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35

## SEAMLESS E-LEARNING IN THE WORKS

Imagine yourself taking a pleasant stroll through a thoughtfully designed and well kept park. The paths are clear, the trees provide sheltering relief from the sun, the cool breeze is rejuvenating, and the birds are chirping happily to delight your senses. The stroll you take is in fact so pleasant that you lose yourself in the moment. You are lifted above the distracting mundane and you begin to see, appreciate and learn more about the nature before you that most take for granted. Now imagine, as an analogy, the same transplanted to your experience of e-learning....

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## ABOUT TCX

TCX (Tutor Connexions) is a non-profit OUM e-newsletter that provides a dedicated link between the University and its tutors. It serves as a channel for news and updates on tutor-related events and as a platform for the sharing of views, experiences and tips on best practices in university teaching and learning.

TCX is published electronically once every semester.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

After a short hiatus, TCX returns this semester with a refreshed look and direction, with me at the helm again, at least for the time being, until a new editor takes over.

From this issue onwards, TCX will sport a new, cleaner and more streamlined look. More substantially, having digested feedback from our various stakeholders, we've decided to take a minimalist approach to content creation.



While many of our readers had in the past enjoyed chewing on the themed features in each issue, not all had the time to actually go through them in any detail. Hence, from now on, instead of a series of themed features, we'll be reducing the number of features to one or two at most. This is also to avoid distracting readers from the various important notices which all face-to-face tutors as well as e-tutors need to take note of.

TCX35 takes a look at OUM's current effort to improve its learners' experience in e-learning. The main feature is in a sense a teaser that presents the ideal towards which the university is working. As the effort unfolds in stages, more details will be shared in forthcoming issues of TCX. We hope that by sharing with you OUM's plans, you'd be able to relay the same to the learners under your care.

On behalf of the university, the editorial team wishes you a productive semester ahead!

Best

Dr David CL Lim

Chief Editor

## TUTOR REMINDER

### IMPORTANT DATES

TUTORIAL 1	Existing Learners: 18-20 May 2012 New Learners: 9-10 June 2012
TUTORIAL 2	Existing Learners: 1-3 June 2012 New Learners: 15-17 June 2012
TUTORIAL 3	Existing Learners: 15-17 June 2012 New Learners: 29 June-1 July 2012
ASSIGNMENT DEADLINE	Existing Learners: 27 June- 9 July 2012 New Learners: 9-12 July 2012  (Tutors should remind their learners to use the special assignment template and to submit their assignments online. This ONLY applies to courses that require learners to submit their assignments online.)
MID-TERM EXAMS	23-24 June 2012
TUTORIAL 4	Existing Learners: 29 June-1 July 2012 New Learners: 13-15 July 2012
TUTORIAL 5	Existing Learners: 13-15 July 2012
FINAL EXAMS	28 July-15 August 2012

### CONTACT INFO

E-TUTOR ISSUES AND CONCERNS	ITLA Staff: 2773 2490/2493/2301, OR Email: safiah_mdyusof@oum.edu.my or aznam@oum.edu.my
F2F TUTOR ISSUES AND CONCERNS	Learning Centre Directors, OR ITLA Staff: 2773 2490/2493/2301, OR Email: sitifarina@oum.edu.my or aznam@oum.edu.my
ASSIGNMENT ONLINE SUBMISSION QUERIES	Email: assignment@oum.edu.my
MYVLE TECHNICAL ISSUES	myVLE HelpdeskL 2772 2283, OR Email: mylms_admin@oum.edu.my or aznam@oum.edu.my



### **ALL FACE-TO-FACE (F2F) TUTORS ARE ENCOURAGED TO:**

- Come fully prepared for all tutorials.
- Keep to the schedule of the tutorial sessions, and complete all tutorial sessions that have been scheduled for the semester.
- Be punctual at all times. Remember to record your attendance (i.e. sign-in time) truthfully.
- Complete the designated amount of time allocated for each tutorial session.
- Use the module as a guide (not a script) to highlight important points and encourage deeper discussion on the subject matter.
- Be professional. Keep in mind that tutorial sessions are a time to discuss academic matters.

