

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION



GUIDELINES FOR ADOPTION OF AN EMERGENCY OPEN, DISTANCE AND E-LEARNING (ODEL) SYSTEM BY THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

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1.0. Introduction

The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), a body mandated to regulate the provision and conduct of Higher Education in Uganda, is desirous of implementing an emergency ODeL system for enabling the Higher Education training institutions to offer teaching and learning during the current lockdown. The ODeL system of learning provision is globally recognized as a worthy mechanism for flexible learning. It has been observed that ODeL avails numerous benefits as a teaching and learning system, because it focuses on learners, and provides for continuous engagements between the instructor and learners as and when is desirable.

The NCHE takes cognizance of the readiness to reopen expressed by the majority of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and has developed guidelines for aiding HEIs to resume their teaching and learning activities remotely, since students and lecturers can be able to interact without necessarily coming into contact, during the lockdown.

2.0. The Emergency ODeL Guidelines

The following Guidelines are provided by NCHE for enabling HEIs to commence remote teaching and learning activities during the current lockdown.

That every applicant shall avail to NCHE: -

- a) Evidence of the existence of COVID-9 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as issued by the Ministry of Health. This should clarify the arrangements on the ground in the institution so as to mitigate the safety concerns should a student, staff or NCHE official pay a visit.
- b) A structure and details of the proposed ODeL model, including the equipment (e.g. flash discs, data provision) or the available logistical arrangements of how materials will be delivered to learners.
- c) A list of the accredited academic programmes to be rolled out on the ODeL system, since the guidelines will support the rolling out of only **accredited** academic programmes.
- d) A list of staff qualified and ready to support the rolling out of the academic programmes through the ODeL system.
- e) Details of the students to be engaged. This should include evidence of having traced them and a survey on the students' readiness for the ODeL teaching and learning as well as the learning support technologies they have e.g. smart phones, laptops and internet access.

- f) An undertaking by students indicating their willingness or inability to participate in the proposed arrangement. In case of students being unable to access emergency ODeL teaching and learning, the institution will indicate its proposed mitigation measures of redress for time and learning lost.
- g) The strategy for covering the learning content missed during the lockdown.
- h) Evidence of approvals by the institutional respective organs i.e. Senate and Council.
- i) Principles and guidelines of how the ODeL system would run, including equity and quality assurance. This is critical because the ODeL guidelines will aim to ensure that there is unhindered access to education through open, distance and e-learning, as afforded by new media and other technologies (phones, radios, TVs) and through blended means.
- j) Evidence of the mechanism of access and usage by the students and staff. The applicant should provide clarity on how they would address the issues of students who are not able to acquire electronic gadgets, data and network coverage.
- k) Assurance of mainstreaming of disability and gender in all COVID-19 response recovery actions.
- l) A description of the pre-training of both the staff and learners to be offered prior to embarking on the ODeL system.
- m) The assessment and evaluation mechanisms of learning, as a means of continuous assessment during the teaching and learning.
- n) Evidence of the following conditions if final examinations are to be administered on-line;
 - i) Staff trained to deliver examinations on-line
 - ii) Security and cheating avoidance lockdown browser
 - iii) Face recognition software
 - iv) Any other relevant examination security features
 In the absence of (i) –(iv) above, final examinations should be done on campus when institutions re-open.
- o) The learning support mechanism in case learners require so.
- p) A student communication mechanism during the proposed schedule of ODeL provision.
- q) Evidence of the ODeL capability, including the recording and documentation mechanisms for post viewing.

- r) Demonstrate strategy of completion of the practicum, for programmes which require practical engagements such as medicine and engineering.
- s) Evidence of the HEIs internal quality assurance measures, including the human resources to support the same.
- t) The attendant budget to support the new schedule of teaching and learning.
- u) Demonstrated capacity to mitigate Cyber risks.
- v) Assurance that relevant laws and regulations such as Data Protection and Privacy Act 2019 will be complied with.
- w) An action plan indicating how teaching and learning as well as assessment of both practical and theoretical aspects of the programme will be implemented during the lockdown.

3.0. Implementation

- a) Eligible HEIs may apply to NCHE for consideration to roll out an ODeL system during the current lockdown.
- b) Upon receipt of the application from the HEIs, NCHE will carry out the necessary quality assurance checks, including visitations where possible, or requiring an officer from the institution to demonstrate the institution's technology capability to provide teaching and learning remotely.
- c) Permission granted to offer emergency ODeL will be valid for twelve (12) months or the duration of the crisis as will be determined by the relevant authorities.
- d) All institutions that would have been granted permission to offer emergency ODeL shall apply for renewal of the same at least two (2) months before the expiration of the initial period of twelve (12) months to allow for smooth continuity of operations should the pandemic be deemed likely to persist beyond twelve months.
- e) The NCHE shall continuously Monitor and Evaluate the new schedule of teaching and learning, either online or physically where possible.

- f) Records of the teaching and learning sessions completed shall be compiled for verification by NCHE through the ODeL system under this arrangement. They shall be availed to NCHE on a semester basis.
- g) Institutions may develop customized manuals or guidelines but will be required to submit them to NCHE.
- h) Institutions are encouraged to network with other institutions and exchange information and best practices.

4.0. Conclusion

There is overwhelming support of the idea of implementing the ODeL mode of delivery of higher education. However, critical success factors should be upheld, hence the need for adoption of the emergency ODeL system.