



**eLearning Strategy and Policy
for
National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)**

15 – 17 August 2005 - Lagos, Nigeria

(Prepared during the eLearning Workshop organised by RETRIDAL, NOUN)



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING



Contents

1.	Current Status.....	1
2.	Objectives of this Strategy and Policy.....	1
3.	Scope of This Strategy and Policy	1
4.	Challenges Facing the Institution.....	1
5.	Institutional Vision and Mission.....	1
6.	Justification for eLearning.....	2
7.	Vision for eLearning.....	3
8.	Barriers to Implementation to be addressed.....	4
9.	Supporting Structure for eLearning.....	5
10.	Dependencies.....	5
11.	Policies and Standards for the Institution.....	6
12.	Roles.....	8
13.	Governance of eLearning.....	9
14.	Management and Administration of eLearning.....	9
15.	Budget.....	10
16.	Implementation Plan.....	11



1. Current Status

This institution has been following the development of eLearning over the last number of years. It is aware of the opportunities which this new medium of education presents. The institution is mindful of the need to expand access to quality education in our country and is seeking mediums and modes that will facilitate this.

At mid year 2005, no substantial progress has been made with the use of this new medium in the educational programmes of the institution.

2. Objectives of this Strategy and Policy

This document sets out to define the approach to eLearning and specify some guidelines and broad policies that will promote and inform the development of and use of eLearning in our institution. The policy will provide a basis on which the institution can adopt a standardised and structured approach to the use of this new medium in our daily activities.

3. Scope of This Strategy and Policy

This strategy and policy will be in the single and authoritative source of guidance to faculty and administrative staff in the use of e-Learning as a component of the activities of the institution. Any shortcomings in this policy should be reported to the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic as the sponsor of the e-learning process, so that the policy can be kept up-to-date and relevant to the activities of the institution.

4. Challenges Facing the Institution

Our institution faces a number of challenges. These challenges include:

- Limitations on financial resources available to the institution.
- Demands for education which exceed our current ability to deliver.
- Increasing pressures to increase access to education.
- Geographic conditions require alternative mediums to enable access to education in remote areas of the country.
- Difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified and competent staff to our institution.
- Limited physical facilities available to the institution.

The institution believes that a number of these challenges can be addressed in part by the use of eLearning as an additional and extended medium of education.

5. Institutional Vision and Mission

The vision and mission of our institution include the following statements:



Vision

To be regarded as the foremost University providing highly accessible and enhanced quality education anchored by social justice, equity, equality and national cohesion through a comprehensive reach that transcends barriers

Mission

To provide functional, cost-effective, flexible learning which adds life-long value to quality education for all who seek knowledge

Both the vision and mission, together with the strategy that has been defined for the institution, clearly set out to address the challenges set out above. The existing educational programmes and traditional education mediums applied by our institution, is only partly meeting these challenges. It is believed and recommended by this eLearning strategy and policy, that the use of eLearning can support the vision and mission of our institution and provide us with additional capability and more effective utilisation of resources to meet our challenges and achieve our vision and mission.

It is strongly recommended that the use of technology-enabled education should be specifically included in the mission and strategic objectives of the institution.

6. Justification for eLearning

Through the rapid technological development over the last 10 years, particularly through the extension of the internet as a medium of communication and a business tool, a new medium of learning has been developed which provides significant opportunities to the institution. There is already a wide acceptance of this new medium of education as an acceptable and viable mode of education. Many institutions and corporate entities have adopted eLearning successfully and there is already a large global community of on-line learners.

eLearning is defined as the use of technology to enable the learning process. In most cases, this new medium of education will be used alongside the traditional mediums of education in a manner which has become known as “blended learning”. The main justification of eLearning is provided through the opportunities which it presents to the University, including:

- eLearning has the potential to enhance traditional face-to-face education.
- The ability to develop eLearning material, known as learning content, in a form that it can be reused over and over.
- The ability to deliver content to an increasing numbers of students electronically at no incremental cost.
- The increasing availability of electronic learning material such as e-journals and e-books to support an eLearning approach.
- The opportunity provided to students and lecturers to define the timeframes for education allowing for increasing flexibility of teaching and learning times.



- Significant cost reductions in the teaching and learning processes including the ability to teach students who are remote from the institution and making use of their own facilities rather than consuming University facilities.
- Reduced requirement for physical teaching facilities.
- Reduced travel and accommodation costs for students and lecturers.

