

Distance Learning on Population Issues (DLPI)

DLPI Tutor Guide

Version May 2010



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Acronyms and abbreviations

BPFA	The Beijing Platform of Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
FGM/FGC	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
GAD	Gender and Development
GE	Gender Equality
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GDI	Gender Development Indicator
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGI	Gender Gap Index
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GM	Gender Mainstreaming
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus /Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HR	Human Rights
HRBA	Human-Rights Based Approach
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant in Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	NonGovernmental Organisation
PoA	Programme of Action
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RBM	Results-based management
RH	Reproductive health
SCR	Security Council Resolution
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women
UN INSTRAW	United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
WHO	World Health Organization
WID	Women in Development

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WELCOME NOTE & PURPOSE OF THE TUTOR GUIDE

On behalf of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Distance Learning on Population Issues (DLPI) Team, welcome to the tutoring team of upcoming DLPI courses! DLPI is a tutor-led learning programme and, as such, your contribution as tutor is a critical component for its success. Participants recognize this through numerous messages to the DLPI administration attesting the appreciation they have on the excellence of their tutors. Additionally, the formal feedback through evaluation forms continues to indicate that tutors have been doing a great job. Thank you!

Purpose of the Tutor Guide

UNFPA's "Distance Learning on Population Issues (DLPI)" is offered by the UNFPA's Division for Human Resources (DHR) to staff members and service contract holders. Its objective is to enable them to implement UNFPA's programmes according to UNFPA strategy and best practices. The DLPI is run by the Learning and Career Management Branch (DHR/LCMB), and its content is owned by UNFPA's Technical and Programme Divisions.

The DLPI Programme is a mixed-mode learning programme. It is divided up into courses, and DHR/LCMB invites staff four times a year to apply for one course at the time (20 participants maximum), which takes about 40 hours over 8 weeks to complete.

The Tutor Guide is designed to support your work as a tutor. The guide aims to strengthen your understanding of the principles and practice of tutoring in open and distance learning (ODL), and to provide guidelines for applying these principles and practices in the DLPI programme.

The guide provides:

- An overview of distance learning and tutoring
- Guidance on working with learners
- Detailed information on tutor's roles and responsibilities in the DLPI programme
- Key strategies to use in distance learning
- Sample templates for DLPI tutor-learner communication

Currently, the following tutor course primers are available for these specific courses:

- DLPI Course 3: Gender Mainstreaming – Taking Action, Getting Results

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DISTANCE LEARNING & TUTORING

The last 100 years have produced amazing advances in our understanding of the workings of the mind and the nature of learning. Although the 20th century began with a fairly myopic view of teaching as the presentation of knowledge, it concluded with a panoramic perspective on instruction that addressed such diverse aspects of learning as the importance of affect, the role of attitudes and beliefs, the importance of metacognition and prior knowledge, and information analyses.

(Marzano 2000, p.90, qtd in Greene, 2001)

The development of new professional fields, technology advances and increasing complexity of social life in the last centuries required constant diversification of education strategies to respond to growing needs of learners. Education conducted at a distance was introduced early on in the diversification of education strategies to cater to the needs of learners separated by potential educators by distance or time. This provides a widely used definition:

Open and distance learning (ODL) is a generic term used to refer to education that occurs when the instructor and the learner are separated by distance or time, or both.

Box 1. History of distance education

- Distance education dates back to at least as early as 1728, when “an advertisement in the Boston Gazette...[named] ‘Caleb Phillips, Teacher of the new method of Short Hand’ was seeking students for lessons to be sent weekly. (Qtd. in Holmberg, B. 2005).
- Modern distance education has been practiced at least since Isaac Pitman taught shorthand in Great Britain via correspondence in the 1840s. (in Moore & Kearsley 2005).

The advances in telecommunication technologies have radically changed education, greatly increasing the choices and opportunities for learners and facilitating the communication between learners and educators. Many different technologies are available to link the two out of which the DLPI programme uses the following:

- CD-ROM
- Instructional materials in printable format
- Information and communication tools like e-mail, and the Internet.
- Powerful software providing learning management and virtual classroom services (forthcoming)

A great advantage of ODL compared to classroom education is that it allows individuals to study at their own pace within a pre-determined time period and milestones. This allows them to learn while holding other commitments to work, family or community.

Unlike on-site educational programmes, ODL involves no direct personal contact and interaction between the learners and educators. However, it compensates for this lack of direct personal contact with a highly individualized and unique one-on-one coaching relationship between the tutor and the participant, without which the learning would not be possible. This way it brings back the ancient tradition of a personal teacher, which was largely lost in the age of classroom teaching aiming at the highest quantity of participants possible. The ODL format tries to bring back individual learning quality while catering to the same or an even larger quantity of targeted participants. In this individual coaching role the educators or tutors are the key to success in guiding the learners throughout the course:

Tutor is a generic term used throughout this guide to refer to the instructor accompanying the learners in the educational process.

Tutoring in ODL is designed to:

- Bring an individual coaching element to the learning process.
- Foster collaborative learning and support in small groups.
- Enrich print-based learning through a variety of practical and interactive exercises.

The learning environment in distance education is intended to be learner-centred, adding value to the learners' existing experience and facilitating their continued learning. Regular contact and communication initiated by the tutor are at the center of the learner support strategy.

Future "virtual classroom" settings will in addition facilitate the learner-to-learner interaction, bringing back the peer group contact and opening up the possibility for exchange with even larger professional "communities of practice" in order to learn lessons from different experiences and contexts.

In times where staff members often cannot wait for classroom courses to be organized in a convenient location, ODL driven by fast evolving communication and learning technologies is becoming more often the preferred choice of learning method. So the personal tutor is back and here to stay, demanding from the educators:

- "Just-in-time" answers to often challenging individual questions
- Ability to "coach" in concrete work situations with real consequences
- Attention to individual learning needs and preferences
- Establishment of a real learning relationship with the learner
- Providing a model to the participants in self-discipline and timeliness

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PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

Being an effective tutor requires understanding how adults learn best and familiarity with adult learning principles. Figure 1 outlines the connections between adult learning styles and related implications for teaching.

