

## From Lecturer to Course Coordinator: Redefining the Role of the University Academic for Teaching and Learning in a Distributed Learning Environment

**Olabisi Kuboni**

University of the West Indies  
Open Campus  
St. Augustine  
Trinidad and Tobago, W.I.  
[olabisi.kuboni@open.uwi.edu](mailto:olabisi.kuboni@open.uwi.edu)

### Abstract

One of the important areas of change in contemporary higher education is the adoption of the interactive technologies for teaching and learning and more specifically the reconceptualizing of the classroom as a virtual learning space. This paper reviews the role and function of the course coordinator in the web-based classroom, in the context of the project to transform the distance delivery mode of the University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC). It does this review through the vehicle of students' open-ended responses extracted from a course evaluation undertaken during the project period. As a follow-up to that review, the paper presents excerpts of guidelines developed by the project team to enhance the functioning of the course coordinator in the virtual classroom. Finally it makes recommendations for a clearer articulation of the course coordinator role as distinct from that of the conventional lecturer.

**Keywords:** Distributed learning, instructional leadership, change management, learner-centeredness, virtual classroom, higher education.

### Introduction

In 2004, the University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC) took the decision to transform its operations from a form of distance delivery that may be characterized as industrialized distance education (Peters, 1967) or alternatively as largely belonging to the second of Nipper's (1989) three generations of distance education. The UWIDEC model combined print-based self-study materials with face-to-face tutorials and course coordinator-led audio-conferences; it targeted students attached to local sites, spread across sixteen countries of the English-speaking Caribbean. The model was patterned on practices that prevailed during the 1970s and the early part of the 1980s. For the purposes of this paper, this model will be referred to as the conventional model to distinguish it from subsequent developments that would mark a significant departure from the period mentioned above..

The 2004 decision would see UWIDEC making a transition to a delivery model that retained the use of self-study materials, but which entailed greater use of a web-based teaching-learning environment for learner activity and interpersonal interaction. Face-to-face tutorials and audio-conferences were therefore significantly reduced, since all three agents of the distance teaching and learning enterprise, namely students, tutors and the course coordinator had shifted operations to the virtual classroom space provided by the web-based learning management system, *Moodle*.

This paper focuses specifically on the implications of this shift for the course coordinator. Many of the course coordinators in the UWIDEC project were full time members of the academic staff of the parent institution, the University of the West Indies (UWI), and functioned as lecturers in the campus-based face-to-face classroom setting. Others were contracted from outside the institution. However, whether from inside or outside, course coordinators saw themselves mainly as content experts who transmitted the knowledge of their discipline to their students. For their part, students functioned largely as recipients of this new knowledge, later demonstrating through examination how well they had received it.

It should be noted that within recent times, two professional development offerings, namely the *Certificate in Teaching* and the *Certificate in Managing and Facilitating Online Instruction* have been introduced to

enhance overall teaching and learning in UWI. While acknowledging the significance of both these initiatives, their implementation does not preclude the need for an ongoing conversation about the evolution from the teacher-centered perspective of the lecturer to a more learner-centered outlook that is required of the course coordinator role.

The paper therefore seeks to address the issue of university teachers making the shift from a didactic teacher-centered context to a more learner-centered approach to teaching and learning as is required in the web-based environment.

## Background

During the period September 2005 to July 2007, the University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC) set about to shift its delivery mode from the conventional model described above, to one based on what it described as a blended learning/asynchronous format (UWIDEC, 2004). While the dominant rationale for this shift was to expand opportunity for study anywhere and at anytime, it was also viewed as a means of facilitating increased learner-centeredness. Proponents of the approach to distance delivery described here as conventional, would argue that placing learners at the centre of the teaching-learning process, and providing them with the necessary support to take responsibility for their learning was always a key feature of distance education. Moore and Keasley (1996) allude to this view of distance education in their recommendation that,

Distance education materials must be designed to encourage and support self-directed learning as well as provide the degree of support needed by people at different stages of self-directedness. (p.119)

The notion of non-hierarchical interpersonal interaction is also highlighted by other theorists (Daniel and Marquis, 1988).

However, in UWIDEC's implementation of the model, face-to-face tutorials and the additional teleconference sessions functioned largely in a top-down manner with students occupying a passive role in relation to their tutors and the course coordinator (Kuboni, 2008).

