

UNIT FOR DISTANCE LEARNING: TEACHING & LEARNING (UDL-T&L)

PULSE @ UDL-T&L | Quarterly Newsletter



NEW BEGINNINGS & PLANNING AHEAD FOR YEAR 2022

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*Every moment
is a fresh
beginning*

T.S. Eliot



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dr Joany Fransman

2022: New year - greater possibilities

Following a turbulent 2020, a volatile 2021, we have planned for and anticipate that 2022 will be a more promising year for us all.

A new year, new beginnings, and a new name. Since its inception way back in 1919 the Unit has changed its name several times for various reasons. This time around the name was bound to change with the split into 2 workspaces, the UDL Teaching and Learning and the SALA workspace at the Unit. The Teaching and Learning related structure at the Unit had to be re-named so that it is more distinguishable from its SALA partner structure.

To anyone outside looking in, it should be clear that its difference is motivated on academic terms. Therefore, the new name sharpens the focus on the functions delivered to different stakeholders within the Unit.

The Teaching and Learning structure, which is referred to as the UDL: T&L (Unit for Distance Learning: Teaching and Learning), is directed by Dr Joany Fransman, while the SALA structure is directed by Dr Almero Kok.

The focus of the UDL: T&L will this year be very much on assisting all our paper-based students to join the online platform of the NWU. Therefore the 1st and 2nd year students are already assisted in the online modality. Digital workshops for bursary students, as well as e-connect sessions for students by our e-Learning team are all efforts in an attempt to further drive this focus.

I am sure that many may question my new look. Well to me it symbolises a new beginning as I champion a cause that is near and dear to me. Change is sometimes necessary to yield better, better for me, you and all of us.

Our fearless leader, rocking her new look!



We will strive this year to strengthen those valuable friendships and family bonds. Within an era of unprecedented isolation, we need to embrace inclusivity and reach out to our fellowmen and resuscitate our relationships with one another.

Theme for this publication

Our ideas, actions, creativity, endurance, emotions, renewal and growth can be associated with the lifecycle of the flora that surrounds us. The symbolism of the seedlings, plants, flowers and foliage are all representative of 'possibilities of new beginnings.'

An interesting fact about a houseplant, the Calathea is that it symbolises new beginnings. What it does in the dark is that it turns over a new leaf. A great lesson to us, when we find ourselves surrounded in uncertain times, difficult positions or even surrounded by negativity and darkness, we search for the light. Plants play such a major role in our lives, they take in our used breath and provide us with clean and fresh oxygen. We at UDL-T&L will absorb all our past shortcomings and recycle them for the betterment of our stakeholders.

In this issue, you will notice that different plants and flowers are featured and will showcase their symbolisms. Sometimes, we need to look around in nature and remind ourselves of the qualities that lie within each of us. Never be afraid to start over...New beginnings is an opportunity to start afresh and reach your full potential. Like many of these plants, we too share similar characteristics

The calathea plant turns over a new leaf in the dark



Make it happen!



BACK TO BASICS

We learn and grow each day and as such we also need to unlearn certain things, take a new perspective, and at times uproot ourselves for the greater benefit. Our senior leadership team has shared their focus for 2022 which includes their planned events, retention strategies as well as anything noteworthy to share with all stakeholders.

Here are reflections from the various divisions:

STARTING OVER

More magic is about to be born!

2022 marks the beginning of a new era. The nomenclature of the unit has been aligned towards the Teaching and Learning mission and vision for its distance learning students. We are proud to announce, the official name as Unit for Distance Learning – Teaching & Learning. A process leading to this change is described below.

In late 2019, the NWU's UMC had approved the setting up of a structure to better deal with the teaching-learning needs of the distance education students.

In the course of 2020 this structure had been further developed and optimised at no additional costs to the University. Given the changed form as well as purpose of the new Unit it made sense to consult with staff members about an identity shift that signalled more clearly the purpose of the Unit as dedicated to teaching-learning support.