Figure 1. Characteristics of adult learners

Source: Stephen Lieb, 1991.

Adult learner characteristics	Implications for teaching/ tutoring
• Adults are autonomous and self-directed.	Teachers/tutors must actively involve adult participants in the learning process and serve as facilitators for them. Specifically, they must get participants' perspectives about the topics covered and let them work on projects that reflect their interests beyond the core course requirements. They should allow the participants to assume responsibility for presentations and group leadership. They have to be sure to act as facilitators, guiding participants to attain their own knowledge rather than supplying them only with facts.
• Adults have accumulated a foundation of life experiences and knowledge that may include work-related activities, family responsibilities, and previous education.	To help adults connect learning to their knowledge/ experience base, instructors should draw out from it what is relevant to the topic. They must relate theories and concepts to the participants and recognize the value of experience in learning.
• Adults are goal-oriented. Upon enrolling in a course, they usually know what goal they want to attain.	Instructors should show participants how this class will help them attain their learning objectives which they expressed in their course applications.
• Adults are relevancy-oriented. Learning has to be applicable to their work or other responsibilities to be of value to them.	Theories, concepts, and examples must be related to a setting familiar to participants. The second final assignment in the course is typically application oriented.
• Adults are practical, focusing on the aspects of a lesson most useful to them in their work.	Tutors should help participants apply their learning to local contexts and work challenges. Tutors should select assignments for the participants which fit their participant profile and learning objectives as reflected in their application file or expressed as a special interest.

- As do all learners, adults need to be shown respect.

Tutors must acknowledge the wealth of experiences that adult participants bring to the classroom. They should be respected for their experience and knowledge and invited to share their contributions freely. Participation in group assignments should be optional.

4

PEDAGOGICAL METHOD

Naive expectations by learners that this is the 'easy' way. Our experience is that for both learners and teachers, distance learning is the harder way. It is essential to encourage learners to be realistic about the time this course of study will take and about the amount of time they have.

(Kennedy & Duffy, in Higgison 2000)

Individual interactions between the tutor and the learner underpin the success of the DLPI programme. It is important that this interaction is established and strengthened throughout the term. The primary means of interaction is currently through e-mail. While UNFPA plans to move the DLPI Courses gradually to a virtual classroom setting, they will continue to be distance learning rather than online self-learning.

The following are some ways of enhancing the exchange between the tutor and the participants:

- Individual email messages with a personal touch
- Quick reaction to individual requests
- Regular messages to the group fostering common progress in the course
- Distribution of additional resources during the course
- Encouragement of participants to share experiences & examples
- Discussion threads on "hot topics"

You are highly encouraged as a tutor to engage your course participants to participate by asking questions or giving comments.

Why encourage online discussion?

It would be good if the tutor could share good answers of participants to all other participants. It would help other participants.

(UNFPA staff, former DLPI participant, 2006)

Former DLPI participants have signaled in evaluation sheets that low interaction among the course participants is a loss in the process of learning. Many have suggested to make the course more inter-active, to encourage group discussion, and to foster a network among the participants. The gradually introduced virtual classrooms will provide tutors with a platform and the technology to respond to this need.

Adults in the workplace have gathered years of valuable knowledge and experience. In distance learning courses, practically all participants have valuable insights to offer to each other. Online discussion offers the possibility to share their experience and knowledge, especially when participants have different demands on their time and are located all over the world, as it the case with the UNFPA staff.

Benefits of online interaction:

- Makes it possible for new knowledge to be creatively constructed, emerging out of interaction between people.
- Allows exchanges and sharing of experiences among participants who wouldn't otherwise be able to learn from each other over the duration of a course.
- Takes place "just-in-time", so learners can ask for help with concrete work products they are faced with
- Technology makes interaction "timeless" with the possibility to exchange documents for the benefit of current and future participants.

In addition to the tutor-led communication, the course participants can also support and motivate each other through online and email interactions. Stronger links among the participants fosters the development of a learning community and adds value to the learning process.

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KNOWING THE LEARNER: PARTICIPANT NEEDS & INTERESTS

'What can spice up the course to keep learners' interest?'

'Staff already have a big workload and many documents that they have to read for work. This is not school! It should be made fun and interesting.'

(Conversation over Distance Learning, DLPI, April 2009).

The participants of the DLPI programmes are UNFPA staff from different backgrounds and levels, programme-related but also operational functions, and based in various country offices. Because of the extra time the courses requires and because of their potentially career-enhancing effects, it is typically younger staff, both professional and administrative, taking the courses.

Based on previous course participation, the learners fit broadly in this profile:

- Many already possess experience and knowledge that can be formalized and deepened
- They will possess technical competencies in different fields including operations
- Depending on their past learning experiences they will hold different expectations about their roles as learners and the tutor's role as facilitator of learning
- Some will find it challenging to participate in a DL programme in addition to their workload and rapidly changing work priorities.

Before the beginning of the course:

- Study the participants list that is sent to you by the DLPI administrator. It contains useful information about the participants that will help you in trying to understand their motivation and learning objectives.
- Analyze the added value expected from this course. Some participants have concrete short-term needs to improve their work products; others have more long-term development needs expressed in their learning plans, including the Certificate of Achievement issued by the University of Costa Rica for a completion of the whole DLPI Programme.

At the course start-date:

- Send a welcome & guidance note to the participants group explaining how you will lead them through the course and what you expect (see an example welcome & guidance note in the Annex)
- Include your professional background and some personal information to enable you to connect with the participants.
- Ask for their professional background, what they would like to get out of the course, and how you can best aid them.
- Ask them for something personal, e.g. what they like to do in their "other" lives.

