

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA
OFFICE OF DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR ACADEMIC

INTERNAL MEMO

TO: ALL STUDENTS DURING THE NOVEMBER 2020 ORIENTATION

FROM: UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING SERVICES UNIT (UTLS)

DATE: 26th NOVEMBER 2020

**RE: INFORMATION ON TEACHING AND LEARNING AT THE OPEN
UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA FOR 2020/21 ACADEMIC YEAR**

Dear Students

It is my great pleasure to welcome new students to the Open University of Tanzania (OUT). I wish to congratulate each of you, first on having secured your university place and second, for having the good sense to choose to study at OUT. The Open University of Tanzania puts the student at the centre of everything it does; your experience here at OUT and your success is important to each and every member of staff who works here.
Dear students

Unlike other higher learning institution in Tanzania and the whole of East Africa sub region, OUT follows an Open Distance Learning (ODL) model of tuition, which represents an approach or philosophy that combines the principles of learner-centeredness, lifelong learning, flexibility of learning, removal of barriers to access, recognition of prior learning, provision of relevant learner support. It is also important that you understand two important terminologies that will guide your studies at the Open University of Tanzania i.e. Distance and Open Learning

What is ODL?

Distance Learning – A process whereby the student learns while separated from the tutor/teacher

Open Learning - Is any form of learning with strong emphasis on flexibility and learner centeredness. It is open in terms of access, delivery and interpretation

Like any other ODL institution, OUT adopted the Heutagogical Approach to teaching. Heutagogy is the study of self determined learning. Self determined learning assumes that people have the potential to learn continuously, in real time by interacting with their environment. Thus, developing heutagogy means creating a self directed learning environment for students to discover their own strategies for learning, sharing their knowledge and understanding. Therefore this student-centred learning approach requires you to;

- Make your own decisions and do most of the work
- Interact at all levels – lecturers, other students, Teaching Assistants (physically or through our learning management platform, the MOODLE).

Dear Students

After my introductory remarks, let me now provide information on four important aspects that are key to you to fully comprehend as an Open University of Tanzania student that are connected to teaching and learning.

1. Students Support

Distance learning students like you need appropriate academic and administrative support for you to remain motivated and committed to your studies. For example; First Year Students enter higher education without the ability to use higher order thinking skills to master their studies, so they need support from the university and lecturers in particular.

Therefore OUT offers a range of support structures, including direct contact and the use of information and communications technology (ICT). For instance lecturers have the responsibility to guide you, support you and make sure that you succeeded, thus Lectures will;

- ❖ Act as interface between you and the university
- ❖ Facilitate and guide your learning
- ❖ Support and assess your academic work
- ❖ Communicate and interact with you extensively
- ❖ Motivate you

- ❖ Mark your assignments, advise you and provide feedback on your academic performance

Such supports from lecturers will prevent you from feeling isolated and distant from other students, provides direction in your studies, encourage you to participate in online learning, retain you in the programme, develop your higher order thinking skills and will teach you self-discipline, learn to work alone and acquire time management skills.

On the other hand, the university has physical facilities to assist your studies. Such facilities include:

- Regional centres and Coordination centres
- Examinations centres – up to district level in some regions
- Library including community libraries and online library (more information will be provided by the Directorate of Library Services)
- Computer lab
- Facilities for physically challenged students available in Dar es salaam only
- Academic Counseling
- Technology Enhancing learning (MOODLE)
- Face to face session
- Students administration
- Printed study materials for some courses in particular foundation program

2. Teaching and Learning arrangement - Blended Mode

On the aspect of teaching and learning, the University has made a major change regarding teaching and learning and assessment whereby mostly the teaching and learning processes are to be conducted in a blended mode of learning where some traditional face to face has been either replaced or complemented by an online learning activities. In Blended Mode of teaching, the following learning activities have been identified; real time online lecture, recorded online lectures, online discussion, online assignment, face to face, independent study, formative/continuous assessment, Final

examination and practical/laboratory/field session. Many of these activities have been embedded on the online learning management system (MOODLE). Note that, the time allocated for each activity differs from one course to another or one program to another eg. The foundation program, BSC(ICT), B.Sc Data management and most masters programs have more hours allocated to face face than other programs where more activities are done online. Likewise, many first year course have online lectures, the university is making every effort to make sure that all online lectures are available to all courses taught at the university. The table below summarizes the teaching and learning activities at OUT and also compare with the traditional teaching as in other conventional universities

