



**Assessment of Face-to-Face Tutorial Sessions of the University of Education, Winneba Distance Education Learners of Ghana**

**Évaluation des Sessions Tutoriales en Présentiel de L'université D'éducation de Winneba, Éducation À Distance du Ghana**

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**Abstract**

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*The study assessed the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) distance education (DE) learners' perceptions, expectations, and challenges of face-to-face tutorial sessions and why DE learners absent themselves from face-to-face tutorial sessions. It was a qualitative study; precisely participatory research. The data was collected through focus group discussion. Twenty-eight (28) participants (learners) on UEW DE degree programmes were purposively selected for the research. The objectives of the study were to find out DE students' perceptions, absenteeism, challenges and expectations of tutorial sessions. The research questions that guided that study were: what are the UEW DE students' perceptions about face-to-face tutorials? what are the expectations of UEW DE students of face-to-face tutorials? what are the challenges that UEW DE students encounter during face-to-face tutorials? and, why do UEW DE learners absent themselves from face-to-face tutorials? The research found out that DE students see face-to-face tutorial sessions as vital, and expected their tutors to teach them and not to facilitate during the face-to-face tutorial sessions. Challenges associated with face-to-face tutorial sessions*

*were mostly administrative and andragogical. It was recommended that tutors should involve the DE students in deciding which method of tutoring to be used at all times to encourage participation and attendance. Also, more reliable technological distance learners' support system aimed at breaking communication barriers with the distance learners should be deployed in the provision of distance education in UEW.*

**Keywords:** distance education; assessment; face-to-face tutorials;

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### **Résumé**

*L'étude a évalué les perceptions, les attentes et les défis des apprenants de l'enseignement à distance (FOAD) de l'Université d'Éducation, Winneba (UEW) des séances de tutorat en présentiel et pourquoi les apprenants de DE s'abstiennent des séances de tutorat en face à face. C'était une étude qualitative ; précisément la recherche participative. Les données ont été recueillies dans le cadre de discussions de groupe. Vingt-huit (28) participants (apprenants) aux programmes de diplôme de l'UEW-FOAD ont été sélectionnés à dessein pour la recherche. Les objectifs de l'étude étaient de connaître les perceptions, l'absentéisme, les défis et les attentes des étudiants de l'UEW-FOAD face aux séances de tutorat. Les questions de recherche qui ont guidé cette étude étaient les suivantes : quelles sont les perceptions des étudiants de l'UEW-FOAD sur les tutoriels en présentiel ? Quelles sont les attentes des étudiants de l'UEW-FOAD vis-à-vis des tutoriels en présentiel ? Quels sont les défis que rencontrent les étudiants de l'UEW-FOAD lors des tutoriels en face à face ? et pourquoi les apprenants l'UEW-FOAD s'absentent-ils des tutoriels en présentiel ? La recherche a révélé que les étudiants des FOAD considèrent les séances de tutorat en présentiel comme vitales et ils s'attendent à recevoir de la part de leurs tuteurs des enseignements et non de la facilitation pendant lesdites sessions. Les défis associés aux séances de tutorat en face à face étaient principalement d'ordre administratif et andragogique. Il a été recommandé que les tuteurs impliquent les étudiants des FOAD dans le choix de la méthode de tutorat à utiliser à tout moment pour encourager la participation et l'assiduité. En outre, un système d'appui technologique plus fiable aux apprenants à distance visant à briser les barrières de communication avec ces derniers, devrait être déployé dans le cadre de l'enseignement à distance à UEW.*

**Mots-clés :** enseignement à distance ; évaluation ; tutoriels en présentiel.

### **Background Literature and Problem Context**

The term "Distance Education" (DE) according to UNESCO is "an educational process and system in which all or a significant proportion of the teaching is carried out by someone or something removed in space and time from the learner." It continued that DE requires; structured planning, well-designed courses, special instructional techniques, and methods of communication by electronic and other technologies (Burns, 2011 cited UNESCO, n.d.). Also, according to UNESCO (2002), open and distance learning or education has grown into an important global strategy in resolving problems of access to education. Guri-Rosenblit (2011) is of the view that 17 million students around the world currently study in different-types of open or distance learning institutions. Allen and Seaman (2011) contend that distance learning has become a critical long-term strategy of many universities to encourage higher education participation, and to serve as a means to increase accessibility to tertiary education. Again, distance education or learning provides an opportunity for those who could not usually attend traditional and regular university classes to participate in tertiary education. It also promotes lifelong learning, provides an enriching experience such as those in traditional course. It caters for diverse populations of students with different learning styles (Zirnkle, 2001). Essentially, in distance education, the instructor, instructional strategy and methods are incorporated into the learning materials popularly referred to as the study materials (modules) that have been designed as self-directed learning guide for students. Moore and Kearsley (2012) argue that distance education has the advantage of providing extended access and meeting the rising expectations of people who would not be able to attend traditional campus-based universities due to work or other family commitments.

