



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING



# Mainstreaming Open, Distance and Flexible Learning (MODFL) for Pacific Countries

## Course description

Open, Distance and Flexible Learning (ODFL) has the potential to enhance access and achieve equity in educational provision. However, it is important for providers to have a sound understanding of what this mode of provision entails. Unless one has a good understanding of the mode of provision and how it differs from conventional face-to-face education, implementation of ODFL is likely to be compromised, and this limits the benefits for learners. Poor quality distance education systems have resulted in the public developing negative perceptions of this mode of provision. This course, Mainstreaming Open, Distance and Flexible Learning (MODFL), follows on from two earlier courses, QA4ODFL 1 and QA4ODFL2, which focused on quality assurance issues at the strategic level. This new course is designed to help education officials and teachers gain a deeper understanding of ODFL as a mode provision, including its underpinning theories and how it has evolved over time. The course takes participants through key aspects of ODFL, including the need to be open and flexible to maximise access. It also highlights the role technology has played in the evolution of ODFL and how the affordances of new forms of technology can be harnessed to extend the target population and enhance the quality of provision. The course draws learners' attention to the growing challenges of youth unemployment and invites participants to explore possible ways of addressing this problem using ODFL methods. It is envisaged that by demonstrating that ODFL is both a field of study and an approach to educational practice that is underpinned by theory, participants will become more intentional in their choice of models of ODFL to implement in their contexts. Although officials and teachers in the Pacific Region are the main target audience for the course, ODFL practitioners working in any developing country context will find the course highly beneficial, especially those working in or interested in open schooling. Like the previous two courses

mentioned above, MODFL will run over four weeks. It will require five hours of study time each week. Participants will learn from readings as well as discussions with peers and the facilitator in the discussion forum. MODFL is an activity-based course, and participants are encouraged to complete all the activities to gain maximum benefits from the course. These activities build up towards quizzes at the end of each of the four units. There is also a course assignment task at the end of the course, which will also encourage learners to check their understanding of the concepts and principles covered in the course.

## Dates

The course will be facilitated online by Dr Ephraim Mhlanga (Programme Specialist: Quality Assurance at the South African Institute for Distance Education - *Saide*) from **26 June 2024 to 17 July 2024**. Thereafter, the content will remain freely available for self-paced learning.

## Learning outcomes

After going through this short course, participants will be able to:

- Explain what open, distance and flexible learning (ODFL) involves and how it differs from traditional learning;
- Explain why it is important to mainstream ODFL in your countries;
- Identify an appropriate open and distance learning (ODL) model for your context;
- Consider appropriate HR strategies for open schooling;
- Advise on the most appropriate technologies that can be harnessed to leverage the quality of ODL in their context, and;
- Contribute meaningfully to ODL policy development and review in their countries.

## Course details

This is a hands-on, activity-based course in which participants will complete four (4) learning challenges/units that would prepare them to better implement ODFL in their contexts:

- Why mainstream ODL?
- Understanding ODL
- A systems view of ODFL
- Technology and emerging pedagogies

## Course summary

**No of Challenges:** 4

**Length of the Course:** 4 Weeks

**Workload:** 5 hours per week

**Language:** English

**Level:** Intermediate – Some knowledge of planning and implementing education systems

**Prerequisites:** None

## Certification

Participants who complete all four Course Unit Quizzes and get at least 50% in each of them will receive a Certificate of Participation. Participants who complete all four Course Unit Quizzes, obtain a score of at least 50%, and complete the course assignment will receive a QA4ODFL three Course Completion Badge.

The learning activities in the units will prepare learners for the Course Quizzes and the assignment. It is important for learners to engage with all these learning activities.

## Registration

To register, please go to: <https://oer.nz/modfljun24>

## For more information

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## Pacific Partnership for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning (ODFL)

Open, distance and flexible learning (ODFL) is an important channel for increasing education opportunities and outcomes. It is particularly relevant for the Pacific, given the small, dispersed remote populations and limited access to secondary and post-secondary opportunities in rural and outer island locations. Despite the importance of ODFL to the region and the immediate need to build capacity, there has been limited investment. The Covid-19 pandemic has further reinforced the need for the Pacific to be well-prepared for non-contact teaching and learning approaches outside traditional classroom-based practices.

Partnership for ODFL in the Pacific is a five-year project (2020 – 2025) funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade to support enhancing capacity and efficiency of education sectors in the Pacific through greater use of innovative delivery mechanisms and technology. Commonwealth of Learning (COL), together with the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD), implements the project in the nine Commonwealth countries in the Pacific (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu).

**The Commonwealth of Learning (COL)** is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1987 to promote the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.

Pacific Centre for Flexible & Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD) is a collaborative initiative between COL and the University of the South Pacific since 2013 to facilitate flexible and open learning for sustainable development in the Pacific region through advocacy, communication, innovation and research. The Centre for Flexible Learning at The University of the South Pacific has a strong and long track record in the adoption of open, flexible and distance learning methods in the Pacific region and is best placed to coordinate the work of PACFOLD.