SN	Teaching and Learning Activities at OUT	Teaching and Learning Activities in Traditional University	Remarks
1	Recorded Online Lectures Available on OUT YouTube Channel	Lectures	The same, but at OUT you have an opportunity to listen and view the lectures at any place and anywhere also to play back
2	Real Time lectures	Lectures	Same
3	Online Discussion	Seminar participation	In online discussion one can also participate at any time and place
4	Online Assignment	Take home assignment	The same
5	Practical/Field/ Laboratory/project/research work	Practical/Field/ Laboratory/project/research work	The same
6	Independent/Private study	Independent/Private study	The same, but at OUT more time is allocated to

			independent study as learning is learner-centred
7	Face to Face session	Not available as always students are in contact with lecturers	Face to face sessions allows physical interaction for various purposes eg. Academic, counseling, administrative etc
8	Formative Assessment	Tests, quizzes, assignments, etc	Same (Managed by DES)
9	Summative Assessment	Final Examination	Same (Managed by DES)

For fair teaching and assessment, the learning content follows the syllabus of the course and has been divided into six knowledge areas, a knowledge area may include one or more topics of the syllabus. Online teaching and learning has therefore been arranged according to these knowledge areas. It means that one knowledge area will be taught at a specific period before moving to another knowledge area.

Courses will run from 4th December 2020 to 20th May each knowledge area will be covered within a month as summarized in the table below.

From the table above, items 1-4 have been embedded in MOODLE , each student is expected to participate in full as follows

(a) Real time (live) online lectures

In this academic year OUT will offer real time online lectures just as in any conventional university for all courses using video conference based on Zoom cloud meeting application, you are encouraged to observe a teaching time table provided and join the online classes where you will have opportunity to interact with your lecturer and fellow students. The lectures will starts at 14:30HRS to 17:15HRS (all time are +3 UTC). The zoom joining links will be accessed on your MOODLE account.

There will be a one **hour lecture for each knowledge area (KI-K6)** every month from December 2020 to May 2021. Normally each knowledge area comprises more than two

topics of the course syllabus. In this academic year KA1 will be covered in December, 2020 effectively from 4th and the last knowledge area (KA6) on May, 20th 2021. See the timetable provided for more detail. Observe carefully the timetable and make sure that you don't miss any of the session.

NB: Make sure that you have the online teaching time table and university almanac

(b) Recorded Online lectures

In this activity, lectures are recorded to video, audio or both then uploaded and made viewable on a MOODLE. The advantage is that, you may access online lectures posted on your designated websites anywhere in the world, at any time you wish, as long as you have an internet connection, but you can also view offline using OUT mobile App also you can play back for the sake of note taking. More explanation will be provided during MOODLE training.

Each course instructor has prepared a **one hour lecture for each knowledge area (KA1-KA6)** which can be viewable on OUT ODL YouTube channel.

NB: At the moment recorded online lectures are available for level one course

(c) Online discussion

Online discussion is a collaborative tool to facilitate communication and knowledge construction. You can view content and contribute to an online discussion any time or anywhere on your computer/tablet/smart phone with an internet connection or offline using OUT mobile App. More clarification will also be provided during MOODLE training. Lectures will award marks depending on participation of each individual, the marks awarded are needed for official use including forming part of your continues assessment and hence to determine final grade for some courses or programs

(d) Online assignment

Online assessment as any kind of assessment is used primarily to measure cognitive abilities, demonstrating what has been learned after a particular educational event has occurred, such as the end of an instructional unit or chapter.