Despite the advantages that distance education provides, Berge, Muilenburg, and Haneghan (2002) argue that distance education learners face challenges which could be situational, attitudinal, psychological and pedagogical as well as socio-cultural. These challenges result in high rate of student drop-out and late completion of

DE programmes. To mitigate these challenges, institutions provide several student support services to help reduce the attrition rate and ensure that distance education learners are successful. According to Simpson (2000), student support services in DE refer to all activities beyond the delivery of course materials that assist in the progress of DE learners in their studies. Analytically, these services could be in the form of academic support such as library resources and face-to-face tutorial sessions, and administrative support such as safekeeping of student records, examination arrangements, registrations and answering of students' queries.

Moore and Tait (2002) also state that student support services to DE learners encourage cognitive development (learning) of students, and enhance the self-esteem of learners thereby building their confidence and systematically helping learners to meet the required standard expected of them so that they do not fall behind or redraw from the institution. These student support services are intended to help learners overcome difficulties that affect the quality of their academic work and increase retention and graduation rates (Simpson, 2002; and Tong, 1994).

The Institute responsible for delivery of distance education at the University of Education, Winneba is the Institute for Distance and e-Learning (IDeL). The IDeL also provides administrative support services by appointing part-time study centre coordinators, tutors cum full-time administrators at the various study centres to manage the study centres. In addition to these, guidance and counselling services and compulsory face-to-face tutorials are organised bi-weekly at the various study centres as student support services. However, the focus of this study is to assess face-to-face tutorial sessions provided to DE learners of the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) as a student support service.

### **The Concept of Face-to-Face Tutorials**

According to Burr (2003), face-to-face tutorial allows students to interact with their peers and tutors for the purpose of learning. Thus, to facilitate learning by UEW DE learners and reduce the disadvantages associated with learning at a distance, UEW provides the DE learners with administrative support services including bi-weekly compulsory

face-to-face tutorial sessions which are organised at the various study centres. The belief is that learners who attend tutorials will, together with their peers and tutors, engage with the study materials in order to derive maximum benefits from it (Sweeney, O'Donoghue & Whitehead, 2004). In these sessions, DE learners are expected to prepare for the tutorials by reading their modules before attending and contribute meaningfully to class discussions. Learners are also expected to interact with each other. In addition, these sessions also provide the opportunity for DE learners and tutors to physically interact and provide the opportunity for tutors to respond to learners' questions and offer further explanation or clarification on topics or concepts treated in the modules provided them.

DE tutors are also expected to establish a cordial relationship with the DE learners in order to help them learn and overcome problems that may affect their academic life. Tutors are also expected to ensure that DE learners have adequately grasped the concepts of the course by providing the needed explanations and additional learning materials where necessary. In order to ensure a good learning experience, the tutors on the DE programme are expected to:

- attend all tutorial sessions and on time;
- have adequate knowledge of the subject area and be able to explain concepts to DE learners; and
- provide opportunity for students to ask questions so they can respond to questions posed by DE learners.

(Personal communication, May 29, 2019).

### *Importance of Face-to-Face Tutorials*

Face-to-face tutorials are intended to supplement printed materials and provide learners with ongoing dialogue that facilitates active learning and to support the needs of the students. The focus of tutorials is to enable a two-way communication between tutors and students. Moore and Tait (2002) argue that tutorial sessions offered to DE learners are an attempt to minimise the physical separation of learners from tutors and from their colleagues on the programme. According to Dzikaria and Walker (2003), infrequent face-to-face tutorial meetings between teachers and distance learners cause frustration and sometimes impede the learning process. DE learners suffer from feelings of loneliness and non-ownership when no instructor is present.