In 2021 a process of consulting the ODL (i.e. both SALA and T-L) leadership had been initiated by the Director, also in consultation with the Director UODL SALA, the Deputy Registrar as well as the DVC T&L.

*Good luck
and
determination
are represented
by the
Snake Plant*



Various suggestions had been motivated to better capture the mandate and the purpose of the UODL in terms of providing teaching-learning support to academics and faculties, as contrasted with the UODL SALA in which admissions, registrations, examinations organisation and related academic records, were managed. In particular the focus was on the nature of teaching-learning support offered to distance education students in faculties and academics.

This functionality in terms of curriculum related support is quite unlike that of the SALA focus in distance education on admissions, registrations, and marks related processes.

Furthermore, the former Unit's emphasis on "open" distance education had to be revisited alongside the University's commitment to offer aligned contact and distance programmes in which there would similarly be an aligned admissions and registration process. In light of the above, a staff survey had also been conducted, open to both SALA and UODL TL colleagues, with a view of exploring other naming possibilities and their feelings about the need for a name change. The results yielded a majority vote for UDL T&L which was subsequently approved by the University Management Committee in late 2021.



THOUGHTS BY THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR FOR TEACHING & LEARNING, PROFESSOR ROBERT BALFOUR

When asked about the change, Professor Robert Balfour, has the following to say: "The long and illustrious history of the UODL at the NWU has laid the foundation for its latest iteration in which the Unit's mandate to provide teaching-learning support becomes more focused and specialised. This aligns with the University strategy to increase the portfolio and range of programmes offered by Faculties (with all Faculties now offering a selection of programmes in distance education) some of which are aligned to contact programmes and thus also to the University's processes as regards to recruitment, selection, admissions and registrations. Faculty-based support of students as well as staff becomes therefore the mandate of the new UDL-TL.

Nationally we have also seen a changing appetite from government in terms of funded programmes, away from teacher education, towards other areas of specialisation and scarce skills (like IT, cyber-security, labour practice and law and so on) to which the University had had to respond. The impact of this emphasis-change is felt by the NWU in terms of its distance enrolments which must grow and the need to secure new sources of funding for programmes in niche areas through corporate or government sources."

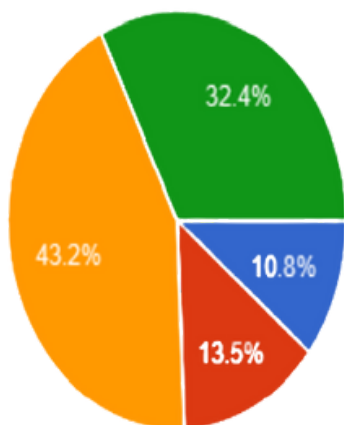


“Speaking Stats”: Sharing results

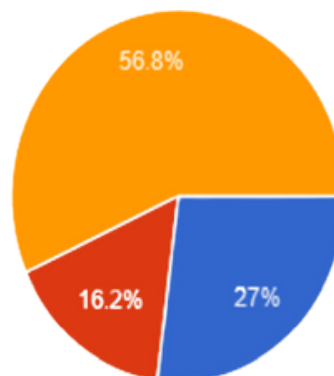
A Survey was commissioned which allowed all UODL (SALA & T&L) staff, an opportunity to have their voices heard; suggestions were then considered and discussed. This graphical representation displays the outcomes of the staff survey that was conducted.

It was noted that 43.2% voted in favour for the name change to reflect Unit for Distance Learning-Teaching and Learning (UDL-T&L). This was the tallied votes from the sections that Dr J Fransman, the Director oversees.

The option with the majority vote for the UODL-SALA under the directorship of Dr A.Kok, was the Unit for Distance Learning-SALA (UDL-SALA). The statistics gathered suggest that the alternate options did not attract a substantial vote. The graph below reflects the winning vote yields a 56.8% in favour of UDL-SALA.



