

ODLAA Bytes- March 2020

Welcome to March 2020 ODLAA Bytes. The purpose of this newsletter is to touch base with you and ensure that you are keeping well and staying on top of things at this challenging time when *Distance Education* has become increasingly significant in our times. Our thoughts are with you all as we respond to the scourge of Coronavirus and all the risks posed by this hideous pandemic! The Executive Committee would like to reassure you that your Association will do its best in these unprecedented times to support you and give you the best opportunity to survive the devastating effects of Coronavirus on our lives, communities and society. Following the outbreak of *COVID -19*, Distance Education has become very significant in education circles.

Distance Education has become known by a variety of names including online learning, e-learning, off campus learning, digital learning. The list goes on. Whatever the name, what is important is that we are talking about a form of learning that is different from face-to-face learning. This form of learning has never been more important and is currently helping to keep teaching and learning going in many countries. At the same time, more than ever we need to ensure that our practice in Distance Education has a strong research and theoretical underpinning.

In this brief newsletter, we suggest a few tips both for parents and students affected by COVID -19. We consider the tips useful as our members translate the current climate in a pragmatic and practical way.

Tips and Resources

1. Ensure that you have a working computer and that you have access to the internet. That counts to both instructors and their students. In terms of access to the internet if you can get fast broadband that will be very useful. In Australia, there are many areas where the National Broadband Network is accessible. If you have this facility, consider yourself ahead of the game.
2. You will need a room where you can work without the usual distractions. Bear in mind that online learning requires focus and concentration. If you have a study area, other than your bedroom, that would be preferable. The risk with using your bedroom is that the temptation to lay down and doze away is real.
3. Learn to set aside blocks of time. Two hours per session is reasonable. Taking a break after every two hours is quite useful.
4. Develop a timetable and remain faithful to it. Many students tend to spend too long in subjects that they find easy at school and overlook what challenges them. Important to bear in mind is that many institutions require all-round performers. Being well rounded means that you give yourself a better chance in future.
5. Responding to tasks given. Most teachers will give you tasks that you will be expected to complete. Work within strict timelines.
6. Manage isolation responsibly. While many students remain active on social media, valuable time could be taken by such practices. It would be better to spend school hours doing academic work and maybe two or three hours max on social media. You know yourself so work within your limits.

7. Spare time to do exercises at home. An occasional walk within the house or compound is good for your health. Stretching away from your computer is a recommended.

We hope the above tips are helpful for these strange times we are living in! The entire world continues to reel in the face of the Coronavirus. All of us have been affected in one way or another.

Technology to Keep Teaching

Have you ever used Zoom? Zoom is a software that offers users a video facility that can be used to teach and learn. Zoom is an easy way to get groups with similar needs together and share learning. It is easy to set up. Do a google search and learn all you need to know about the facility. Zoom can currently be used for free in response to COVID -19. Zoom can be used by both instructors and students to perform live tasks together. Students can be given tasks and then share their findings on Zoom. If you have access to headphones, that is recommended. Exercise self-control while using Zoom. Some people tend to dominate sessions at the expense of those unsure and nervous. The teacher can be a useful guide giving every student a chance to make a contribution.

eAGM in May 2020

ODLAA will have an eAGM in early May. The eAGM will take place online across Tuesday and Wednesday 12th and 13th May 2020. Members have been notified about this. We encourage members to turn up at the meeting and better still to nominate someone to join the executive in one role. This is a great opportunity to learn new skills and help shape the future of distance education at this important time. All that is required of you is to be financial at the time of nomination. Please get a financial ODLAA member to nominate you to the executive. Please let your friends know about this. A link will be provided closer to the time. If you have any issues with this, feel free to write to our executive secretary and you will be assisted.

Our Journal

All financial members will have received the current edition of Distance Education journal Volume 42(1). The second issue of *Distance Education 42/2* has just gone to press.

Our National and International Partners

Recently, ODLAA reached out to ASCILITE and FLANZ and granted that we have similar interests, we are looking forward to working together to make the area of distance education more meaningful. ASCILITE is the Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education. FLANZ is the Flexible Learning Association of New Zealand.

ASCILITE: See the link <https://ascilite.org>

FLANZ: See the link <https://flanz.org.nz>

Our other two partners are the European Distance Education Network, EDEN, and the International Council on Distance Education, ICDE. Recently, ICDE hosted a webinar as part of a webinar series. See link provided <http://www.eden-online.org/covid-webinar-series/>

COVID - 19 Resources

The coronavirus disease also known as COVID -19 has disrupted numerous aspects of our lives. Below is valuable information related to the scourge.

<https://www.icde.org/corona>

Looking to the Future

ODLAA has recently rebranded adopting the new tagline – **Borderless Learning | Transforming Futures**. This tagline is even more relevant today as we respond to the current health crisis and we hope that you will promote the ODLAA community to your colleagues in other institutions now learning how to teach online. Make sure you follow ODLAA on Twitter for regular updates and useful resources. Visit our Twitter handle @ODLAAorg Mark Brown is a member of our executive and he published the blog below <https://www.icde.org/icde-blog/2020/3/26/responding-to-covid-19>

Meanwhile, there are a few useful links to assist members as they transition to online teaching

<https://www.icde.org/icde-blog/2020/3/26/responding-to-covid-19>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjcxUEzO3sE>

•[Tips from the Coalface: Live Online Classes](#)

Thanks for being part of ODLAA

Mutuota Kigotho
President
March 2020