The shift to the web-based virtual learning space therefore brought learners into an environment that would place greater emphasis on their capacity to function as active participants in the teaching-learning interaction. Course coordinators and tutors would also need to make the necessary adjustments to their role to ensure that they were adequately equipped to facilitate this new approach to learning.

## Blended Learning or Distributed Learning?

As mentioned above, UWIDEC's new delivery mode was defined as a blended learning/asynchronous approach. Typically, the term 'blended learning' refers to the combination of online and face-to-face delivery modes. Dziuban, Hartman and Moskal (2004) explain that it "refers to courses that combine face-to-face classroom instruction with online learning and reduced classroom contact hours (reduced seat time) (p.2)". They emphasize that by highlighting the reduced seat time feature, they are not simply talking about enhancing face-to-face courses with online resources; rather their aim is to integrate the two delivery modalities in a way that draws out the best of both environments to support meaningful learning.

Allen, Seaman and Garrett (2007), who share Dziuban et al's (2004) understanding of the term, take the definition further by quantifying the proportion of content that must be delivered in each mode for a course to be described as a blended learning course. Specifically, they state that such a course will have between 30% and 79% of the course content online (p.5).

UWIDEC's use of the term 'blended learning' is not consistent with that given in most of the literature. Mason and Rennie (2008), for example, distinguish between blended learning and distributed learning, and they explain that although the latter combines distance and e-learning, it "may not necessarily include any face-to-face activity (pp.26-27)". They specify the key properties of distributed learning as follows:

- The components of the course are distributed across multiple media, and
- Flexibility for students in terms of time or location of study is one key aim of the pedagogy of distributed learning. (p.27)

In the context of this project therefore, the term *blended learning* is somewhat of a misnomer; the delivery format used by UWIDEC should really be described as *distributed learning*. This latter term would therefore be used in the rest of the paper.

### Distributed Learning and UWIDEC

In UWIDEC's distributed learning project, students were expected to study the self-instructional materials independently and interact with their tutors and other learners in the teaching-learning space or virtual classroom developed within the learning management system (LMS), *Moodle*. Each tutor was expected to interact with and provide direct learner support for a group of twenty to twenty five students; thus the number of tutors retained for a course was determined by the number of students enrolled in that course. Each course coordinator designed and developed the teaching-learning events that would form the basis for learner activity as well as learner-learner and learner-tutor interaction during delivery of his/her course. In addition, the course coordinator maintained oversight over the operations of the entire virtual classroom, monitoring the activities of both students and tutors in all groups and intervening at regular intervals through a classroom-wide forum.

The project was implemented by a team drawn primarily from UWIDEC's course development unit, comprising curriculum development specialists, editors, web administrators and production assistants.

A short training programme was mounted for course coordinators and tutors respectively to prepare them for the transition. Orientation exercises were also conducted for students. Following is a selection of the topics/activities that comprised the training for course coordinators. The term 'blended learning' is retained here in order to preserve the authenticity of the record:

- Redefining the role of the course coordinator in a blended learning context
  - Course design considerations for blended learning
  - E-tutoring: revisiting old skills; building new ones
  - Using *Moodle* for online teaching and learning
  - E-resources in a blended learning context
  - *Impatica-on-cue*: a demonstration
- (Course coordinators' workshop programme, December, 2004).

Course coordinators, whether from inside or outside the University, were contracted for a single semester at a time. This was done on the basis of an agreement that included a list of responsibilities and duties. Extracts from that list are given as Figure 1 in the Appendix.

At the end of Semester 1 of the 2006-2007 academic year, an evaluation was conducted to get students' views on their experience of learning in the web-based environment. This paper examines the results of one section of that evaluation to determine what students' perceptions about their learning experience were communicating about the course coordinator role. The paper then presents excerpts from revised or newly created course coordinator guidelines that the project team had developed as a result of its assessment of the views the students had expressed in the evaluation questionnaire. While there was no formal evaluation in the aftermath of the new/revised guidelines, the paper notes the continued variability in course coordinator performance and makes further suggestions for defining the course coordinator role within the framework of distributed learning in higher education.

### The Evaluation

The aim of the evaluation was to gather information about students' perceptions of their learning experience during the semester just ended. A questionnaire was administered to students in their respective courses.

