UNIVERSITY OF SAINT JOSEPH MBARARA (USJM)

OPEN DISTANCE AND E-LEARNING (ODeL) STRATEGY

JANUARY, 2023

FOREWORD

Through the Strategic Planning process during the COVID 19 lock down, the University of Saint Joseph Mbarara (USJM) Management and Staff agreed in a meeting to institute and ODeL Planning Committee chaired by the Dean, Faculty of Computing Sciences to over see the management and roll out of Open Distance and eLearnng (ODeL) program at the University. Together the Committee has worked to build a large-scale community informed strategy.

As part of this process, the team reached out to USJM staff and students' community to provide feedback through a survey. The Committee developed a collective identity and voice, resulting in the following guidelines and policies.

USJM has recognized open and distance learning as a key strategy in increasing access to equitable and flexible education. It shall therefore be emphasized and supported.

VICE CHANCHELLOR

University of Saint Joseph Mbarara

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Archdiocese of Mbarara (AoM) started a university as part of its mission and mandate to establish educational institutions of different levels to share in the salvific ministry of Christ by being the salt and light to the world. The founders coined the name: University of Saint Joseph Mbarara (USJM), for the university from St. Joseph, foster father to Jesus and the patron Saint of the pioneer St. Joseph Technical School, whose tradition of hard workmanship and community responsive education, USJM is to uphold.

The personal qualities and values of St. Joseph, the worker, such as integrity, hardworking, commitment, are behind this tradition, and the University will uphold them. USJM aims at total orientation and focus on tertiary education that meets community needs and engineers socioeconomic transformation. It delivers relevant, affordable, high quality, inclusive and community-responsive university education. The University of Saint Joseph Mbarara derives its vision and mission from the Christian understanding of the integral growth of a person.

i. **Vision:** A leading center for integrated community responsive university education.

ii. **Mission:** To provide holistic education for sustainable development.

iii. **Motto:** Foster Excellence and Integrity **(*Praestantia et Integritate Foveat*)**

iv. **Slogan:** For and With the Community

v. **Philosophy:** Community-Responsive and Engaged university education

vi. **Core Values**

   a. God fearing,

   b. Integrity,

   c. Excellence,

   d. Accountability,

   e. Community responsiveness

vii. **Objectives:**

   a. To provide relevant university education.

   b. To promote research and innovation among stakeholders.

   c. To nurture citizens of integrity and sense of common good.

   d. To nurture students with demand-oriented skills.

   e. To promote best practices in institutional governance.

   f. To promote pastoral mission of the church

It is USJM commitment to encourage the development of each individual through education at all levels, stressing in particular the creation/promotion of an environment where intellectual and

moral values are priorities. Since the person is at the centre of all growth and development, both at individual and societal levels, all members of the community respect each other in an attempt to create an environment of openness and trust. The University is committed to promoting justice, respect, solidarity, human rights, equality, and environmental protection, both in its own community and society in general.

Based on our Vision and Mission and further developed in our Learning and Teaching Strategy, this document describes our aspirations for the future learning environment at the University of Saint Joseph Mbarara. We describe the features that a strong ODeL capability and culture will contribute to the vision and mission.

Vision

Inclusive, flexible, engaging and transformative learning for everyone

Mission

To create a learning and teaching environment that promotes student success

Objective

Cultivating an innovative, collaborative and evolving community of learning

The Strategy delineated in this document sets out a vision for the future learning environment at the University of Saint Joseph Mbarara and a pathway to follow to achieve this vision. It should however be noted that the Strategy does not tell staff how to teach or students how to learn but rather seeks to empower them by increasing both the range and accessibility of the methods they can adopt. In a rapidly changing world, where higher education is becoming increasingly global and distant in nature, it aims to put in place measures that will enhance the position of the University as a national, regional, continental and world-class place of research informed learning.

The strategy builds on the aspiration of the University Vision and Mission and further developed in our Learning and Teaching Strategy. It specifically addresses the core vision and mission commitments that is; "*A leading Centre for value- based, contemporary and integrated community responsive University Education for social transformation*" and "*To provide accessible and holistic education, relevant skills and innovative techno-logy for a liberating, integral and sustainable development.*" respectively.

The Strategy outlines how Open Distance e-learning can support the vision and mission and identifies specific strategic priorities for the coming years and the enablers that will allow the delivery of these priorities.

1.1 The Open Distance and E-Learning (ODeL) Vision

At the heart of our vision is an academic community that is empowered to creatively consider and take advantage of the opportunities to foster an inclusive, flexible, engaging and transformative learning for everyone supported by technology at the early stages of programme and course design and is both confident and well-supported in its use.

1.1.1 The learning experiences of our student community will be enriched by

i. An increasingly personalized, technology-supported, student learning experience to offset the depersonalizing effects of large classes;
ii. Increased access to and interaction with rich educational content via mobile devices within and beyond the physical bounds of our campuses and,
iii. Access to a limited range of wholly online, interactive and feedback-rich courses, available on-campus, to increase both the flexibility and the breadth of the learning experience.

