which your reader has been held suspense.

3.7.4 Support Thesis with Specific Evidence (not in all types of writing)

You need to formulate your thesis, which is the main idea that pervades the whole write up. It could be a sentence that summarizes the contents of your writing. Every other sentence in your writing revolves around this sentence. It is not enough to formulate your thesis statement, but you must ensure that it

is supported with concrete evidence and more information to support or authenticate the claim you have made in your thesis statement.

3.7.5 Organize and Connect Title, Introduction, Main Body and Conclusion

Organize your writing very well in such a way that the introduction, development and conclusion will be clear and discernable. Your writing must be clear and definite. That is what is called clarity. Jot down points, ideas and thoughts that you could develop to meet the goals of your writing exercise. These should be arranged in a specific order following a logical pattern. This logical arrangement of points, which presents the main themes, also provides the working guide in your writing exercise. It helps you to organize your work appropriately. To ensure proper organization and coherence in your writing, ensure a logical arrangement of ideas; consistent numbering of your major heading and sub headings and also adhere to grammatical rules.

3.7.6 Ensure Unity and Coherence

You know that each paragraph contains one unit of thought that is captured in your topic sentence. You need other sentences to support it in order to give more details. However, for you to present a very good writing, these sentences and paragraph must be presented in a coherent manner. This means that you should be able to take your "... reader logically and smoothly from one idea to the next. The reader must clearly recognize that one sentence logically leads to the next (Olaofe 9). Unity implies oneness of the subject matter in your writing. It means that all your ideas and points you raise in your writing must be linked and express one point. You should try as much as possible not to digress or contradict yourself.

By coherence we mean that you must ensure that all your ideas, thoughts and points expressed in your writing are connected. To achieve this, you need the use of linking words, expressions or connectives such as: and, but, or, whenever, wherever, whoever, etc. you also need Sequence markers such as first, next, firstly, secondly ... finally, etc. (NUC 71).

Self-Assessment Activity

Draw an outline based on an idea or a topic you have chosen and list at least ten things that come to your mind concerning the idea/topic. Come up with more self-assessments. Each sub-section should have activity and feedback that will enhance learning. Please do this in all the sections in this module.

4.0 Conclusion

Acquisition of basic writing skills is a vital aspect of study as you write all the time. You can only acquire it through voracious reading and constant writing practice. In doing this, you must ensure that you present original ideas in your work. Do not copy what others have written. When you use extracts of other author's works, ideas, you must give the credit by making reference to them so that your reader can distinguish between the ideas of other writers and

your original ideas. Writing skills include an ability to present an idea in a unified, clear and coherent manner.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

Video

Audio

6.0 References/Further Reading

Student Academic Services. (2011). Note taking systems. California Polytechnic State University. Retrieved from <http://www.sas.calpoly.edu/asc/ssl/notetakingsystems.html>

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Unit 5 Study Strategies

Contents

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1.0 Introduction

You must have observed that the volume of work and reading you have to do at the University level is enormous but you should not let the sheer volume of what you have to do deter you from achieving your lifelong ambition. All you need is to determine a study format that works for you. You would have come across a good number of this study strategies in the course of your study but remember that there is no one-size-fits-all study style, all you need to do is review the strategies available here and pick what best suits you. This unit on study strategy is designed to help you find an effective study pattern that will help you excel. With dedication and a desire to succeed fuelled by hard work, you will definitely excel.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you would have:

- Identified the types of learning strategies
- Distinguished between different learning strategies
- Identified types of learners
- Demonstrated different studying strategies.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Find the Learning Style that Suits You Best

To succeed academically, you need to be productive, and figuring out what kind of learning style suits you best enhances productivity. Whether it's for everyday learning via homework, or revising for your exams, finding the learning style that helps you achieve maximum productivity will be crucial to getting the best possible essay grades and exam results. In this article, we're going to look at the different methods and techniques you can try as you search for the best learning style for you, and we'll also look at environmental factors that can influence your learning style. Though finding the right learning

style for you will ultimately come down to trial and error, this article should give you some different things to think about and try to help you come up with a style that allows you to work at your most efficient.

3.2 What Type of Learner are You?

We are not all equipped to learn the same way. You may have a preferred or different way of studying or picking up information from your friends. You should get to know the style you are most comfortable with and study in the way that best suits you.

3.2.1 Visual Learner

You might be a visual learner if you study and remember better with pictures, graphics, diagrams etc. Visual learners have a learning preference to what they see.

Study Tips

- You should include images when you make notes, so you can associate your study with something visual.
- You can also turn bullet points into a mind map; this way, you will be able to visualize how everything interconnects.
- You can use flashcards, or highlight your work with colour pens to make key points stand out.
- You could try to remember some ideas as images.

3.2.2 Auditory/Aural learner

Auditory learners prefer to learn by listening; they remember what they hear, better than what they see. It is much easier for them to pick up information through listening and speaking. You might be an auditory learner if you enjoy discussions and talking through your ideas and find verbal instructions easier to remember than written ones.

Study Tips

- You can record your notes and key points and then play them back often.
- You can read aloud when you study and use repetition to keep information fresh in your mind.
- Try explaining what you have just read to a friend.
- You can also get someone to read out prepared questions to test your knowledge.

3.2.3 Verbal learner (Reading and Writing)

You may be a verbal learner if using words in writing and speech comes to you with ease. For you, information retention is more successful when studying with textbooks, note taking, and verbalizing lessons. If your notes are always pages long and you can spend hours reading a new book, reading and writing might be your learning style. The good news is that writing your

assignments and exam papers might not be difficult for you, but organizing and prioritizing your ideas could be more challenging. Reading around your subject online, or at the library, can be a great way to study and pick up extra information.

Study Tips

- Rewrite your notes again and again.
- Test yourself by rewriting a page of notes from memory.
- Write out your thoughts on paper and organise them into lists.
- Make notes in your own words on your textbook, or post-it notes.
- Find questions about your subject online and write down answers in the style of a quiz.
- Read through what you have written several times.

3.2.4 Tactile/Kinaesthetic Learner

Tactile/kinaesthetic learners prefer physical activity; they learn by doing. Kinaesthetic learners pick up information by doing things. If you enjoy crafts or making things with your hands, playing sports etc., you just might be a kinaesthetic learner. This could mean putting an object together, or trying out something they have seen in a textbook. If you're a kinaesthetic learner, you're likely to have more energy and fast reactions, but you may find it difficult to concentrate.

Study Tips

- Try using techniques like role-playing or building models to revise key points.
- Keep your hands busy when you're studying; you can write notes or play with a stress ball etc.
- When possible, act out a situation or physically show someone how to do a practical task.
- Get practical experience when possible. When you put what you have learnt into practice, it helps you remember.
- Take regular study breaks, so you do not get bored or feel stuck at a desk for too long.

3.3 Methods, Approaches and Techniques for Effective Study

Let's start by looking at some of the different study methods you could choose from. Different people find different methods effective at helping them learn, so the best thing to do if you're not sure which suits you best is to try each of these and see how you find them.

3.3.1 Note Taking

Taking notes is a classic learning method. Note-taking can include copying out passages of books, summarising concepts on notecards, devoting a single page to each topic, or writing endless reams of notes and organising

them in a file. The problem with note taking is that it's all too easy simply to copy out what someone else says without really taking it in or understanding it. If you try out this method and then can't answer mock exam questions on this topic, this suggests that you might not have found quite the right method of learning.

3.3.2 Learning things by Heart

You'll have little option but to learn some things by heart for recalling in exams, but it's an approach that can help you understand something as well. Learning poetry by heart, for instance, might seem quite an old-fashioned approach, but it'll help you feel more confident about the poem, its rhymes and rhythms, and how it's structured. Learning things by heart means you'll also be able to rattle off facts and quotes in exams, which will impress examiners.

Do you have a visual memory? If so, visual methods of learning might suit you best. This could include techniques such as creating a mind map for each of the topics you learn about, with the topic name in the middle and arrows pointing off it to facts you need to learn. This can be an effective memory aid too, because when you're in an exam, you can use your visual memory to recall the position of the fact on the page and thereby remember what it was.

3.3.3 Learning with Others

It can help to study with friends. Some people find that they work best with other people (this is known as social learning). Whether it's simply the presence of other people that motivates you, or you engage in academic discussion and help each other learn in a more direct way, it's a good way to counter the feelings of isolation you may experience if you work alone too much. Academic discussion is a powerful way of learning, as it forces you to question and defend your opinions; that's why it's a big part of the way we teach our courses.

3.3.4 Explaining to others

On a related note to social learning, you might find that you learn things more easily if you have to explain a concept to someone else. This is because in order to explain something clearly to someone else, you have to have a thorough grasp of it yourself. For example, giving a presentation to fellow students will require you first to have an excellent understanding of the topic and then to put together materials from which the others can learn. You'll also have to give a verbal explanation and answer questions, which will force you to be even more confident in your understanding.

3.3.5 Audio/Video

Some people find that watching or listening to things helps them absorb information more easily. There's a wealth of information available in video form online, so if you find that you're struggling with learning a topic in a book,

googling a video that explains it may be just what you need. If you're studying literature, you might find that listening to an audiobook of the work in question helps you understand or remember it better.

3.3.6 Learning by Doing

Performing a piece of music, you've been studying from a theoretical perspective helps you understand it better. One of the most effective learning styles is to learn by doing. By this, we mean that rather than (or as well as) reading things in books, try to experience things 'in real life'. For example, you could conduct a scientific experiment or see how a chemical reaction works practically. You could audition for a part in a play you're studying or perform a piece of music you're analysing. You could visit the site of an important historical event, such as the Battle of the Somme. Experiencing things practically gives your brain something concrete to remember, so not only will you absorb the information more easily in the first place, but it'll also be easier to recall things when exam time comes around.

3.3.7 Learning by Deducing

You may have the kind of mind that enjoys solving problems. Rather than being told the answer, you may find that you learn best by working through the problem for yourself. This style of learning will be best suited to mathematical and scientific types.

3.3.7 Tests and Mock Exams

Some people enjoy tests and mock exams because they provide strong motivation to succeed. If you're the sort of person who thrives on these sorts of challenges, you could try asking your teacher, parents or study buddies to set a mini mock exam to test what you've learned on a topic. A more fun variant of this is the quiz, which you could arrange with your friends.