- Distance Learning Support Unit (DLSU)
- Unit for Distance Teaching & Learning (UDTL)
- Unit for Distance Learning – T&L (UDL – T&L)
- Unit for Open Distance Learning T&L (UODL – T&L)



- Unit for Open Distance Learning - SALA (UODL – SALA)
- SALA – Unit for Distance Education Support (SALA - UDES)
- Unit for Distance Learning - SALA (UDL - SALA)



PROJECT & TENDER MANAGEMENT

Efforts are geared to supporting UDL Bursary students to enhance their academic performance and satisfaction by providing them with an outstanding learning experience. Plans to focus on increasing the student retention and throughput rates for bursary students and position UDL as an institution of choice for Bursars (Public and Private Sector, Non-Governmental Organisations and Employers) are ongoing.

- Stakeholders Meetings (Progress reports for Provincial Departments of Education, ETDP SETA and other Bursars)
- Arrange additional Learning Support Sessions for bursary students
- Set up application sessions for new bursary intakes for 2023
- Roadshows to be held in Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Kwazulu-Natal provinces

Attracting more students to study through distance learning

P&TM Office holds meetings with the Education Department to discuss the possible intake for the 2023 Academic Year:

- Application sessions for Eastern Cape (ECDBE) are scheduled for 28 March – 01 April 2022
- Possible intake for GDE School Leadership & Management project
- Possible intake for Northwest DBE – School Leadership & Management
- Possible ACT project from Mpumalanga DBE (October 2022)

Handy abbreviations reflected in this insert

DBE: Department of Education

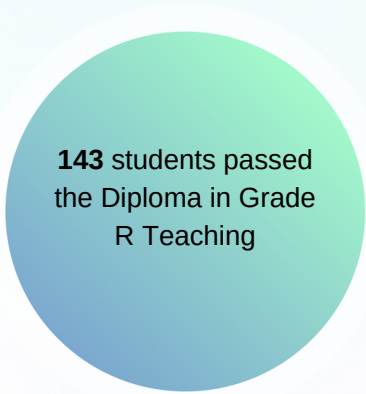
ETDP SETA: The Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority

Focus for 2022

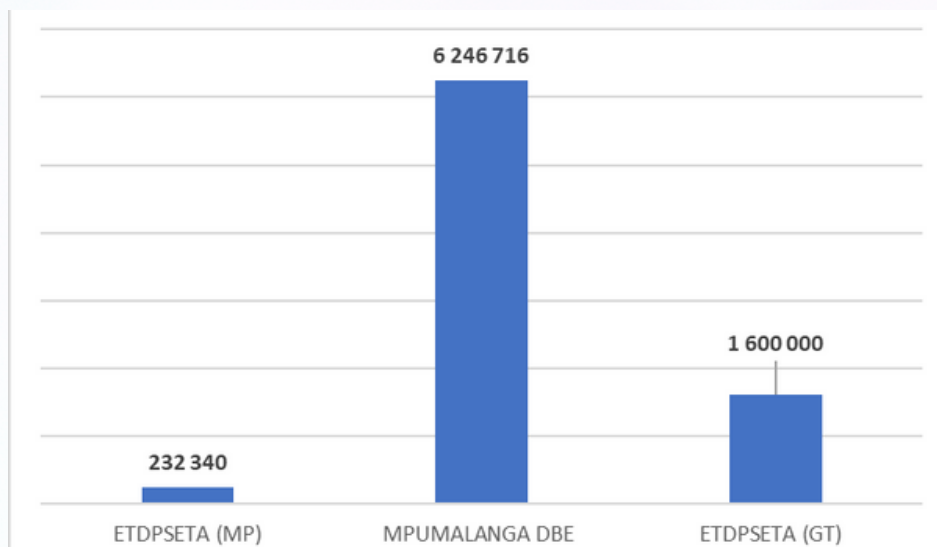
- Registration of 23 Bursary groups (1 697 Students)
- Timeous delivery of Study Material to LSC centres (Study Material Office & LSC)

Golden Pothos are symbolic of determination and longevity

Reflecting on Results



Bursary Payments Received (January to February 2022)



** Awaiting Payment: R12 147 535 (KZN DBE)

Bursary students who have successfully obtained Grade R Diploma in Teaching qualification from Northern Cape and Gauteng provinces have been afforded the opportunity to articulate into BEd Degree (Foundation Phase). This is in line with our T&L's mission statement to support the students so that they can progressively become self-directed and lifelong learners. Efforts to support bursary students are starting to bear fruits, retention and throughput rates are sure to improve.