1.1.2 Our staff and students will be supported throughout by: -

i. A robust IT infrastructure that allows pervasive high-speed connectivity, sufficient bandwidth, storage capacity and technical capability to create and deliver rich multi-media course content to our students on demand;
ii. A robust but flexible Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) with support of a Learning Management System (LMS) that incorporates a range of well-supported interactive tools for teaching and assessment both on campus and at distance;
iii. Technology enabled physical teaching, study and assessment spaces designed to be flexible and aligned to the teaching and learning strategies of our staff and students; and,
iv. Continuous Training of staff and students to keep updated with the emerging technologies

1.1.3 On the other hand, our local, national, regional and global reach and reputation will be enhanced through: -

i. Supporting a significant number of learners at distance on a range of high-quality, online education aligned with both our research expertise and the needs of high-level professionals
ii. Enabling the University's Transnational Education Strategy through a seamless support for flexible delivery in-country or online across national boundaries
iii. Contributing to and drawing from world-class Open Educational Resources to both enhance our students' learning experiences and our reputation as a leading Centre for value-based, contemporary and integrated community responsive University Education for social transformation.

1.2 Generic Strategic Priorities

Many of the building blocks required to deliver the vision stated above are already in place but several are not and these deficiencies must be addressed as key priorities in the next few years. Specifically, the University will:

i. Empower and support staff to develop and deliver effective approaches to teaching enabled by the creative use of technology and, if appropriate, provide pathways for embryonic activity to be mainstreamed;
ii. Enhance the on-campus learning experience through more effective, integrated use of interactive technologies;
iii. Support staff in developing and sustaining a core capability in online, distance education targeted primarily at high-quality programs aligned to our research strengths, the needs of high-level professionals and in support of transnational education; and

iv. Extend the reach and flexibility of our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), learning toolset and student support systems to provide easy access and interaction through laptops, mobile and tablet devices and to create the opportunity for students to increasingly personalize their own learning space.

1.2.1 Focus Areas and Specific strategies

Ever since the inception of USJM, there has been a strategic plan to standardize key eLearning resources at the University level. Enterprise-focused support and professional development opportunities are necessary for USJM to meet its goals. Consistency and availability of technology resources, as well as partnership with the faculties, administration, the IT unit and other service providers, are essential for driving Open Distance and eLearning growth at USJM. Below, we provide a list of the focus areas and respective specific strategies for our ODeL strategy.

1.2.1.1 First Focus Area: Student & Faculty Staff Experience

This focus area mainly aims at standardizing key Open Distance and eLearning resources at the university level, enterprise-focused support and professional development opportunities necessary for USJM to meet its ODeL goals. Consistency and availability of technology resources, as well as partnership with the faculties, administration and the IT unit, are essential for driving ODeL at USJM.

Identified Strategies

i. Promote digital citizenship and prepare students to succeed in the rapidly evolving digital world;
ii. Build a 21st century digital Open Distance and eLearning environment that promotes evidence-based learning and teaching;
iii. Provide affordable, quality, consistent and easy to use Open Distance and eLearning resources to remove barriers and increase access;
iv. Exceed industry standards for accessibility and quality in order to deliver an inclusive, world class Open Distance and eLearning environment;
v. Support & help provide faculty professional development that highlights pedagogical best practices for existing and emerging technologies; and
vi. Ensure that appropriate and adequate resources are available across the university for student and faculty staff success.

1.2.1.2 Second Focus Area: Open Distance and eLearning Foundations Development

Under this focus area, USJM as a higher education institution plans to establish a Decentralized Open Distance and eLearning organizational structure with all courses utilizing some form of eLearning technology.

Identified Strategies

i. Deliver a high quality, all time support environment that is effective and responsive to the diverse needs of the USJM community;
ii. Leverage Open Distance and eLearning analytics to improve student success and support continuous quality improvement. (This will specifically inform decision making, track performance, and improve student success is an emerging capability);
iii. Ensure the Open Distance and eLearning strategies are aligned with the university's five-year enrollment plan to forecast technology and related staffing needs;

iv. Benchmark USJM's Open Distance and eLearning environment to monitor and compare our performance against ourselves and peer institutions in the country and beyond;
v. Collaborate in the development of models to identify, develop and launch new online programs; and
vi. Establish a sustainable Open Distance and eLearning funding model that promotes access to critical products and services across the university.

1.2.1.3 Third Focus Area: Building an Open Distance and eLearning Oriented Community

This focus area aims at critically engaging the USJM community in the ODeL conversation to realize its goal of excelling in Open Distance and eLearning services. Through resources and engagement tools like eLearning Newsletters, Community Speaker Series and our to be eLearning Champions, members of the USJM community can stay engaged and current on the latest Open Distance and eLearning initiatives at the university.

Identified Strategies

i. Engage the student voice in building the Open Distance and eLearning community;
ii. In partnership with USJM QA Directorate, promote a shared understanding of Open Distance and eLearning pedagogies to further encourage academic excellence at USJM;
iii. In partnership with USJM QA Directorate, grow communities of practice to promote and advance the adoption of Open Distance and eLearning pedagogical best practices;
iv. Communicate effectively with the university community to increase awareness of opportunities and encourage engagement;
v. Enhance and expand collaboration between central and distributed Open Distance and eLearning efforts to cultivate shared services and best practices and
vi. Leverage Open Distance and eLearning to enhance USJM's community partnerships by reaching new audiences and delivering diverse program offerings.

