



Open, Distance and e-Learning Directorate

REPORT ON BUILDING CAPACITY IN ONLINE LEARNING AT LUANAR

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected every aspect of life globally, including interruption of education. To enable continuity of teaching and learning, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), like many educational institutions is repositioning itself to Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning (ERTL) for all its programmes, a form of Open, Distance and e-Learning (ODeL). LUANAR was privileged to obtain a grant of USD 5000.00 from RUFORUM to facilitate an exercise of building capacity in online teaching and learning at the university. This project had three main objectives:

- i. To conduct refresher training courses for faculty members to enhance their capacity in using online learning tools.
- ii. To introduce extra open-source tools that can support e-Learning and develop training materials for usage.
- iii. To enhance online support system through development of more support materials and system patches

2.0 BRIEF REPORT ON EACH OBJECTIVE

2.1 To Conduct Refresher Training Courses to Enhance the Capacity in Using Online Learning Tools.

We organized four trainings under this activity, the first one was for students, second one was for new faculty members and adjunct faculty members, the third one was Microsoft 365 training for all faculty members. We have successfully done trainings for students (a total of 4500) and the new faculty members and for adjunct faculty members (a total of 50—including ODeL tutors). Two trainings for staff members on online content development and Microsoft 365 were implemented later than planned because members were overwhelmed with end of semester assessment. We also slotted in an additional task to create Microsoft 365 accounts for all students and enforce the usage of institutional email addresses for all students, this is an ongoing activity. So far, we have started with Bunda and ODL campuses which have about 12000 students. This email creation activity will make it easier for lecturers to fully use all features which Microsoft 365 has to offer (for example, creation of virtual classrooms on Microsoft Teams, sharing of study materials using SharePoint and video lesson recording using Stream), this training targets 150 lecturers.

2.2 To Enhance Online Support System Through Development of More Support Materials and System Patches

We organized three activities under this theme. First, we had a task to update existing user manuals to be in line with the new system upgrades, this was done successfully. Another task was to develop and update video illustration materials for online support,

so far, all existing videos requiring updates have been done and new additional video support materials have been developed and these are now available on the [Students](#) and [Staff](#) FAQ pages, this activity targeted all the 12000 LUANAR students and all the 370 academic members of staff. Lastly, we had another task to add a password reset patch to our SARIS and integrate Moodle and the registration system to enable automatic transfer of continuous assessment grades from Moodle, this activity will directly benefit all academic members of staff. Both activities were done successfully.

2.3 To Introduce Extra Open-Source Tools That Can Support E-Learning and Develop Training Materials For Usage.

This activity involved researching and introducing members to self-recording software in addition to the one which was introduced last year and develop simplified user support materials. Another activity was to introduce a new PDF annotating application for offline grading of assignments /take home exams. We did not find a user-friendly open-source annotation software, instead we introduced members to “Active Presenter” a recording application and a podcast development application called “Open Board”. Now we are developing simplified video illustration materials to be uploaded on [Staff](#) FAQ page, again this is an activity that benefits all academic members of staff.

3.0 DETAILED REPORT ON EACH ACTIVITY

Activity	Status	Comment
Conduct refresher training courses for faculty members and students to enhance the capacity in using online learning tools.		
Conduct Moodle and online facilitation refresher training course for new faculty staff members, adjuncts, and tutors	Training for new faculty member, adjuncts and tutors conducted – the training had 50 participants.	The training was conducted successfully, and it came at a right time when these new instructors were expected to start their online training.
Conduct Moodle and online facilitation refresher training course for faculty members	The activity was done, and it targeted 150 faculty members.	This activity was done together with the Microsoft 365 training. The delay was because faculty members were busy with end of semester assessments.

Conduct Moodle refresher training course for students.	6 online sessions and 10 face to face session conducted – the training had 7456 participants in total.	The training targeted 12000 students, but some did not attend the training session. Those that missed will be included in the upcoming sessions.
Conduct Microsoft 365 Training	This activity was done successfully.	Was done together with the Moodle and online facilitation refresher training.
Enhance online support system through development of more technical support materials and system code patches.		
Update existing user PDF manuals/ video tutorials in line with new system upgrades.	Activity was done successfully.	Updated materials have been uploaded on staff and student FAQ pages. These pages can be accessed on the following links. Students: http://luanar.ac.mw/mdl_land_page/student_faq.php Staff: http://luanar.ac.mw/mdl_land_page/staff_faq.php
Develop extra online technical support materials (in form of video illustrations)	Activity was done successfully.	New materials have been uploaded on staff and student FAQ pages. These pages can be accessed on the following links. Students: http://luanar.ac.mw/mdl_land_page/student_faq.php Staff: http://luanar.ac.mw/mdl_land_page/staff_faq.php
Develop automated online code patches to improve user online learning support e.g., improved. FAQ and password reset pages.	Activity was done successfully. -SARIS centralized auto password reset implemented -SARIS and Moodle integration for automatic continuous assessment grade upload	For the assessment grade upload, we need to enhance capacity of staff members in terms of managing grades on Moodle. We noted that most members do not make effort to properly configure Moodle gradebooks.

Introduce extra open-source tools that can support e-learning and develop training materials for usage.		
Research and introduce members to self-recording software and develop simplified user support materials.	Activity done successfully. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active Presenter was introduced. - Video support material developed. - PDF manual developed and is being reviewed. 	Video support materials have been made available on staff FAQ page. http://luanar.ac.mw/mdl_land_page/staff_faq.php
Research and introduce document annotation tools for offline grading and develop simplified user support materials.	Did not find a user-friendly annotation tool and instead. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OpenBoard (which is compatible with Microsoft 365) has been introduced. - Video support materials were developed. 	Video support materials were developed and are available on staff FAQ page. http://luanar.ac.mw/mdl_land_page/staff_faq.php

4.0 AREAS THAT NEED MORE SUPPORT

4.1. Improve ICT Infrastructure

There is need to improve internet connectivity on campus by increasing internet bandwidth. This would enable good connectivity for faculty members who would want to livestream some of their lessons. There is also need for LUANAR to subscribe to Moodle Mobile, this would enable offline access to course materials.

4.2. Furnish Recording Studios

It is also important to furnish the studios at the ODeL Hub in order to improve the quality of the video lessons being produced (short term solution would be to equip studios with computers compatible with recording software like Open Broadcast Software).

4.3. Create Virtual Science Laboratories

Alongside ICT infrastructure is an investment in Virtual Science Laboratories. This would go a long way in ensuring quality of the programmes offered through ODeL.

5.0 CONCLUSION

As highlighted above most of the activities have been achieved. The outstanding activities are mostly ongoing activities which we need to be doing for effective online delivery. We also would like to confirm positive feedback on the whole exercise which can be seen by the increase in numbers of faculty members engaging students online and the number of students who are now able to use the LMS to an extent that lately we are having congestions issues on the LMS due to high user traffic. Our next activity is to continue monitoring traffic on LMS and ensure that the system does not slow down.