All DLPI courses have been designed for 40 hours of learning time including communication and assignments. In reality however, the study and completion of assignments may take more time, depending on each participant's speed, learning style and familiarity with the course materials. The fact that all course participants are working full time, sometimes in challenging environments with no quick and fast access to the internet may pose challenges to both one-to-one and group communication. Conflicting priorities and other commitments related to work, family or health may affect learners' timely completion of course assignments or participation in the suggested group reflections and work. As a tutor, you may need to coach the participants on how to set aside quality time for study, and to budget more time for completion of the course. UNFPA DLPI management can help a participant in gaining the supervisor's support if required. In the end you are the conductor of the orchestra, and the participants expect from you that you lead the rhythm of course progress. This is an even more difficult task over the distance, so you need to be a model in discipline and clarity about timelines and output expectations for each step of the way. *(See Annexes for examples of communication letters tutor - learner).*

The certificates awarded for successful completion are an important incentive for course participants to stay engaged and enlist in more than one DLPI course. Currently there are two levels of Certificates available for successful completion:

- UNFPA Certificate of Completion for each successfully passed course
- University of Costa Rica "Certificate of Achievement" upon successful completion of the whole DLPI programme.

The University of Costa Rica "Certificate of Achievement" represents an incentive to participants to complete the whole DLPI programme. The certificate does not have any official academic value though.

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TUTOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The ideal tutor is a paragon: she or he is consistent, fair, professional in standards and attitudes, encouraging but honest, unbiased, kind, positive, respectful and accepting of learners' ideas, patient, personal, tolerant, appreciative, understanding and helpful.

(The Commonwealth of Learning, 2003).).

In distance learning the tutors are the interface between the institution and the learner. Thus, it is important for tutors to understand both the environment in which learners are working in and the teaching techniques that are effective in this environment. This section contains brief tips about how you can get and stay prepared as a tutor in a distance learning programme.

Two perspectives on the tutors are addressed here:

- a. Who the tutor should be – her/his role.
- b. What the tutor should do – his/her tasks.

The roles of a tutor revolve around facilitating a learning space and community, motivating the participants, giving feedback and support for course assignments and encouraging exchange. In distance learning as in the classroom the tutor, while a knowledge expert, does not need to already have all the good answers ready, but she/he should lead the participants in their quest for finding the answers in the course together, and then in the future on their own.

There are four categories of roles developed by Berge (1995), which are widely used for online tutoring:

1. **Technical** – making participants comfortable with the technology and ultimately making the technology transparent.
2. **Managerial** – setting the agenda, objectives, procedures and rules of the educational activities.
3. **Pedagogical** – designing and delivering an appropriate educational experience, encouraging participation and fostering deep learning and reflection.
4. **Social** – creating a learning community that supports and encourages students, monitoring progress and participation.

The same roles are valid for classical teachers, but the emphases for teaching in distance learning are different than those in face-to-face classroom settings. Researchers have identified other roles that tutors can play, including: (in Higgison, 2001):

- Facilitator
- Motivator
- Knowledge expert
- Evaluator
- Mentor/Counselor
- Researcher

Box 2. The learner's ideal tutor

From the learner's perspective a tutor should:

- facilitate and nurture a learning community,
- facilitate communication (including email and offline methods),
- monitor attendance and contributions,
- support process related activities, including learning skills,
- provide access to administrative and other support,
- provide sensitive instruction (including group-work) and moderation,
- guide students through their curriculum,
- motivate,
- tolerate differences,
- assist learners to achieve their objectives.

Source. Ed. Higgison, 2001.

Please review the table below for an indication of how this can translate into practice. The four roles included below capture the key components of quality tutoring in ODL.

Figure 2. Tutor Roles in Practice

Adapted from Daweti, 2009.

Role	In practice, you ...
Tutor as manager	• Understand the scope of responsibilities and activities you are contracted to perform. • Prepare well for each course by being familiar with the learner list, study material, assignments and related documents. • Show professional commitment by modeling the standards you set for learners. You are especially a model in proactive time management for the participants • Your choice of appearance and communication style should reflect respect for community and cultural expectations. • Lead the rhythm of the course through giving clear learning and evaluation milestones and following up on them. • Keep records of drop-outs, inquiries, assignment marking, contact details of fellow tutors, and all correspondence with learners and the institution. • Keep additional documents and other learning elements that were introduced during the course and share them with DLPI administration for wider distribution. • Solicit and record any "success stories", e.g. if a participant was able to do something interesting as a result of what she/he learned.

Tutor as learning facilitator	• Spend time on getting to know each learner, explaining the curriculum design and showing how various components of the course fit together. • Assist learners in understanding their expected individual contribution, and the importance of collaborative learning. • Strive to use strategies that promote deeper learning and reflection, rather than superficial, examination-driven discussion. (Many techniques are complemented by case studies, readings and a variety of media including newspapers, handouts, charts, slides, overhead transparencies, live radio or television broadcasts, and audio or video recordings). • Please check on the availability of a tutor course primer for course-specific ideas and suggestions.
Tutor as evaluator	• For the first (mid-course) assignment propose group assignment or select individual assignment based on the participant's profile and learning objectives (consult participants file) as well as special interests. See assignment booklet. • Select a final course assignment which fits best the learner's current work and interests. See assignment booklet. • Coach learners to succeed in exercises and assignments, e.g. ask for first drafts and provide guidance and support until successful completion • Correct specific errors of fact or misunderstanding. • Explain your evaluations and grading. See grading standard for the final assignments in the Annex. • Suggest strategies for improvement and personal development. • Appreciate and foster learner's effort, however poor the performance might be overall.
Tutor as mentor/ counselor	• Help learners keep the right learning pace and use the resources at their disposal to enrich learning. • Advise learners to negotiate sufficient learning time with their supervisors or to ask for support in this from DLPI management. • Clarify course concepts and assignment requirements. • Assist learners with the revision of materials and assignments. • Offer ways to overcome anxiety and fear of failure. • Listen to and assist learners as individuals.