1.2.1.4 Fourth Focus Area: Establishing an Open Distance and eLearning Ecosystem

Under this focus area, USJM's Open Distance and eLearning ecosystem strategy is to include the tools, resources, and people vital to excelling at eLearning. Students and faculty staff will increasingly start using video in support of instructional activities, utilizing different digital tools. It is also here that the new eLearning Platform (the Learning Management System-LMS) and other eTools are to be adopted across the university.

Identified Strategies

i. Align critical products and services with student and faculty staff needs and expectations;
ii. Build awareness of the shared set of critical tools while acknowledging USJM's distributed organizational structure and diverse instructional needs;
iii. Develop models that assist in selection of appropriate instructional tools that are supportive of pedagogical innovation, inclusive and accessible;
iv. Develop a strategy for the effective use of instructional tools to support teaching and learning;
v. Develop a strategy for cloud-based services to provide for easy-to-access, secure and sustainable service delivery; and
vi. Strengthen University relationships with critical vendors to ensure quality service delivery and promote USJM as a leader in the community

1.3 Key Enabling Factors

Achievement of our strategic priorities will only be possible if the foundation on which we build activity is strong. There are a series of key enablers that must be enacted at the core to our learning and teaching environment for this to happen. These are:

i. **Staff:** We will establish effective financial and staff-development mechanisms to support a significantly increased proportion of our staff in engaging with and developing expertise in Open Distance and E-Learning.
ii. **Policy:** We will proactively assess the elements of our current academic policy framework in terms of their future suitability to support staff and student aspirations of the increased use of technology supported learning.
iii. **Evidence**-based progress: We will establish mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of approaches to E-Learning including, where appropriate, learning analytics
iv. **IT Infrastructure:** We will progressively upgrade our IT infrastructure to support the delivery of our strategic vision

1.4 Supplementary Factors

1.4.1 Physical Infrastructure

The importance of our physical infrastructure to this strategy has already been highlighted in our vision. It is essential that the physical spaces in which we teach and in which our students study evolve as our teaching and content delivery methods change. In reality, we have already been anticipating change by progressively developing more flexible teaching spaces and we will continue to do this. The integration of technology within these spaces is, however, a key factor that will have increased prominence at the design stage in the future.

1.4.2 Emerging Technologies Generic Capability

There are always new technology-supported approaches to teaching emerging in higher education. For example, the use of gaming techniques for learning is currently attracting considerable interest in the broader community. If we deliver against our priorities we will, by default, have the capacity to seamlessly evaluate, test and implement new technology-supported pedagogic approaches where they have real potential to impact positively on our learning environment. This is why, although the strategy recognizes some of the emergent trends in technology-supported pedagogy it deliberately avoids identifying specific approaches in the vision or in the setting of strategic priorities.

1.4.3 Communication and Collaboration

In this 4th Industrial Revolution, there has been significant growth in student-student, student group, staff-student or staff-staff collaboration through both formal and social-media channels both in individuals' personal lives and in support of teaching and learning.

As collaboration tools and environments evolve in the coming years and students increase their use of external content, it is therefore logical to assume that students will increasingly seek to collaborate with fellow students, alumni and subject matter experts from outside of the University. The University is already encouraging students to widen their horizons and take advantage of these new opportunities to enhance the learning experience that they have at USJM. This strategy will further enable progress in this area.

1.4.4 The Personalized Learning Experience

Throughout this strategy, reference is made to personalizing the student learning experience. Open Distance and E-Learning (ODeL) offers a significant potential to enhance the way in which the University supports the learning experience of each individual student. Examples of this include the potential to offer:

i. improved generic and individual feedback through a range of media;
ii. individual formative exercises based on performance;
iii. additional support for students with disabilities;
iv. improved progress monitoring and early intervention;
v. support for flexible study patterns; and
vi. collaboration tools for students working in groups including across time zones

This list is not intended to be exhaustive but rather merely highlights the big potential in ODeL

1.4.5 Research

The research process is about gathering and processing information and collaboration. The fact that most of the people involved in have interests in using technology, provides opportunities for new ways to support these activities to facilitate more flexible ways of working.

1.4.6 Delivery

The ODeL strategy, and any associated projects to deliver information and services online, will be managed by IT Services and jointly delivered, in collaboration with a range of information and service providers from across the university faculties, administration and other service providers.

1.4.7 Library

There is close alignment between the ODeL strategy and the direction already being taken by the Library unit. The Library is being planned to be a hub of an exciting hybrid service, encompassing both physical print and digital materials. Alongside these plans, the capabilities are being developed to enable the Library to adapt readily to the wider changes underlying the Open Distance and e-learning strategy. Plans are under way to heavily invest in digital resources, particularly in terms of e-journals, abstracting and indexing services and large data sets. The Library can add value to the ODeL by:

i. Providing access to high quality information to USJM students which is integrated with the curriculum;
ii. Ensuring that USJM learners are information literate and able to discover, evaluate and manage information at any time from any place and
iii. Providing advice and assistance to learners through a range of services, and ensuring that these services are effectively communicated to students.

2.0 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

This section puts the strategy in context, identifying both the factors that are driving change in the learning environment and the possible challenges therein to focus our moving forward.

