Centre for Teaching and Learning Enhancement

Online Learning-Guide to students

Dear esteemed students,

My warmest welcome to the UR-e learning platform, your e-learning platform. Welcome to learn through online mode.

In this Moodle platform, you will find: (1) all your modules per level, year of study and per trimester/semester for which you are required to register for; and, (2) all the learning materials (videos, readings, *e-tivities* , assignments, quizzes) your instructors have prepared in order for you to learn effectively, achieve the intended learning outcomes of the modules and acquire the expected competences. In online learning, I invite you to be familiar with the concept e-tivity: it is a concept coined by Gilly Salmon (2013) to mean "frameworks for enabling active and participative online learning by individuals and groups" (https://www.gillysalmon.com/e-tivities.html). In the following lines, I present to you: what is learning? How to learn better? What is online learning? My recommendation to your own learning through UR e-learning platform.

1. **What is learning?**

While I have no doubt that you have your own point of view on what you understand by learning, the common simple meaning is the acquisition of knowledge, behaviors, skills, values and attitudes through study, experience, or being taught. I invite you also to agree with Ambrose et al (2010) that "Learning is a process that leads to change, which occurs as a result of experience and increases the potential for improved performance and future learning". The change in you as a learner may happen at the level of knowledge, attitude or behavior. However, as a university student, you need to know that "learning is not something done to you, but rather something you yourselves do. It is the direct result of how you interpret and respond to your own experiences". Therefore, regardless of the field of your study, through your learning, I recommend you to make sure you develop and practice your intellectual skills processes (e.g. problem-solving, scientific inquiry), motor skills and attitudes/values that are important to your field of study; interpersonal and social skills (often referred to as soft skills: teamwork, effective communication, conflict resolution and creative thinking) that are important for your professional and personal success.

2. **How to learn better?**

While everybody may agree on the importance of learning, you need to know that learning is no easy task: "the brain needs to actively build something of meaning". To study well, to learn well, you need to create understanding. To become an effective learner, it will require you to run on repetition, and in order to sharpen an area of expertise, you will have to engage that area of expertise multiple times--preferably in multiple ways. To learn better, no matter the subject—mathematics, geography, or chemistry—you need to experience the idea a few times before you develop some type of understanding (https://www.the-

learning-agency-lab.com/the-learning-curve/how-to-study-more-effectively). As a university student, you need to be aware that "learning isn't playtime or a matter of amusement. You will learn more and better when you stretch your skills and knowledge in ways that will sometimes make you uncomfortable. Philosopher Aristotle has already said that "learning is no amusement but is accompanied with pain" (http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.8.eight.html).

To win the learning struggle, the following attributes are important life skills that will be useful during your studies: independence, willingness to get involved, organization, the ability to work with others, effective time management, self-reflection, and self-motivation. To have more details on the above life skills, I invite you to read " What to expect from academic study" based on Stella Cottrell's book "Skills for study"(http://www.palgrave.com/skills4studycampustaster/An_introduction.html). Study skills are the methods, strategies and attitudes that will help you to get the most out of your education. As you progress through your programme, your study skills will improve through practice, trial and error, feedback, and reflection.

3. What is online learning?

The term online learning implies "that the learner is at a distance from the tutor or instructor, that the learner uses some form of technology to access learning materials" (Anderson, 2008). A form of learning in which learners interact with each other and the instructor through either asynchronous or synchronous modes of learning. Allen and Seaman (2011) described online learning when content is delivered online 80% or more. "A course where most or all of the content is delivered online. Typically have no face-to-face meetings".

4. Recommendations on your online learning through UR e-learning platform

As you may understand it, e-Learning means that you will mostly learn using electronic instructional materials and conducting e-Learning activities uploaded on the platform. However, you will take advantage of: collaborating with your classmates or working in your respective group at distance; working with an increased flexibility: you will be able to learn from your home or anywhere and at any time; interacting with your colleagues and instructors from where you are.

Therefore, before you embark in reading, listening and watching learning materials; before you start solving exercises, responding to quizzes and assignments, and conducting e-tivities proposed to you, I would recommend you to proceed as follows:

1) Read carefully and make yours the module description and module outline: they summarise key information about the module including the module title, credit value, aims, intended learning outcomes, indicative content, teaching and learning strategies, assessment methods and key resources available to you.
2) Pay more attention to the module intended learning outcomes of the module: they will guide you in your progression of learning as they are the ones you will be asked to complete progressively and achieve to gain the required competences.
3) Another important document to start with is the storyboard: it clarifies for you week per week and along the trimester/semester the different units, the weekly Intended Learning Outcomes, the weekly learning activities, assessment tasks and resources.

4) Then, go ahead and LEARN: attend to synchronous sessions, work on asynchronous activities: read written documents, listen to audios and watch videos proposed to you, do e-tivities, quizzes and assignments.

Online learning is a student-centred learning approach. As such, although you will be supported by your lecturers, you will be responsible for your own learning. Visit regularly the discussion forums and post your own reflection; check and meet the deadlines of quizzes, assignments and e-tivities.

5. **Technical support**

For any technical support, send your query on **elearning@ur.ac.rw** or call any one of the following technical support. Their emails appear on the Main Page of the UR eLearning Platform.

	Contact	Dedicated College to support
1.	NTABOMVURA Leon (0788351569)	UR-College of Education
2.	UWIZEYE Jean Claude (0788444646)	UR-College of Science and Technology
3.	NTALINDWA Theoneste (0788884594)	UR-College of Arts and Social Sciences
4.	NYINAWUMUNTU Clemence (0788635596)	College of Business and Economics
5.	NYIRUMULINGA Christian (0783030750)	UR-College of Agriculture, Animal Sciences and Veterinary Medicine
6.	KARANGWA Benjamin (0788353225)	UR-College of Medicine and Health Sciences

If you are not satisfied for given support by above staff, contact the Director Centre for Open Distance and e-Learning, Dr. NDUWINGOMA Mathias, Tel: 0788897814

Once again, I would like to wish you all the best in your online learning and success in your studies.

Directorate of Teaching and Learning Enhancement & CODeL
University of Rwanda