

11th May 2020

Dear Colleague,

In these difficult times, we hope this message finds you healthy and safe! The COVID-19 epidemic has changed our daily actions and impacted all levels of education, globally. The closure of campuses poses the same questions of disruption to the education provided, regardless of geographical latitude or longitude.

The Association of African Universities, the French Development Agency (AFD) and the World Bank are supporting the ACE Impact Centers through a task force working to identify quality content and make suggestions for learning management systems that could be quickly adopted by the Centers as a strategy for reducing the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 related lockdowns.

A. Online Content

While we acknowledge the challenges around incorporating online courses from external sources in existing academic programs, there is potential value to the students in making online content available. Due to the disruption in Spring Semester 2020 teaching on campus, online materials from quality providers can (1) supplement ongoing (or planned) online teaching; or (2) serve student needs in “top-up” learning necessary to prepare for anticipated classes in Fall Semester 2020.

In the immediate term, we have identified resources that the ACEs could freely use, and they are accessible now through some of the largest and highest quality open content and MOOC platforms. Faculty members who choose to use these resources would have to determine which courses are appropriate for their students. A series of webinars and training sessions will be organized within the coming weeks for Centers and their universities interested in understanding better how to use these content platforms and in the long term, how to create and deliver their own online content.

1. Coursera (<https://www.coursera.org/campus/>)

Coursera for Campus is available globally at no cost to any university impacted by COVID-19. This initiative (<https://www.coursera.org/coronavirus>) provides access to 3,800 courses and 400 specializations. Up to 5,000 licenses are provided per institution for their students. Institutions may enroll students into these courses through July 31, 2020. Students can complete courses through September 30, 2020. Month-to-month extensions are available dependent on need. Enterprise-level admin tools, analytics, and online support resources are also available. A mapping of the list of free courses under the Coursera COVID-19 initiative with the thematic areas of the Centers has been completed to help you navigate these courses more easily. Please find the mapping [here](#). Centers interested in the Coursera content should indicate that using this [form](#) (complete by 31st May 2020).

Universities interested in liaising with Coursera beyond the COVID-19 free offerings, can reach out to them to understand the fee structure for those courses and related services.

2. edX (<https://www.edx.org/covid-19>)

edX Online Campus allows any university across the globe to offer in-demand and on-demand learning for their students, alumni and employees. From now through June 30, 2020, qualified accredited higher education institutions can enroll their students so that they can access free courses and programs from select edX partners to help them transition to a remote learning environment and keep students progressing with their learning tasks. The courses don't need to be completed by June 30, 2020, but the students need to be registered by June 30 and as long as the course is opened, they can take it even beyond June 30, 2020. Each institution gets 5000 codes that can be used in any of the edX courses in the catalog provided to the university by edX. These courses are reflective of the courses the edX Member Institutions are making open and available for free certificates. The university gets an administrator dashboard where they can admit as many course administrators (faculty) into as they want. The students' course information (students' progress, performance, etc) can be downloaded and sorted from the dashboard. If a Professor can identify their students by the list of single use unique codes the university gave to them for their class, they can see the course information of their class

Most of the edX courses are in English. 48 are in French. A mapping of the free courses to the thematic areas of the Centers is found [here](#). Centers interested in the edX content should indicate that using this [form](#) (complete by 31st May 2020).

3. FUN (France Université Numérique) MOOCS (<https://fun-blog.fr/fun-campus-covid19/instancier-des-mooc-en-spoc-sur-fun-campus/>)

FUN-MOOC launched the FUN-Campus initiative, a platform that allows the privatization of existing MOOCs *in French*. Such an environment makes it possible to administer and facilitate distance education, an opportunity for teachers who wish to use MOOCs to engage their students in a fully online or hybrid learning mode. Teachers interested in using one of the available courses will be able to enroll students in a "virtual classroom", interact with them in private mode, launch exercises and assignments, as well as follow their progress throughout the course. The mapping of the courses available to the thematic areas of the Centers can be found [here](#). There are no limits on licenses or a cap on number of students that can take these courses. Centers interested in the FUN content should indicate that using this [form](#) (complete by 31st May 2020). Due to the intensive administrative management of the "virtual classroom" space, AAU will collate all the interests and coordinate closely with FUN, after which FUN will liaise with the interested Centers.

In summary, the current free offerings from these 3 content providers are:

	Coursera	edX	FUN
Predominant language	English	English	French
Number of codes/licenses per university	5000	5000	No limits
Cost of courses	Free	Free	Free
Period offer is opened	Now till September 30, 2020	Now until the courses close (each course has its own close date)	Until the end of a given academic year (I.e. 2020/20201)
Is there space for professors to virtually interact with students?	No but admin tools are available	No, but admin tools are available	Yes
Any technology requirements at the university level?	No	No	No
Can Centers access the courses now?	Yes	Yes	First send your interest to AAU. Fill form

In addition to those broad content providers identified above, IBM has partnered with the Africa Centers of Excellence project to deliver online courses and support education and research activities in Digital Skills. The **IBM Africa Skills Academy** provides courses and resources to certify faculty members to teach in emerging IT areas including Artificial Intelligence, Predictive Analytics, Big Data, Blockchain, Cloud Computing, Cybersecurity, IOT, and Mainframe. The tracks are skills based, and can be used by faculty members to support their ongoing instructional activities. The **IBM Academic Initiative** provides further access to IBM resources and training for teaching, learning and non-commercial research. It is available to all faculty, staff and students. **IBM Digital Nation Africa** provides digital competency training, as well as resources for innovation and the development of digital solutions. It has more than 85 courses and over 280 hours of learning focused on digital skills for students from non-IT backgrounds. The mapping of the courses available under the IBM Africa Skills Academy can be found [here](#). Centers interested in the IBM Africa Skills Academy content should indicate that using this [form](#) (complete by 31st May 2020)

B. Learning Management Systems

The task force will work with some of the common LMS providers to provide capacity building virtual workshops for the ACE hosting universities, Do let us know your specific capacity building needs in relation to LMS, if it is not already in the list of topics.

Should the crisis prolong, the project will consider a shared LMS approach on the cloud but hosted on the continent and into which the various ACE Institutions can connect into their own virtual private space. AAU will share with you within the next few days invitations to a series of webinars.

We look forward to hearing from you very soon. Please accept, dear colleague, the expression of our best regards.