Golden Pothos brings good luck



QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICE

- Self-evaluation surveys are to be a key focus area as it is critical in understanding the needs of our stakeholders. Emphasis to be placed on the different processes in the student life cycle, including, registrations, study material, assessments, the library, and overall service delivery.
- The office is busy investigating the need for a rating system for our help desk emails.
- Planned Calendar events will include the evaluation of LSCs and exam centres throughout the year and in the exam period.
- Closer collaborations with Alumni office, the marketing team, SRC and SCC to ensure student success.
- Many more surveys are planned to go out to fill the gaps in our service delivery.

*Spider Plants
are connected
to abundance
and prosperity*

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

- Better turnaround times to resolve student escalations
- Timeous feedback to be provided, thus keeping all parties involved updated.
- Orientation sessions have begun.
- Much focus and effort spent on improving working relationship with all stakeholders, e.g. lecturers and programme leaders in different schools with modules in the Policing Practice programme.
- Awaiting on accreditation of new programmes from Faculty of Health Sciences.
- Plans for recruitment of prospective students and marketing will commence once accreditation granted.



E-LEARNING

The e-Learning Team 'hit the ground running' in January 2022 as there was much planning and processes to implement in preparation for our online programmes and live broadcast sessions. Further, the integration of Panopto (video capture, management and sharing platform) with the learner management system, eFundi and Microsoft Teams, the unit had to ensure that all UDL:T&L end-users are effectively trained on the use of same.

Live Lectures

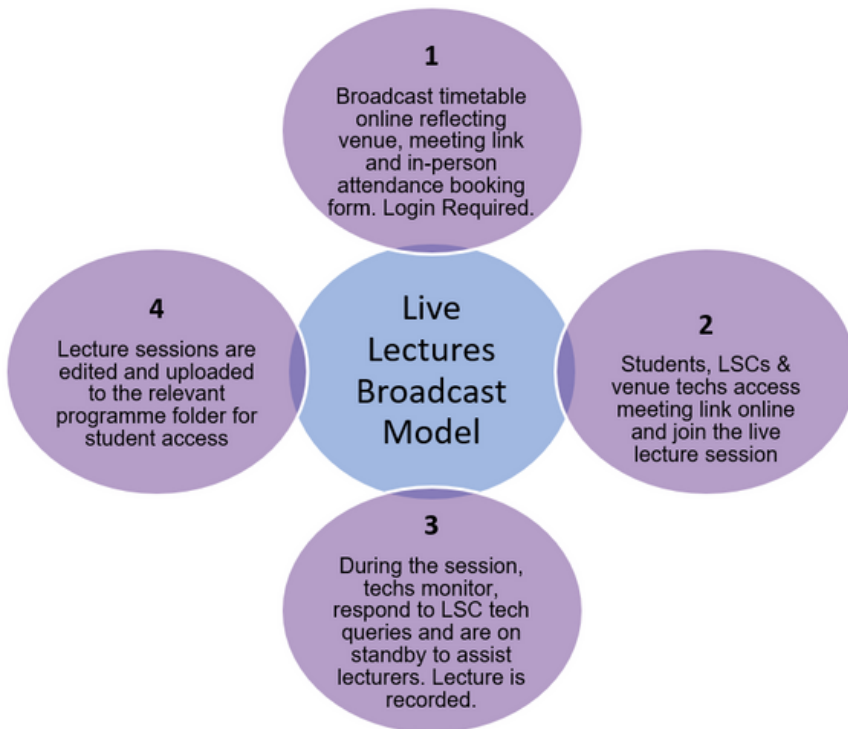
Live broadcast sessions commenced on the 21st February 2022 and the following programmes are currently being broadcasted as per the broadcast timetable that is available via the UDL webpage:

