

<u>Title:</u>	Piloting the Digital Media Literacy Programme at the University of the Western Cape
<u>Authors:</u>	Liesl Leonard, Clint Braaf and Juliet Stoltenkamp
<u>Selected scholarly area:</u>	Student Learning
<u>Format:</u>	Oral paper; Poster Presentation
<u>Proposal:</u>	The University of the Western Cape (UWC) offers Digital Academic Literacy (DAL) courses to assist students in gaining the basic computer skills necessary for tertiary studies. Unfortunately, with the focus being on ICTs for administrative purposes, students are not provided with the knowledge to produce digital media content. However, the ability to produce and edit podcasts, video clips and imagery are becoming increasingly necessary as these are now used as a form of assessment in certain modules. Therefore, if students are not provided with these skills, it becomes harder for them to manage their academic requirements and students with no prior training or exposure to digital media production are then placed at a disadvantage.

It therefore became evident that a need for student digital media literacy training existed at the University of the Western Cape. As a result, the Digital Media Literacy (DML) Programme was piloted in 2019 with students on the BA Extended Programme in line with the White Paper (2016-2020), “to provide opportunities for an excellent learning and teaching experience that [would be] contextually responsive to the challenges of globalisation and of a society in transition.” The programme was well received by staff and students alike and in 2020, due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, the programme was adapted and offered fully online to a second cohort of students.

The research explores the experiences of students who participated in the pilot DML Programme (before COVID-19) as well the fully online cohort of 2020. Being a practically based course, the research explores the differing experiences of the 2019 students who had a blended learning approach and the 2020 cohort who learned practically based skills online. The research additionally focuses on the benefits of the attained skills in relation to their academic programmes.

Purposive sampling was utilized to recruit participants from both the 2019 and 2020 cohorts. An online questionnaire was distributed to students using a Google Forms link sent to their institutional email accounts. 21 students participated in the study with 71.4% (n=15) being from the 2019 cohort and 28.6% (n=6) from the 2020 cohort. The small sample was a limitation to the study however, given that the institution had adopted fully online learning at the time the questionnaire was distributed, the researchers attributed the small response to the fact that students were being overwhelmed with emails and online communication.

With the increase in online learning at most institutions nationally and the move toward learning which incorporates more digital media, there are benefits to properly equipping students with skills which will assist them while at a tertiary institution and beyond graduation. The research showed that students found the programme beneficial to their course requirements.

Key Questions:

As academic requirements and expectations shift and change, are lecturers and higher education institutions as a whole, adequately preparing students with the skills and knowledge to meet these requirements?

Can practically based course content be adapted and effectively delivered online?