### *Challenges Associated with Face-to-Face Tutorials*

A review of some of the literature in relation to challenges associated with face-to-face tutorials suggests that much work has been done on the merits of face-to-face tutorials as compared to its challenges. However, in a study conducted by Akhter and Munshi (2016) on *Analysis of Face-to-Face Tutorials of Distance Learners for Prospective Teachers in Pakistan*, it was observed that tutors appointed to manage tutorials were not well trained and were not experts in distance education teaching. Also, the issue of absenteeism on the part of DE learners for face-to-face tutorial was seen as a demotivating factor for tutors to attend tutorial. The study also showed that distance learners in the rural areas were less satisfied with the process of tutorials. This may be attributed to logistical constraints, and may be the personal involved in the entire process of tutorials

In furtherance to the above, Kabate (2014) conducted a study on *Assessing Students Perceptions on Intensive Face-to-Face in Open and Distance Education: A Case of the Open University of Tanzania*. The study found that DE learners were unhappy about the tutors' strategies in identifying and addressing students' academic and psychosocial problems. Implicitly, DE learners were uncomfortable with the manner with which their academic and psychosocial problems were identified and addressed during face-to-face tutorial. It means that there were challenges with the methods the tutors used to identify and address DE learners' academic and psychosocial problems during face-to-face tutorials. Akhter and Munshi (2016) posit that distance learners face loneliness most of the time while working because the nature of learners' activities demands independent study by learners.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to Sekyi (2013), DE learners are challenged with lack of self-discipline in their academic work and feeling of seclusion from the classroom environment. Hiola and Moss (1990) are of the view that DE learners are physically removed from the teacher, isolated from other learners and responsible for setting their own working pace. All these factors have effects on the motivation and success of DE learners. To mitigate these challenges, face-to-face tutorials is one of the mechanisms put in place at the UEW distance education set up. The

UEW DE tutorial sessions are compulsory and are organised bi-weekly at the various study centres. All UEW DE learners are required to attend all sessions. These face-to-face tutorial sessions usually last for two hours for each course. DE learners meet their tutors for seven (7) sessions before the writing of end-of-semester examinations. Tutors employed to tutor DE learners are expected to have a minimum qualification of Master's degree in their areas of specialisation. These tutors are supposed to be knowledgeable in the subject areas. They are expected to be well trained, and prepared for each session so that they will be able to refer students to other sources of information. In addition, they are expected to facilitate group discussions, help students to make meaning out of the course material (module) and integrate the acquired knowledge with correct educational practice.

Sakyi (2013) is of the view that face-to-face tutorial sessions are vital for the academic success of DE learners and that without tutorials, students will be found wanting. Nonetheless, IDeL has conducted several unannounced tutorials monitoring at its study centres, and it is evident that there have been high levels of student absenteeism from face-to-face tutorial sessions. Sometimes in a class of 30 students, less than half will turn up for the face-to-face tutorial. Additionally, various complaints have been received from the study centres regarding non-attendance of face-to-face tutorial by the DE learners (Personal communication, June 7, 2019). This has been a puzzle since it was thought that bi-weekly tutorial sessions would ensure high attendance by learners. Despite these complaints and observations, there has not been any study at UEW to ascertain why DE learners fail to attend face-to-face tutorials. The literature, Sakyi, 2013; Kabate, 2014, seem to suggest that in order to attain a greater understanding of the challenges of face-to-face tutorial sessions, purposeful and individual research is needed in various localities or institutions such as the IDeL. This study therefore, attempts to assess the face-to-face tutorial session through a close study of the IDeL of the University of Education, Winneba.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to assess the face-to-face tutorial sessions of UEW DE learners. The specific objectives for the study was to assess the perception of UEW DE learners in terms of their:

- a) observations about face-to-face tutorials;

- b) expectations of tutorial sessions;
- c) challenges in attending tutorials; and
- d) reasons for absenting themselves from face-to-face tutorial sessions.

### *Research Questions*

The research questions that guided the study are:

- 1) What are the UEW DE learners' observations about face-to-face tutorials?
- 2) What are the expectations of UEW DE learners on face-to-face tutorials?
- 3) What are the challenges that UEW DE learners encounter during face-to-face tutorials?
- 4) Why do UEW DE learners absent themselves from face-to-face tutorials?