Programme	Broadcast Days
Advanced Diploma in Education (ADE)	Weekdays and Saturdays
Advanced Certificate in Teaching (ACT)	Weekdays and Saturdays
Diploma in Grade R	Weekdays and Saturdays
BA in Policing Practice (1 st Year)	Monday Evenings

*Click Here
to access the live
broadcast timetable
and recordings for
these programmes*

*Bergonias
stand for
knowledge and
deep thought*

The e-Learning team has put processes in place to ensure the successful delivery of the live lectures. The teams model comprises of the following:



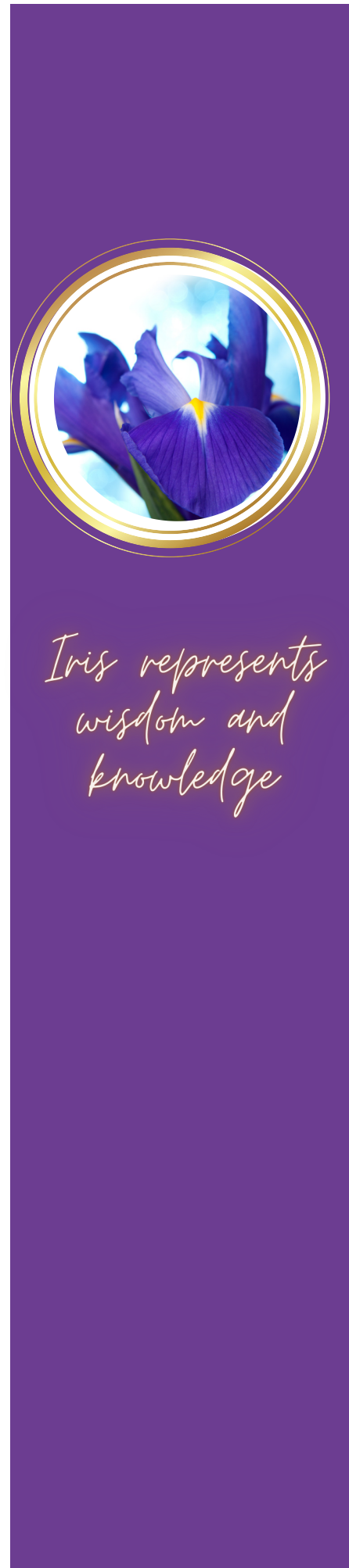
Note: All other distance programmes are delivered fully online, via eFundi

Online Programmes

With the integration of Panopto with eFundi and Microsoft Teams, lecturers can now seamlessly record their lectures within the eFundi platform. This further allows for them to easily edit and then share their recorded lectures with their students. When integrating Panopto with MS Teams, connect sessions with their students can be recorded and automatically sent to the Panopto platform for ease of access, editing and sharing. This essentially allows for lecturers to work in one space and various processes are now streamlined.

Resources and Connect Sessions

It is essential to develop online resources and schedule training/contact sessions with various stakeholders, taking into account new processes and integrations that have occurred. The following activities were conducted:



Activity	Stakeholder(s)
Planning, Processes and Logistics Discussion	Programme Leaders & Academic Managers
Online Training: Live broadcast processes	Learner Support Centre (LSC) Managers
In-Person Training: Live broadcast processes and physical use of technology in UDL multimedia venues	UDL Lecturers
Online Training: Panopto & eFundi integration	UDL Lecturers
Site Visit & technical training: Mahikeng and Vaal Campus	LSC Managers and Technical support assistants overseeing the live broadcast sessions at these two campuses.
Microsoft Teams Training: Access and Use	UDL Lecturers, LSC Managers and Technical Assistants at Vaal and Mahikeng campuses
Online Resource: Video developed to assist with accessing MS teams meeting links for live lecture sessions and lecture recordings (Paper-Based Programmes)	UDL Students
Technical Support: Use of Panopto and integrating with eFundi as well as use of MS Teams. Telephonic, in-person and online support.	UDL Lecturers
Connect: LSC Office (UDL) and e-Learning	Internal Logistics