3.3.8 Length of Study Periods and Deadlines

Time yourself to find a good working rhythm. Some people like to knuckle down and study something for hours until they really get to grips with it. Others have shorter attention spans and need to study intensively in short bursts. Find out which is best for you by experimenting with different lengths of study session. Perhaps start by allocating yourself half an hour and setting a stopwatch; you may find that it's not enough for you to get into the topic, and you find you want to carry on for longer. Carry on until you naturally feel ready to stop and see how long you've been studying for. Try doing this a few more times both with the same subject and with other subjects. Look at your average study time within each subject and this is likely to be your optimum study time. It's important to do this subject by subject, because you may find yourself better able to study for longer periods of time with some subjects than others. Subjects you don't like, for example, may require shorter study periods to keep you motivated.

Some find that they work better under the pressure of a looming deadline, as it forces them to focus totally on the task at hand (the consequences of not doing so are far worse than the effort this takes!). If this sounds like you, you might be able to motivate yourself by setting yourself your own deadlines if those imposed by your teachers are too distant to make you spring into action. One way of doing this is to write out a list of what you're going to get done today and not stop until you've completed every item on the list. Alternatively, rather than writing down the 'official' deadline in your diary, choose your own, much closer, deadline and write that down instead.

3.3.9 Environment

The environment in which you choose to study can have a big impact on your productivity, and as such, it's worth experimenting with various environmental factors when you're coming up with an overall learning style to help you work to your maximum potential.

3.3.10 Silence versus music

Do you concentrate better in total silence, or does silence agitate you? Try working in a library and see if you can deal with the quiet. Some people prefer to study with music on to motivate themselves. If you prefer music, it's worth experimenting with different styles of music to see which helps you study best. Even if you don't normally listen to classical music, its lack of lyrics could help you focus more than songs you can sing along to. Some people even prefer to listen to heavy metal while they're studying – each to their own!

3.3.11 Working space

Consider where you can study comfortably and effectively. When you have a laptop, you can work from anywhere, so you can try out different working spaces and see which allows you to be most productive. Here are some of the places you could try

- At home – try different parts of the house, such as the dining table or your room. Do you work better by the window, or does that just distract you?
- In the garden – this can be a nice way to enjoy the outdoors while still getting work done, and the change of scene may be motivating to some; others may find it's too hard to concentrate because they want to relax.
- In the library – libraries are meant for studying in, so either your school or university library or your town or city library could provide a suitable distraction-free learning environment.
- At a relative's house – if your house is full of noisy siblings, you might find it easier to study at the house of a nearby relative, such as a grandparent.
- In a coffee shop – most coffee shops have free Wi-Fi these days, so you could try taking your laptop down to your local one and enjoy a

coffee while you study. Providing the noise doesn't distract you, this is another way of motivating yourself with a change of scene.

- In an empty classroom – if you find you work best in the school environment, why not see if you can work in an empty classroom (if there is one)?

3.3.12 Alone or with Friends

We've already touched on the fact that some people may prefer to study in the company of others, but it's an environmental factor too. Some people find they work better alone, and get distracted with chatting if they're with friends, while others really need the motivation of being with friends to get anything done and find it isolating to study alone.

3.4 Using Memory and Mnemonic Devices

Mnemonic devices are memory techniques you can use to help improve your ability to retain and remember something. It helps your brain to better encode and recall important information. By associating what you have to remember with an image, a word or a sentence. Examples of mnemonic devices include:

3.4.1 Acronyms

These are pronounceable words formed from the first letters or first few letters of each word found in a name or phrase.

- UNICEF - The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
- SMART - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely (Used in Goal setting)
- AWOL – Absent Without Leave
- AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats.

3.4.2 Rhymes

Rhymes make remembering easy because they have similar sounds at the end of each line. The example below is a popular mnemonic for remembering the number of days in a month:

30 days hath September,
April, June and November,
All the rest have 31,
Except February alone.
Which only has but 28 days clear
And 29 in each leap year

3.4.3 Chunking and Organization

This is a way of breaking down larger pieces of information into smaller, organized units or "chunks". This makes the resulting chunks easier to commit

to memory than a longer string of information an example is the sequence for writing telephone numbers e.g. 0908 765 4321 will be easier to remember than 09087654321.

3.4.4 Imagery

Visual imagery is an effective way to help you memorize and recall information when you need it. You can create a mental image of what you want to recall, or have it sketched into your study notes. It does not matter if your drawing or sketches are not good as long as you know what your sketch means you will do just fine. The important thing is that it helps you learn and remember. For example, you can associate a visual image of Prof. Wole Soyinka with his white hair and beard to help you remember his contributions in African Literature.

3.5 Finding the Right Study Strategies

3.5.1 Pick a Place and Time

Everyone has their own idea about the best place and time to study. Whether it's your bedroom at night or the library after school, find a study space and a regular study time that works for you and stick with it. No matter how tight your schedule, you should have a place and time set out for private study. This will help you meet up with your reading and assignments and remove the stress that comes with unplanned study pattern.

- Set up your study space – Your study space should be quiet, comfortable and distraction-free. It should make you feel happy and inspired. Decorate it with your favourite pictures or objects. If you want to listen to music or burn incense, pick a space that lets you do that.
- Find your best time – Some people work better in the morning. Others work better at night. Work out which time suits you and plan to study then. Don't study much later than your usual bedtime – pushing yourself late at night can make you too tired to study properly.

3.5.2 Study Daily

If you study a little bit every day you'll be continually reviewing things in your mind. This helps you understand things. It also helps you avoid the stress of last-minute cramming.

Early in the year an hour or two per night might be enough to stay on top of things. Later in the year you might need to study more each day.

If you're finding it hard to find time to study, cut back on some of your other activities. Prioritizing study might mean spending less time online, or it might mean cutting back on shifts at work or giving weekend sport a miss for a while.

3.5.3 Plan your Time

It helps to have some plans in motion, so you can make the most of your study time.

- Set alarms – Set alarms to remind you about your study plans. A regular reminder keeps you honest and your plans on track.
- Use a wall planner – Stick a calendar or wall planner up so you can see it whenever you're studying. Mark it up with important dates, like exams and assignment due dates. Use it to block out your regular study timetable too.
- Make to-do lists – Lists break tasks down into manageable chunks. At the start of the week, make a list of the things that you need to have done by the end of the week. Make a to-do list at the start of each study session too, so that you're clear about what you need to be doing with your time.
- Set time limits – Before you start your study session, have a look at your to-do list and give yourself a set time to spend on each task. If you don't get something done in the set time, consider whether it's the best use of your time to keep going with it, or to start working on something else.

3.5.4 Discover your Learning Style

Most of us have a preferred way of learning. Get to know the learning style you're most comfortable with and study in the ways you learn best.

Note that these styles are just a way to think about different studying techniques – they're not hard and fast rules that say you should only study in one way. Try each of these out and see which ways you prefer.

- Auditory learners prefer to learn by listening. Try reading your notes aloud and discussing them with other people. You might like to record key points and play them back.
- Visual learners prefer to learn by seeing. Try using colours in your notes and draw diagrams to help represent key points. You could try to remember some ideas as images.
- Tactile/kinesthetic learners prefer to learn by doing, rather than listening to a lecture or watching demonstrations. Try using techniques like role-playing or building models to revise key points.

3.5.5 Review and Revise

At least once a week you should go back over the things you've studied in class. Thinking things over can help you to understand the concepts and help you remember when you need them the most.

- Quiz – Get a friend or family member to quiz you on key concepts. Offer to help your friends with their work too. Quizzes are great ways to get confident about what you know and find out what you still need to learn.

- Make your own study materials – Think up some practice exam questions or create your own flash cards to help you study. This way you learn it all twice: once when you make the study materials and once when you use them to revise.

3.5.6 Take Breaks

It's important to take breaks while you're studying, especially if you're feeling tired or frustrated. Working too long on a task can actually decrease your performance. When you take a break, make sure you get away from your desk or study space. A bit of physical – even just a walk around the block – can sometimes help you to look at a problem in a different way and could even help you to solve it.

3.5.7 Ask for Help

If you're stuck on something, or something just doesn't seem to make sense, you can always ask for help. Talk to your teachers or lecturers about the things you don't understand. Talk to your friends and fellow students too.

3.5.8 Stay Motivated

When you're studying it helps to keep in mind your reasons for doing all this hard work, like a course or career you're working towards. It can help to have something in your study space to remind you of your goals. You could also decorate your study space with inspirational quotes or photos of people you admire and family members you want to make proud of you.

You should note that whatever strategy you come up with, when you find something that works for you, put it into practice and go for it!

3.5.9 Prioritize your time

No matter how much you might wish differently, there are only so many hours in a day you can devote to studying. It is important that you prioritize your time at the beginning of every study session. Make a study plan, starting with the more difficult tasks and material and then move on to the easier ones.

3.5.10 Participate in Class Discussions

These discussions have a way of imprinting knowledge you have in your minds. Contribute to these discussions by asking questions or sharing your understanding of what you have learnt.

3.5.11 Find a Study Group

If it is possible, get a study group. That may not always be possible because you study from a distance but if you do find a group, it will surely help.

3.5.12 Manage your Life and Family Well

Your family and friends can be a great support system, but they can also be a drag on your time and energy. Do not allow undue interference from them. Do not let life get in the way of your dreams. Your work, family and friends are important, but you should prioritize to be able to achieve your goal.

3.6 Preparing for Tests and Examinations

3.6.1 Give yourself enough time to study

Do not leave studying for the course until the last minute. This is not the best way to approach an examination. To help sort out your time management, set up a timetable for your study. Write down how many exams you have and the days on which you have to sit for them, and then organize your study accordingly. You may want to give some exams more study time than others, but in all find a comfortable balance.

3.6.2 Organize your Study Space

Make sure you have enough space to spread your textbooks and notes out. Is the light in the room bright enough? How comfortable is your chair? These are things you need to take care of. Try and get rid of all distractions, and make sure you feel as comfortable and able to focus as possible.

3.6.3 Use Flow Charts and Diagrams

Visual aids can be helpful when revising. At the start of a topic, challenge yourself to write down everything you already know about a topic – and then highlight where the gaps lie. Closer to the exam, condense your revision notes into one-page diagrams. Getting your ideas down in this brief format can then help you to quickly recall everything you need to know during the exam.

3.6.4 Practice with Old Exams

One of the most effective ways to prepare for exams is to practice taking past versions. This helps you get used to the format of the questions, and - if you time yourself - can also be good practice for making sure you spend the right amount of time on each section.

3.6.5 Explain your Answers to Others

When you explain what you have read to others, it gives you a clearer picture of your understanding of the topic and also to highlight any areas where you need more work.