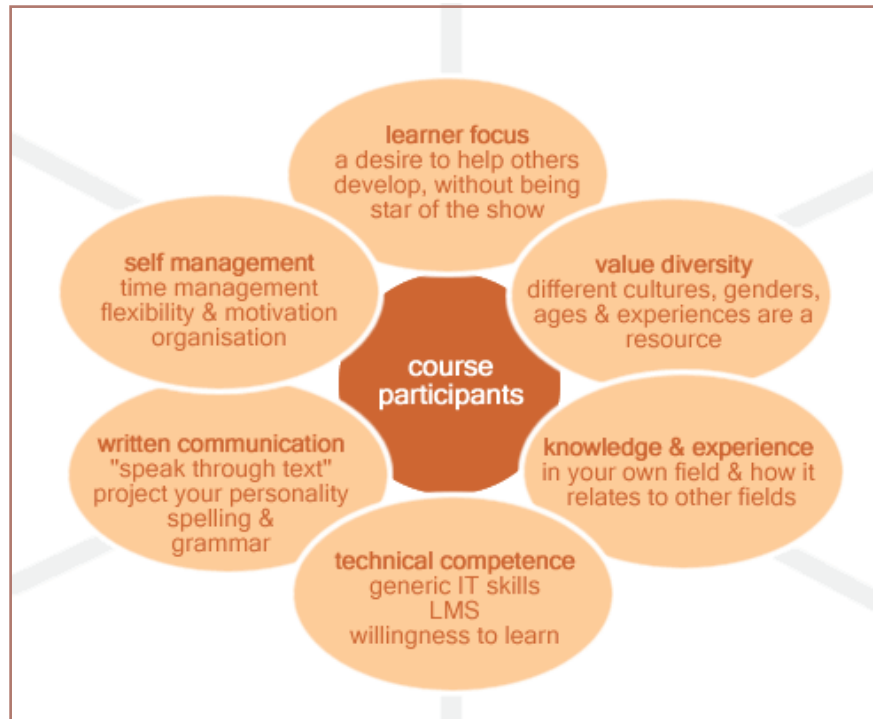
Tutors should have the following basic competencies:

- Expertise in their subject matter,
- Pedagogical competence,
- Technical competencies to facilitate learning by leveraging technology
- Cultural sensitivity to adapt to different learner contexts

As in face-to-face teaching, the distance learning tutor needs to undertake a range of tasks and activities requiring a variety of skills (See Figure 3).

Figure 3. Distance Learning Tutor Skills

Source. Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology, 2009.



Communication with the learners is at the core of tutoring work and contributes essentially to a good learning experience. Figure 4 details practical responsibilities of the tutor revolving around timely and adequate communication with learners.

Figure 4. Tutor Responsibilities

Adapted from Tutor Guide, Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology Online, 2009

Tutor responsibility	In practice you...
Introducing yourself to all participants at the start of the course <i>(See example of welcome & guidance note in Annex)</i>	• Prepare a brief self-introduction and photograph of yourself and encourage participants to share as well. • Ask for acknowledgment of receipt for your welcome note. • Respond to any student messages of self-introduction.
Establishing and maintaining learning relationships with individual participants as well as the whole group	• Circulate a participants list with contact details, including your own (Name, gender, location, email, phone if applicable, availability).[*] Encourage the use of "reply all" and the copying of all participants in emails, in order to create a culture of trust and transparency. • Ask for frequent participant feedback showing that you are there to serve them.
Acting as first point of contact for course-related enquiries	• Make it known that all course inquiries are welcome. • Feel "ownership" for the course and pass on any suggestions or questions to DLPI administration, and/or DLPI management. • Acknowledge an inquiry, even if you can't answer it immediately or have passed it on.
Familiarizing yourself with course content and distance learning expectations	• Be familiar with the course materials and approach before the course starts. • Skim through course activities and content before the course starts, noting all activities and reflections where online interaction is recommended • Determine intersection points, which you expect participants to have reached together e.g. module completion, exercises, group or individual assignments etc.
Responding to student messages in a timely manner	• Respond to messages and queries within a 24 hour time frame (during the week) or on Monday morning (weekend requests). • Notify participants if replies will be delayed within the timeframe above, or specify down-times (holidays, etc.) • Acknowledge receipt of their assignments or inquiries as soon as you receive them.
Tracking participant progress and contacting those who may be behind or having difficulty Providing feedback and sharing knowledge and	• Check who is late with emails and absent from the discussions. • Encourage participants who have not contributed for some time. • Develop a good electronic filing system (e.g. email folders by participant) so that you can systematically keep track of your participants' progress.

expertise	• Use feedback and encourage discussion between participants. • Be proactive in clarifying any misconceptions, inaccuracies or ill-judged contributions. • Share advice and tips to support participants. • Congratulate them on their achievements. • Let them know which points they should pay attention to in order to enhance learning. • Notify them personally about their evaluation results and explain the grading. • Please don't try to leave difficult communication or bad news up to the DLPI administrator.
Liaison with related groups and stakeholders	• Communicate with DLPI administrator and DLPI management as required. • Contribute to the course-end report, which you or your institution needs to submit at the end of each course as defined in the tutoring services contract.

Some General DLPI Tutoring Tips

1. Try to adapt to the language preferences of your participants. Participants can choose between English, French or Spanish as their preferred language, and they are assigned – if possible – to tutors with these language skills. It will take a while until all DLPI courses will be available in English, French, and Spanish.
2. Set the deadline of the “draft” final assignment two weeks before the end of the term (*see example course programme with major milestones in the welcome & guidance note in the Annex*). That way, participants do not see the final assignment as such a hurdle they might be tempted to push beyond the deadline. Also, this gives you another possibility to support participants in their learning process and coach them towards excellence in a work-related output. This staged approach should help you in getting all assignments in at the set deadline. Please encourage participants to plan their course reading and their assignments well ahead of time. Individual exceptions for extensions should only be granted under exceptional circumstances. Please mention such exceptions in your course-end report.
3. Your “Welcome Note” should include some request for reply or similar action, otherwise the recipient will just read it and not respond to you. You may say, “Please acknowledge this welcome note so that I would know that you have received it and that you are ready to start. In your reply, please include a brief self-introduction so that I and your classmates will get to know each other a bit more.”
4. Like in a classroom setting, where all participants can listen to your dialogue with one student, “copy all” participants in your teaching communication. Of course, like in a classroom setting, students might want to “take you aside” for a personal conversation, and then you need to respect that. Be always mindful of creating a “culture of trust”.
5. E-mail is the primary means of communication for the DLPI course, so it is crucial that it is working properly. The two following problems occur quite frequently: (1) your

e-mail system might not recognize an incoming e-mail and put it into the spam box or reject it outright; registering the participants' email addresses in your email address book should avoid this problem - (2) when the participants submit their assignments all at once; your e-mail system might exceed its quota and reject subsequent e-mails or will not accept .doc or .zip attachments. Ask the participants to follow up assignment submissions.