In making our commitment to a visionary curriculum development, delivery and review, we have acknowledged the need to continuously monitor and enhance our teaching and assessment methods to keep up with the latest technologies. It is based on this context that the University Management and Staff have recognized the importance of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) with use of a Learning Management System (LMS) in continuing to deliver an excellent student experience not only while physically at campus but also away from campus.

In other words, this ODeL Strategy is intended to enhance the learning experience by both physical and virtual infrastructures of the highest quality and excellent learning resources that are targeted to address our diverse learning community's needs and to provide them with flexibility in what, how, when and where they learn. By this, we are advantaged to avail a robust, accessible, and sustainable platform for innovation and enhancement of student learning".

The development of this ODeL strategy is therefore premised against this background.

2.1 Internal Context

2.1.1 The Virtual Learning Environment

For several months now we have invested in ensuring that our Virtual learning environment is ready to support Open Distance and eLearning. A lot of effort is also being made to enhance our formal teaching spaces together with additional investment in social learning spaces. We have an ongoing commitment within the Capital Plan to continue with this investment, targeted towards our new building that will house more teaching space and laboratory.

At this time, we are rolling out a robust Virtual Learning Environment (the Learning Management System-LMS) to enhance our teaching and student learning experience both on campus and away from campus. Much of this growth has been driven by the Covid-19 pandemic and the students' demand for delivery of courses away from campus.

In the coming year, staff across the University will transition their courses onto the LMS. It is anticipated that both the scale and range of Virtual Learning Environment usage will continue to grow in the years ahead as the Education sector of Uganda moves more towards the Open Distance and E-Learning model.

There is a likelihood that some staff members may use the VLE as merely a document repository. This has been envisioned and continuous support to staff members is underway. The way in which we plan to support staff in the future in understanding and engaging with innovations in pedagogy supported by technology will be central to enhancing our reputation for delivering a national, regional, and world-leading student learning experience.

There is plan to enhance our Virtual Learning Environment by provision of a number of additional "virtual" tools such as plagiarism detection, GradeMark software for assessment, software for peer assessment and student creation of multiple choice questions. Across the

University, we hope to use a range of subject-specific software solutions to deliver specialist courses and, in some cases, will devise local software solutions to meet specific student learning needs. In moving forward, we must continue to build an environment in which innovations of this kind are encouraged and supported.

2.1.2 Student Behaviors and Expectations

Another important dimension that impacts on the future shape of our learning environment is the changing behaviors of our students. A significant proportion of our students now have some kind of part time job, are engaged in volunteering or are active in one of the many clubs and societies. These time commitments mean that learning patterns vary considerably and that students are likely to access e-resources at any time of the day.

Mobile Computing devices usage amongst students is extensive. In a recent survey of our students, it was found that almost over 80% of students have a dependable computing device. Over 70% own a smart phone, over 15% own a laptop and over 60% can access internet while off campus. We noted that over 60% can access electricity off campus and over 65% can afford suitable/stable internet bundles per week. We also found out that the technology skills especially proficiency in using Office applications, email and accessing online libraries and other online resources were averagely distributed. Over 75% students agreed that introduction of a virtual learning environment using a learning management system can support teaching and learning while off-campus. This survey has uplifted our venture in laying down the ODeL strategy to promote continuous learning even when off the USJM premises. More surveys will continuously be made to ascertain the technology changing environment for better modifications and planning.

2.1.3 Supporting our Staff

The support to be provided for staff in terms of engaging with technology in teaching will be delivered through a variety of routes including local technical support, peer support, seminar and training sessions and direct support through the Faculty of Computing Sciences and IT Services Unit. The demands on academic staff time are such that, to be effective and to encourage proper engagement, support has to be targeted and efficient in terms of time. At present, our support mechanisms are not sufficiently structured to scaffold engagement with innovative technology-based teaching methods and this must be addressed as we move forward.

2.2 External Context

2.2.1 Online Learning

The recent emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic has focused public interest on online learning. The reality is, however, that online learning has been growing steadily now for a number of years. Online programs and courses provide universities with an opportunity to connect with a much broader student base than would otherwise be possible and, in marketing terms, this has the potential to significantly impact on the external profile of an institution.

To us this remains to be seen as an advantage of developing a sustainable financial ODeL strategy that will enhance student Higher Education learning experiences at USJM.

2.2.2 The Influence of the External Environment on Student Expectations and Staff Opportunities

The experience of students prior to entering Higher Education and in their use of technology in everyday life has a significant impact on their expectations and learning styles. Our survey for academic staff and students' online capacity needs assessment of the attitudes towards technology shows a significant interest in the use of technology to support teaching and learning while off-campus. We anticipate that, as students use enabling technology more and more in their daily lives, it is likely that their expectations in terms of its use in the learning environment will continue to grow. In the current generation, students are increasingly looking to have greater choice in creating a personalized learning environment rather than being forced to adopt a learning model prescribed by the University. In addition, information sources are expanding rapidly, again introducing greater choice for the students. It is important that the teaching community is in a position to understand these changes and tailor content in a manner that enriches the overall student experience.