### **Significance of the Study**

Significantly, the rationale for exploring students' views on why UEW DE learners absent themselves from face-to-face tutorials is that it would help to identify learners' needs in terms of learner support and to recommend strategies for improving tutorial sessions and attendance. It would also shed light on learners' views and expectations on the tutorial session and to determine a link between the intentions of tutorials and learners' expectations of the sessions.

### **Limitation and Delimitation of the Study**

The study covered only two study centres, out of the forty (Techiman, Northern Zone, and Cape Coast, Southern Zones respectively). The study also focused on UEW DE learners. It was centred on UEW DE learners' observations about face-to-face tutorials; expectations of tutorial sessions; challenges in attending tutorials; and why they absent themselves from face-to-face tutorial sessions. Thus, this study did not go beyond the areas mentioned.

### **Research Design**

The research approach adopted for the conduct of this study was qualitative one. Specifically, the participatory research method was used to carry out the study. Bergold and Thomas (2012) thought that participatory research methods are geared towards planning and



conducting the research process with those people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study. This research method, usually, is used to gain a deeper insight into contextual structuredness of meaning and dynamism inherent in social action (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). Therefore, this study was to ascertain the reality, solicit rich information, and get deeper understanding on UEW DE learners' perceptions, expectations, challenges and their absenteeism from face-to-face tutorials. As Bergold (2007) puts it, participatory research method is a representation of an attractive and fruitful knowledge-generation option when researching the social world in the sense of habitualised practice.

### *Sampling*

The purposive sampling technique was used because according to Amoani (2005) the basic assumption in purposive sampling technique is to hand pick the cases to be included in the sample and to develop samples that are satisfactory in relation to the researcher's need. Again, Bergold and Thomas (2012) believed that “participatory research is conducted directly with the immediately affected persons” (p.8). Therefore, two (2) DE learners were purposively selected to represent each of the seven (7) degree programmes being run at the two selected study centres – Cape Coast (Southern) and Techiman (Northern), all in Ghana. The essence was to cover all UEW DE learners on the UEW DE degree programmes of study, and by extension to have a fairer representation of all the learners.

In effect, fourteen (14) participants were purposefully selected from each of the two study centres – Cape Coast and Techiman to participate in the study. The two study centres selected run all the UEW DE degree programmes hence their selection for the study. Again, this was done to enable the researchers to gain more insight into what really pertain in each of the Zones. Data was collected through focus group discussion because according to Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, and Mukherjee (2018);

“Focus group discussion is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population” (p.20).

A structured interview guide was prepared and used during the focus group discussion. As indicate, fourteen (14) UEW DE learners were involved in the focus group discussion at each of the study centres. In each case, the discussion took approximately two (2) hours. In effect, there were twenty-eight (28) UEW DE learners involved in the study.

## Findings and Discussion

### *Findings*

For the purposes of this presentation, the data collected were grouped under four major themes. The first theme was about UEW DE learners' observations about face-to-face tutorial sessions. In other words, whether the face-to-face tutorial sessions provided them were adequate or relevant or not. The second theme dwelt on the UEW DE learners' expectations of face-to-face tutorial sessions. The third theme looked at the challenges UEW DE learners encountered for attending face-to-face tutorial sessions. The fourth theme was on the rationale UEW DE learners absented themselves from face-to-face tutorial sessions, and suggestions for improvement. The findings have been presented in a tabula format, Table1 (see Appendix A for the raw responses) and is followed by discussion.

**Table 1: Summary of Findings**

Theme	Summary of Findings
<p><b><i>Theme 1: UEW DE Learners' Observations about Tutorial Sessions</i></b></p>	<p>UEW DE learners mentioned the following as their observations about the face-to-face tutorial sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Face-to-face tutorial sessions enable UEW DE Students to clear their doubts on what to learn, contribute in class, learn from others and learn as a group.</i></li> <li>• <i>It also helps the students to get better understanding on what is or is not clear from the modules. In other words, “get a clearer understanding of some concepts”.</i></li> <li>• <i>Again, it presents an opportunity for summarising the modules since some of them are too big.</i></li> </ul>

- *It also serves as a preparatory ground for examinations. Finally, it provides an opportunity for UEW DE Students to network with others and establish study groups.*
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**Theme 2: UEW DE learners expect the following to happen during DE Learners' face-to-face tutorials:**