### Data collection

The questionnaire comprised forty two (42) closed items and three open-ended questions. Only data gathered from the open-ended questions are discussed in this paper. The three were as follows:

- What, if anything, did not go well for you in the online learning experience for this course?
- What, if anything, went well for you in this course?
- Do you wish to make any further comments?

## Data Analysis

As alluded to earlier, the approach to data analysis in the context of this paper was not completely guided by the questions as presented in the questionnaire. In other words, the data were not analyzed solely on the basis of what the respondents felt went wrong or did not go wrong. Rather the analysis sought to identify those responses that, directly or indirectly, drew attention to some aspect of the course coordinator's role in the teaching-learning process. A deductive-inductive approach was used to conduct this analysis. Thus, responses were selected based on the meanings emerging from the data. Simultaneously, the pre-determined duties that formed part of the course coordinator contract (see Figure 1), served as a guide for making the choices.

Responses selected were first classified into *during-delivery tasks* and *pre-delivery tasks*, since the course coordinator's role was not limited to activities undertaken during delivery. In each of these two categories, responses were further subdivided according to the specific tasks that seemed to be inherent in the comments made.

## Findings

These are presented according to the classification given above.

### During delivery tasks

Students' responses seemed to point to two sub-categories of course coordinator tasks, namely "Supporting the learning experience of the student" and "Monitoring tutor performance".

#### Supporting the learning experience of the student

Students felt strongly about having the course coordinator clarifying course delivery information, and laying out the path of study. Some students commented as follows:

*B1-05:* The course coordinator's postings kept us well informed.

*A1-61:* Course coordinator kept weekly contact so that kept me in the loop. This was greatly appreciated.

*B2-03:* The course coordinator's forum, which I thought was supposed to be mainly for the course coordinator to communicate vital information, was cluttered with unnecessary responses.

The course coordinator postings referred to in the first comment and implied in the others, were made in a special forum through which he/she communicated with all students enrolled for a particular course. It is likely that much of the information that students were referring to was either already posted in the Course Information section of the online course site, or should have been posted there. What these comments suggest is that some students seemed to welcome getting the information directly from the course coordinator. In addition, even if they had read the relevant documents, having the same information repeated in another medium or using another tool, was perceived as being beneficial. Moreover, it is also likely that having the course coordinator 'appearing' at regular intervals could have had a reassuring, confidence-boosting effect on students.

#### Monitoring tutor performance

While acknowledging the importance of the overarching course coordinator role, it is the tutor who must maintain ongoing person-to-person interaction with students both individually and with the group as a whole. Recall that the UWIDEC model gives the course coordinator a monitoring role over the tutors of the course. Moreover, it is the course coordinator who sets the parameters of the course thereby setting the framework within which tutors and students interact. Thus, both as the designer of the learning space and the overall manager of the teaching-learning process, it is the course coordinator who carries ultimate responsibility for the functioning of the tutors in the course.

Consequently, when students made comments about what tutors did or did not do, such remarks reflected not only on the tutors themselves but also on the nature and quality of course coordinator monitoring. Thus, students' comments about tutor performance were regarded as highlighting two broad course coordinator tutor-monitoring tasks.

First, some comments were taken as a reminder of the course coordinator responsibility to ensure that tutors carried out pre-planned tasks according to the criteria set, as for example,

A1-39: My tutor was very active throughout, thus I was able to practice some short answer questions.

B2-17: Mid-term marks are taking too long to be posted.

A3-25: It would be a plus if my other courses had an e-tutor as attentive, responsible, professional and informative as Ms. X.

B3-51: I think it would be useful if marked assignments were returned showing correction and highlighting weak points.

A2-03: The tutor's explanations of the units were on target but vague (sic).

The second set of comments in this sub-category was taken as highlighting course coordinator responsibility to ensure that tutors assisted students in dealing with difficulties. One cannot say whether the students had previously voiced these concerns in the virtual classroom. If such comments were actually expressed in the tutoring group, one does not know if the tutors had addressed them, and if they did, how successful their efforts were.

The essential point being made is that it is the responsibility of the course coordinator to ensure that tutors are able to assist students in overcoming learning challenges.