3.6.6 Organize Study Groups with Friends

Get together with friends for a study session. You may have questions that they have the answers to and vice versa. As long as you make sure you stay focused on the topic for an agreed amount of time, this can be one of the most effective ways to challenge yourself.

3.6.7 Take Regular Breaks

While you may think it's best to study for as many hours as possible, this can actually be counterproductive. You should always take short breaks to stretch out and this helps retention of knowledge.

3.6.8 Don't Forget to Eat!

You may feel like you deserve a treat, or that you don't have time to cook, but what you eat can really have an impact on energy levels and focus, so keep your body and brain well-fuelled by choosing nutritious foods that have been proven to aid concentration and memory, such as fish, nuts, seeds, yogurt and blueberries. The same applies on exam day - eat a good meal before the test, based on foods that will provide a slow release of energy throughout. Sugar may seem appealing, but your energy levels will crash an hour later.

3.6.9 Drink Plenty of Water

Remember that being well hydrated is essential for your brain to work at its best. Make sure you keep drinking plenty of water throughout your revision, and also on the exam day.

3.6.10 Plan your Exam Day

Make sure you get everything ready well in advance of the exam - don't leave it to the day before to suddenly realize you don't know the way, or what you're supposed to bring. Check all the rules and requirements and plan your route and journey time so that you will be punctual.

4.0 Conclusion

People learn differently and such we can classify learners as follows: visual learners, aural learners, verbal learners and kinaesthetic learners among others. You can also learn by note-taking, learning by memorizing, learning with others, learning by doing, learning by deducing or using tests/mock examinations. There are various spaces and various learners can use, that is some spaces can be conducive for learning for some people and may not be conducive for others.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

Video

Audio

6.0 References/Further Reading

Student Academic Services. (2011). Note taking systems. California Polytechnic State University. Retrieved from <http://www.sas.calpoly.edu/asc/ssl/notetakingsystems.html>

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Module 3 Assessment and Evaluation Modes In Open And Distance Learning (ODL)

Unit 1	Overview of Assessment in ODL
Unit 2	Instructional-Based Assessment Modes
Unit 3	Semester Examination
Unit 4	Assessment of Non-Examinable Courses

Unit 1 Overview of Assessment in ODL

Contents

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)
3.0	Main Content
	3.1 Concept and Tools of Assessment and Evaluation
	3.2 Importance of Evaluation/Assessment
	3.3 Types of Assessment
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	References/Further Reading



1.0 Introduction

Welcome to the third module that is going to focus on assessment. For your effective learning and studying, assessment directs you as to what you are to focus on during the course of study. Though you have been engaged in writing tests and examinations, yet you have not really comprehended what an assessment is and how it relates to evaluation. In this unit therefore, you will learn different meaning, types and why you are involved in assessment throughout the period of your study.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)



By the end of this unit, you will be able to

- Explain assessment and evaluation in the context of open and distance learning
- Appreciate the purposes for which assessment is carried out among undergraduate learners
- Acknowledge different types of assessment
- Explain the principles that guide you in the process of selecting, developing and using meaningful assessment.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Concept of Assessment and Evaluation

3.1.1 Meaning and Guidelines for Selecting Assessment

Assessment occupies a vital position in the process of teaching and learning, certification and acquiring knowledge and skills, whether in a conventional system, or an ODL system. Assessment is a sub-system of the total ODL system. A vast mechanism works for managing students' assessment. All activities an instructor carries out in order to ascertain the level of achievement and ability of any learner is a form of assessment. Nitko and Brookhart (2007) described assessment as a process for obtaining information that is used for making decisions about students, curricula, programme, schools and educational policy. Assessing students' competence involves collecting information to help decide the degree to which the student has achieved the learning targets. Assessment is classroom research to provide useful feedback for the improvement of teaching and learning. [Assessment](#) is feedback from the student to the instructor about the student's learning.

Assessment is conducted in the ODL system mainly:

- To provide feedback to learners starting from assignments to the term-end examination; to get an idea about what they are really doing and what they are supposed to do to complete the programme; and to generate a spirit of consciousness to connect the concept of written materials with the varieties of practices carried out by the learner.
- To reach at summative evaluation based on formative assessment, which helps learners to examine their performance at every stage of their study and progress successfully to attain the course objectives.
- Assessment in ODL is not only meant for students to earn a grade, it is equally helpful for monitoring the effectiveness of academic programmes and adopting appropriate strategies to accomplish institutional objectives.
- The practice of assessment in ODL is not only for certifying students, it also impacts their learning improvement and helps learners to develop a positive attitude towards the institutional system (Commonwealth of Learning, 1999).

According to Falayajo (2004), assessment is likely to result in promotion and improvement of learning only when at least these conditions are met:

- The outcomes being tested must be recognised and accepted as important objectives of the instructional programme
- Assessment of achievement must be planned and implemented as an integral part of the curriculum and programme of instruction.

This is emphasising the fact that assessment measures the programme of instruction based on the stated objectives. A set of guiding principles must be observed in selecting assessment meaningfully. These guidelines include:

- Be clear about the learning targets you want to assess.
- Be sure that the assessment techniques you select match each learning target.
- Ensure that the selected assessment tools serve the needs of the learners.
- Use multiple indicators of achievement for each learning target.
- Take limitation of results of assessment into account when interpreting the results of assessment.

Instructors can ensure that their methods of assessment are effective by ensuring that they:

- ▶ strive for clarity
- ▶ maintain balance
- ▶ ensure [validity and reliability](#)
- ▶ accommodate individual needs and differences.



ACTIVITY: Examine seven assessment [tools](#) described in the source and how are they different from those that you are familiar with in course of study?



3.1.2 Definition of Evaluation

The general assessment of students' learning would be inconclusive without evaluation because assessment all assessment activities must lead to evaluation. Evaluation is the process of making a value judgement about the worth of a student's product or performance. Assessment provides the information you may use to judge the quality or worth of students' performance.

Evaluation is a continuous process of inquiry concerned with the study, appraisal, and improvement of all aspects of the educational programmes. Evaluation also leads to decision-making among several alternatives. The [scope](#) of evaluation involves value judgement, ascertaining the extent to which educational objectives have been ascertained, effectiveness of appraisal of instructions and identifying learners' strength and weaknesses.

3.1.1 Importance of Evaluation/Assessment

In the previous section of this unit, you have seen the link between assessment and evaluation with the emphasis that assessment leads to evaluation that affords decision making. Among ODL learners as so for other learners in other mode of instructional delivery, assessment serves the following purposes:

3.2.1 Instructional Management

Assessment helps you to make decisions on how to plan instructional activities, placing students into learning sequences, monitoring students' progress, diagnose learners' learning difficulties, providing students and parents with feedback about achievements, evaluating teaching effectiveness and assigning grades to students.

3.2.2 Selection

In Nigeria, learners are often considered and selected or rejected for admissions into various schools and institutions based in their performance in approved assessment bodies like Federal, State, National examinations council (NECO), West African examination Council (WAEC) given to them. When institutions use assessment for selection purpose, it is necessary to show the candidates that results on the assessment bear a significant relationship to success in the programme or job for which the institution is selecting persons.

3.2.3 Placement

People are assigned to different levels of the same general type of instruction, education or work; no one is rejected, but all remain within the institution to be assigned to some level (Cronbach, 1990).

3.2.4 Classification

At times you must make a decision that results in a learner being assigned to one of several different but unordered categories, jobs or programme. You need to consider classification as a more general term that subsumes selection and placement as special cases. Classification refers to cases in which that categories are essentially unordered; placement focuses on cases in which the category represents ordered levels of education without rejection, and selection refers to cases in which students are accepted or rejected.

3.2.5 Guidance and Counselling

Have you ever consulted your Counsellor at the study for any information concerning your studying, personal challenges or family issues? Guidance and counsellors carry out assessment to obtain relevant information from you so as to guide you better. Assessment results frequently assist students in exploring, choosing, and preparing for career. A series of assessment is carried out using interview, questionnaire, interest inventory, various aptitude test and an achievement battery.

3.2.6 Credentialing and Certification

Certification refers to the confirmation of certain characteristics of an object, person, or organization. Some form of external review, education, assessment, or audit often, but not always, provides this confirmation. Assessment helps in ascertaining whether a learner has met up with certain criteria (minimum competency) for him/her to be given a certificate on the programme pursued. In order to justify the assessor, the quality of the instruction must correspond to what the assessment procedures covers.



ACTIVITY:

Identify four purposes that Liljedahl (2010) explained in the write up in peterliljedahl.com/wp-content/uploads/Four-Purposes-of-Assessment1.pdf. In what ways do these purposes similar or different from what you have covered in this section.

3.3 Types of Assessment

This section will take you through different types of assessment you will be exposed to as you undergo academic programme in this university. Make sure you access other sources for greater information and also be involved in the activities of the section.

Classroom assessment is generally divided into three types: assessment for learning (Formative Assessment), assessment (Summative Assessment) and assessment as learning.



3.3.1 Assessment for Learning


Assessment for learning is given for diagnosing learners' problems and difficulties during instructional processes. It is administered to provide remediation to alleviate such difficulties. It is referred to as [formative assessment](#). Formative assessment leads to judgement of students' about the quality of students' achievement made while students are still in the process of learning. Its result is used to improve teaching and to help to guide students' learning. It provides feedback for deriving appropriate intervention. Assessment *for* learning is especially useful for teachers as they develop, modify and differentiate teaching and learning activities. It is continuous and sustained throughout the learning process and indicates to students their progress and growth.

3.3.2 Assessment of Learning

Assessment *of* learning is cumulative in nature. It is used to confirm what students already know and what they can do in relation to the program of studies outcomes. Assessment of learning is an essential part of your study and it focuses on all kinds of ways you would have to undergo to test your abilities and achievement during the course of your study. It is otherwise called [summative assessment](#). This helps your instructors to evaluate students after you have finished one or more units of study. Summative information is needed about a students' achievement that counts towards grades for a marking period. It comes at the end of a semester or session to ascertain what you have attained in course or programme with a view to awarding you with a degree in the institution. Summative assessment is also carried out to check whether an educational programme is successful or not.

3.3.3 Assessment as Learning

Assessment *as* learning focuses on fostering and supporting metacognitive development in students as they learn to monitor and reflect upon their own learning and to use the information gathered to support and direct new learning. This involves taking assessment as a field of study that one can specialise on and on which one have in-depth knowledge. As a discipline assessment makes one to become an expert in order to contribute to that area of the body of knowledge.