In all cases the use of eLearning as an approach or mechanism to achieve learning objectives and defined outcomes needs to be carefully considered to ensure that the highest possible quality of education is provided.

The specific outcomes expected for NOUN are as follows:

- The Nigerian population desires education and NOUN's ambition is to expand access. There is no limitation on student numbers for NOUN and eLearning could enable the significant expansion of NOUN through:
 - Increasing flexibility;
 - Providing access options;
 - Increasing student numbers.
- Enhance response time.
- Enhance quality (in terms of provision of richer resources and references).
- Increase student retention through interactive tracking.
- Growing the competencies of learners to become effective IT users (by product).
- Quality must be built into the eLearning process.
- Intention to reduce variable cost on current educational model.
 - Increase efficiency/cost reduction.

7. Vision for eLearning

The eLearning vision for this institution is to make effective use of this new medium of education to significantly grow our student numbers and increase access to education while maintaining our standards of quality education. This will support our national goals and vision and mission.

The specific vision for eLearning for NOUN is:



To support the growth ambition of NOUN by extending our teaching and learning activities through the development and delivery of programmes via ICT to increase accessibility, retention and throughput and to propel NOUN to an ODL institution of preference or of first choice.

The specific objective of eLearning at NOUN is:

To move NOUN to become an institution of first choice through efficient delivery at all levels.

The targets for eLearning at NOUN include:

- To initially develop and deliver materials for some targeted programmes.
- To progressively expand the use of eLearning so that:
 - Some programmes are entirely online, e.g. MSc in IT;
 - Others – perhaps just a module;
 - All course material are available online, but not necessarily online material.
- To ultimately have all programmes using ICT.

8. Barriers to Implementation to be addressed

Two main categories of barriers exist for the implementation of eLearning at our institution and in our country. These barriers can be grouped as external and internal barriers and include the following:

External Barriers

The main external barrier is the limitations on access to technology and basic infrastructure such as electricity and telecommunications for our students who are the target market for eLearning. We acknowledge that access to technology, particularly the internet, is increasing rapidly. Until broad-based access is available and reasonable bandwidth is in place for home users wishing to study online at the University, we will continue to face limitations and restrictions on our ability to effectively utilise this new medium. In the short-term, alternative strategies will need to be put in place to overcome this barrier. These strategies will include the use of learning centres and the provision of technology access to students both on campus and in these learning centres.

Internal Barriers

The main internal barrier will be our own willingness to change and adopt this new medium as an effective part of both our existing and proposed new programmes. Until the potential of this medium is understood and internalised by our leadership and academic staff, and until effective and successful examples of the use of technology-enabled learning has



been seen at the University, we will struggle to see the benefits of broad-scale adoption of eLearning.

The second major barrier may be access to the seed funding required to develop the first programmes that will demonstrate the value of this medium to the institution.

Other barriers may include:

- The perception that eLearning may not be an acceptable medium to provide quality education.
- The challenge of managing eLearning, particularly the impact of managing remote students.

9. Supporting Structure for eLearning

The University will establish a support unit, to be known as the eLearning Unit, which will primarily function as a supporting, standard-setting and capacity-building body. The specific objectives of the unit will be:

- To promote the use of eLearning in current and future programmes of the institution.
- To provide training and development to lecturers and facilitators of online learning programmes.
- To set and monitor standards for the use of eLearning from a technological, content and quality perspective.
- To seek opportunities for collaboration and cooperation with other institutions inside and outside of our borders, and particularly with other institutions in the Commonwealth and the African Virtual University.
- To monitor the use of external service providers to ensure standards are adhered to and that quality of service is received.
- To create an enabling environment to promote eLearning, such as making specific scholarships available for eLearning students.

The eLearning Unit will ensure that its role remains that of a support unit to the faculties of all institutes presenting programmes on this new medium. The unit will at no stage take direct responsibility for the creation or delivery of eLearning programmes.

10. Dependencies

A key dependency for the effective implementation of eLearning is the support and integration with the ICT policy of the University. The ICT policy will need to make specific provision for technology access for on-campus and distance education students and provide the supporting technology infrastructure to facilitate the development and delivery of eLearning programmes.