The following comments are therefore seen as pointing to both a tutor and a course coordinator function.

B2-14: Reading the course material and then applying it to actual examples, prove to be much more difficult than it should have been.

B2-34: The whole experience of learning Course B online is daunting. Even though I read and reread my course outline and practiced, the material was very hard to grasp without a face-to-face tutor.

A2-48: I encountered difficulties in interpreting certain topics in the course... I encountered difficulty as to how I should structure my essay ....

A2-13: Difficulty in grasping ticklish areas where I thought I would get a better explanation if I had a face-to-face tutor.

A2-83: ... Having to keep up with the readings and answering questions online was extremely challenging.

Some may argue that these tasks are beyond what a tutor can do during delivery, and that it is the responsibility of the course coordinator to so plan for course delivery that all stumbling blocks are removed.

Nonetheless, even as one would expect the course coordinator to develop strategies for handling them in the pre-delivery phase, it is almost impossible to remove all contentious issues from the teaching-learning environment. There will therefore always be a need for tutors to assist students to overcome challenges during delivery.

#### Pre-delivery tasks

Open and distance learning emphasizes design and development prior to delivery. Such a focus on pre-planning can be expected to set the platform for high quality interaction both at the interpersonal and intrapersonal levels. Some of the comments therefore, while made in relation to the teaching-learning process that was in progress, were viewed more as indicators of the importance of pre-planning. Three aspects of course coordinator pre-planning activity were gleaned from some of the comments made.

First, though not explicitly stated, students seemed to be acknowledging that course information had to be efficiently organized to support their learning. The following were noted in this regard:

A1-18: Access to information was easy, the site was well put together, easy to follow and very helpful.

A1-50: The challenge of teaching myself was an interesting one. NOT welcomed but interesting. It made me study Course A because all the material was available.

B1-34: [What went well was] obtaining info and resources for my different courses.

A1-62: A lot of information was provided on the web pages to guide you.

Even though not explicitly stated in all the comments, a high value seems to be placed on the information being “well put together”, “easy to follow” and able “to guide you”. One can argue that it is this quality of efficient organization that made it possible for students “to obtain info and resources” Further, it seemed to help one student take up “the challenge of teaching myself”.

The second aspect was that of specifying areas of emphasis and areas for special treatment during the current offering. While the course would have been substantially developed, it is the responsibility of the course coordinator to define how course content is to be used in a particular offering, to amplify areas not adequately dealt with and to provide updates as appropriate. It can be argued that remarks like those below point to the role of the course coordinator in preparing the course for delivery.

*B2-99:* The online mode provides sufficient material in terms of theory but it is difficult to transfer this to actually solve the problems present.

*A2-56:* The readings for the course were too much. The questions were inappropriate at times.

A third area of course coordinator pre-planning activity was assessment, in particular as this served as a means for learner self-assessment.

*A2-31:* In terms of the course work assignment, I believe that the maximum amount of words should be at least 1500 words and for the examination quizzes, the time allotted was not enough. The time should be at least one hour.

*A2-55:* We should be given practice in short answers and essay-type questions as well.

*A1-10:* I loved the fact that we had a lot of practice quizzes, past papers, Tips for Essay Structure, Glossary and links to aid us in our studies.

*A1-16:* I really appreciated the online quizzes. It really helped me to focus on the Unit at hand...

These comments clearly indicate how much students valued this aspect of the pre-planning activity. It also shows how much in tune they were with the aims of the different types of assessment.

### **Improving course coordinator guidelines**

While some of the students' comments showed some measure of satisfaction, it was also evident that they were highlighting areas for improvement. Thus, the project team considered it necessary to revisit the tutor and course coordinator guidelines developed at the start of the project in order to strengthen and bring greater clarity to roles and responsibilities.

There were continuous upgrades and revisions during the period December 2006 to the end of the project, August 2007. These were done in response to the team's observations as well as feedback received from the core stakeholders. Some were full revisions, while others were short communiqués. Overall, they all represented the team's effort to be responsive to learners' expressed needs and to intervene appropriately and in a timely manner to introduce measures aimed at satisfying those needs. The upgrades and revisions of course coordinator and tutor guidelines reflected an awareness of the responsibility that these two agents in the teaching-learning process carried for implementing strategies capable of providing the best possible learner support.