At this point, students' choice will become an ever increasingly important factor in the learning experience. Not only that, but as the University's Online Distance and e-Learning strategy evolves it is clear that the range of tools and techniques available to teaching staff will also increase in number and diversity. Academic staff therefore will also be faced with choice and be able to select the most appropriate mix which suits the teaching style of the academic, the subject matter involved and the demands of increasingly demanding students. The University will ensure that staff are properly enabled and supported in doing this.

3.0 Implementation of the USJM-ODeL Strategy

Implementation of this ODeL strategy shall immediately kick-start after the required approvals and as well keep evolving as emerging technologies come into play. Financial investment and carrying out more surveys involving the community stakeholders will as well contribute to its future implementation.

The implementation of the USJM-ODeL strategy will require planning, training, implementation testing, dissemination, formative evaluation and addressing any technical issues through on-going support. Below are some details of the implementation process.

3.0 USJM-ODeL Implementation

The USJM-ODeL strategy shall be implemented through a series of steps as indicated in the next section.

3.1Proposed Implementation Process

3.1.1 Planning.

In preparation for Open Distance and eLearning implementation, we will develop a research plan, in order to disseminate or present results of the ODeL initiative to a wider audience. Based on our program goals, scope, and audience, and with direction from the ODeL task force, shall create a high-level plan. The Plan will include what we will do when and how we will roll out eLearning initially so that we can evaluate and make adjustments in the content and processes before going to scale. In collaboration with the University ODeL task force, we shall identify budget inputs such as hardware, software, staff time, communication

costs, training costs, and monitoring and evaluation costs. It is after the approval of the plan with its budget that other processes will commence.

3.1.2 Training

There will be training for everyone who will be involved, including IT staff, Lecturers, students and any other users. Guidance on how to access the help desk, and other IT support shall be put in place. This will enable Lecturers, students and other users get their questions answered easily, get any technical problems solved, and receive support for their implementation.

3.1.3 Implementation Testing

The ODeL embedded courses will first be tested with a small group to identify issues/problems and adjust as necessary. Thereafter, the USJM Learning Management System will be tested with a small user (student) group, some lecturers and IT staff to identify and solve any process or technical issues.

3.1.4 Dissemination

The eLearning materials can include large files if they include video and other multimedia. This implies the need to download and import the courses onto the systems initially, while training the lecturers or IT staff. There will be a provision of guide with details on downloading and importing files. We shall use stakeholder meetings, professional association meetings, media, and other forums both to distribute eLearning materials and to share information about the ODeL initiative and how to access information or participate. There will also be reporting the findings that are approved by the task force after monitoring and evaluating the results.

3.1.5 Ongoing Support

Ready support for all users such as the lecturers, students, and IT personnel is critical, especially in the early stages. There will be a telephone number, e-mail address, or access to live support to ensure that technical issues and other questions are addressed and answered. The IT support unit working closely with the Lecturers will be required to monitor on a regular basis, such as weekly, to determine how students are progressing and answer any questions. This shall include managing the help desk or troubleshooting processes or the support system for users and administrators established to document problems that would have been addressed.

3.2 Other Related Implementation Issues

3.2.1 Disaster Recovery, Maintenance, Safety and Backup

The Open Distance and e-Learning strategy increases the reliance on the University's IT infrastructure. The IT Services Unit will consider the resilience of services, disaster recovery planning and support cover. In each of these areas we will need to balance additional cost against risk and perceived value of the service. The IT Services Unit will continue to develop and improve service resilience in the selection of server hardware and with recent SAN (Storage Area Network) developments. It will also be committed to review and document Disaster Recovery plans immediately. Consideration of e-learning servers and file storage will be incorporated within this review. Any recommended improvements will be costed for further consideration and budgeting.

Specifically, we shall:

1. **Create a disaster recovery team.** This team will be responsible for developing, implementing, and maintaining the Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP). Team members shall be identified, member's responsibilities defined, and contact information provided. The DRP will also identify who should be contacted in the event of a disaster or emergency, and all staff and students will be informed of the DRP and their responsibility if a disaster occurs.
2. **Identify and assess disaster risks.** Our disaster recovery team will identify and assess the risks to our University. Things such as natural disasters, man-made emergencies, and technology related incidents will be assessed. This will assist the team in identifying the recovery strategies and resources required to recover from disasters within a predetermined and acceptable timeframe.
3. **Determine critical applications, documents, and resources.** The University will evaluate its processes to determine those which are critical to its operations. In this critical applications, documents, and any other critical resources shall be assessed.
4. **Specify maintenance, backup and off-site storage procedures.** We shall identify when to carry out infrastructure maintenance (network, servers, LMS, etc.), what to back up, by whom, how to perform the backup, location of backup and how frequently backups should occur. All critical applications, equipment, and documents will be preserved and backed up.
5. **Test and maintain the DRP.** Disaster recovery planning is a continual process as risks of disasters and emergencies are always changing. We shall routinely test the DRP to evaluate the procedures documented in the plan for effectiveness and appropriateness. The recovery team will regularly update the DRP to accommodate for changes in University processes, technology, and evolving disaster risks.

3.2.2 Scaling up.

Our intention is to achieve an effective implementation of the Open Distance and e-learning strategy, especially from perspective of staff capacity building, supportive resources, future positioning and attracting funding.

