

UNLP Office of Distance Education, Classroom Innovation and ICT

The Office of Distance Education of the Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP) [National University of La Plata] is dependant from the Office of Academic Affairs. The Office of Distance Education is made up of interdisciplinary group of professionals and web-based virtual learning environments. The main objective is to provide assessment for the launch of Distance Education proposals and for the use of technology in classrooms from UNLP and from other institutions.

BACKGROUND

In 2004 the President's Office of UNLP initiated the development of the Distance Education mode of delivering education and instruction as a complementary tool for the training of students holding associate degrees, graduate degrees and post graduate degrees. This new mode tries to integrate the former efforts made by the UNLP different Schools through the establishment of a strategic plan that involves in-house technology development, teacher training for DE (distance education) tools management, multidisciplinary experiences design and rules and methodologies establishment to ensure the quality of the off-site courses delivered from University. Over the last years, the Distance Education challenge has mainly focused on two axes: the pedagogical transformation needed for off-site learning development (involving teachers, students and new materials) and the optimum use of technologies (networks, internet, e-mails, synchronous and asynchronous communication tools, software platforms, social networks, simulators, scripting languages, etc.). Due to economic, social and work-related factors and the growing importance of professional development, Distance Education has been enjoying a steady increase at both national and international levels. Distance Education development combines pedagogical elements with information technology, cognitive psychology and human-machine interface design. The Office of Distance Education, students and professors work together to draw up strategies that favour the use of ICT (Information and Communications Technology) in the classroom in order to foster innovation in learning activities.

GOALS

- To spread the possibilities of information access and exchange that Distance Education provides among professors and management staff.
- To encourage DE projects development for technical degrees in UNLP.
- To enhance and promote the development of distance entrance courses to UNLP.
- To develop unconventional learning activities and programs for higher education courses.
- To aid in the adaptation from conventional modes of teaching to distance modes of education in post graduate courses.
- To encourage the research and the evaluation of new teaching and learning methodologies.
- To constantly train university professors in information and communication technology management.
- To enhance Distance Education development at international levels through networking and university partnerships.
- To construct a digital library in order to share bibliographic material and periodicals and therefore enrich the teaching and learning process in virtual learning environments.

VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS



WebUNLP (<http://webunlp.unlp.edu.ar>) is a virtual learning environment where professors and students interact, work together and have access to external resources of interest. WebUNLP is an e-learning education system (education through electronic media), also known as E-learning Platform or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The platform was developed by the Instituto de Investigación en Informática LIDI (III-LIDI) of the Computer Science School which is currently in charge of its maintenance and updating. WebUNLP needs an internet connection and a web browser.

AULA-CAVILA is an Association of Latin American Universities. These universities are members of Campus Virtual Latinoamericano (CAVILA) (Latin American Virtual Campus). Some of the members of this association are Universidad de Extremadura (Spain), Universidad de Guadalajara (Mexico), Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Universidad Nacional de Entre Ríos and Universidad Nacional del Noroeste de Buenos Aires (Argentina), Universidad Federal de Santa María (Brazil), Universidad de Porto (Portugal), Universidad de Panamá, Universidad Autónoma de Nicaragua, Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas and Universidad Autónoma de Honduras. All the institutions involved are currently developing virtual projects in order to share, acquire and spread knowledge using new technologies. This virtual learning environment at the UNLP is a Moodle personalization <http://www.cavila.unlp.edu.ar>. Go to <http://www.cavila.org> for more information.

AulasWeb (<http://www.aulasweb.unlp.edu.ar>) is a virtual learning environment used by all UNLP schools to undertake educational projects via digital technologies. The UNLP Office of Distance Education, classroom Innovation and ICT runs this virtual environment and delivers courses and chair proposals to various schools, research institutes and other University-dependant institutions. AulasWeb is a virtual learning environment based on a Moodle personalization.

Cursos Externos (external courses) (<http://www.cursosexternos.unlp.edu.ar>) is a virtual learning environment used by all UNLP schools to undertake educational projects via digital technologies. The UNLP Office of Distance Education, Classroom Innovation and ICT runs this virtual environment and delivers courses and proposals from various organizations and institutions out of UNLP. Cursos externos is a virtual learning environment based on a Moodle personalization.

E-LEARNING PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The team in charge of projects management, models, learning dynamics, technology and syllabuses provides assistance to institutions in order to install, activate and manage education systems in different delivery modes.

COURSE DESIGN

Distance learning, blended learning and m-learning courses are designed. More possibilities of in-person education programs are also created: more learning models, different kinds of practical activities and technological aids.

INTERNATIONAL COURSE DELIVERY

We offer our experience in the planning of Master's degree programs together with other universities around the world. All courses are delivered in Distance Education mode.

E-LEARNING PLATFORM

We install, maintain, host, personalize, and program plug-ins and additional tools for your project's best platform.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

We offer assistance to the users in charge of the E-learning platform administrative dynamics.

E-LEARNING COURSE ADAPTATION

We adapt traditional materials to E-learning various mediums: Web, DVD, intranet and SCORM, W3C formats.

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

We produce instructional designs and evaluation, follow-up and specific methodologies systems. We develop multimedia scripts and SCORM format materials.

TRAINING

We train specialist in platform, LMS systems and authoring tools management. We also train tutors and e-learning assistants. We offer in person and e-learning training sessions about on-line courses delivery. We give asynchronous tutorials or tutorials via e-mail to private or public institutions in order to answer any doubts or questions that may come up.

CHAIR-BASED BLOG DESIGN

Chair-based blogs are useful tools to expand classroom activities. Each chair or institution can launch a blog and use it as learning and teaching tools for professors and students. Professors can post schedules, materials and activities on the blog.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The team specialized in instructional technology offers aid to all technicians responsible for each institution computer networks in the set-up and management of Distance Education servers.