A list of the documents is provided in Table 1. The term ‘blended learning’ has been retained in the listing to preserve the authenticity of the names of the respective documents.

The changes and/or additions made to the course coordinator guidelines sought to bring about improvements in the following areas of his/her practice:

- Planning in a more organized way for students' introduction to the course.
- Paying greater attention to the design of learning activities, with special attention being paid to the quality of the assistance provided for doing those activities.
- Providing tutors with clear guidelines for developing discussion topics and strategies for moderating the discussion.
- Providing tutors with guidelines for developing additional/supplementary teaching material

Some aspects of the upgraded course coordinator guidelines are presented as Figure 2 in the Appendix. The segments extracted were drawn from the documents prepared at the end of the project period.

Table 1. Roles and responsibilities of course coordinators and tutors: updates and revisions

Documents revised/created	Date
E-tutoring tasks for the blended learning course, Update for Semester 2, 2006-2007	December, 2006
Four monthly updates for tutors	January – April, 2007
Course Coordinator tasks for the blended learning course – Semester 2, 2006-2007	December, 2006
General information for course coordinators – Semester 2, 2006-2007	December 2006
Course Coordinator tasks for the blended learning course: update for academic year 2007-2008	August, 2007
Guidelines for the UWIDEC Tutor (2007-2008 update)	August 2007
Procedures for the record and submission of grades: Flow Charts	August 2007

### Limitations of the Study.

An important limitation to be noted is that no formal evaluation was conducted among the course coordinators themselves. Some may contend that the absence of such data may have compromised the reliability of the guidelines. While acknowledging this, it was felt that the revision done to the guidelines were not seriously compromised, since the student data were the more critical given an emphasis on learner-centeredness in the distributed teaching-learning environment.

### Defining the Course Coordinator Role

While there was no follow-up evaluation to formally assess the effect of the revisions on course coordinator performance, it was evident that overall, the quality of their output in the latter part of the project continued to be variable. Some coordinators paid close attention to the guidelines and performed their duties with a high level of discipline. Others just did the necessary to get by.

As the project came to an end, it seemed that, to some extent, the course coordinator role still needed to be more clearly defined. More specifically, there was need to have this position acknowledged in its own right as part of the development of distributed learning in the University of the West Indies. A heightened recognition of the position could have a positive impact on the perspective that course coordinators themselves have of their role. Greater recognition of the role may also lead to a more realistic appraisal of the personal and professional attributes required in academics performing this function.

The following are offered as examples of such attributes.

#### The Course Coordinator as Leader

In the UWIDEC Distributed Learning model, the course coordinator occupies a leadership position. With specific reference to online teaching and learning, Forbes (2004) views leadership as “capacity building among a wider group of people” (p.2). More fundamentally, she asserts “leadership is about creating opportunities for others to learn” (p.2). She goes further, placing her understanding of leadership within the context of a constructivist, collaborative outlook on learning. She supports this perspective by citing Lambert (2003) who posits,

Learning and leading are deeply intertwined ... Indeed, leadership can be understood as reciprocal, purposeful learning in a community. (Forbes, p.2)

In terms of their participation in the web-based teaching-learning community, course coordinators may be viewed as first among equals, creating the environment for both tutors and students to learn, while at the same time enhancing their own learning through their interaction with their fellow participants.

#### Managing change

The course coordinator must also manage change. One important factor giving rise to the need for change is the demographic of the student population. In discussing the situation in their own country, Cummings, Phillips, Tilbrook and Lowe (2005) make the following point:

One of the areas of greatest concern is the impact that the move to mass higher education in Australia will have on the quality of teaching and learning. The demographics of higher education in the western world have changed dramatically in the past two decades ... Higher education in most western developed countries is now clearly for the masses ...

This growth has not only dramatically increased student numbers but also resulted in people with a broader range of academic ability taking part in higher education ... (p.2)

Whether in developed or developing countries, the fact that there is now "a broader range of academic ability taking part in higher education" (Cummings et al., 2005), has significant implications for the strategies that the course coordinator employs in managing teaching and learning in the virtual classroom. Indeed, some of the comments discussed earlier would suggest that some students may have been unfamiliar with the approaches to teaching and learning in higher education.