Discussion Forum  : What in your own opinion is most important, assessment for learning, assessment of learning or assessment as learning? Justify your stand.

4.0 Conclusion

Assessment and evaluation are key processes in which learners are examined to know their level of ability and achievement. Assessment could be undertaken using various means but evaluation would further use the

information of the assessment to ascertain the quality and worth of the traits/behaviours so as to make decisions among many alternatives.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

Video

Audio

6.0 References/Further Reading

Berry, R. (2008). Assessment for Learning. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. <https://books.google.com.ng/books?isbn=9622099572>

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Unit 2 Instructional-Based Assessment Modes

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)
- 3.0 Main Content
- 3.1 In-text/Self-Assessment
- 3.2 Tutor/Computer–marked Assignment
- 4.0 Conclusion
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- 6.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 Introduction

Assessment helps you to attain maximally objectives set out for your effective leaning. In this unit, you will be taken through the form of assessments that are imbedded into the study and that will help you to have full understanding of your study materials. They are self/in-text assessment and tutor/computer marked-assignment. The self-assessment is fully undertaking by you as you go through the study materials while the tutor-marked assignment would be submitted to your instructor or electronically for making and feedback is given to you to strengthen areas of weakness.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)



By the end of this unit, you would have:

- Gained the skills in utilizing self-assessment to improve understanding of concepts of study.
- Applied the principles behind tutor/computer marked assignments to prepare adequately for examination.
- Compared modes of tutor-marked in open and distance learning universities in Africa.



3.0 Main Content

3.1 In-text/Self-Assessment

Learning target should offer students ways to think about evaluating their own learning. Applying criteria to their own work in progress, discussion with peer about their work, and reflection on their work after its completion does this. Students should be taught effective self-assessment techniques. In a culture of transparent and understood learning goals, self-assessment has great

meaning. In fact, it could be argued, that self-assessment in a climate devoid of such transparency has no meaning. Without knowing what the targets are, how could a student effectively evaluate their performance? But this is more than a philosophical shift. It is also a [pragmatic](#) shift. In a climate where students have full knowledge of the learning goals and how their work relates to these learning goals self- assessment can become the most effective method for assessing homework, in class assignments, and quizzes. In such a climate, there is no motivation for students to be misleading about their work. In fact, giving students the freedom to record their achievement using codes for correct, incorrect, correct with help, correct but incomplete, did not attempt, etc. will allow for students to maintain a constant and accurate record of where they are in their learning. Activities of the self-assessment would enable learners to know his/her understanding if what had been studied and have a reflection on content covered. It serves as a source of reflection and pondering upon what has been taught or learnt. If there is any deficiency, learners would go back to the learning materials to identify the missing link for adequate adjustments. They are in-built into the instructional process.



ACTIVITY: Read *Enhancing Learning through Self Assessment* by David Boud on <https://books.google.com.ng/books?isbn=1135354340>. Write eight ways of using self assessment. Do a posting on students' forum of this course.

2.2 Tutor/Computer–Marked Assignment

Aside from self-assessment, learners should complete stipulated tutor or computer marked assignments. Tutor-marked assignment (TMA) is given to learners and submitted to the instructor or facilitator who scores and grades based on set out criteria. After marking, such a facilitator makes comments and gives feedback to learners. [Computer-marked assignment](#) (CMA) items are generated by the facilitator, uploads them into the computer and administer to students online. After completion, it is the computer that scores and award grade on the performance. The administrators, through the computer (online), provide comments and feedback to the learners.

In National Open University of Nigeria, the current assignment is computer-based. Each student is to take four computer-marked assignments of eighty (80) multiple-choice items broken down into 20 items for each assignment on a course registered for. Time line for completion and submission of assignments are set and learners have to ensure strict adherence to the time schedule failure of which the porter will be closed not be able to take such assignment.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Compare the modes of tutor-marked assignment in two other Open Universities in Africa pointing out the similarities and dissimilarities from NOUN. Post your response of not more than 500 words to forum page.



ACTIVITY: Listen to this You Tube presentation by Okt (2017) on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHR04J9JIIY>. Identify five ingredients that can make tutor-marked assignment for meaningful for learners. Submit your response to forum activity of the platform.

4.0 Conclusion

Assessment is used to ascertain how students learn as they go through the content materials is called self-assessment. This is very necessary to follow up with learners studying at every point and to ensure that each aspect is well understood before progressing to another section of the study. Computer-marked assignment is given to assessment students' performance. Its items are generated by instructor and uploaded into the computer for student to attempt but the computer does the marking. Three of such assignments are available to each student every semester on every course registered for.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

Video

Audio

6.0 References/Further Reading

David Boud, B. (2013). Enhancing Learning through Self Assessment. <https://books.google.com.ng/books?isbn=1135354340>

Unit 3 Semester Examination

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Structure of semester examination test items
 - 3.2 Tips for preparing for examination
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 References/Further Reading



1.0 Introduction

This unit will take you through the intricacies of gaining skills for preparing and writing semester examination in open and distance learning system. You will also learn about the structure of examinations that are available in your institution in order to be familiar with modes and types of test items you are likely to come across during your course of study.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to

- Explain the structure of examination being conducted in NOUN
- Utilise the skills for preparing for semester examination
- Employ relevant competencies in writing examination papers
- Demonstrate the skills for coping with examination anxieties that often weaken the students' concentration when writing an examination.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Structure of semester examination test items

Examination is the process or act of testing for knowledge and ability in order to determine its worth. This implies that a test is a means of measuring the knowledge, skills or aptitude of an individual. Osindeinde (2000) reiterated that examination is a broad term that connotes the assessment of knowledge, skills and intelligence acquired by learners in an educational system. From this assertion, it is clear that the [purpose of examination](#) is to measure the extent of achievement of learners in terms of educational objectives. Hence, examination in distance learning institutions serves a number of functions such as certification, selection and accountability.

In National Open University of Nigeria, examination in every semester is of two phases. The first is referred to as Pen-on-paper (POP) meant for undergraduates who are in 300, 400, 500 levels with students from the Faculty of Law and it is essay type of questions in which each student is made to write their answers theoretically. All postgraduate students also take POP

examinations. The second is said to be electronic examination (e-exam) for undergraduate in 100 and 200 levels except those from Faculty of Law. The PoP test items for 300 level are five main questions out of which students are meant to answer three but for 400, 500 and postgraduate students, six main questions are generated out of which students would take four.

Discussion Forum

Explain how examination is conducted in your institution. What do you consider to be challenges facing your institution in the areas of administration of semester examination?

3.2 Tips for preparing for examination

Examination period should be approached with careful and high preparedness. For you to perform in the examination you write there is need for conscious efforts to be ready. You have study a [Vesta University examination preparation guidelines](#) as enunciated on sources of examination difficulties, effective study, motivational factors, multiple choice and essay examination writing strategies, in-text strategies, exam anxiety reduction and how to improve concentration. Northedge (2010) further gave elements of examination revision strategies as to when to start revision, getting hold of past questions, gathering together notes and books, working out a revision strategy and making a revision time table. Other revision approaches are don't try to re-read the course, don't try to memorise course notes, making a summary notes, trying to answer past examination questions, thinking up examination questions of your own and keeping in touch with other students. All these would assist you in getting ready to write your examination.

3.3 What to Avoid When Writing Examination



Northedge (2010) enunciated what you need to avoid when you are taking your examination papers. The following were pointed out:

- Not answering the question – You may fail answer a question when you fail to recognise the key terms and issues of the question. On the other hand, when you fail to offer critical analysis, take an

objective stance and arrive at conclusion. This will make you to guessing and drastically reduce your marks.

- Not using material from the course – Although learners are often advised to study wide, yet whatever material to be used to answer exam questions should not be deviant with the materials recommended for the course. Anything relevant that you can remember from the course will look better than an answer made up from your experience or views of people you happen to know.
- Stuffing answers full of names and facts – Examiners are not looking for how much you can memorise facts but to what extent you can put the ideas and information in the course materials into useful application.
- Using time badly – Every paper has length and breadth to cover in answering questions and the time allotted to answer the questions. Wasting of much time to a question to well does not attract given you marks from other questions you fail to answer for lack of time. Spend commensurate time on a question based on the mark allotted to it.
- Poor presentation – Examinees are prone to failure due to unstructured answer, lacking any division into paragraphs, writing in note form and illegible handwriting.

[Andrea Leyden \(2015\)](#) gave some tips for answering semester examination questions. Also, Pembroke gave some examination writing skills in attached pdf file (Pembroke's Friday Freebie material on pdf file on exam writing skills).



ACTIVITY:

In not more than 1000 words Identify and discuss five test taking skills enumerated in this link www.veritasprep.com/...preparation-test-taking-skills. Post your responses on the discussion forum

Self-Assessment Exercises

Write out 10 dos and 10 don'ts necessary for consideration when preparing or writing examination in your institution context. Post your responses on the discussion forum.

4.0 Conclusion

Semester examination is a form of summative in which students are subjected to testing mode to answer questions be it pen-on-paper or electronic based on the content of the courses covered in the semester. Students are to avoid not answering questions in line with instructions given by the examiner. When preparing for examination, you need to make summary notes and try to answer past questions.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

Video

Audio

6.0 References/Further Reading

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Unit 4 Assessment of Non-Examinable Courses

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- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Assessment of Research Projects
 - 3.2 Practicum and SIWES Assessment
 - 3.3 Teaching Practice and Seminar Assessment
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 References/Further Reading



1.0 Introduction

Non-examinable courses are courses that are not assessed through regulated examination condition but their assessment are based on criteria set on every aspect in which students are required to demonstrate skills. Such courses might be assessed using observations from the supervisor, rating of the required skills and assessment of quality report presented. This unit will expose you to how non-examinable courses such as research project, practicum, SIWES, teaching practice and seminar presentation are scored.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Arrange the components of research project reports according to format laid down by each department
- Acquire competence in undertaking students industrial work experience in the area of course of study
- Differentiate between SIWES and practicum and how these are assessed
- Appraise the point of focus in teaching practice and practical activities

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Assessment of Research Projects

All undergraduate students are bid to carry out a research project as the requirements for graduation. Depending on your department, you too will be required to carry out a research in your final year on any areas of interest related to your course of study. Research is systematic process of collecting and analysing information or data in order to enhance understanding of focussed phenomenon with which you are concerned or interested. Research is not mere information gathering, transformation of facts, rummaging for information and catchword to get information. Rather it is an activity through which answers are given to a question with systematic support of data.