Collaborations with NWU Divisions

The e-Learning team continues to foster good relationships with various NWU divisions. Through their collaborations, the unit was able to secure the use of HyFlex Venues at Mahikeng and Vaal Campus for UDL's live broadcast sessions which we are most grateful for.

e-Learning has been collaborating with NWU's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), Mr Kobus Le Roux and Mr Hennie Esterhuizen, especially with regard to projects involving the Panopto/eFundi integration and MS Teams.

A special thanks to the NWU's Electronic Services, headed by Director, Mr Danie Stoop and members of his team, Mr Alex Venter and Cedrick Kaas. They have been superb in providing support and are always quick to action when enquiries and requests are sent their way. We would like to further thank Mr Zak van Heerden from the NWU IT division who always goes the extra mile to attend to issues experienced at the UDL. We further continue to work closely with Mr Flip van Schalkwyk and Mr Jacques Pienaar from NWU IT Operations in terms of our connectivity at our Learner Support Centers based all over South Africa.

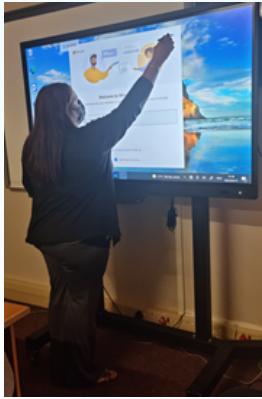
Close collaboration with the project specialist from the Director's Office, Mr Y Rassulmia, ensures that SLA's, MOU's and business process mapping is monitored, enforced and in place to fast-track success of initiatives.

Efforts are being made to strengthen relationships with various NWU faculties and division as ultimately we all slot under one big umbrella, being the North-West University.



*The Yellow
Iris represents
passion*

Teaching & Learning Tool



With the kind assistance from NWU's Electronic Services and AE Solutions, e-Learning managed to secure a 'touch screen', at no cost, for purposes of testing.

e-Learning is exploring alternative technological solutions for its multimedia venues and this will no doubt aid in the decision-making.

PROJECTS

Student Registrations

The e-Learning team developed an online platform for the uploading of registration documents and with a bit of automation, letters to students were automatically generated and the database could be accessed by registration and the call centre staff simultaneously. This assisted greatly with streamlining administrative processes.

Further, an information platform was developed that greatly assisted students to follow processes involved in successfully registering for the academic year. e-Learning worked closely with the application and registration division.

Strategic Funding: Skills Development - UDL Staff

We are now in our second year of this project and our staff continue to derive benefit from these sessions. The units latest session focused on how our applications and registrations division makes use of the VSS system (application status, student records, registration statistics and finance). The session was facilitated by Mrs Keshni Scholtz. Positive feedback was received from participants who attended the session. e-Learning is now focused on developing advanced training content on the use of technological platforms that the UDL staff use on a regular basis.

Namibia: New Office

The UDL's office based in Windhoek is in process of moving to new offices. Ms Zanobia Kanjee from the e-Learning division is overseeing this project which includes ICT interventions. She continues to connect with various service providers and staff based in Windhoek. The new offices will allow for additional space and a section where students can access online resources. It is hoped that staff will be able to move to their new office by the end of March.



*The Blue Iris
stands for
deep
knowledge*



New Office: Windhoek, Namibia



Designated Web Page for Namibia Students

A web page has been created specifically for our Namibia students to access information relevant to them. This web page can be accessed via the Distance Learning website. Contact information of the UDL's offices based in Windhoek and Ongwediva as well as information relating to the learner support centers can be found on the web page.



The lotus is a symbol of wisdom and knowledge.

Way Forward

It has been a very busy period for the e-Learning division and despite the various processes that had to be implemented, the team has continued to persevere; their hard work, dedication and unwavering spirit is evident. They will surely continue to find innovative solutions that benefits the UDL and are looking forward to the next few months, with the main aim of "making a difference".