Another area requiring the change management skills of the course coordinator is the challenge of breaking the students' tendency towards the passive role that they are used to in the face-to-face context. This pull towards the didactic is suggested in those comments where students were asking for a return to face-to-face tutoring. Course coordinators need to adopt strategies to lead students away from a reliance on the top-down approach so that they can begin to see themselves in a less hierarchical relationship with their tutors.

#### A Learner-centred Perspective of the Course

Ultimately, a large proportion of the concerns expressed in the comments discussed above may be traced back to issues related to the construction of the course. While it is the course developer who carries the primary responsibility for course creation, one cannot ignore the role of course coordinators in managing the delivery of the course, including making adjustments and additions as implied in the earlier analysis of the students' comments. Their role involves some limited developmental activity and therefore they need to be aware of the course design issues that are applicable in a learner-centred context.

#### **A work in progress...**

Overall, the project to introduce distributed learning into the University of the West Indies was able to build a fairly well-defined structure to continue its operations. At the same time, there are still challenges in orienting key agents towards a changed perspective of their respective roles. This remains a project of work that needs to be continued.

#### **References**

- Allen, I.E., Seaman, J. and Garrett, R. (March, 2007). *Blending In: the extent and promise of blended education in the United States*. (35 pages). Retrieved October 8, 2008 from [http://sloanconsortium.org/publications/survey/pdf/Blending\\_In.pdf](http://sloanconsortium.org/publications/survey/pdf/Blending_In.pdf)
- Cummings, R., Phillips, R., Tilbrook, R. and Lowe, K. (2005). Middle-Out approaches to reform of university teaching and learning: champions striding between the top-down and bottom-up approaches. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, (6), 1. Retrieved October 8, 2008 from <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl> .
- Daniel, J.S. and Marquis, C. (1988). Interaction and independence: getting the mixture right. In D. Stewart, D. Keegan and B. Holmberg (Eds.), *Distance Education: international perspectives*. (pp. 339-359). London: Routledge.
- Dziuban, C., Hartman, J. and Moskal, P. (March 2004). Blended Learning. *EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research: Research Bulletin* (2004), 7. Retrieved October 8, 2008 from <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERB0407.pdf>
- Forbes, D. (2004). Leadership as capacity-building in online teaching and learning. *Pan Commonwealth Forum* 3. Retrieved October 8, 2008 from [http://www.col.org/pcf3/Papers/PDFs/Forbes\\_Dianne.pdf](http://www.col.org/pcf3/Papers/PDFs/Forbes_Dianne.pdf) .
- Kuboni, O. (2008). Transnational policies and local implementation: The University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre. In T. Evans, M. Haughey and D. Murphy (Eds.) *International Handbook of Distance Education*. (pp. 685-705). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.
- Mason, R. and Rennie, F. (2008). *E-Learning and Social Networking Handbook*. New York: Routledge.



- Nipper, S. (1989). Third generation distance learning and computer conferencing. In R. Mason and A. Kaye (Eds.), *Mindweave: communication, computers and distance education*, (pp. 63-73). Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Peters, O. (1967). Distance teaching and industrial production: a comparative interpretation in outline. In D. Stewart, D. Keegan & B. Holmberg (Eds.), 1983. *Distance Education: International perspectives*, (pp. 95-113). London: Croom Helm.
- University of the West Indies, Academic Programme Committee of UWIDEC (2004). *Blended Learning/Asynchronous delivery: a UWIDEC project 2004/5*. UWIDEC APC P.4 2004/2005. Presented by Professor Stewart Marshall, Director, UWIDEC, October, 2004.

---

## APPENDIX

### Figure 1. Responsibilities and duties of the course coordinator – to be appended to contract

#### Responsibilities:

The course coordinator provides overall academic and pedagogic supervision for the delivery of the course. He/she is required to monitor the teaching/learning process and ensure that students are given appropriate guidelines and support to assist them in their study of the course. He/she must lead a team of tutors and provide them with the relevant information to assist them in carrying out their role as learning facilitators in a blended learning delivery environment.