11. Policies and Standards for the Institution

The implementation of eLearning in the institution will largely be new to most users. As such, this implementation carries the risk of multiple approaches and different methodologies being applied, creating limitations on our ability to share knowledge, skills and even content across the University. Accordingly, a key responsibility of the eLearning Unit will be to ensure the development of, and adherence to a defined set of standards and processes which will guide the development of eLearning content, the structuring of programmes, the technology to support this new medium and the quality of eLearning programmes.

Performance Service Charter

The requirements for eLearning will be built into the performance charter proposed for the University including:

- Study material at registration.
- Assignment (results in 2 weeks).
- Turn around time on online responses.

Programme Selection

The selection criteria for programmes for eLearning may include the following:

- Demand for programmes exceeding the University's ability to deliver.
- Demand for increased flexibility in learning and teaching schedules.
- The opportunity to significantly extend access to learners normally engaged in full-time work and requiring increased flexibility in learning times in the ability to learn at a distance.

The nature of eLearning in each programme will depend on the requirements of that specific programme. Individual programmes could range from only a small component of the programme being technology-enabled, to a programme which is offered entirely online.

Incentivisation for eLearning Participation

The University has defined a standardised approach to incentivising the participants to eLearning which includes the following:

- Lecturers and content providers will be remunerated for the assistance and additional effort put into the creation of eLearning material and conversion to eLearning programmes where this is outside to the normal responsibilities and workload of the individuals. This remuneration will be in line with the University's existing policies for overtime and extra workload.
- The University has and will continue to engage an external party to assist the University with the development of content for the University.



Process

Guidelines will be developed to cover the following processes:

- The assessment of programmes to consider their suitability for eLearning.
- The process of content creation and content conversion.
- The process to be used for the presentation of eLearning programmes.
- The administration process for eLearning programmes.

Content

eLearning content will be developed utilising the institution's approved content authoring tools and technologies. Content, once developed, will be owned and stored by the University in a format that it can be easily reused and shared where appropriate. Is the University's intention to join with other institutions in the establishment of a Learning Object Repository (LOR) which will be the primary medium for storing individual elements of content.

The key elements of this policy are:

- All content will be owned by University.
- The University will continue to contract out course development.
- Intellectual property belongs to the institution.
- Content and course development will:
 - Count towards individual promotion; and
 - Can be referenced in a publication or CV.
- Acknowledgment of source of material whether adapted or adopted course materials from other institutions.
- Course material must be developed within 24 months before it's offered (includes needs assessment course ready for printing).

The current status of courses and the opportunity for embedding eLearning in further development is:

- Current Status: 49 courses ready, 86 to be developed for first academic year.
- Opportunity to embed ICT element into the 86 yet to be developed.

Lecturer/Facilitator (in terms of time & workload)

There is a policy in place for facilitators and this should be applied to eLearning as well. The institution will need to develop a ratio of face-to-face facilitation versus online facilitation.



The facilitator policy should include the following:

- Policy in place for facilitator hours.
- Could include online number of hours per course.
- Facilitation is made up of X number of hours to include online facilitation.
- The rate and frequency for facilitation will likely reduce over time when FAQs per course or programme must have been gathered and made available through other technologies apart from online.

Assessment

The existing institutional policies and rules for course assessments will remain applicable to eLearning programmes.

Technology

The institution will make use of the Open Source software components installed as part of the COL Workshop in the development of content and presentation of programmes:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| ▪ Content authoring | A-Tutor |
| ▪ Content storing | A-Tutor |
| ▪ Learning management | A-Tutor |

Technology solution for the following will be identified:

- Student registration and administration
- On-line Assessment

12. Roles

The following eLearning roles will be used:

- Programme leader (involved in the operationalisation of the programmes).
- Course content experts (may not know about ICT).
- Course designer.
- Course developer (need to know about ICT).
- Graphic writers (need to know about ICT).
- Online facilitator.
- Online administrator (interacts with the students on line on a regular basis, performance tracking to build retention and throughput, build a sense of community). The student interacts with two people, one who knows about the



course (facilitator) and one who does not (counselor) helping the student through the process, advising them on how to use the internet. The job of the online administrator can be built into that of the counselor.