DIGITAL STORYTELLING: DEAR DIARY

A digital network, Common Good First intends on identifying, showcasing and connecting social impact projects that are community driven with both local and international universities. The purpose of such an initiative would be for research, student engagement purposes and of course teaching and learning.

This initiative involves 6 local universities and several international learning institutes. The European Union programme Erasmus+ (link to site) granted funding to make the launch of the hub possible. The official launch of the Innovation Hub under the leadership of Mrs Beatrix "Bibi" Bouwman, NWU's Director of Sustainability and Community Impact took place on the 25th of February 2022.

Yaseen "Yaya" Rassulmia is proud to represent UDL-T&L with such initiatives. As social innovators, ambassadors for goodwill, in our various units within NWU, coupled with our experiences can we form an online support circle and work together and share solutions to challenges.

Click Here

To view one of the initiatives that the Director's office at UDL:T&L has been involved in

To view Yaseen's digital story
Click Here

The Aloe plant is known for its healing properties



SECRETS TO SUCCESS

In our garden, full of beautiful and diverse plants, two stunning Bonsais stick out. Their radiance and aroma leave many mesmerised.

Ben Schutte from the Quality Office, attained his Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) with distinction (Cum Laude).

Chatting to Ben, this is what he had to say, "Studying through distance learning gives me a front row seat, to working and studying at UDL-T&L. I get to see things first hand from our students' perspective. Challenges like self-discipline, time management, work-study balance etc. makes part of studying so much more difficult, not to even mention data or connectivity issues that some of our students go through.



The support from the academics is top notch and I never had any issues regarding my studies. My opinion is that reading the announcements and instructions from academics that is posted on eFundi to students is pivotal. Students created Whatsapp groups where they supported each other, lots of information sharing happened. It was great to see the quality content of our distance learning PGCE programme first hand and according to me, is world-class."



Zanobia Kanjee from e-Learning, attained her Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in Management with distinction (Cum Laude)

"It took a lot of perseverance, dedication and long hours, as well as sacrifices. The efforts you put in, does indeed pay off. Studying via 'distance' was most convenient especially since content could be easily accessible online and it offers great flexibility if you are employed full-time and have to juggle your studies. The lecturers were accessible and the programme provides a good foundation if you are currently in a management role".

Bonsais are symbolic of harmony, wisdom and calm



Passport to Purpose



EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Mr Yaseen "Yaya" Rassulmia

Looking back at 2021, We at the unit worked effortlessly to serve all our stakeholders. You, our distance learners have also poured hours into your studies. We are adamant that we need to raise the bar. Communicating with each other, allows us to bridge the Gaps and finding ways to attain Win...Win outcomes.

This year we intend to shake up things even more. We are geared to go all the way. We are aware that our student needs change. Our ears are adjusted to your 'Voices'. Be rest assured that you are heard, and we will break new ground with our service delivery. Complaint's resolution is high on the priority list and providing constant feedback on the status quo of queries and escalations.

A mantra that my family lives by:

A true humanitarian never gives up, even when it feels almost impossible to continue, especially if the work that needs to be done will positively impact/benefit our fellow mankind. It is having faith in the higher power that all will work out just as it was meant to be.

What makes us at UDL a community of care is that the unit works closely with all our stakeholders, actively listen to our distance learners, and continuously try to remedy our shortcomings. We take ownership that we are all in this together.

My message to you, our current and prospective students is:

- **Dream-** as far and big as your imagination allows.
- **Dare-** to challenge and fight for economic and financial freedom.
- **Do-** work smart and study through distance, at your own pace with an affordable option.

You can create your own future, full of promise; it is never too late, for a new beginning. The beauty and magic of starting over is that we become wiser with the knowledge and experience gained. New and different approaches, result in better outcomes - anything and everything becomes possible!

A hearty shout out and welcome to all that will be joining our family unit here at the Unit for Distance Learning. UDL holds your "Passport to Purpose".

Let us be true in all that we say and do. Keep it real!