At the moment, online assignment will be used for **formative assessment**; i.e. to determine if learning is happening, to what extent and if changes need to be made. Ongoing feedback needs to be given as soon as possible after the task is completed for improvement of teaching and learning for both students and instructors.

Course instructors will prepare online assignment for each knowledge area that will be **marked either online on the MOODLE or offline by the instructor**. Similarly, the marks obtained from online assignment will be for official use the same way as online discussion.

SPECIAL ARRANGMENT FOR MASTERS STUDENTS

For taught masters programs, the teaching will remain Blended Learning. There will be face to face sessions in centre(s) that will be determined by the respective faculty based on the number of students. However, at any centre(s) where F2F will be conducted all students in the program shall be connected through ZOOM, so it is not mandatory for any student to participate in physical class if teaching through ZOOM and MOODLE is sufficient to him or her. A teaching timetable for each program will be provided by the program coordinator.

ROLES OF STUDENTS IN BLENDED LEARNING

The transformation to blended learning and particularly to use of online means of teaching will depend much on your preparedness. One of the intended outcomes of the move towards blended learning is to develop among students soft skills related to ICT that will make you better graduates and meet the current market.

We are therefore asking you to play the following organizational; intellectual pedagogical; social and technical roles to become successful at OUT:

(1) Organizational roles

ODL requires you to be self organized. It is important that the calendar of studies is internalized and followed. Each knowledge area is to be learned in a specific allocated period. We understand this is compromising the pace and space criterion to open learning. However, this is a fair option considering that teaching and learning is conducted in a blended mode. The amount of time to engage in the studies for each knowledge area is manageable. You will have to take note of the following:

- i) Understand and adhere to the course policies – the dos and don'ts;
- ii) Study and follow the rules and rubrics for the learning activities;
- iii) Follow the timetable for the learning and assessment activities;
- iv) Contact the course instructor on issues that require further clarification regarding the course
- v) Take an active role in course discussions
- vi) Complete online assignments on time
- vii) Demand the feedback from the instructors

(2) Intellectual pedagogical roles

You are reminded on your active role in the learning process. The traditional role of the teacher of transmitting knowledge to learners therefore has no room in this context. The role of the course instructor is facilitation (or moderation) of discussions. Every student will individually explore and seek knowledge from relevant sources and then share it in the discussions. Hence you are expected to:

- i) Study the course learning material and other relevant materials
- ii) Participate actively in the discussion forum
- iii) Contribute to the forum constructive ideas on the topics
- iv) Share with others any relevant knowledge links

(3) Social roles

One of the major reasons for ODL to have lower rates of student success and completion is the fact that students usually develop a feeling of isolation and loneliness. At the same time, experience shows that students are engaged in social networking. Within this movement you shall be responsible ensuring that you remain connected to the group, hence no more student isolation and loneliness. The following are some of the basic tasks related to the social role:

- i) Joining social networks that will enhance learning
- ii) maintaining friendly and comfortable social environments to enhance learning;
- iii) using appropriate communication all the time;

(4) Technical roles

Students have an active role in the technical aspect. Interestingly you are more comfortable with technology although you still need guidance on how to use technology for academic purposes. ODL has made it possible for the LMS to be accessed via mobile technology hence addressing the accessibility issue. The following are some of the basic tasks related to this role:

- i) Ensuring access to technology to access ODL LMS
- ii) Taking time to learn and grasp the basics of LMS
- iii) Using appropriately discussion forum available in and beyond LMS
- iv) Using other available social networks to re-direct fellow students to engage actively in discussing the topics posted in LMS
- v) Assisting other students on technical concerns by providing useful information where possible.
- vi) Make sure that you have any device that will assist you during the learning process eg. Any tablet, laptop, Smartphone etc.

And with those few words of advice I wish you every success at the Open University of Tanzania .For more information and clarification don't hesitate to contact your instructor on the MOODLE or regional centre director or coordinator of our centres

Thank you for your anticipated courtesy and cooperation

Dr. Lawi Yohana

**COORDINATOR OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING
SERVICES UNIT – DAR ES SALAAM**