13. Governance of eLearning

The use of eLearning as a new medium for the provision of education and which should not change the existing governance and approvals processes of the University. In particular, the following key policy statements form the basis of governance of these programmes:

- The faculties will remain the primary unit through which education programmes are presented.
- The approval of programmes for eLearning, including the implementation of modifications to existing programmes to blended learning into the current approach, requires the approval of the faculty boards and ultimately the Senate of the University, as would be the normal case with any other changes to all proposed new programmes.
- All programmes proposed for eLearning should be supported by a sound business, marketing and financial plan to assist in ensuring the viability of the programme.
- The eLearning Unit remains responsible for ensuring the standards for eLearning content development and presentation are adhered to.
- The Academic Quality Unit retains its existing responsibility for the academic quality of all programmes presented by the University.
- All programmes should ideally be evaluated by both internal and external reviews to assist in the quality assurance process.
- All programmes must form part of and be accredited by the National standard-setting and accreditation bodies.

Where necessary, the unique requirements of eLearning will be accommodated in the governance and policy framework of the University.

14. Management and Administration of eLearning

The management and administration of eLearning activities are intended to follow the existing processes and procedures of the University. Where required, policies and procedures will be developed or modified to deal with the unique requirements of these programmes and specify the manner in which eLearning programmes will be managed by the institution.

The success of eLearning is dependent on the cooperation and collaboration of numerous parties including the lecturers, course designers, content developers, course administrators and facilitators and the ICT function. Effective management processes will need to be put in place to ensure this cooperation.



The implementation of eLearning will be coordinated by an **E-learning Steering Committee** to be established and to comprise the following:

- **Sponsor** Vice-Chancellor initially and then the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
- **Champion** Mr M. Balogun (who sells the eLearning process with time to run and coordinate)
- **Representatives** Will require support from respective schools, and ICT unit itself to form a unit.

The **E-Learning Unit** will be responsible to the DVC (academic), but in the meantime to the VC. The **E-Learning Unit** will comprise:

- **Champion** Mr Balogun (who sells the eLearning process with time to run and coordinate)
- **Specialist Trainer** Will require a specialist course developer, and trainer (can be seconded from elsewhere) with above form the unit.
- **Technical Support** To be provided by ICT to the Unit.
- **Communication Mechanism: Champion** To keep everyone informed and abreast through a newsletter regularly informing them of what where the unit is, what to expect and so on.

15. Budget

A budget for eLearning should be developed including the following costs:

- Mobilisation
 - Meetings (with champion, schools, workshops)
 - Meetings with external providers
 - Stationery
- Infrastructure
 - Servers and
 - Communication
 - Software support
- Course delivery
 - Design time



- Development time
- Media
- Training and change management
 - Training Jan/Feb 2006
 - Newsletter/communication
- Ongoing Costs
 - Champion
 - Course designer
 - Trainer/support
 - Hardware maintenance
 - Software maintenance
 - Hosting cost
 - Additional bandwidth

16. Implementation Plan

The implementation of eLearning should follow the following broad steps:

- Step 1**
 - Strategy, goal, what you aim to achieve
 - Plan process including defining the strategy, vision, mission, policy Document
 - Management to approve the appointment of champion, steering committee, and the school workshop plan
- Step 2**
 - Sell the idea School by School to Dean and school board, tailored specifically to each school
 - Present, debate, workshop plan (pilot, training, requirements, school programme and timeframe)
 - Get support and commitment from schools
 - Will end up with 4 distinct programmes
- Step 3**
 - Plan to sell to Senate and Council (Oct/Jan)
- Step 4**
 - Training/refresher/hands-on assistance (Jan/Feb)



The following broad implementation plan and timeframes were proposed:

YEAR	ACTIVITY	ON-LINE
August 2005	Initial training + platform + strategy Online registration capability Establish steering committee and appoint champion	
September	School workshops External providers	
October 2005	Present strategy to Senate	
Oct/Nov	Present proposal to ETF & COL	
January 2006	Council approval	
Jan/Feb 2006	Retraining	
Jan - March 2006	5 pilot courses available online	Pilot online course – CIT 101
August 2006	30 Courses available online	2 online courses priority online content (CIT 101 CIT 614)
January 2007	All 100 level courses available online Plus assignment to be submitted online	
August 2007	All courses available online	Additional 4 courses online
January 2008	All 200 level courses online	
August 2008		
January 2009	All 300 level courses online	

The eLearning Workshop was organised by RETRIDAL with the support of the Commonwealth of Learning

Directed/Coordinated by:

Dr. Sunday A. Reju
 Ag. Director, RETRIDAL