A scale-up plan will be developed based on the lessons learnt after implementation. Investing in more digital tools, determining learning content and planning for more training sessions for expansion. In more details, the following will be done:

i. **We shall first create a pilot program** that we can easily test and validate so as to allow for scaling up.

ii. **Next will be validating the pilot program.** We shall gradually roll out the pilot program department by department or location by location, or even introduce it university-wide after a pre-determined period of evaluation. Once our pilot program is validated, we shall proceed with confidence, knowing we have proof of concept.

iii. **Mapping the unmet needs.** To achieve smart scaling, it requires a look at University needs and objectives. Mapping where our University has unmet needs and identifying opportunities for new learning programs will be an important part of the expansion process.

iv. **Choosing the right technology** will be a critical step for us since seeking to scale-up also requires to choose the right learning management software. We shall expand our operations through the use of a modern, and scalable cloud-based LMS.

4.0 Evaluation of the USJM-ODeL Strategy

An effective initiative for implementing Open Distance and eLearning at the University starts with a well-defined strategy. However, its success is ultimately determined by a clear plan and follow up for evaluation. Through this strategy, we would want students and staff to participate in the courses, the students to complete the course, students and staff to have full engagement, learning to take place, and later demonstrate improved skills through application of knowledge. Therefore, the success of this ODeL strategy will mainly be premised on six key elements: Participation,

i. Completion,
ii. Engagement,
iii. Learning,
iv. Application, and
v. Ultimately Results.

A layout of our ODeL evaluation plan is provided below. It is important to note that at this stage, we don't know the details, the goals and the outcomes, of each solution, but we only have a fair idea of how we want to go about the evaluation exercise.

Metric	Description	Timeframe	Who/How
Participation	% of students and staff population who accessed and used the ODeL platform (LMS)	2-3 month after kick off	LMS reports
Completion	% of students/learners population who started a given course and completed it via LMS	3-5 month after commencement	LMS reports
Engagement	Average student satisfaction acceptability rating or other forms of engagement such as downloads of notes, comments, forum chats, likes etc.	Immediately after the students get enrolled on to the LMS	Student: satisfaction surveys Staff: viewing download statistics
Learning	Average scores obtained by the students from well-designed assessments	Immediately or 1 to 2 weeks after the students get enrolled on to the LMS	Student: Continuous assessments, End of course assessments administered either

			offline or through the LMS
Application	% or the extent to which students are able to do better or differently in their work and day to day life.	3-6 months after the students get enrolled on to the LMS	Student and Staff: via online evaluation (feedback) surveys Measuring student knowledge change (pass rate per course)
Results	A tangible improvement in a relevant course/program	3-6 months after the students get enrolled on to the LMS	Staff: Relevant university processes. i.e. marking/grading Students: Semester results/transcripts

4.1 Key Focus Evaluation Indicators

1. Content Indicators	
Outcomes	**University Level Indicators**
Content priorities identified; content selected, adapted, or developed	Number of eLearning courses available
Implementation research plan developed to determine usability, satisfaction level, and cost	University management approves plans
2. Platform Indicators	
Needs assessment completed	Needs assessment draft
Needed supplies and equipment procured	Servers, hardware, and software in place, functional and installed
IT infrastructure and support in place (e.g., servers, training on eLearning use, and maintenance)	•eLearning course installed •Servers operational • IT staff trained to maintain system • Average time to respond to service call • More IT staff hired
3. Process Indicators	
IT infrastructure/support and maintenance available	• IT staff hired • Average time eLearning is "offline" • Average time to respond to service call
Facilitators and users trained to use e-Learning Users actively using eLearning modules	Number trained in use of eLearning • Proportion of users who have completed 80% of eLearning course by end of testing phase • eLearning pre- and post-test pass scores of users at each faculty on eLearning courses
Results of implementation research on usability, user satisfaction, and costing available and disseminated	• Level of satisfaction (users and lecturers) • Unit costs defined • Proportion of users and lecturers using eLearning • Proportion of users completing 80% of courses per year • Number of reported technical problems with eLearning systems course per year
Evaluation of student outcomes	• Average user scores pre and post test
Scale-up plan developed based on lessons learned	• Scale-up plan drafted and approved
4. IT and Infrastructure Indicators	
All Faculties have needed hardware and software for eLearning	Schools have IT equipment and supplies to provide eLearning
All Faculties have ongoing IT support and maintenance	Proportion of students whose eLearning courses are not functional for two weeks or more

5. User Indicators	
Routine monitoring of eLearning usability, level of satisfaction, and performance outcomes	• Level of satisfaction of students and lecturers • Proportion of students and lecturers using eLearning • Proportion of students and lecturers completing 80% of courses per year • Percentage increase in average score per course (pre-test/post-test)

5.0 USJM ODeL Strategy Implementation Risks

5.1 Lecturer Related Risk

To be an involved lecturer in an e-Learning system, there are some important requirements that need to be accomplished. One needs to have "information literacy, computer literacy, technological literacy and new education literacy". This so because according to the new profile of this kind of lecturer will now be "the lecturer processes data, structures information, systematizes knowledge" using new software tools offered by the e-Learning platform. In the sections below are some of the foreseen risks and our proposed approach to remedy them.

