

## Title

Harnessing eLearning for increased access to quality higher education

## Institution



## eLearning project

Makerere University eLearning Project

## Short Description

The project ran between 2004 and 2007 and is now on no-cost extension till March 2009. It aimed at laying the technical and organisation policy infrastructure for successful deployment of eLearning at Makerere and beyond. Project activities included ICT policy formulation, installation of communication backbone, staff training, establishment of e-learning labs in five pilot faculties, recruitment and capacity building for e-Learning Unit staff, establishment of the multimedia lab, and implementation of iLabs.

## Target Group

- Academic staff and students
- Working adults (for on-job training and lifelong learning)

## Goals

- To improve the quality of graduates, by utilizing modern instructional materials and methods, including increased use of ICT in teaching and research.
- To provide greater access to university education, by developing capacity for increased enrolment through non-conventional approaches in teaching and learning.

## Illustrations



The Children of Africa – A Time Bomb: Classrooms in primary and secondary schools are overflowing following the implementation of Universal Basic Education. What hope is there for their tertiary education? Can technology-assisted distance education help meet their need?



Infrastructure Challenges: The African homes that breed great men and women – given the opportunity!

## Methodology/ Approach

Implementation required several steps: development of the policy and procedures relating to eLearning; establishment of the hard environment: a university-wide backbone infrastructure; setting up LANs with sufficient computers for access; and equipping facilities for multi-media educational material development; ensuring sufficient and efficient access to the Internet; establishing and equipping of the responsible institutional unit, staffing and training; establishment of the software (and associated hardware) platform(s) - the e-learning platform; and training of academic staff in student-centred, activity-based course development and delivery.

## Main strengths

- Basic university-wide ICT infrastructure put in place at main campus
- Policy and implementation structures are in place
- Dedicated unit and staffing in place
- Critical mass (over 30%) of academic staff trained in eLearning courseware development
- Over 1000 courses at different levels of deployment online
- Early adapters are already using eLearning platforms for aspects of their teaching
- Prompted graduate research in e- and m-Learning

## Main challenges

- High costs of bandwidth
- Infrastructure does not extend to university centres away from the main campus
- Basic computer skills still low among potential users of e-learning
- Low bandwidth and unreliable power supply
- Less than 40% of trained academic staff go on to deploy skills gained
- Students too needed training to fully benefit from eLearning

## Partners

- Carnegie Corporation of New York
- Partnership for Higher Education in Africa
- NUFFIC – The Netherlands
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Norwegian Government
- University of Western Cape (RSA)
- Tuft University
- SAIDE

## Future Plans

- Complete (with expert help of SAIDE) analysis of Learning Management Systems (LMS) currently in use in order to select one LMS to be used to support e-learning at Makerere University.
- Identify a stable LMS, migrate all current e-learning content to that LMS, and provide training on its use to all academics currently involved in e-learning.
- Conduct an audit of training interventions that have been or are currently being provided around use of technology in education, in order to determine gaps and to plan for the construction of a comprehensive suite of professional development support strategies to meet the training and support needs identified for e-learning at Makerere University.
- Develop a methodology for determining the sequence of priorities for creation of e-learning materials for courses at the University, and apply this methodology to establish a preliminary list of courses for conversion, accompanied with timeframes for implementation.
- Review all existing policies in an effort to determine the extent to which they currently support effective use of educational technology, and recommend changes as appropriate based on review.
- Establish the ICT needs for outlying Makerere Centres with view to extending eLearning services to Distance Learners and local communities through these Centres.
- Implement ongoing sensitization/advocacy work focused on generating demand for eLearning amongst staff and students.
- Roll out implementation strategies to all faculties of the university.

## Additional Information

In the long-run, eLearning at Makerere University will lead to greater ability for Uganda to participate in the global economy and achieve sustainable human development.

This will be achieved through:

- Greater access to university education
- A better and modern learning environment for students
- Development of life-long learning skills in the working population