UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, WYE COLLEGE
Postgraduate Distance Education
“Distance Learning: From Paper to the Web”
by
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AERDD/FAO Workshop on Distance Education for Agricultural and Rural Development
17th and 18th February 1998

Wye College
University of London

▲ Early 1900’s - Specialist School of University of London
▲ 4 academic departments
  ♦ Agricultural Economics
  ♦ Agriculture and Horticulture
  ♦ Environment
  ♦ Biological Science
▲ External Programme 1988 (1st full DL programme of University of London)
Wye College External Programme

- More than 900 students in over 100 countries
- 9 Programmes, 40 plus courses
- Overseas Collaborative Links
- Academic Support Internally and Externally
- 1994 Queens Anniversary Award

The Degree Programmes

- Agricultural Development
- Agricultural Economics
- Applied Environmental Economics
- Environmental Management
- Environmental Assessment (new)
- Environment and Development
- Food Industry Management and Marketing
- Managing Rural Change (new)
- Sustainable Agriculture & Rural Dev. (new)
The Structure of the Programme

◆ MSc: total of 7 modules
◆ Postgraduate Diploma: total of 4 Modules
◆ Affiliate: single course
◆ Registration Period: up to 5 years

The Learning Process

◆ Learning Materials
  ⇒ module file
  ⇒ volumes of readings
  ⇒ text books

◆ Tutoring
  ⇒ 3 voluntary tutorial assignments per module
  ⇒ team of over 90 tutors drawn from Wye College Departments and other academic institutions

Assessment
  ⇒ October examination in-country
Student Registration Breakdown

- Masters: 50%
- Postgrad Diploma: 35%
- Affiliate: 15%

Students by Programme

- Environmental Management: 49%
- Food Industry Management and Marketing: 4%
- Agricultural Development: 29%
- Environmental Economics: 15%
- Applied Environmental Economics: 8%
- Agricultural Economics: 6%
- Environment and Development: 9%
Wye College, University of London

Students by Region: Total 893

- United Kingdom: 140
- South America: 30
- North/Central America/Caribbean: 117
- Indian Ocean: 7
- Europe: 172
- China: 6
- Australia and Oceania: 40
- Asia: 126
- Africa: 255

Students by Age Groups

- Unknown
- 20 - 30
- 30 - 40
- 40 - 50
- 50 - 60
- 60+

11/19/97
Students by Gender

Female
30% (270)

Male
70% (623)

External Programme Academic and Administrative Management

Administrative
- Student recruitment/publicity
- Registration: enquiry to graduation
- Tutorial system (TMAs)
- Student contact
- Course production / despatch
- MIS database

Academic
- Course materials development
- Course maintenance
- Tutorial support
- Student support
- Examinations
- Quality control systems
Student Profile

▲ Mid-career professional
▲ 60% chance of being male
▲ 30 - 40 years old
▲ Likely to have range of experience
▲ Studies 2 courses a year (all written delivery - hard copy) - seven in all for MSc
▲ 15 hours of study time per week
▲ Completes 3 Tutor Marked Assignments per course
▲ Sits 2 examinations (in October, in country)
▲ Unlikely ever to visit Wye!

Contact in a typical study year

▲ 31 weeks of study + 4 weeks of revision (Feb - Oct)
  Opportunity for contact at any time via EP office
▲ 3 Tutor Marked Assignments (optional) per course
▲ Centralised system of tutor allocation to provide detailed feedback: educational, diagnostic
▲ Course appraisal opportunity with each TMA, with possible follow-up
▲ EP Newsletter (2 per year)
▲ Informal email network
▲ Exam registration (July mailing)
▲ End of course appraisal and monitoring
  Examination results + advice on next year’s courses
Wye College Experience
Academic Issues: Perceived Strengths

▲ Interactive nature of course materials
▲ Study Guide on skills
▲ Constructive and detailed TMA feedback
▲ Pastoral care: “someone always at the end of a telephone”
▲ Interaction of academic and admin staff
▲ Newsletter
▲ Mutual support via email

Wye College Experience
Academic Issues: Perceived Problems

▲ Isolation - NO face-to-face contact
▲ Lack of student-tutor interaction
▲ Lack of inter-student interaction
▲ No regular channels of communication with Programme Coordinators
▲ Problems of monitoring performance
▲ Delays in TMA processing
▲ Tutor anonymity and consistency of TMA feedback
Problems of equitable delivery
▲ Cultural differences and language
Wye College Experience
Administrative Issues

▲ 24 hour phone line open
▲ Well trained staff with positive and helpful telephone manner, handling queries intelligently
▲ Close working relationship with academic staff
▲ Team approach and collective responsibility
▲ Student data base
▲ Accurate records and efficient filing
▲ Rapid acknowledgement and processing of applications
▲ Designated TMA staff member
▲ Regular briefing meetings

Distance Learning Essentials:
Student Support

▲ Collaboration between administrative, technical and academic staff
▲ Student access to ‘someone’
  pastoral care; procedural information; programme advice
▲ Tutorial staff have relevant expertise
  Programme Co-ordinators, Course Tutors, Tutors
▲ Quality of tutorial advice
  speed of response; appropriate advice; tone and length of response
Distance Learning Essentials:
Teaching Materials

▲ Teaching File
  - interactive: more than a guide through the literature
  - facilitates student thinking
  - engages the student and holds his/her interest
  - has clarity of vision: student always knows where they are and why
  - builds confidence: student informed at the beginning of each unit what they will learn, and given a checklist at the end to ensure they have understood.

Distance Learning Essentials:
Teaching Materials (continued)

▲ Literature
  relevant and appropriate
  up to date
  correct balance between depth and breadth
  must be provided

▲ Other Media
  ▲ audi tapes
    mostly recorded in-house: could be better
  ▲ videos
    used where appropriate; some problem of access to VCRs
From Paper to the Web

▲ Student Support
importance of student-student interaction
need for more student-tutor interaction
Problem of access and equity
necessity of re-training
importance of properly briefing students

▲ Mode of Delivery
students have paper preference
problem of access and equity
cost
copyright issues

From Paper to the Web
(continued)

▲ Range of media
influence of electronic support, BUT
✦ social sciences and knowledge interpretation:
  – limitations of multi-media
✦ danger of being technology driven
✦ student access and equity
✦ need for gradual approach
  – effective use of existing capital
  – maintaining discursive approach