5.1.1 The competency risk

The competency risk is determined, first of all, by the level of professional education in one's own field of activity and second in the IT & Computing domain, especially knowledge about operating systems in general and in particular, e-Learning software operation procedures. From this reason, the competency risk is a complex one, composed of many sub risks as provided below:

- **The didactic risk** appears when an old course is put in the same shape, without any improvement, on the e-learning platform. We shall prevent this kind of risk by introducing controls, called general controls, for example to control the course content and structure, control of the ergonomics of navigation through the course, of the hierarchy of the lessons, of subjects, of news, bibliography and resources.
- **The scientific risk** is associated with quality of the content of lessons. The content of the course must give a chance to the normal student to pass the exam with good marks but in the same time must have a higher scientific level to stimulate also the excellent, and interested students that get outstanding results. The modernism must be not only in the shape but also in the content of the course. There are now much more tools to bring together the last hour theory with real world examples and study cases. Our emphasis will be on the lecturers' need to take more care about a continuous improvement of their own scientific culture to face up with the web, other colleagues and students' competition.
- **The technological risk** belongs to the relation between lecturer and the IT & Computing system and depends on the level of knowledge about functionality, menus, commands, toolbars, shortcuts and operating procedures of the e-Learning software. First lecturer need to know build, publish and edit courses, create and update a database for tests, to add resources, to open and manage forums and digital announcement panel. Second are receiving the solved exercises, the homework's, projects, and so on, and quickly deliver the feedback, marks or comments or indications. Many times the lecturers must interact on-line, directly with students with virtual groups using the platform software resources such as forums, blogs, chats, video chats, Skype conferences etc. There will be training the lecturers in dealing very well with the Windows operating system, MS Office and different

programs such as zip/unzip, antivirus, firewall programs and surely browsing very well the Internet for scientific research.

- **The evaluation risk** is generated by the desire of increasing the objectivity of evaluation process, transferring, if would be possible, the responsibility to the computer. To do this we use tests, homework's send via email or projects stored on folders on hard disk by the students. No matter how good or strong the tests are, neither such an evaluation cannot replace the pedagogic experience of lecturer. Using only electronic distance methods, the evaluation of students are uncompleted. Our approach will be to have some of important qualities be discovered through face–to-face meeting, oral exams, and direct discussions which will help us to observe such values that can't be expressed on writing.

5.1.2 The Management Risk

The management risk rises up because a bad planning and control of the eLearning process, courses, tests, mid tests, consultations, face-to-face one-week meeting, bad using of digital poster boards or breaking the deadlines discipline, or because of a bad cooperation between lecturer's team or lecturers and students. On the e-Learning system everything must be ready at the starting day of the course and the students decide what and when they learn. The lecturers must concern themselves about the dates of intermediate tests, the deadlines for projects and to keep a higher rhythm of working. The following things can go wrong:

i. Compulsory requirements to promote the exam sometimes are not clearly exposed, for example minimum requirements for each qualifying level, good, very good, outstanding;
ii. Bad schedule of intermediate tests and deadlines and unexpected delay on delivery of the observations and marks;
iii. Missing personalized feedback to the inactive or lazy students;
iv. Authentication of paternity for off line homework.

The methodic-didactic process management will be treated as any other management process, on the terms of planning, organizing, coordination and control

5.1.3 The education risk

The education risk is present because it is difficult to influence the student professional behavior sitting somewhere in cyberspace hidden by an email address. Lecturers are obliged to be preoccupied, not only of the level of knowledge, but at the same time about increasing of the professional responsibility, labor discipline, and desire of excellence. Our approach will be to train lecturers to discover the proper style of subjects to be posted on forum, replying to the questions, blogging or chatting with students, trying to demonstrate honesty, love for the job well done, and trying to give them directions for the future career.

5.1.4 Teaching staff fear that they will lose their jobs due to technology.

The University plan is to do the following:

i. Reassure staff that technology will enhance teaching, not replace it;
ii. Work with staff to consider how their roles will change;
iii. Ensure that staff are trained and supported appropriately;
iv. Reward online learning in staff appraisal; and
v. Encourage innovation and engagement with finding new ways to teach online

5.2 Student Related Risks

5.2.1 The participation risk

The participation risk linked directly with the student expectations. When the course is rigid, hermetically closed, contains too much information in a few pages and claims a sustain effort to be understood, the student perception about this so called innovative style of teaching is worse. They will have missed the Lecturer's guidelines and feel uncomfortable on the solitary confrontation with the e-learning system and hence don't fully participate in the course.

5.2.2 The competition risk

This risk is associated with the motivation of the students. Competition exists with or without e-Learning. But, when we work with virtual classes we must find new and proper pedagogic methods to stimulate competition. Only the notes are not enough. First, we must not wait until the end of the course, the end of semester, for the evaluation of students. We hope to deploy a good practice of for example establishing "on spot tests" and individually telling to every student his /her relative position into the hierarchy of the class. We plan to be innovative, by organizing professional project contests, short virtual scientific symposiums on different subjects linked to the course, with participation of the managers representing known companies or professors from the academic staff or other universities. The guests would play a role in commenting on the results and if there are even one or two sponsors, it can be great to award the winners and spur more competition.

5.2.3 The personality risk

This risk is important in connection with the competition risk. In a normal class the professional authority, the individual scientific value, the leader behavior can be noticed and appreciated much more easily by the lecturers and, may be much more important, by the rest of the students. In a virtual class these qualities are difficult to be observed and accepted and pay some respects to the best students.