Each Faculty has the mode of assessing research work of students based on the agreed structure/guidelines that made available. A good [research report](#), must possess the following sections:

There are five chapters when presenting final report of research project or thesis as presented below:

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Background to the Study
- 1.2 Statement of the problem
- 1.3 Research Questions/Hypotheses
- 1.4 Purpose of the Study
- 1.5 Significance of the Study
- 1.6 Scope and Delimitation of Study
- 1.7 Limitation of Study (optional)
- 1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

- 2.1 Model/Theoretical Framework/Conceptual Framework
- 2.2 Insert other relevant sub-headings
- 2.3 etc
- 2.4 Literature Appraisal

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 Research Design
- 3.2 Population of the Study
- 3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques
- 3.4 Instrument(s)
- 3.5 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument(s)
- 3.6 Administration of Instrument(s)
- 3.7 Method of Data Analysis

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Summary of Findings
- 5.2 Conclusion
- 5.3 Implications of the Study
- 5.4 Recommendations
- 5.5 Suggestions for Further Research
- 5.6 Contribution to Knowledge (PG Students only)

References

Appendices

In order to assess your submitted research report, your Faculty prepares an assessment sheet the format of which is presented below:



National Open University of Nigeria
Plot 91, Cadastral Zone, Nnamdi Azikiwe Expressway
Jabi, Abuja, Nigeria

Faculty of Education
Student Research Project Assessment Sheet

Name of Student:

Matric Number:

Study Centre:

Title of Project:

.....

.....

Supervisor:

Year

S/N	Project Report Features	Total Marks	Rating	Score
1	Preliminary Pages	05	5 4 3 2 1	
2	Chapter 1: Introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Statement of the problem. How practical or theoretically significant is the problem? Was it clearly stated? - Hypotheses/Research questions: Are they verifiably formulated? Can they be logically deduced from some theory or the problem? - Objective/Purpose: Are the objectives/purposes clearly stated? 	15	5 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1	
3	Chapter 2: Literature Review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of previous research relevance and comprehensiveness. - Pertinent opinion/theory conceptual framework reviewed. 	10	5 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1	
4	Chapter 3: Methodology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriateness of the design. - Population and samples clearly specified. - Instrumentation and methods of data collection clearly stated. - Sampling procedure clearly described. 	20	5 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1	
5	Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Discussion of Results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriateness of the analysis technique. - Presentation of result pertinent to each hypothesis/research question. - Findings consistent with the data presented. - Discussion of Results appropriate, consistent and related to the findings and related researches. 	20	5 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1	
6	Chapter 5: Summary & Conclusions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conclusions consistent with the obtained results. - Generalisations confined to the population from which the sample was drawn. 	10	5 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1	

S/N	Project Report Features	Total Marks	Rating	Score										
7	Referencing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials – correctly cited using the APA format. - Comprehensively cited. 	10	<table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>5</td><td>4</td><td>3</td><td>2</td><td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td><td>4</td><td>3</td><td>2</td><td>1</td> </tr> </table>	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
5	4	3	2	1										
5	4	3	2	1										
8	Others: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Typing/neatness/consistency of character. - Overall impression. 	10	<table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>5</td><td>4</td><td>3</td><td>2</td><td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td><td>4</td><td>3</td><td>2</td><td>1</td> </tr> </table>	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
5	4	3	2	1										
5	4	3	2	1										
General Comments														
Student's Overall Score: Grade:														
..... Supervisor's Name, Signature and Date														

This is typical project assessment sheet for Faculty of Education. Your Faculty would give you the format for your project report on which the assessment would be based.



ACTIVITY : From this [link](#) identify the reasons why research is essential for you to undertake.

3.2 Practicum and SIWES Assessment

A practicum is a graduate level course, often in a specialized field of study, that is designed to give students supervised practical application of a previously or concurrently studied theory. Practicums are common for [education](#) and [social work](#) majors. In some cases, the practicum may be a part-time student teaching placement that occurs the semester before a student's full-time student teaching placement. The process resembles an [internship](#); however, the latter is often not part of the [school](#) program.

Essentially, educational practicums and internships are supervised on-site work experiences that allow students to practice and demonstrate their developing skills and competencies in their chosen career. While these experiences bear some similarities in design, their purpose and scope are quite different. Understanding the difference between a practicum and an internship can better prepare students for the curriculum demands of their

degree programs. Essentially, educational practicums and internships are supervised on-site work experiences that allow students to practice and demonstrate their developing skills and competencies in their chosen career. While these experiences bear some similarities in design, their purpose and scope are quite different.

Practicums are field experiences that allow a student to observe and document how working professionals perform their job responsibilities. Students will also [participate to a limited extent](#) in performing tasks under supervision by program professors and on-site staff. Concurrently, students enrol in a course which outlines the expectations and requirements of the practicum. The expectations associated with a practicum vary according to the career. For example, a practicum in teaching may require assisting the teacher with implementing small group instruction, whereas a practicum in nursing may entail recording vital signs for one or two patients under supervision. General characteristics of practicums include:

- Shadowing one or more assigned employees who will guide the on-site experience.
- Observing and correlating practices in the field with theories and methods previously studied.
- Recording data or assisting with tasks as directed by on-site personnel.
- Completing practicum course assignments.

Participation at the practicum site is typically two or three times per week for a few hours per session. No remuneration is expected for a practicum, but it does qualify for academic credit. Internships are usually considered to be full-time experiences, following the work schedule of the assigned placement. They also receive academic credit, and in some cases, may provide a stipend for services rendered.

As an avenue for preparing graduates for careers, academic practicum and internship experiences are valuable tools for learning. They not only afford students opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and practice their skills in real world settings but prepare students for the realities of the workplace. By understanding the differences between a practicum and an internship, students have the advantage of being better prepared to navigate the curriculum of the degree programs they are pursuing.

Understanding the difference between a practicum and an internship can better prepare students for the curriculum demands of their degree programs. In National Open University of Nigeria, students in most of the Faculties partake in practicum activities which enable them to practise the theories learnt with the course in the real work life.



ACTIVITY:

Access this link and draw out key difference between practicum and internship

<https://www.bestcounsellingdegrees.net/faq/what-is-the-difference-between-a-practicum-and-an-internship/>

Practicum is undertaken within six weeks. During this period both the internal and external supervisors monitor students. Supervisors have assessment sheet on which students performance in the practicum exercise are graded. Supervisors' scores are sent to the study centres where scores are compiled and forward to the concerned department for processing and make available to MIS for final upload to the students porter.

Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES)



SIWES is one of the industrial training fund (ITF) program. It was designed to give Nigerian students studying occupationally-related courses in higher institutions the experience that would supplement their theoretical learning.

Objectives of SIWES

The programmes of SIWES are designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Provision of avenue for students to acquire industrial skills and experience during their course of study
- To prepare students for the work situation they are likely to meet after graduation
- To expose students to work methods and techniques in handling equipment and machineries that they may not be available in the universities
- To make the transition from the university to the world of work easier and thus enhance students' contacts for later job placement.
- To provide students with an opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in real work situations, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice.

The Institutions will also do the following:

1. Appoint SIWES Coordinator in Schools;
2. Prepare and submit Master and Placement lists to the respective coordinating agency and ITF
3. Place students on attachment with employers;
4. Organise orientation programmes for students to prepare them for industrial training;
5. Supervise students on attachment and sign their logbooks. A minimum of three visits should be made to the
6. Students by the institution's supervisors during the period of attachment;
7. Work out industrial tailor-made programme with the employers-based supervisor on the National Training Guidelines for each course;
8. Submit completed ITF Form 8 to the ITF;

9. Submit comprehensive reports on the scheme to the ITF after the programme.

The Employers/Industry

1. Accept students and assign them to relevant on-the-job training;
2. Provide tailor-made training programmes for the students;
3. Attach experienced staff to students for effective training and supervision on a ratio of 1:10 (staff : students);
4. Control and discipline students like permanent staff;
5. Provide medical care for students within the limit of employers conditions of service;
6. Permit representatives of ITF and Institutions' based supervisors to visit the students on attachment and
7. Grade students in the assessment Form and the ITF Form.

The Students

1. To attend institution's SIWES orientation programme before going on industrial attachment;
2. Comply with the employers rules and regulations;
3. Keep proper records of training activities and other assignments in the logbook;
4. Arrange their own accommodation during the period of attachment;
5. Submit Log Books, Reports and other documents related to SIWES as required by their institution at the end of the training period;
6. Submit to ITF through their institution, Evaluation Form (ITF Form 8) completed by the students the employer and the institution;
7. Avoid changing of place of attachment except in special circumstances and with the permission of your Centre Director and the SIWES Directorate.

Duration of Attachment for SIWES Funding

The minimum duration for SIWES should normally be 24 weeks (6 months) at a stretch. The period is longer for engineering and technology programmes. The ITF will not pay for any attachment period that is less than 24 weeks. In most institutions, SIWES is done at the end of the 2nd semester examination of either 300, 400, or 500 level. The time and duration will have to be worked out jointly by each school and the directorate and the ITF.

COMPULSORY REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION

Master List

Placement List

Summary Sheet

ORIENTATION PROGRAMMES

All students accepted for SIWESS must be given an orientation on SIWES by their institutions during which ITF staff must be in attendance

SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS

Students on attachment are to be supervised by the professional ITF staff and the institutions supervisors (comprising staff of Schools and the Directorate).

ALLOWANCES

The current students and Institutional supervisory allowances approved by the Federal Government are as follows:

WRITING OF IT/SIWES LOGBOOK REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The report of the Industrial Training/SIWES is an essential part of the programme. The programme is, therefore, not deemed to have been passed through by the student, by the School Board of Studies and the University of Senate until a satisfactory report has been written. The guidelines for writing the reports are therefore set out below and the student should write the report stressing what he/she did during his/her attachment.

RECOMMENDED OUTLINE FOR WRITING REPORT

The plan of the report is the student's own responsibility. To streamline all reports, the following **outline is to be followed by every students.**

Title

Name of Student (Surname first)

Matriculation Number

Course and Year (e.g. Bus. Edu. 3)

Location & Firm of Training

Summary or Abstracts of report (about $\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 page) it should containing all the essentials inside the report.

Acknowledgement

Introduction

Here, the student should state what he/she is going to write about. He should briefly outline the organisational structure for the company.