### **ALL E-TUTORS ARE ENCOURAGED TO:**

- Always maintain visibility in your respective forums.
- Log in to your forum at least four times each week.
- Assist learners when they request for help, and regularly respond to their posts.
- Encourage and stimulate discussions by posting and redirecting questions to the learners.
- Post additional resources related to the subject matter. Relevant web links, videos, articles and other resources can stimulate interest and spark discussion amongst the learners.
- Direct your learners to the e-schedule of your course (if available). This is meant to guide them through the weekly activities for the course. The e-schedule appears within myVLE (under the course title, on the left sidebar menu).
- Monitor your respective forums on a daily basis.
- Keep yourself updated with the regular reminders that are sent by the ITLA staff, e-Tutor mentors and Head of e-Learning.
- Inform the Head of e-Learning at ITLA of any prolonged absence and inability to facilitate the forum.





## NEW DEVELOPMENTS FOR E-TUTORS

- Email Notifications:
  - Email notifications will be sent to your OUM email when learners post in the forum. By replying to the email, your responses will appear in the forum.
  - These email responses will count towards your total number of posts. Additionally, your number of logins to the myVLE forum will be recorded as well.
  - All official communication related to e-Tutor matters will be relayed through your official OUM e-mail account. Please use this email service and check your inbox often.
- Online Training for e-Tutors:
  - This online training course is called the “OUM Online Facilitator Preparation Course”.
  - Beginning this May 2012 semester, e-Tutor training will be conducted in a fully online mode. The first group of e-Tutors that will undergo this online course will be the new members of the e-Tutor community.
  - The objective of the online training course is to equip online facilitators with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively manage learning in a virtual environment.
  - During the first three weeks of the course, e-Tutors need to participate as learners and complete structured online activities and assignments.
  - The respective e-Tutor forums will be monitored. Evaluations will be performed over four weeks.
  - At the end of the course, all e-Tutors will receive a certificate of completion.
- e-Tutor Scheduling System (ESS):
  - The ESS is an online system that allows e-Tutors to confirm their availability for appointments as well as to select courses for the upcoming semester.
  - ITLA will announce when e-Tutors can access ESS to make the confirmation and selection.
- Some new expectations from OUM:
  - Please log in to the forum at least once in two days.
  - Please post at least eight times every week.
  - Please check your OUM email inbox for email notifications related to your learners’ posts.



## ASSIGNMENTS

For selected courses with assignments:

- The following have been uploaded on myVLE:
  - Assignments
  - Assignment Rubrics
  - Assignment Templates for Learners
- Different deadlines have been given for existing learners, new learners and the new BPG intake. This only applies to courses that require learners to submit their assignments online.
- ITLA will not accept late submission of assignments.
- Please remind learners to start working on their assignments early. Advise them to not wait until the last day to submit their assignments online.
- A list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on assignments is available on the left sidebar menu on myVLE.
- F2F tutors and e-Tutors can only guide learners on how to complete assignments based on the rubrics given. Please do not give any confirmation of marks as their assignments will be graded by the assigned e-graders.

## YOUR COMMUNITY AREA

OUM has made available the F2F Tutor and e-Tutor Community Forums for all its tutors. Please visit these forums for continued support and development for all matters related to tutoring. The forums also give F2F tutors and e-Tutors the opportunity to exchange and share experiences with other F2F tutors/e-Tutors. e-Tutors may also communicate with the e-Tutor Mentors in the e-Tutors Community Forum.

# SEAMLESS E-LEARNING IN THE WORKS

BY DR DAVID CL LIM (david@oum.edu.my)

Imagine yourself taking a pleasant stroll through a thoughtfully designed and well kept park. The paths are clear, the trees provide sheltering relief from the sun, the cool breeze is rejuvenating, and the birds are chirping happily to delight your senses. The stroll you take is in fact so pleasant that you lose yourself in the moment. You are lifted above the distracting mundane and you begin to see, appreciate and learn more about the nature before you that most take for granted.