**Expectations of Face-to-Face Tutorial Sessions**

- *That their tutors to teach what have been presented in the module during face-to-face tutorial sessions.*
  - *That they their tutors are regular and punctual for tutorial sessions since they travel from afar.*
  - *That they expect their tutors to have adequate knowledge of their subject areas so they can clarify concepts that they do not understand.*
  - *Again, the students expect that their tutors explain the concepts and not to read what is in the module to them.*
  - *That their tutors clarify issues and even correct them when they are wrong.*
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**Theme 3: UEW DE learners mentioned the following as the DE Learners' challenges that the face:**

**Challenges of Face-to-Face Tutorial Attendance**

- *Classrooms are very uncomfortable for studying, chairs are small, ventilation and lighting are bad.*
- *The environment is not conducive for tutorial sessions for university students.*
- *Some tutors do not focus on the tutorials; however, they deviate from their core duty of tutoring and engage in telling stories.*
- *Attending tutorials is risky and expensive since as students they have to travel from long distances.*
- *Inadequate time allocated to cover courses resulting in most topics left untreated.*
- *Poor response on confirmation of tutorial attendance timetable from the Study Centres.*

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***Them:4  
Reasons for  
UEW DE  
Learners'  
Absenteeism***

The following are the reasons for which UEW DE learners absent themselves from face-to-face tutorials:

- *Lessons taught during face-to-face tutorials do not necessarily appear during quizzes and or end-of-semester examinations.*
- *The unannounced changing of the face-to-face tutorial schedules.*
- *The UEW tutors do not play any role during students' assessment.*
- *The course modules are self-explanatory; therefore, careful study of the modules can make the student pass the quizzes and the end-of-semester examinations*
- *Some tutors read the course module to the students. This discourages the students to present themselves for face-to-face tutorial. In such cases, students prefer to stay in their houses to read than to risk to travel long distance for tutorials only to come and listen to tutors reading for their hearing.*
- *Some tutors lack knowledge in the subject area thereby confusing the students.*
- *Sometimes the subject matter in the course modules differ from what the tutors present creating misunderstanding among tutors and students. Some tutors don't come regularly, others too come very late.*

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**Discussion**

*Learners' Observations about Face-to-Face Tutorials*

Concerning UEW DE learners' observations made by the learners on the face-to-face tutorial sessions, it is evident from the findings that all the subjects involved in the study agreed that tutorial sessions are important and that institutions providing such service should not consider cancelling it. This affirms Akhter and Munshi's (2016) view that distance learners give importance to tutorials. Again, it came out that tutorial sessions presented opportunities for DE learners to interact with colleagues, and enabled them get better understanding of the content of the modules. This argument seems to agree with Munshi and Bhatti's (2009) view that tutorials guide learners in the form of lectures by

resource persons. Face-to-face tutorial sessions are also seen as preparatory grounds for all examinations. This assertion is confirmed by Cheung and Kan (2002) that “student performance was positively associated with tutorial attendance, previous academic achievement and relevant learning experience of learners” (p.263). Finally, Akhter and Munshi (2016) posit that “variety of activities is involved in effective tutoring such as proposing clarifications, inspiring students to contribute actively, confirming and clarifying student understanding, creating queries and observations, and demonstrating desired performance” (p.235). The view expressed agrees with the findings in this study that face-to-face tutorials provide opportunity for distance learners to clear their doubts about what to learn, contribute in class, learn from others and as a group, and to get better understanding of concepts. In other words, “*to get a clearer understanding of some concept*”.

#### *Learners' Expectations of Face-to-Face Tutorials*

As regards the UEW DE learners' expectations of face-to-face tutorial sessions, it is seen from the study that UEW DE learners expected their tutors to teach them during the tutorial sessions and not to play facilitation role. This position of the subjects seems to agree with Fung and Carr (2000) that distance learners (students) prefer tutor centered approaches to tutoring, to the extent that the subjects wanted their tutors to clarify issues and even correct them when they go wrong. Notwithstanding the view of the DE learners, the subjects were made to appreciate the role of the tutor as a facilitator and a guide during the focus group discussion. Also, it is significant to note that it is the expectation of the subjects that their tutors are regular and punctual for face-to-face tutorial sessions because they travel from afar. Tutors have adequate knowledge of their subject areas, tutors can clarify concepts that they do not understand, and that tutors can explain the concepts to the students. And finally, it was unexpected of the DE learners that their tutor read what is in the module to them. These are significant as reiterated by Akhter and Munshi (2016) that for face-to-face tutorials to be effective, variety of activities should be involved.