#### Duties:

He/she

1. Prepares and/or identifies additional materials to supplement the pre-packaged materials. These may include web-based materials, multi-media presentations developed or sourced by the course coordinator, and/or print-based materials.
2. Prepares and/or updates guidelines and instructions for tutors, thus providing them with a framework for carrying out their own tutoring tasks.
3. Holds a teleconference briefing session with tutors at the beginning of the semester to ensure clarity in their understanding of their role in the delivery of the course.
4. Prepares a study schedule for the course.
5. ... prepares the required number of online learning activities. These may take the form of quizzes, short-answer questions, problem sets, short essays, mini-research exercises. ... identifies the activity (ies) that tutors would be required to grade and for which they would provide individual feedback.
6. Maintains ongoing communication with and supervision of tutors through the course coordinator-tutor forum ...
7. Posts a message in the course coordinator news forum at least once every two weeks to motivate students, ...
8. Conducts at least two (2) teleconference sessions with students.
9. Prepares in-course assignments/examinations with accompanying guidelines and instructions to students.
10. Provides tutors with a marking scheme for grading in-course assignments/examinations.
11. Prepares the final examination paper and corresponding marking scheme ....
12. ...
13. Undertakes and/or coordinates the marking of all final examination scripts.
14. ....

15. Accepts end-of-semester reports from tutors
16. Drawing on the tutor reports received and based on his/her own evaluation of the delivery of the course, prepares a report for submission to the Dean of the Faculty or his/her representative as well as to the Director/Campus Coordinator, UWIDEC....

(updated May2006)

## Figure 2. Excerpts from upgraded course coordinator guidelines

### Developing the preparatory unit for Week 1 (Unit 0)

This 'dummy' Unit ... is intended to serve two purposes. First, it will give students further opportunity to become familiar with the online environment before they begin formal study of their respective courses. Secondly, it will introduce students to the course as a whole. Each course coordinator is therefore required to prepare a short introductory Unit containing the following:

- Appropriate **Unit objectives**.
- An extended course overview that would also place the course in the context of the whole programme as well as in the wider working environment of the student. If appropriate, links may be made to preceding areas of study that the course is building on. This will be presented as an **e-tutor presentation**.
- A ten-item **multiple-choice quiz** ....
- A short-answer question, based on the presentation, that would require students to write a single paragraph of about 6-8 sentences. This response is to be uploaded as an **assignment**. Tutors will make a short comment on this assignment. It will not be graded.
- A **discussion topic** in the *Unit discussion forum* ....

### The design and development of learning activities

Activity	Information/guidelines for students	Information/guidelines for tutors
Short Essay	<p>What aspect of course, essay based on;</p> <p>What overall outcome expected of student;</p> <p>...</p> <p>...</p> <p>link between introduction and conclusion;</p> <p>Attributes of a good essay; elements of a good paragraph; attention to grammar, punctuation and spelling.</p> <p>Caution to avoid re-writing chunks taken from elsewhere.</p> <p>...</p> <p>...</p>	<p>What they must do in period between release of essay topic and submission of essay;</p> <p>Suggestion that they can extend on any aspect of guidelines already given; e.g. writing a proper paragraph. Can ask group to suggest one point about essay to discuss why appropriate, how to develop etc.</p>

**Developing discussion topics and guiding tutors on the moderation of the discussion**

The discussion topic is the basis for an exchange of ideas; it should not give students the impression that they are required to write a mini-essay. Please note the following when developing the discussion topic:

.....

The topic must solicit students' informed views and not simply require them to present information.

For quantitative and skills-based courses, the discussion topic may take the form of a problem to be solved or a procedure to be worked through; ....

Following are suggestions for tutor moderation of the discussion:

In the event that there are only a few student postings, the tutor should respond to all individual postings in a manner that not only deals with the points raised by the individual student but also moves the discussion forward.

If many students are responding, the tutor may respond to several students with a single posting but should draw attention to specific points raised by individual students within the single posting.

....

**Guidelines to tutors for the preparation of eTutor presentations (mini-lectures)**

The eTutor presentation and the general discussions that are moderated in the Unit discussion forum are the core elements of the ongoing tutoring activity. ....

Advise tutors to avoid simply paraphrasing sections of the course content of the respective Units for their e-tutor presentations.

... identify aspects of the Unit that require more extensive treatment and on which tutors can base their presentations. ....

---

Manuscript received 6 Nov 2008; revision received 2 Mar 2009.



This work is licensed under a  
[Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.5 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/)