Main Body of the Report

This is the most important part of the report and the student must show own innovations. The plan and order sequence should include mainly:

This is the most important part of the report and the student must show own innovations. The plan and order sequence should include mainly:

- The skills and practices the student required
- The operation and maintenance training received
- The specific work done must be given adequate coverage
- Any design, calculations, and analysis must be carefully, but briefly recorded.

- Supervision and any leadership role played in a given project or assignment (if any) must be briefly reported so as to leave no one in doubt as to student's actual involvement.
- Sketches, diagrams, graphs and drawings (if any) must all have titles and designated as Fig. 1, 2, etc. and each must be referred to at least once in the report.
- Experimental test, together with the tables of results must also be given adequate coverage. Each table should be given a title in a sequential order as: Table 1,2,3,4,5,6, etc. with related titles, and must be referred to at least once in the text.

ACTIVITIES:

Nigerian students face a lot of problems on SIWES, relate such problem you have experienced with the ones enumerated in this [link](#).

Conclusion

Here, the student should state again what he has achieved, contributed and learnt during this attachment.

Acknowledgements

All those who have in any way helped the student to the success of his training may be noted in this section.

References

A list of references may be necessary. It should be listed in the order the references are referred to in the report and also listed alphabetically.

Appendices (if any)

Detailed description of working principles of most apparatus, equipment or devices may be reserved for the appendix section. Only in exceptional cases when the apparatus is the main focus of training should detailed description form part of the main report.

3.3 Seminars, Teaching Practice and Practical

Each undergraduate student would also have to present a seminar as part of the requirements of their course. To do this, you need to identify a seminar topic that is of interest to you and write out a full research report on the topic. This report would be presented before an external assessor who would grade the quality of the report as well as the presentation. The presentation would be organized at the study centre. The assessment form resembles that of the research project assessment earlier discussed.



Teaching practice is peculiar to students in the Faculty of Education. Such students go for six weeks practical teaching in any school of their choice within the community of interest. Study centres assign supervisors to them and who will monitor and assess quality of their teaching. It is required that lesson notes are written to guide each lesson to undertake. Assessment of teaching practice is based on following areas:

- Introduction of Lesson
- Quality of objective of lesson
- Availability and appropriate use of instructional materials
- Content
- Presentation of lesson
- Evaluation
- Conclusion
- Summary
- Assignment
- Reference materials

The supervisors would pay two visits for your assessment before the expiration of six weeks.



Practical activities take place most in the Faculty of Science especially for Biology, Chemistry and Physics students. Each department will derive a time table for students based on practical courses students need to undertake each semester. You will be required to write your report after each practical exercise for your supervisor to assess. Since this is physical science experimental work your report would contain the following:

- Title
- Purpose
- Materials used
- Experimental Procedure
- Observations
- Precautions
- Inference
- Conclusion

Your practical report would be graded based on the quality, precision, accuracy and fervency of carrying out the experiment.

Self-Assessment Exercises

Imagine you are on SIWES exercise, write a comprehensive report of what you have done within the first two weeks of being in your SIWES firm.

Discussion Forum

Reflect on the conduct of examination, research project and SIWES in your institution pointing out distinctively the areas of strengths and weaknesses of how they are assessed. Suggest better ways to make assessment of each of them more effective. Your response should not be more than 400 words. Post your comment on the forum page.

4.0 Conclusion

Non-examinable courses are vital to your completion of your course of work and are key requirement for your graduation. They include research projects, SIWES, practicum, teaching practice, and seminars. You need to pay particular attention to them when you register for them to be taken. You need to consult your course coordinator to identify which of such courses are peculiar to your programme.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

Video 

Audio 

6.0 References/Further Reading

National Open University of Nigeria (2014) SIWES Guidelines. Retrieved from <http://nouedu.net/directorates/students-industrial-work-experience-scheme-siwes>

Sweizer, H.F. & King, M.A. (2014). The Successful Internship. Australia: /COLE Centage Laerning. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.ng/books?isbn=1285653262>

Module 4 Learners' Support Services

Unit 1	Definition and Purposes of Learners' Support Services
Unit 2	Types of Learners' Support Services
Unit 3	Sources of Learners' Support Services
Unit 4	Benefits of Learners' Support Services

Unit 1 Definition and Purposes of Learners' Support Services

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Definition of Learners' Support Services
 - 3.2 Purpose of Learners' Support Services
 - 3.2.1 Cognitive Purpose
 - 3.2.2 Affective Purpose
 - 3.2.3 Systematic Purpose
 - 3.3 Elements of Effective Learners' Support Services
 - 3.3.1 Responsiveness
 - 3.3.2 Interactivity
 - 3.3.3 Context Specificity
 - 3.3.4 Learner Development
 - 3.3.5 Openness to Change
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Reference/Further Reading

1.0 Introduction

You are welcomed to the last module of this course. In the last few weeks, you have studied various aspects of open and distance learning system of education from the history to communication modes and forms of assessment. All these are designed to make you familiar with the system of learning in open and distance learning and also to make you feel at home during your course of study in the National Open University of Nigeria. In this module, you would be examining one of the most important feature and concept of open and distance learning: learners' support services. In this unit, you would be looking at the definition and purpose of learners' support services.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Define learners' support service
- Identify activities that can be designated as learner' support service
- Describe the various purposes of learners' support services
- Differentiate between the various purposes of learners' support services.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Definition of Learners' Support Services

Learners' support is one critical component of an effective open and distance learning environment. As a concept within the open and distance learning, learners' support has been variously defined, however, the concept does not have a widely accepted definition (Bowa, 2008). You would be presented here with some major definitions that would help you to understand the concept.

Garrison and Bayton (1987) define learners' support services as the resources that learners can access in order to carry out the learning process. Garrison (1989) observes that in distance education, "support is concerned with a range of human and non-human resources to guide and facilitate the educational transaction" (p. 29). Tait (1995) an open and distance learning practitioner of Open University of United Kingdom who has written extensively on learners' support service defines it as follow:

The term students' support means the range of activities which complement the mass-produced materials which make up the most well-known elements in open and distance learning (ODL). It is, of course, true that printed course units, television and radio programmes, computer programmes etc., which replace the lecture as a means of delivery, and after so much both in terms of social and geographical access, and in terms of cost-effectiveness, support student in central ways. But the elements of ODL which are commonly referred to as student support are made up of tutoring, whether face-to-face, by correspondence, telephone or electronically; counselling; the organization of study centres; interactive teaching thorough television and radio, and other activities. These activities have as key conceptual components the notion of supporting the individual learning of the student whether alone or in groups, which in contrast to the mass-produced elements are identified for all learners (p. 232).

You need to note that the above definition was constructed when the use of print materials were predominant in distance education.

SAIDE (1999) defines learners' support as the "entire range of methods and strategies employed in the presentation and delivery of courses aimed at assisting and enabling learners to comprehend fully, assimilate and master the skills and knowledge needed to achieve success in their studies" (p. 14).

Simpson (2002) offers another beautiful definition. He approached the definition of learners' support from a broader sense and he sees it as all measures beyond the production of study materials that support students in their learning process. However, he brought in another dimension by differentiating between academic and non-academic support. On academic support, he wrote:

Academic support consists of: defining the course territory; explaining concepts; explaining the course; feedback-both informal and formal assessment; developing learning skills such as numeracy and literacy; chasing progress, following up students' progress through the course; enrichment-extending the boundaries of the course and sharing the excitement of learning (p.9).

On non-academic support, he wrote:

Non-academic support consists of: advising: giving information, exploring problems and suggesting directions; assessment: giving feedback to the individual on non-academic aptitudes and skills; action: practical help to promote study; advocacy: making out a case for funding, writing a reference; agitation: promoting changes within the institution to benefit students; administration: organizing student support (p. 8).

Self-Assessment Activity

Having gone through the above definitions, try formulating your definition of learners' support services.

3.2 Function of Learners' Support Services

3.2.1 Cognitive Function

Cognitive support facilitates learning through the mediation of the standard and uniform elements of course materials and learning resources for individual settings (Tait, 2000).

3.2.2 Affective Function

Affective services provide an environment that supports students, creates communities and enhances self-esteem (Tait, 2000:28).

3.2.3 Systematic Function

Systemic support services establish administrative processes and information management systems that are effective, transparent and student-friendly.

3.3 Types of Learners' Support Services

Adewale (2014) identifies five types of learners' support services and they are listed as follows: *This section should go to the next unit under types. For this section, look at the importance of learners' support services to the university and the students. Also, present the role both need to play to have a successful learner support services. In NOUN, explain the Directorate and its function. The students should know where to find such services*

Forum Discussion

In the few weeks you have spent in the National Open University of Nigeria, list all the activities you have gone through that can be classified as support services and group them according to their types.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit you have learnt that learners support services can be defined as the range of activities that complements the course materials designed to assist the students in the mastery of their course. These include tutorials, counselling, study centre organization and interactive teaching among others. Learners' support services can also be divided into two categories: academic (including tutorials, feedback through assessment, following students' progress etc.) and non-academic (including information access, advocacy, writing reference letters etc.). Learners' support services have three functions: cognitive, affective and systematic. Learners' support services also include administrative, technical, library and counselling support.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

Video

Audio

6.0 Reference/Further Reading

Student Handbook, NOUN.

Unit 2 Types of Learners' Support Services

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Types of Learners' Support Services
 - 3.1.1 Academic Support Services
 - 3.1.2 Social and Personal Support Services
 - 3.1.3 Information Support Services
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 Introduction

In the previous unit you have examined the definition as well as the various purposes of the learners' support services. You would have known that learners' support services comprises of wide range of activities that may even vary from one institution to the other. In this unit, you are going to examine the various classifications that make up learners' support services and the various activities included in them.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- List the various classes of learners' support
- Classify given list of activities to their respective class
- Identify various activities under each class of support services.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Types of Learners' Support Services

Though a lot of activities are involved in what is broadly known as learners' support services, they are usually classified into three. Rumajogee (2002) and Nonyongo (2002) divided the classes as follows: teaching and learning, social and personal and access and information.

3.1.1 Teaching and Learning Services

According to Bowa (2008), teaching and learning services consists of the following activities:

- a. Teaching and learning contacts,
- b. Network and learner support centres
- c. Compulsory residential schools
- d. Practical sessions for professional training (for example, teachers and nurses needs special sessions such as teaching practice and practicum)

- e. Access to facilities (for example, artisans would need workshops and natural sciences students would need laboratories).
- f. Academic advising
- g. Tutorial and counselling in person or by letter, telephone and e-mail.
- h. Tutorial marking and feedback
- i. Quick turnaround on assignments
- j. Orientation and on-going training of tutors to ensure quality support.
- k. Supply of high quality learning materials
- l. Pre-examination counselling
- m. Pre-course registration and counselling services
- n. Pre-course study-skills training
- o. Administration of examinations
- p. Provision of audio and or video tapes
- q. Telematics
- r. Supply of newspaper (internal and mass media).