#### *Learner's Challenges of Face-to-Face Tutorials*

In terms of challenges of face-to-face tutorial attendance, the data from the study showed that the concerns were purely administrative such as

changing of tutorial venues at a short notice, unannounced cancellation of tutorial sessions, and absenteeism on the part of both students and tutors. It was evident from the data that lack of response from the study centres on enquires made by learners, and disappointment about poor service delivery at the study centres were some of the challenges. To strengthen this argument together with others, Sweeny and Ingram (2001) in their study found out those face-to-face tutorials are highly rated in terms of the effectiveness of the learning environment and several other criteria. This argument is supported by the UEW DE learners' perceived challenge that the classrooms for the face-to-face tutorial sessions at their study centres were very uncomfortable for learning. Some of the responses were "*chairs are small; ventilation and lighting are bad, environment for the face-to-face tutorials is not conducive for tutorial sessions for university students*". One other challenge pointed out was that the time allocated to treat the courses was inadequate, and in most cases, some of the topics were left untreated. This view agrees with Hiola and Moss (1990) that shortage of tutorial time and complexity of materials are problematic.

It is also interesting to note that UEW DE learners faced the challenge of tutors not focusing on their core duty but engaging in other frivolous activities during face-to-face tutorial sessions. This view has been explicitly expressed by Akhter and Munshi (2016) in their study on an *Analysis of Face-to-Face Tutorials of Distance Learners for Prospective Teachers in Pakistan*, that tutors appointed to manage tutorials are not well trained and are not experts in distance teaching.

#### *Learners' Absenteeism from Face-to-face Tutorials*

As indicated earlier, varied reasons were adduced by UEW DE learners as the causes of their absence from face-to-face tutorial sessions. It showed in the data that UEW DE students absent themselves from face-to-face tutorials because; 1) lessons taught during face-to-face tutorials did not necessarily appear during quizzes and or end-of-semester examinations, 2) some tutors lacked knowledge in their subject areas thereby confusing the students, 3) some tutors read the course module to the students, 4) the unannounced changing of the face-to-face tutorial schedule, 5) the course modules were self-explanatory, 6) and sometimes the subject matter in the course modules differed from what the tutors presented creating misunderstanding among tutors and

students. These reasons seem to be in line with Fung and Carr's (2000) view that distance learners absented themselves from face-to-face tutorials because they gave no value to tutorial attendance. Another major reason why distance learners did not attend face-to-face tutorials was that tutors did not have hands in the DE students' assessment. This view is expressed by (Akhter, 2014) that distance learners did not attend tutorials because tutors had no weight in the result of students, and that rules did not compel them to attend tutorials compulsorily.

### **Conclusion**

In examining the discussions on UEW DE learners' perceptions, expectations, and absenteeism as well as learners' reasons for not attending face-to-face tutorials, it became apparent that distance learners cannot do away with face-to-face tutorials because it provides the DE learners the platform to interact with other colleagues, get better understanding of the content of the modules, network among themselves, clear doubts about what to learn, contribute in class, learn from others, learn as group, and get better understanding of concepts.

Also, it is the expectation of the distance learners that tutors; teach and not to facilitate, clarify and or explain issues and concepts, correct them when they go wrong, are regular and punctual, have adequate knowledge of their subject areas, and do not read what is in the module to them. That distance learners are saddled with administrative challenges such as changing of tutorial venues at a short notice, unannounced cancellation of tutorial sessions, poor response to DE learners' needs, and inadequate time allocation for courses.

Again, absenteeism on the part of tutors, uncomfortable studying environment, tutors not focusing on their core duty but engaging in other frivolous activities during face-to-face tutorial sessions are the other challenges being faced by distance learners. That distance learners absent themselves from face-to-face tutorials because:

- lessons taught during face-to-face tutorials do not form part of the final assessment,
- some tutors lack knowledge of their subject area thereby confusing the learners,
- some tutors read the course module to the hearing of the learners,

- tutorial schedule is changed unannounced,
- the course modules are self-explanatory, and
- explanation provided by tutors on the subject differ from what is in the course modules.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made based on the discussions together with the conclusions arrived at in this study:

- 1) Mode or approach of delivering face-to-face tutorials should not be the sole prerogative of the tutors. The UEW DE tutors should always involve the distance learners in deciding on what mode or approach to be used at a particular time for face-to-face tutorials. Again, tutors should be given special training on tutoring.
- 2) More reliable technological distance learners' support system aimed at breaking communication barriers with the distance learners should be deployed in the provision of distance education in UEW.
- 3) Conscious effort should be made by UEW in ensuring that study centre coordinators as well as tutors get the feeling that they are part and parcel of the university system. For instance, if possible, making one or two major university rules and regulations applicable to study centre coordinators and tutors would suffice.
- 4) Management of UEW DE programmes should always ensure that tutors employed are specialised in the subject area they tutor. In addition, there should be regular training of tutors on what is expected of them during tutorial sessions to avoid lecturing or reading course materials in class.



