For years, Makerere University has run traditional distance learning degree programmes since 1991 when the External Degree Programme (EDP) was launched. Such large numbers of students have had opportunities to study and acquire degree qualifications from a distance, with many of them obtaining master's and PhD programmes.

Dr Justina Sarah Aguti, an associate professor at the Institute of open distance and e-learning at Makerere University, says in recent years, EDP has also opened access to a larger number of young people aspiring to university education.

"The EDP has over the years graduated many people in bachelor degree education, bachelor of commerce, bachelor of science and bachelor of agriculture and rural innovation. Makerere University has also run a master's programme in public health by distance education since it was launched," she adds.

With the advent of increasing access to ICT, Makerere University is now exploiting the potential with ICT in learning. "The university is committed to a paradigm shift in teaching by moving from teacher-centred to student-centred teaching as one of the strategies of ensuring that the university prepares its graduates to be versatile, open to lifelong learning and ready for the competitive world of work in an ever changing environment," Aguti says.

According to Aguti, Makerere University is strategising to achieve this in ways including mainstreaming open, distance and e-learning (ODeLs) for increased and more flexible access to higher education.

To provide for this right policy environment, the ODeL policy was approved by the university council in 2015 and the institute was subsequently set up to operationalise the activities.

Aguti says, the major role of the institute is to provide backstopping support services such as academic units offering blended programmes and promote the development of blended learning (online programmes) in the university. To achieve this, the institute provides continuous pedagogical training and support to academic staff in course design and development, content development and assessment.

The institute also supports and promotes the future and development of Makerere University Planning environment for delivery of courses and programmes, provision of robust training and support to all students enrolled on distance learning programmes as well as the internationalisation of programmes and student enrolment.

"This provision as an Institute is that ODeL is the Institute and Makerere University has positioned itself to take advantage of the potential," the Institute of ODeL has introduced four new programmes of which three are online. These include master of instructional design and technology (MIDT) and bachelor of youth development work (BJYD).

**Master of instructional design and technology (MIDT)**

MIDT is a comprehensive programme of study designed to enhance the knowledge, skills and professional development in instructional design and technology.

The programme focuses on the effective instructional design in online, electronic and distance learning and delivery of teaching using technology.

The programme enhances one's skill in the design and delivery of technology-supported curricula and methods of leading as well as managing in technology-enhanced learning environments.

The programme also offers one to methodologies of educational research, specifically in instructional design and emerging technologies.

MIDT explores current issues impacting curriculum design, andragogy, learners, educational leaders in technology-mediated learning environments. It explores the theories and processes of instructional design in the development of face-to-face instruction, web-based instruction, and the use of other instructional media.

Students also get to examine the capabilities and constraints of traditional and emerging media.

The MIDT programme seeks to enhance new, emerging technological skills, attitudes and values required in the contemporary world of work.

**Learning outcomes**

At the end of the course, the learners will have acquired knowledge and skills in management, research professional and business career in e-education (e-learning, e-learning, distance education, online education and blended education).

**Mode of delivery**

This programme shall be delivered using a combination of limited face to face sessions together with home study sessions supported by specially designed online study materials and activities.

**Bachelor of youth development work (BJYD)**

BJYD is a multidisciplinary programme that delicately balances social science, psychology, sociology, management and applied science-related courses throughout the programme to achieve a unique blend.

This programme covers community work and development highlighting the national concern with poverty eradication and it includes computer applications and communication skills.

The programme seeks to inculcate a developmental mind-set in the graduates.

The main objective of the programme is to develop professional youth workers who will steer the energies of the masses of youth towards contributing to development in Uganda and the region.

The programme targets individuals and groups such as local government employees that work with youth, employees of NGOs and private sector agencies who specialise in youth-related work.