However, we plan to show our appreciation by making public comments on the forum about the results of the best students, about the winners of internal competitions, advise them and stimulate them to participate to the national or international conferences, to the research programs etc.

The other option will be stimulating them by asking directly by name, many times, on the forum, to share their opinions, theirs experience of work, ideas. This way, they can see that, both lecturers and students, know and appreciate them for the results they get. This student will act in the future with much more enthusiasm creating a professional emulation inside the virtual class.

5.2.4 The communication risk

This risk doesn't only affect the e-Learning system but also in general IT related systems, and it is amplified by the Internet. It's not about the volume and frequency of mails, or hours spent in chat rooms, or blogging the Internet, browsing websites, sharing opinions in writing. The IT related systems and Internet alter our communication as human being. In fact, we communicate with a monitor hiding our real personality behind the words. From our point of view, it will be difficult to activate a good communication between students, to inspire them into the feeling of being a big, strong and performing team considering their general scientific behavior and also connect them to the goals of the e-learning strategy, to be good, better and finally the best.

For successful team working, we plan to use polls to get and share at the same time, information about the preoccupations, goals, skills or something else, to find out how we can group together the students. The same polls could be used to know how every team member accomplishes his/her tasks and what are the opinions of the other members from the team.

5.3 Administration/Management Related Risks

5.3.1 Efficiency and economies of scale

Missed business opportunities and unsuitable adaptation may occur due to lack of knowledge transfer. The development of Distance Learning provision should address business development, efficiency and effectiveness in systems. The Beyond Distance and Staff Development Centre approaches should provide appropriate and constant knowledge transfer. We shall need to review models of practice frequently.

5.3.2 Complexity and delay in decision-making and governance

We shall endeavor appropriate use of committee structures and working groups without adding complexity.

5.3.3 Funding

Although e-learning plays a big role in cost reduction, it comes with huge costs. These include Capital costs for IT infrastructure (e.g. all time connectivity, purchasing hardware equipment such as servers and computers among others, software (costs of hosting the LMS and acquiring other digital tools)), Extra time to adapt curricula, costs of developing new learning content and costs of training for staff, communication costs, and monitoring and evaluation costs.

The administration and management will endeavor appropriate use within the existing resources or additional focused resources, plan income generating activities and encourage writing grants for funded projects. We also intend to collaborate through e-learning with our associates, partners, collaborators and lower costs through economies of scale.

5.4 Proposed Generic Controls to Manage the Risks

Practically, to manage a risk means to prevent the occurrence of the risks and producing the damages. This can be done by creating and implementing procedures and controls for verifying if procedures are correctly followed by all the persons in charge. After realizing a list of possible risks towards an efficient strategy for ODeL, general controls for managing risks have been established as follows:

i. **New content structure, visual design and navigation ergonomics;**
   a. These requests are necessary to face up competition with the websites from the Internet. It's a good idea to use website development techniques, starting with designing the layout of pages, titles, subtitles arrangements, pages hierarchy, hyperlinks, shared borders and navigation structure, frames for multimedia study case presentation, etc. The general subject of the courses must be divided into detailed logical units. Students should be able to see the entire structure of lessons and tests.

ii. **Ensuring the availability of HELP and FAQ facilities**
    a. This is to support the effort of the students to understand much better the courses and viewing examples for homework. It is also important as a quick guide to solving common problems and providing answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

iii. Putting in place controls for timetable of direct meeting based on Digital tools.
    a. For example, during student consultations, meetings with guests from other universities, managers, research institutes and even from media.

iv. Putting in place controls for verifying the scientific level of courses.
    a. For example, update bibliography, using of study cases, simulations, games, multimedia and other IT tools for increasing quality of e-Learning courses.

v. **Putting in place checks and controls of the progress recorded by students before the final exams.** This can be done using statistics, polls, other e-Learning software functionalities.

vi. Ensuring controls for the feedback with the students, how the lecturers personalize the
    a. individual communication with them, etc.

vii. Pursuit and control the level of students' satisfaction related to the courses, laboratories,
    a. seminars and evaluations as well as how any good suggestions are implemented, to increase satisfaction.

viii. Appropriate use of the existing resources, planning income generating activities and focusing on grant writing for funded projects to support funding for the implementation of the ODeL strategy. Collaboration through e-learning with our associates, partners, collaborators and lowering costs through economies of scale will also be key in our plans.

ix. The last observation refers to the prevention of fraud, a common preoccupation of the superficial and lazy students. It's more and more difficult and sometimes boring, to fight with copy-paste or other practices. Except the penalties, we must develop projects and home works to stimulate creativity, originality of the solutions, of course at the small level. But it's necessary to start early working with such mini-individual projects. Thus the students will be familiarized with this kind of subjects and will not be surprised at the final exam or final project by such type of requirements.

6.0 Amendment of the Manual

The Manual is subject to amendment from time to time by relevant authority. The Manual was approved by the University of Saint Joseph Mbarara Governing Council on this……day of

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Rev Fr Gervase Nsekanimanya Diido

CHAIRMAN GOVERNING COUNCIL

Rev Fr Dr Deus M Karemire (PhD)

VICE CHANCELLOR