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## **Appendix 1**

### **Responses on UEW DE Learners' Observations about Tutorial Sessions**

***Response 1a.** You know it is difficult to study by yourself at home, sometimes you have the wrong impression that you have learnt enough but when you come for tutorials and hear people's contributions and their views on issues, you realise that you still have a long way to go which prompts you to read some more.*

***Response 1b.** When you come for tutorials you understand better what is in the modules and you get a clearer understanding of some concepts. Sometimes when you are alone you pretend to know certain things only to find out that you are answering them in a wrong way.*

***Response 1c.** The modules are so big, so tutorials give a summary of the modules and you're able to answer some questions better when it appears in exams stated another student.*

***Response 1d.** Tutorials are good, you make new friends you can call at all times if you are having difficulties with some topic.*

***Response 1e.** Tutorial sessions help me to prepare for quizzes and end of semester examinations because I take my own note during these sessions which helps me in my revisions. I use tutorial sessions as an opportunity for networking with other students and establishing study groups.*

## **Appendix 2**

### **Responses UEW DE Learners' Expectations of Face-to-Face Tutorial Sessions**

***Response 2a.** I expected my tutors to teach us what was in the modules and to give us answers but I've come to the understanding that tutorial sessions were not lecture sessions. We also have to read and prepare before coming for tutorials.*

**Response 2b.** *I expect my tutors to be present and on time during tutorial sessions because I travel from far.*

**Response 2c.** *I expect tutors to have knowledge of what they are tutoring and be able to clarify concepts we don't understand'. Sometimes when we encounter a concept and the tutor has to explain, the tutor will refer the question back to us even if the entire class does not know the answer to the question. We end up not getting a solution.*

**Response 2d.** *Sometimes too, the tutor will just come and read what is in the module from word to word which shouldn't be said another student.*

**Response 2e.** *I expect tutors to answer some of our questions and correct us but this is not the case'. Our tutors always give the impression that all the answers we give are correct or they don't answer at all but I do not expect that from them. It gives the impression that they don't know what they are teaching'.*

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Responses on UEW DE Learners' Challenges on Face-to-Face Tutorial Attendance**

**Response 3a.** *The classrooms are very uncomfortable to study in. the chairs are small, ventilation and lighting is bad, you have to strain your eyes and sweat all the time.*

**Response 3b.** *The environment is not conducive for tutorial sessions for university students.*

**Response 3c.** *Some tutors come and tell stories the whole time so you end up not learning anything.*

**Response 3d.** *The distance we cover to attend tutorials is too much, it's expensive and risky.*

**Response 3e.** *the time allocated to cover some of the courses too is not adequate, sometimes our tutors live many of the topics untreated meanwhile they come during exams.*

**Response 3f.** *Sometimes you want to confirm tutorial attendance timetable, you call the study centre severally and no one picks*

#### **Appendix 4**

#### **Response on Reasons for UEW DE Learners' Absenteeism**

**Response 4a.** *I've realised that what my tutors teach is not what comes during quizzes or end of term examinations, I must as well stay home and learn on my own'.*

**Response 4b.** *The schedule for tutorials is always changing.*

**Response 4c.** *Tutors don't have any role in assessing students.*

**Response 4d.** *I think the modules are self-explanatory, therefore if you are able to read on your own, you'll be able to answer the questions.*

**Response 4e.** *Some tutors just come to read, therefore if you can read on your own, there'll be no need for you to travel all this distance to come and listen to someone read for you.*

**Response 4f.** *it appears some tutors lack knowledge of what they're teaching, they make you more confused.*

**Response 4g.** *Sometimes the solutions to problems we go through with our tutors is different from what is in the modules. Some tutors don't come regularly, others too come very late.*