Now imagine, as an analogy, the same transplanted to your experience of e-learning. Everything is so well-structured that, from the moment you land on OUM's main portal to the moment you log off, you are positively absorbed, 'lost' in your seamless experience of e-learning. Nothing lies in your path to trip you up. No annoyances like 'cookie error', missing e-tutor and the likes.

**“Seamless e-learning experience is precisely what OUM is currently working on delivering. The university is working on enhancing its e-learning platform to ensure that e-learning becomes more or less like a metaphorical walk in the park.”**

Seamless e-learning experience is precisely what OUM is currently working on delivering. The university is working on enhancing its e-learning platform to ensure that e-learning becomes more or less like a metaphorical walk in the park.

OUM's investment in this area is especially crucial at a time when more and more OUM learners are choosing to minimise their face-to-face contact hours due to work and life commitments, preferring instead to follow their courses fully online on top of self-managed learning.

That increasing numbers of OUM learners are taking to supplementing self-managed learning with e-learning is certainly encouraging. Not only does it show that the university's decade-long effort in promoting e-learning is bearing fruit, it also



shows how OUM learners are getting increasingly comfortable in embracing the global trend in learning that leverages on information technology in unprecedented ways.

It bears emphasising, though, that OUM's focus in the current exercise to enhance its e-learning platform is not simply about adding on to what is already there. In analogous terms, it is not about adding bushes and trees to what already exists in the park.

Indeed, the university's existing e-learning offerings – including i-lectures, e-resources such as e-Gate, myVLE discussion forums, and web-based modules – will be beefed up and integrated with additional features.

More importantly, however, OUM is working on restructuring the metaphorical park itself in order to promote a seamless learning experience.

**OUM's emphasis on seamlessness is underpinned by the belief that seamlessness will induce learners into what psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi terms a state of flow.**

OUM's emphasis on seamlessness is underpinned by the belief that seamlessness will induce learners into what psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi terms a state of flow. As all of us have at least minimally experienced, flow is a mental state of deep concentration and creativity produced by

uninterrupted single-minded immersion in what one is working on. To be in a flow state is to be pleasurable engrossed by what one is doing, so much so that one productively loses track of time, so to speak.

The flow theory applies equally to education as to the use of the internet during e-learning. The premise is simple enough: flow does not just 'happen' spontaneously, nor does one get into it by mere willing. It only occurs when, among other things, continuous flow opportunities and experiences are presented to learners.

OUM seeks to promote the flow state in e-learning by removing all navigational obstacles that can impede flow, and by introducing suitably challenging learning materials that allow learners to 'lose themselves' in discovery and immersed pleasure. It seeks to produce, in short, seamless e-learning experience.

OUM is excited to be pursuing the task in phases. More will be revealed in the near future. Meanwhile, get ready to flow! [TCX](#)

## IN BRIEF: MIHÁLY CSÍKSZENTMIHÁLYI'S FLOW THEORY

BY TENGKU AMINA MUNIRA ([tg\\_munira@oum.edu.my](mailto:tg_munira@oum.edu.my))

In his famous TED talk in February 2004, Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, a Hungarian psychologist, spoke of how a state of flow can cause existence to be temporarily suspended. He talked about an effortless, spontaneous feeling you get when you enter an ecstatic state – something a poet once described as “opening a door that floats in the sky”, and he elaborated on a concentration so deep that one forgets about external senses like hunger, tiredness, and even time.

In essence, Csíkszentmihályi's Flow Theory suggests that a person in a state of flow becomes intense, and experiences a sense of ecstasy and clarity; where you know exactly what you want to do from one moment to another, and you get immediate feedback for all your actions. You forget yourself and you feel as though you are part of something larger. When all of these conditions come together, Csíkszentmihályi says that what you are doing becomes worth doing for its own sake.

This describes the flow experience and the feeling of seamlessness that one can experience while playing or listening to music, engaging in sports, writing, or as OUM is embarking to show, even while learning.

Reference:

TED (2008). *Mihály Csíkszentmihályi on Flow*, February 2004. Accessed June 21, 2012, from [http://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly\\_csikszentmihalyi\\_on\\_flow.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly_csikszentmihalyi_on_flow.html)





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