7

EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

By using specific instructional strategies learners 'are encouraged to go beyond their stated axiom of doing what they have to do to get a certificate. They participate in curriculum building in their own classes. They participate as individual learners and as team members'

(Greene, 2001)

As there is limited contact and communication between distance students and their tutors, these contacts have to aim for the highest quality. While communication in distance learning, mediated by technology, lacks the immediateness of face to face interaction, online communication can still transmit a great deal of one's personality. The way you approach the distance learning and online exchanges can result in a highly value-added experience for participants and also ongoing learning for you as a tutor. Showing openness, warmth, flexibility and genuine interest in participants' thinking and experience are important to nurture the learning process.

Simple ways to facilitate learning, encourage and motivate the participants include:

- showing interest and appreciation for participants' experience
- finding something positive in a message
- sharing that you have learned something new
- providing a real life example of a difficult concept
- offering study advice or further references to support a learner's particular interest
- passing on a technical tip
- showing flexibility within the limits of course requirements
- offering an alternative when a participant is struggling to meet requirements

Box 3. Enabling learning involves

- Helping learners to develop their skills in organizing concepts, in developing 'mental maps' that enable them to structure their learning in a way that makes sense to them
- Helping learners to articulate their ideas in writing or verbally, and to debate them productively
- Fostering learners' ability to achieve learning goals through interactions such as cooperative projects or peer feedback
- Setting appropriate and challenging topics for learner discussions, helping learners to focus on the topic and providing a framework that develops their skills in managing discussions
- Modeling effective learning strategies for learners by demonstrating alternative approaches to a topic, making the learning process transparent and providing examples of different routes to learning
- Problem solving, by helping learners identify and deal with ineffective approaches to learning, or skill deficits blocking their learning, such as language or mathematical skills.

Source: Tutoring in ODL, COL 2003

There are several instructional strategies useful in DL programmes, out of which a few can be successfully used given the current design of the DLPI courses. Three such strategies are presented below as identified by Greene, 2001: choice, balance and reflection.

Choice

An important instructional strategy is to provide choice among assignments and if possible, among performance objectives. While defining the type of assignments requested, most DLPI courses contain multiple choices for assignments that tutors and learners can opt for in agreement. Newer courses also contain options for virtual discussion, on which the tutors should use their best judgment.

Learners may choose areas of interest fitting their personal development objectives and special work challenges, and would like to do research outside the given curricula. As a tutor, it is key to be flexible to learners' different needs and learning styles and encourage them to pursue what they are most interested in.

Balance

Another educational strategy is a "balance of delivery act". The DLPI courses have been generally designed to be of practical use to the generally experienced practitioner and encourage critical personal reflection linked with work issues. Activities are present throughout the courses to provide a break from text and encourage the learner to apply the study to work practice. As some of these activities are optional, the learners may be tempted to glance through them. As some of the activities are also repeated as final assignments, your role is to encourage the learners to stop and engage in the activities suggested as a good learning help and applied practice. Given the desire expressed by past learners to have access to other colleagues' contributions, group emails or online discussion forums - if available - can be a good opportunity for learners to diversify their learning experience by interacting with others.

Reflection

Bringing on-the-job experience into the distance learning arena is another critical instructional strategy. DLPI participants are already working as UNFPA practitioners and many have valuable examples and "best practices" that they can bring into individual and group learning. You may choose specific ones to open the possibility for participants to share anything they would like feedback and comments on from colleagues.

A good way to foster reflection is to encourage the participants to keep a learning journal in notebook form or on the computer. The journal can be a means of maintaining continuity and a record of completed activities, ideas and reflections as learners advance through a course. The inputs one writes into a journal can be easily retrieved and shared in group exchanges. They can also be a great aid in completing final assignments, which can be a further incentive for learners.

Guidelines for virtual discussion

Encouraging online interaction and group work are important ways to foster a learning community. To encourage collaborative learning and exchange of experience recent DLPI courses contain options for virtual discussion as part of the course work.

From the beginning it will be important to encourage learners to use these opportunities for online discussion and sharing among colleagues. As a tutor, it is important to encourage this type of work by emphasizing its benefits illustrated in Box 4.

Box 4. Benefits of Group Work

Working in groups helps develop learning skills for:

- planning tasks
- developing clear communications strategies
- analyzing and solving problems
- resolving potential conflicts
- working collaboratively towards a common goal.

Group Learning also:

- helps learners acquire learning skills
- provides the motivation of social contact
- integrates learning with practice, especially in work-related learning and professional development
- helps with information exchange, questions about the course and approaches to study.

Source: Tutoring in ODL, A handbook for tutors, COL, 2003.

One way to get learners to participate in virtual discussions is to make them an integral part of the course experience. Also, let participants know that virtual discussions are an integral part of their final grade.

Discussion boards (chat rooms) are being gradually introduced to DLPI courses to encourage exchange of reflections between course participants and the tutor. NOTE: Please check with the DLPI course administrator on possibilities to set up a virtual classroom on the new MyUNFPA2 platform.

They have the potential of enabling interaction and learning not just between the tutor and the learner but also among the learners themselves. They will be encouraging to the learner to know that there are other participants like him/her going through the same assignment/concepts. Besides the spontaneous debates that will be encouraged throughout the course, two "mandatory" virtual discussions will also be held. Participants will have to make at least one substantive comment in each of the discussions. This exchange will help you follow up on their learning process during the course and forms part of the final course grading (*see Annex VI*).

