**Support Services in Online Distance Teaching Universities**

**Proposal for collaboration between online distance teaching universities**

Theme

In each phase of the student life cycle (SLC) supporting services have to be in place:

* In his or her orientation on a study the (future) student has to be provided with the right kind of information and easy ways to reach out to the university.
* While enrolling, all the administrative processes must be flawless.
* While studying, all aspects of the (digital) learning environment have to be in place.
* Examinations will be organised, grades will be given and communicated with the students.
* After graduation, it is important to maintain a relationship with the alumni.

The daily operation of a distance teaching university relies heavily upon these kinds of services, processes and systems.

On top of that distance teaching and learning is an area with continuous innovations (both IT- and education-related) and with frequently changing regulations and legislations. This accounts for many implementation issues.

Why

The proposal of OUNL is to create a forum and structure for continuous communication for administrators and staff of these support services within EADTU, with EADTU’s main purpose in mind, the promotion of Online, Open & Flexible (OOF) education.

To initiate this, OUNL proposes a conference on support services in distance teaching universities: **Support staff in the lead: learning by sharing knowledge and experiences,** creating a unique opportunity for support staff to meet, share expertise, instruments and tools, and learn from their peers about their ways to organise support structures for online distance education.

The conference will focus on the implementation and support of (new) educational concepts, approaches, structures and instruments within the administration and IT of our universities. Support staff and management are put up-front: the floor is theirs to share and learn from each other.

As in most countries there are only one or two distance teaching universities, there are few opportunities for support staff of distance teaching universities to share knowledge/expertise and exchange experiences on a national level. Although bachelor and master studies in distance teaching universities are not fundamentally different from those at campus universities, the (digital) learning environment and the organizational aspects, underlying processes and support services in distance education are.

Target group

This conference is open to (management of) support staff within a wide range of expertise, e.g. marketing and communication, registration, student administration, alumni officers, IT development and support, e-learning support, (digital) examination, student services.

4 or 5 support staff members per distance teaching university (member of EADTU) would participate.

Topics

Specific topics - though not limited to these - include:

* marketing strategies for online education;
* Communication strategies for adult learners at home;
* organisation of digital examinations; possibilities for e-proctoring;
* planning and scheduling of online and offline classrooms;
* support of e-learning systems and IT development;
* student administration: from application and registration to graduation;
* E-learning and other study materials;
* Big data services for e-learning;
* GDPR: guarantee the privacy of our online students.

Program

The programme will be further detailed, but will be mainly in a setting of round table discussions with an introduction by a specialist. He or she will be a hands-on expert from the field and will pose examples (good and/or bad practices).

Dates

Two days in spring or autumn 2019 preferably around a weekend.

Travel and Venue Information

Open University in Heerlen, Netherlands

Information for registration

Contribution / Rate: € ???

Full Conference registration includes all refreshments, lunch & dinner as well as social activities.

Financial support

Erasmus individual training opportunities for staff

<https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities/individuals/staff-training/higher-education_en>

EU grants provide a contribution to your costs for travel and subsistence during your time abroad.

**Note EADTU:**

This is a concrete proposal of OUNL.

On other occasions, the need of such exchange and cooperation was also expressed by other open and distance universities to the EADTU Secretariat.