3.1.1.1 Academic/Tutorial Support

Academic support has to do with support geared toward the academic life of the student. At the beginning of distance education, academic and tutorial support is done mainly through the tutors at the local study centres. As of today, there is a mixture of the face-to-face tutorial at the study centre and the web-based tutorials. As Lee (2003) says, “the focus of academic support gears towards facilitating collaborative learning and increasing interactivity between distance students and instructors or among distance students” (p. 183). Like every other open university, NOUN operates on the mixture of face-to-face tutorials at the study centre and the web based in selected course as of now but which would be expanded to cover all the courses as soon as possible.

3.1.2 Social and Personal Support Services

Social and personal needs services includes the following activities:

- a. Pre-course registration and counselling
- b. Internet and e-mail support
- c. Peer support/study groups
- d. Career guidance
- e. Disabilities support
- f. Minorities support
- g. Adult learners’ support
- h. Multicultural education coordination
- i. Social events

3.1.3 Information Support Services

Chattopadhyay (2014) opines that learners should be provided all necessary information prior to admission of their course so that they can make appropriate decisions about their studies and also have access to all

resources and support services. Information support services include the following:

- a. Information on fees and financial support
- b. Information on administrative procedure and regulations
- c. Information on registration and admission
- d. Access to information technologies
- e. Record management
- f. Book services
- g. Provision of personal timetables
- h. Career guidance

If you examined these activities closely, you would notice that some of them overlap, that is, they are found in more than one classification.

3.1.3.1 Administrative Support

Administrative support involves functions such as “admissions, registrations, course scheduling, student records and financial transactions” (Lee, 2003:183) and in most universities today, including the conventional universities, these exercises are mostly web-based. Though administrative support may look menial and mundane, they can lead to frustration when not properly planned.

3.1.3.2 Technical Support

Technical support is defined as the monitoring of the efficient operation of delivery media and offering of technical assistance to learners (Abate, 1999). In some instances, this often involves all round presence of technical assistance at the institution’s web site.

3.1.3.3 Library Support

In the distance education programme, “adequate library services and resources is essential for the attainment of academic excellence” (Lee, 2003:183) so there is the need to extend the library services to the students because those at a distance from the traditional campus setting usually do not have access to the library services.

3.1.3.4 Counselling Support

Counselling support include guidance and advising. Lee (2003) states that the “focus of such services tends to be on how to deal with academic concerns and/or career advising” (p. 183). It also addresses ways to improve communication skills and increase interactivity. This type of support takes the bulk of the support services that takes place in the study centres. This is similar to what other scholars have termed “academic counselling”.

Academic counselling can be described as helping learners to understand all matters related to curriculum, course contents, academic administration and processes. Das and Ghosh (2011) also believe that academic counselling

includes the tasks of “informing, advising and counselling about the administrative aspects” (p. 193) of the programme. Academic counselling support represents the core learners’ support services that is usually provided at the study centres.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit you have gone through the various activities that are classed together as learners’ support services and also the three major classes under which they are classified.

5.0 Summary

Despite the large number of activities lumped together as learners’ support services, they are classified into three, namely: teaching and learning, social and personal and access and information. Under teaching and learning are activities like tutorials, counselling, tutorial marking and feedback as well as examination administration. Under social and personal support services are activities like peer/study group, career counselling and internet and email support among others. Information support services include activities like access to information technologies, information on fees and financial support and information on administrative procedure.

Video

Audio

6.0 References/Further Reading

Usun, Salih (2004). Learner Support Services in Distance Education System. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 5 (4), np.

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Unit 3 Sources of Learners' Support Services

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1.0 Introduction

In the previous unit, you have gone through the types of learners' support services that exist. In this unit you would be studying the sources of learners' support services, in other words, the sections of the open and distance learning institutions where you are likely to receive activities that would be seen as learners' support services.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you would have:

- Determined the role of study centres in providing learners' support services
- Listed the activities in the study centre that can be designated as support service
- Identified other units of the university that provides support for learners
- Discussed the activities of other units in the university that are support oriented

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Sources of Learners' Support Services

3.1.1 Study Centres

The study centres of open universities form part of the detached programme of the university framed to provide extensive modern and efficient student support services to the students. The university assigns an important role to contact sessions at the study centres and this is expected to help the students both academically and personally. The study centre is equipped to offer a

range of facilities to help the students overcome their problems through assistance, in addition to providing a common forum for students to interact (Kumar, Rao & Rao, 2000:18).

The study centre is equipped to with staff to fulfil these functions. In the National Open University of Nigeria, a study centre is under normal conditions, headed by senior academic staff (usually a professor and associate professors or senior lecturers). It has to be noted that there are some centres however that are under the leadership of senior non-academic staff like Chief Counsellors or Deputy Registrars. The Director of the study centre is supported by counsellors and Administrative Officers of various cadres. Usually, the number of the study centre staff is dictated by the population of the students in the centre. Other staff available in the centre are accountants, information communication technology staff, clerical officers and cleaners. However, the organization of the study centre is left in the hands of the director of the centre. The support services of the centre are entrusted in the hands of these staff. The learners' support activities that go on in the study centre can be divided into academic and non-academic activities. These shall be discussed briefly as follows:

3.1.1.1 Pre-Admission and Admission Process

It is expected that prospective candidates should visit the study centres for inquiries about the admission process. At this point, the job of directing the prospective student on what to do to secure admission for their desired course are handled by the counsellors and the administrative officers. Where necessary, the counsellors would guide the student to take the course he/she is most fitted for based on the basic qualifications of the prospective student. At this stage also, all necessary information about fees and the course demands are explained to the students. At the end of the admission process, the student proceeds to the registration stage.

3.1.1.2 Registration

The payment of the fees marked the commencement of the student's formal registration. There are three types of fees:

- a. The compulsory fees which are made up of fees peculiar to new students such as orientation and matriculation fees, library fees and laboratory fees among others.
- b. Course Registration fees: course registration fees are determined by the course units and based on the open policy of the university, the student can register for the number of courses that he/she wants. It is not compulsory to register for all the courses, however, the minimum credit load a student can register for is 10.
- c. Examination fees: the students pay between 1000 (undergraduate) to 2000 (postgraduate) naira per course.

The student has the opportunity to pay these fees in instalments as long as all fees are completed by the end of the registration period that is usually

between six to eight weeks. You need to know that until a student pays the examination fees, tutor-marked assignments however would not be made available to the student.

In order to register, the student would go to the portal and click on the register courses button. As soon as this is done, all the courses available for that session would be opened up and the students would click add to pick the desired courses. At the end of this, the student can proceed to register for examination by clicking the register exams button. The two registrations would be printed out in triplicate. At the end of the registration process, the student is expected to return two copies of the admission form, letter of admission and proof of fee payment and the registration forms to the study centre. The third copy, endorsed by the counsellor, is returned to the student and it would serve as a proof to the store officer for the issuing of the available print course materials. Other course materials that are not available in print would be available to the student as electronic copies at the university courseware on its website.

3.1.1.3 Orientation and Matriculation

The next major activity after the registration process is the orientation and the matriculation program. The orientation is a programme designed to familiarize the new students to the study centre operations and the university by extension. Most new students, on this day for the first time come across the university anthem and are made to learn the anthem. During the programme, the students listen to talks from all the arms of the study centre: Director, Counsellors, Registration, DMI, ICT, Accounts, library and others. Available services are made open to the students and who as well as where they can turn to when they have issues are made known to them.

In NOUN the matriculation holds about a week after the orientation. The orientation holds simultaneously across all the study centres in the country. The new students take the matriculation oath after which they are accepted as students of NOUN.

3.1.1.4 Facilitation

In between the registration and orientation/matriculation facilitation sometimes would have commenced or when it is not possible, it commences after the matriculation exercise. Facilitation is the period when students are made to have some face-to-face interaction with university appointed facilitators to help them in the process of learning or content digestion. Usually, where the centre is large and well equipped, facilitation takes place on site but where this is not possible, facilitation takes place at other places chosen for the exercise.

There are some rules that are in place guiding face-to-face facilitation and the most important of them is that facilitation of any particular course would take place if there is a minimum of 50 students registered for the course in the study centre. The class can also be divided into two where there are more

than 200 students. It is the duty of the study centre to make a workable timetable to guide the facilitation exercise and also to appoint staff that would be on ground to monitor the smooth running of the exercise. The duration of the facilitation also has to do with the units of each course. A 2-unit course is allocated 8 hours facilitation; a 3-unit course is allocated 12 hours of facilitation and a 4-unit course gets 16 hours. You need to note that there is a difference between a lecture and facilitation and so you cannot expect your facilitator to lecture you.

3.1.1.5 Counselling

There is hardly any NOUN study centre that does not have at least 1 counsellor; there are some that have about 4 or 5 depending on the student population. The good thing is that all these counsellors are trained, as they are all graduates in Guidance and Counselling, and some of them have Doctor of Philosophy. They are thus equipped to counselling both academically and psychologically. If you have issues with your studies and other areas of life that may affect your output, you are advised to visit the counsellor's office for a session.

3.1.1.6 Organization of Field Work

Another academically important activity that goes on in the study centre simultaneously with the facilitation exercise is the organization of all field related exercises for the semester. This includes teaching practice and practicum for the undergraduate and graduate Education students, field trips for the Tourism students, seminars for Tourism, Hotel and Catering, and the Business Administration students and Practicum for the Nursing students. Apart from this, there are some students who are also involved in SIWES and these are also planned and carried out during the semester. It is also important to know that students in the Sciences also go through their practical courses during this period. In study centres where there is no laboratory, the Director looks for a tertiary institution that they can collaborate with so that the students would partake in the laboratory classes.

3.1.1.7 Library

In some study centres, there are physical libraries while some centres have e-libraries and some centres have no library at all, either physical or electronic. Thus, the study centre is a place where the students of NOUN are expected to make use of the library. Due to the nature of the university, the e-library is emphasized more and so most of the study centres do have e-libraries and also a dedicated librarian to assist the student in accessing the libraries that the university is subscribed to.

Also available in the study centre library are the project copies of the past students of the study centre that the current students can use as a guide as they embark on their own projects.