The first virtual discussion is introductory and aims at knowing the group better, both on personal terms, learning styles, previous knowledge and experience in the course topic, promoting interaction between participants and, of course, supporting the learning process.

The second virtual discussion is more content oriented and it can also be used for tutoring the final assignments. You will find some topics for the first and second virtual discussion in the assignment booklet.

Some useful tips to moderate a virtual discussion...

Exchange among all participants is systematically encouraged throughout the course modules in the context of the reflection and sharing points. Your role as a tutor will be to initiate, foster and formalize this sharing, by asking a specific reflection to be shared or an answer to an activity to be shared in group. Give examples from your own experience to encourage this exchange!

- Ask participants questions that will make them reflect on the discussed topics. Try to use open questions (those that cannot be answered with “yes” or “no”).
- Set the tone for evidence based respectful of diversity discussions that incorporate key Course concepts. If necessary, remind participants to present facts or statistics to back their statements.
- Refer them to the course. Establish links between course contents and activities (specific sections, case studies, a picture, etc) and what the participants are saying in the discussion.
- Bring up current worldwide and regional events; encourage them to share situations and experiences from their regional or national contexts.
- Keep in mind that participants should only share general, public project related information.

8

COURSE TIMELINE

"What I found helpful was the time-line that the tutor forwarded to the participant. It helped me better organise myself. Excellent initiative!"

DLPI Participant, Evaluation Sheet, 2006

The DLPI courses are run four times per year, each taking 40 hours over 8 weeks to complete. To ensure effective administration of our many courses, please observe this suggested timeline:

T = 0 - Start of the Term: The welcome & guidance note should be sent on this date. *(Please refer to the Annex for an example)*. Sending the welcome note at the same time to all participants provides a tangible marker for the start of the term. Sending it too early is not very helpful because it might reach the participant while he/she is still trying to finish her or his previous term. Sending it too late would cause a flood of emails sent to the DLPI administration by participants inquiring about their course. In fact, depending on your time zone, you may need to send it a day in advance because the day starts earlier for participants in Asia.

Week 1: Keep the communication up. It is important to give the course a good rhythm from the beginning. Otherwise it risks "falling asleep", and it will be so much harder to get the momentum back. Send information emails, motivate them to start reading the modules, point them to fun, challenging, or really interesting passages in the modules to draw them in. Please don't stop until you get the feeling that the group has started to roll and that there is momentum and progress in the course. During this week the virtual discussion starts. Take advantage of this mandatory activity to motivate participants, encourage communication and generate exchange between them as well.

Week 2: Prepare participants for the midterm assignments in week 3 (should be completed in one week). Assign individual assignments based on the participant's application profile (including their learning objectives). Take into account any special interests they have told you about. – At the same time keep reminding that participants need to keep advancing on their modules as well. The virtual discussion continues during this week.

Week 3: Follow up with participants on their midterm assignment.

Week 5: Prepare the participants for their final assignments. Ensure that all participants understand their assignments, and accompany them gently in finishing them. Final assignments should apply the contents of the course to UNFPA practice and the draft assignment should be completed within two weeks (week 6 and 7). Select assignments from the assignment booklet, and as for the midterm assignment, make sure that they fit the participants work profile and interests. – Again, make sure that participants are progressing in their reading. This is the dangerous moment when they think they can concentrate fully on their assignments and can leave the modules unfinished. Motivate them to read the remaining modules, point them to rewarding passages to read and fun exercises to do.

Week 6 +7: Final assignment weeks. Make sure that participants understand their assignments and accompany them gently in their progress. Don't let them fall too much behind schedule. Point out that all you want them to do is send you their draft assignments during week 7. Be ready to give them feedback immediately on their draft assignments, so they don't lose their momentum and mentally close their course. Everybody should have gotten their feedback by the end of week 7 in order to finalize their assignments and catch up with the rest of their course work during week 8. Granting extensions should be exceptional, since they delay the after-course administration process and might even have financial impacts. – Again, course work needs to be finished at the same time! During these two weeks, the second virtual discussion will take place. This will give you a good opportunity to sense how the group is doing in relation to their final assignments. Use this virtual discussion to clarify any type of doubts that participants might have or to support work on final assignment, while maintaining the virtual discussion's objectives and activities.

Week 8: This is the last week where all participants need to free up time and concentrate on finalizing their final assignment as well as catching up with the rest of their course work. You are the cheerleader, and from a distance this is an even greater challenge. Be creative, positive, and give them "you can do it"-type of encouragement. Start with grading as soon as you receive the final assignments so you can finish the course as early as possible. Administrative delays could be costly. *See the Annex for the standard for grading final assignments.*

End of Term (T + 8 weeks): End of the Term, except for the winter term which might be longer due to the year-end workload. Please mark the end of the term with a "Thank You and Good Bye Note" (*see example in the Annex*). You have been pushing them hard, so this is the time to give the participants a sincere "thank-you" for putting in their time, energy and enthusiasm in addition to their fluctuating workloads. Encourage them to stay in touch with the group. The forthcoming virtual classrooms and UNFPA knowledge sharing forums will give "alumni" the tools to keep in touch on the subject and to keep learning. – Keep in mind that their experience during the course will influence largely the attitude with which they will address and master the course's subject in their future work careers. Please don't underestimate this.

Course End + 1 week: This is your busy week with your deadline for sending to each participant the message of successful or unsuccessful completion of the course together with a general performance feedback and the assignment grading. (*See the Annex for the standard for grading final assignments*). Follow-up with any late submissions and accompany them gently to a satisfactory finalization – it's "just the assignment".

Course End + 2 weeks: Your or your contracting institution for the tutoring services needs to submit a course-end report to DLPI management in the form agreed upon in the contract. At the same time, all participants will receive online evaluation requests from DLPI management. You will receive a copy of participants' ratings and comments for your own continuous improvement. The contracting party will receive a summary report and might be asked for any further clarifications.

Please note:

If you have any questions or trouble sticking with this timeline, please talk to the DLPI administrator. Like the participants, you are also constantly learning, and the administrator is there to help you with new suggestions or even some coaching to help you excel as a DLPI tutor. – Thank You sincerely for all the extra efforts you have silently put into our courses!

EXAMPLE TIMELINE for Participants:

Week 1 starting [date]:	Review course guide and plan your work (tutor's guidance is available) First virtual discussion
Week 2 starting [date]:	Review [list modules] and work on exercises First virtual discussion
Week 3 starting [date]:	Work on midterm assignment Keep up your course work
<i>First assignment [date]:</i>	<i>Submit midterm assignment</i>
Week 4 starting [date]:	Review [list modules] and work on exercises
Week 5 starting [date]:	Review [list modules] and work on exercises
Week 6 starting [date]:	Work on final assignment (Applied to your work and selected by the tutor depending on your work profile and interests) Second virtual discussion
Week 7 starting [date]:	Send draft final assignment to tutor for feedback. Keep up your course work Second virtual discussion
<i>Final assignment draft [date]:</i>	<i>Submit draft of final assignment</i>
Week 8 starting [date]:	Depending on tutor feedback, rework final assignment and re-submit. Finish any outstanding course work.
<i>End of Course - [date]:</i>	<i>Submit final version of assignment</i>
Shortly after the course:	You will receive your grading ("pass" or "incomplete", if the final assignment was unsatisfactory (you can retake the course). Please respond to the online course evaluation questionnaire. You will receive your course certificate from the course administrator.

Annex I. Example of confirmation message sent by DLPI administration to the participants of your course

Dear UNFPA Colleague,

We are happy to confirm to you that after careful review of all applications, you have been accepted into the DLPI course:

Term: [Starting – end date]

Course: [Course name]

Tutor: [Name]

(Communication in English or [other language])

We thank you for your interest in this learning programme and expect that you will be able to follow through until its completion. It is estimated that you will need to contribute 20 hours of your time to this course.

Please get your supervisor's support (PAD) and discuss any conflicts with your workload.

What are the next steps?

1. Please download the materials for your course from Docushare. Follow this link, [link to documents online] then click on the folder for your course and save the zip files contained there to your computer. – For this term you will also receive a CD-Rom containing the same files, which was sent to your office address by pouch. In order to limit UNFPA's carbon footprint we recommend reading the materials as much as possible online and avoiding paper printing.
2. On the scheduled start-date (see above) you will receive a message directly from your tutor (see above), marking the start of the course and giving you further instructions. It will be sent to the email address that you indicated in the application. Please inform us as soon as possible, if you did not receive this welcome note from your tutor.
3. All working materials and assignments are in English and you will need regular access to email in order to follow the course. Your tutor will take you through the course together with the rest of the class, providing you with additional information and the assignments required for attaining the certificate of completion. At the end of the course we will ask you for feedback, which will guide us in our continuous efforts of updating the course content and approach.

Enjoy your DLPI learning, and we hope you are going to apply for further courses in the next term [dates of next DLPI term]. You will need to complete six courses to receive the DLPI "Certificate of Achievement" from the University of Costa Rica.

Best regards, and don't hesitate to contact us:

Carmen Marin – DLPI Course Administrator, University of Costa Rica -

cmarin@ccp.ucr.ac.cr

Markus Voelker – DLPI Programme Manager, UNFPA DHR/LCMB – voelker@unfpa.org

Annex II. Example of welcome & guidance note sent by course tutor at the beginning of the course

Dear Participants of the DLPI Course [Name of Specific Course]

First, let me add my own word of welcome to the start-up of UNFPA's Course [Name of the course] My name is [Name of Tutor], and I will be your distance learning tutor for the duration of the course.

To begin, let me provide a brief note about myself: My association with UNFPA goes back to [Personal Details]. My connection to the topic of this course is [Personal Details]. I will be available to help you with your understanding of the course contents.

We will be mainly communicating by e-mail. Please contact me at any time if you have any questions, are looking for additional insights, or run into any difficulties. I am there to give you the guidance and support you need.

When you receive this message, please send a "Reply All" and tell us a little about yourself and your work in the population field. We would also be interested in learning what prompted you to sign up for the course. So please copy (all!) the others on your messages, and I encourage you to start a curious group dialogue accompanying this course. Please note that your contributions can be shared with other DLPI participants and used as examples by DLPI tutors for this or other DLPI courses.

[Introduce any specific learning tools that accompany the course like a virtual discussions, learning journals, etc.]

Please find below some useful links which will be useful for this course: [Provide a short description of the resource sites you are listing]

The course starts today – [Date] - and ends on [Date]. While most of the course is self-paced, it does follow a weekly programme with two assignment milestones which you are required to meet:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Week 1 starting [date]: | Review course guide and plan your work
(tutor's guidance is available)
First virtual discussion |
| Week 2 starting [date]: | Review [list modules] and work on exercises
First virtual discussion |
| Week 3 starting [date]: | Work on midterm assignment
Keep up your course work |
| Midterm assignment [date]: | <i>Submit midterm assignment</i> |
| Week 4 starting [date]: | Review [list modules] and work on exercises |
| Week 5 starting [date]: | Review [list modules] and work on exercises |

Week 6 starting [date]:	Work on final assignment (Applied to your work and selected by the tutor depending on your work profile and interests) Second virtual discussion
Week 7 starting [date]:	Send draft final assignment to tutor for feedback. Keep up your course work Second virtual discussion
<i>Final assignment draft [date]:</i>	<i>Submit draft of final assignment</i>
Week 8 starting [date]:	Depending on tutor feedback, rework final assignment and re-submit. Finish any outstanding course work.
End of Course - [date]:	<i>Submit final version of assignment</i>
Shortly after the course:	You will receive your grading ("pass" or "incomplete", if the final assignment was unsatisfactory (you can retake the course). Please respond to the online course evaluation questionnaire. You will receive your course certificate from the course administrator.