3.1.1.8 Examinations

All examinations except the Tutor-Marked Assignments/Computer Marked Assignments holds at the study centres. To this end, most study centres are equipped with infrastructure to allow student write the examinations. It has to be stated that where there are more students than facilities, study centres rent venues to hold the examinations. Two types of examinations are held every semester: the e-examinations which is taken by the 100 and 200 levels students and all general studies (GST) at all levels, including the postgraduate level. Other papers from 300 to 800 levels are taken as pen-on-paper examinations. There are centres where students write e-examinations at rented venues and write pen-on-paper examinations at the centre or vice-versa or where all examinations are written at rented venues or at the centres. All the planning for the smooth running of the examinations is under the control of the Director and other staff of the centres.

3.1.1.9 Other Administrative Matters

There are other administrative matters that hold at the study centres. An example of such is disciplinary matters. For example, in the case of examination misconduct, immediately after examinations, students that were caught for one offence or the other are asked to face the examination misconduct panel at the study centre level. At the end of this exercise, recommendations and evidences on each case is forwarded to the University Examination Misconduct panel that reviews and or ratifies the decisions of the study centre panel and then forward their recommendations to the University Senate for approval.

In some other institutions, study centres offer only a selection of these services but unlike these other open and distance learning institutions whose study centres may not be able to fulfil all these functions, NOUN study centres are expected to fulfil all these functions.

3.1.2 Directorate of Information Communication Technology

The Directorate of Information Communication Technology (ICT) plays a vital role in meeting the digital requirements and expectations of students. The DICT provides a wide range of information technology and communication facilities to support students throughout their course of study.

All university staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students have access to the services that are available throughout the day. There is at least 1 DICT staff in all study centres around the country. Heavily populated centres have more than 1. For example, the Lagos Study Centre, that is most populated centre, currently has 9 DICT staff. The ICT officers are the central point of contact for staff and student seeking help, advice and support for all IT related services. The IT support staff can assist with the following:

- Online registration issues (password, accounts, etc.)
- Course and examination registration issues

- Computing advice and information
- E-examination administration and support
- Support services for personal computers
- Training for students and staff.

The DICT also ensures that computer laboratories are operational and accessible in all the study centres, so that students can have access to computing facilities and electronic examination. Furthermore, the directorate provides asynchronous and synchronous communication tools such as emails, e-mail groups, online forums, webinars and web conferencing. This is to make the learning process very flexible, where students can learn anytime, anywhere and at their own pace.

3.1.3 Faculties and Departments

The very first truth that often seems buried in the open and distance learning institutions is that no matter the location of the study centre, all students belong to the departments and faculties. The first support service of the departments and faculties is response to students' issues. For example, if any student feels his score in any course is unduly low, he can write to the Dean of the Faculty (definitely through the Director of the study centre) to ask for a reassessment of the paper. If it is a case of not having result for an examination taken, the student would also write to the Dean to complain and the Department would respond at the end of their investigation.

It is also the departments and faculties that establishes the curriculum for each of the programme the students are registered for and the curriculum is made available for to each student at the registration point, clearly specifying the status of each course, that is, showing the courses that are core and those that are electives as well as the minimum number of units the students can register for each semester.

3.1.4 Registry

The role of the registry in support services is largely administrative and takes place even after the student has graduated from the university.

3.1.4.1 Issuance of Admission Letter

The Registrar of the university signs the provisional letter of admission issued to all the students at the point of their admission. Though the letter is automated, it comes directly from the Registry. Without this letter of admission, no one can proceed to the registration point.

3.1.4.2 Issuance of Introductory Letters (Visa/Research)

Another support service the students receive from the Registry has to do with introductory letters. Students sometimes, in the course of their research, may need to visit other institutions and libraries and may be requested to bring letters of introduction from their institution. When this is the case, the student

would write to the Registrar through the Director of the study centre to request for the letter of introduction. After the letter had been written and signed by the Deputy Registrar (Academics), it would be returned to the study centre for the student to collect. It is also important to know that sometimes, as part of their course of study or sometimes for leisure, students would want to travel abroad and embassies would request for letters of introduction from the university. The same procedure is followed for the issuance of such letters.

3.1.4.3 Issuance of Certificates

At the end of the student's course of study, the certificate signifying the successful completion of their programme, is signed by the Vice Chancellor and the Registrar and distributed by the staff of the Registry to the deserving students. The distribution of the certificates is usually done at the end of the convocation service at designated points.

3.1.4.4 Issuance of Transcripts

When students after graduation want to further their education in other universities, they would request for transcripts from the university and this would be sent again to the Registrar who would refer the request to the Deputy Registrar (Academics). After the payment of the required fees, the Academic office would prepare the transcript and the Deputy Registrar (Academics) would sign it and the letter would be mailed to the requesting institution.

3.1.5 Library

The library is another support unit for students' learning in the university. The support services of the library is captured in the following two excerpts:

"Most students used the library not to obtain resources but as a place of study. Generally, the students regarded the library as a quiet place to study" (Baloyi, 2014:1257). "Librarians go beyond information access and retrieval to helping students become information literate – to develop research questions, think critically, and navigate and evaluate the reliability, validity, and usefulness of the overwhelming amount of information available to them" (Brindley & Paul, 2004:5).

From the above quotations, the support functions of the library are: information access and retrieval, supporting students to become information literate and provision of a place of study.

3.1.5.1 Information Access and Retrieval

In fulfilling this function, the NOUN library is involved in the provision of a physical library both at the headquarters and at all the study centres all over the country. Where there is no space for good collection of books, the library ensures that electronic library is available for the students so that they can access and retrieve information. It is important to know that the library usually requests for list of relevant books to be purchased from the departments and

the faculties and use the list to acquire volumes for the library. Also included in the library volumes are copies of past research projects of students for guidance for students who are preparing for their own research projects.

3.1.5.2 Supporting Students to become Information Literate

In fulfilling this function, the library ensures that most study centres have at least 1 library staff to guide the students in the process of information access and retrieval as well as how to use the avalanche of information available to them. This allows for one-on-one interaction between the library and the students.

3.1.5.3 Provision of Study Space

Finally, the library both at the head office and the study centres offers the students a place where they can study. It is usually serene and calm and the librarian is always at hand to control the students in case some are going errant.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, you have studied that learners' support services takes place in the study centres, the Directorates of Information Communication and Technology, Information Management System, Examinations and Assessment and Media and Information, Faculties and Departments and the Library. The widest range of support services take place in the study centres and it includes pre- and admission processes, registration, orientation, matriculation, facilitation, counselling, organization of field work, library services, examination and other administrative matters. The Directorate of Information and Communication Technology supports registration and examination issues; Faculties and Departments determine courses to be offered across all levels as well as admission and graduation requirements. The Registry also has a wide range of services like the issuance of introductory letters, certificates and transcripts.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

[Video](#)

[Audio](#)

Unit 4 Benefits of Learners' Support Services

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)
- 3.0 Main Content
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 Introduction

You are welcomed to the last unit of the last module of this course. Over the last few weeks you have studied through the four modules that made up this course.

2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- List the benefits of learners' support services
- Write briefly on each of the benefits
- Evaluate if they have benefitted from this course on learners' support.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Benefits of Learners' Support Services

Learners' support is one critical component of an effective open and distance learning environment. As a concept within the open and distance learning, learners' support

3.1.1 Promotion of Academic Achievement

Scholars have been able to show that one of the causes of high rate of failure in the open and distance-learning system is the nature of the system, in which the students' study independently most of the time. Also, Tshivhase (2008) cite lack of contact between lecturers and learners and lack of self-help study groups as some of the major factors contributing to low performance and pass rates at UNISA. However, this can be mediated through an effective learners' support service. It has been asserted through research that the use of students' support aids the students learning and increases their academic achievement. For example, Farajollahi and Moenikia (2010) have been able to show that there is a "positive and significant relations between students' support services and academic achievement in distance education. In other words, students who benefit from services are more, their successes are higher" (p.454).

3.1.2 Mediation of Distance

One of the major perennial issues in open and distance learning institutions is the distance between the learners and the institutions and the resultant feelings of isolation by the students. Baloyi (2014) in discussing this says “ODL students often feel isolated, as they are studying on their own” (p. 1252). Boyle, Kwon, Ross and Simpson (2010) state there can be particularly acute issues in the distance learning environments where students often report feelings of isolation, little sense of connection and belonging. Responding to this issue vis-à-vis learners’ support services, Tait (2003) says “student support in ODL has as its primary aim that of assisting students to learn successfully, and in doing so it recognizes that in learning and teaching systems characterized by distance and part-time studying helping students with their feelings of confidence and self-esteem will energize them in ways that support persistence and success (p. 5).

3.1.3 Reduction of Drop-Out Rate

One of the major problems of open and distance learning institutions is the problem of attrition. Attrition is defined as the rate at which students drop out of their program. Research has indicated that ODL learners have a higher attrition rate than their counterparts in traditional campus-based institutions (Brindley 1985; Parker, 1995). Describing the rate of attrition among new students at the Open University of Malaysia, Raghavan, Mohayidin and Chun (2015) say, “nearly 30% of new learners enrolled in their first semester in OUM do not re-register for their second semester and nearly 10% do not re-register for their third semester” (p. 208-209). Describing the issue of attrition in the early years of NOUN, Adewale and Inegbedion (2008) discovered that between 2004 and 2008, out of the 439 students that enrolled for the MBA program, only 60 were left giving an attrition of 86.3%.

However, Bowa (2008) discovered that “learner support contributes to the reduction of drop-out rate through student guidance and counselling, tutor support, and affective information and administrative system” (p. 35). Tait (2003) affirms this as he states “these systems provide a range of activity that impacts not only in teaching but also affectively, thereby, reinforcing the student’s sense of confidence, self-esteem and progress” (p. 4).

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit you have examined the three major advantages of learners’ support. These are the promotion of academic achievement among students, which is usually attained as a result of the mediation of distance that takes place with the learners’ support activities. Finally, when learners’ support activities are properly taken, students who would have ordinarily dropped out of the system would be encouraged to pull through. As you can see, the effects of learners’ support seem to be spiral like.

5.0 Summary

To recap what you have learned in this unit, click on the video below or copy the link and paste on a web browser. The video is a summary of what you have read in this unit. You could also click on the audio version and listen. You can also download them and play offline.

Video

Audio

6.0 References/Further Reading

<https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/24076/Complete.pdf?>

https://empower.eadtu.eu/images/fields-of-expertise/StudentSupport/Student_Support_Services_for_Success_in_OED_SIMPSON.pdf