Please manage your own time proactively, and consult me immediately should you run into any difficulties. DLPI management can mediate, if you are not able to reach an agreement with your supervisor to secure the required learning time of 40 hours. Extensions to the final assignment deadline are granted only in exceptional circumstances, since they cause additional administration costs. You can always apply to the course again. Active participation, measured through your reactions to emails and your participation in virtual discussions is required to complete the course in addition to the passing all assignments.

As your tutor I will select the assignments for you from a pre-approved pool of course assignments. The mid term assignment is formative and with its feedback you will be able to know about your learning process and how to be better prepared for the final assignment. The final assignment will cover all the contents of the course. If the course offers virtual discussions, your discussion contribution will also be part of the final grading. Passing criteria for mid-term assignment, final assignment, and virtual discussions are the following:

- Covered all items
- Personalized the issues and related them to own experience and work
- Elaborated with some depth and complexity
- Organized the assignment
- Did the assignment credibly without help other than the tutor

I will try to match the assignments to your learning objectives and previous experience. Please tell me, if you have any special interests.

One important point about the submission of electronic documents: Please name your files starting with your name, for example "LAILIA DLPI fall 2010 Assign1". This makes it easier for me to keep track and respond quickly.

As a precaution, I suggest that you copy my email address to your address book to avoid them being rejected by a spam filter. Finally, please be kind enough to acknowledge receipt of this letter, as soon as possible.

That is all for now. I am there to lead you through this course and to answer to your questions and concerns within 24 hours. Please feel free to contact me at any time, and to also involve the other participants into interesting discussions.

I am looking forward to hear from you soon.

Best wishes and have a good start to this interesting DLPI Course!

Yours sincerely,

[Name
Address
Telephone no
Email address]

Annex III. Example of end-term good-bye note from tutor

Dear Course Participants,

I want to say goodbye to you as we end this [DLPI Term] Course.

I appreciate your efforts in completing the required course readings and activities on time, and in submitting your assignment on today's final deadline. It is my hope [add something personal about gained knowledge and new skills, as well as their application to UNFPA work].

Certificates for the course will be sent to you shortly by the DLPI administrator. Please respond to the online evaluation questionnaire which will be sent to you soon by DLPI management. Your feedback is crucial, so the DLPI keeps being UNFPA's "most popular learning programme".

I have enjoyed [Be personal about what you enjoyed in this course with these participants].

I observed [Include your general observations and feedback, positive & corrective for the whole group.]

I would encourage you to stay in contact with your fellow learners and to exchange with each other once in a while to keep learning and improving your work for UNFPA.

Best wishes in your work and in your personal life.

Warm regards,

[Tutor]

Annex IV. Example of email sent by the tutor to explain evaluation and grading of the final assignment to each participant

Dear [Name of Participant],

Congratulations for successfully completing the

[Name of DLPI Course].

With a final assignment grading of [Final assignment grade]

In your final assignment [give positive & corrective feedback on the final assignment]
I observed [give positive & corrective feedback on the individual course performance]

You will soon receive your course certificate from the DLPI administrator. If you have successfully completed the whole DLPI Programme, you will also receive the “Costa Rica Certificate of Achievement” through UNFPA headquarters.

Best regards,

[Tutor]

Annex V. Sample unsuccessful course completion note

Dear [Name of Participant],

I regret to inform you that you did not successfully complete the

[Name of DLPI Course].

[Please give reasons, refer to Annex VI]

In your final assignment [give positive & corrective feedback on the final assignment]
I observed [give positive & corrective feedback on the individual course performance]

You will have the opportunity to re-apply for this course in the next DLPI term, and I recommend [Include your recommendation on what is required for a successful completion in the next term]

[Please include a personal note in which you encourage the participant and motivate her/him to continue with the DLPI programme]

Best regards,

[Tutor]

Annex VI. Standard for grading final assignments

The course can only be rated “completed” (as apposed to “incomplete”), if the participant has participated until the end (perceived attendance through reaction to emails and participation in discussions), and if she has received a “pass” (as opposed to a “not passed”) status on all of the following three components:

1. Midterm Assignment
2. Final Assignment
3. Virtual Group Discussion

In the following table you can find the four criteria, which are used to determine, if a submitted component should received a “pass” or “not passed” status:

NOTE: As the DLPI is a work-place learning programme, you should try to help all participants to pass their components. But do give them a “incomplete” status, when necessitated by the criteria below , or if the assignments are not “credibly” completed without help other than the tutor.

Final assignment grading

Criteria	“Pass” Status	“Not Passed” Status
1. Completion (of assignment or discussion contributions)	Covered all the items	Did not cover all the required items or did not complete the assignment by himself/herself[In case of doubt on authenticity contact DLPI management]
2. Internalization of idea (in the assignment / contribution)	Personalized the issues, related them to own experiences	Was not able at all to relate to own context
3. Elaboration (in the assignment/contribution)	With some depth and complexity.	Too simplistic; no details; Did not demonstrate the ability to apply the course content to a problem
4. Organization (of the assignment / contribution)	Organized	Unorganized, scattered ideas; Did not demonstrate the ability to structure for readers' understanding

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Further References for Tutors

Websites

Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA): Hosted by the Indira Gandhi National Open University, provides training in, and access to, electronic media for distance education.
www.cemca.org

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.
www.col.org

Global Distance Education Network (GDENet): Offers practical guidelines for teaching and learning, management, technology and policy.
www.col.org/disted

Structuring Effective Group Projects: This resource will show you how to set up cooperative learning projects and assignments avoid common problems that can occur during traditional group work.

<http://www.stedwards.edu/cte/resources/groupproj.htm>

Facilitating Online Groupwork: This resource is from the Western Montana College of the University of Montana and explores what it takes to successfully design and moderate online group projects toward specific outcome goals.

<http://www.learner.org/courses/rfts/om6web.htm>

South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE): Provides a range of services including support programmes for tutoring and tutor co-ordination.
www.saide.org.za

Books

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