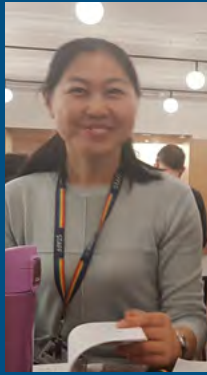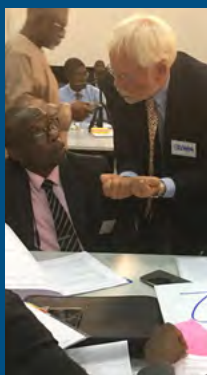# CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

Research and innovation in flexible and distance teaching and learning

Activity Report
2019–2020

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Contents

CDE Fellow Dr J Simon Rofe, presenting at RIDE conference 2020.

Foreword: From the Head of the Centre for Distance Education

I t is my pleasure to present a report on the activity of the University of London's Centre for Distance Education, summer 2019 to the end of 2020.

The Centre for Distance Education (CDE) has had a remarkable 18 months. In 2020, within just a few short weeks, the world moved education online and many found it harder than they expected. CDE was able to step into the discussion about best practice in online learning, teaching and assessment with credibility and experience, and was able to project the knowledge of the University of London in this arena.

The remit of CDE is to support the development of expertise in the field of distance education and 2019 and 2020 provided many opportunities for this. In September 2019, we welcomed two visiting scholars from the Open University of China (OUC). Towards the end of their visit we hosted a conference for other OUC visiting scholars from across the UK along with the Sino–British Fellowship Trust who sponsored their work.

In early March 2020 we welcomed a cohort of 67 vice-chancellors and senior colleagues from Nigeria for a three-day workshop on developing high-quality distance education for the Nigerian context. Since 2016, this work, coordinated between CDE and the University of London Worldwide's Global Engagement team,

has enabled the University to grow both our reputation in Nigeria and our student numbers, as well as develop new Recognised Teaching Centres (RTCs). As we now know, that same week the UK was heading towards pandemic-induced lockdown and with our Research in Distance Education (RIDE) conference scheduled for Friday 13 March we could see that the world was shifting fast. Over 250 participants registered for the conference – the highest number ever – but, in the end, many did not come as presenters and attendees were getting unwell. Despite the circumstances, it was an excellent event and we managed to include a significant number of digital inputs on the day.

I left Senate House on the evening of Friday 13 March and for me, and for many of us, that was the last nearly normal day in the building. Ironically, our RIDE conference theme was 'disruption' – who knew what disruption awaited. Looking forward, RIDE 2021 will be entitled 'Disruption Revisited'. RIDE 2021 will take place on 18 June 2021.

With teaching moving online across the Federation, the UK and the world, CDE mobilised a wide range of resources, materials, activities and webinar training sessions to

Nigerian delegation at Senate House, March 2020.

support the move. Our CDE Covid-19 pages were adopted nationally, with links being set up to our site from a wide range of universities and organisations, including the QAA Scotland, Commonwealth of Learning and International Council for Open and Distance Education.

We have run a range of webinar series: 'Jumping on Line' was the first moving on to 'Flexible Learning in Uncertain Times', designed to support our RTCs. Hundreds of colleagues including those from across the network of RTCs have attended.

As the University's programme teams and CoSector mobilised to move 110,000 exams online, CDE was able to provide input, ideas and resources to support innovation. Our resources were used by teams to help re-design assessments and Alan Tait and Stylianos Hatzipanagos, CDE Fellows, joined a University of London team to undertake a largescale evaluation of the summer assessments. The output from the evaluation is helping to support our planning for summer 2021 assessments both at the University and within the Member Institutions (MIs).

With the University of London Institute in Paris (ULIP) and Goldsmiths, University of London we started an ongoing monthly webinar series: 'Experiences in Digital Learning' which is drawing an international audience and particularly helping to further raise the profile of the University in the USA.

Following on from the success of the visiting scholar programme, OUC has proposed a strategic partnership with CDE to support their staff development. They aim to annually send five visiting scholars to the UK and a cohort of teaching staff for a two-week summer school. Additionally, they have asked us to develop a 16-week staff development online course for 250 of their teaching staff. We are also finalising discussions with universities in India alongside the British Council to similarly support staff development there for online teaching.

In addition to generating income, with CDE working directly in China and India, we help to build the University of London's reputation and support the growth of student numbers and RTCs.

Supporting RTCs is a very important and expanding part of CDE's work. The Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, designed by

myself and CDE Fellows, has now seen 61 staff from RTCs and 19 MI staff enrol. Another 185 participants from other HE organisations across the globe have also joined the programme. Many of the graduates have gone on to win prizes for teaching and learning in their own institutions. And I can't help but mention that the PGCert in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education won the 2020 Roger Mills Prize for Innovation in Learning and Teaching.

CDE Fellows are highly active in research and regularly present at conferences. We publish in journals and the CDE book is due out by the middle of 2022. This all adds to the reputation of the University of London, providing thought leadership and raising our profile. We work with University of London Worldwide teams to support practice and innovation, through our projects and our Teaching and Research Awards.

Perhaps my favourite part of the work this year was the introduction of opportunities for University of London Worldwide students to join the CDE as CDE Student Research Fellows. To date, 10 students have worked directly on CDE Projects, gaining valuable experience and skills by collaborating directly with researchers. This is having a direct impact on our students and the feedback so far has been very positive. We look forward to expanding this opportunity in future.

My thanks to everyone in the University of London for the support and engagement you show the Centre for Distance Education: from welcoming our visiting scholars and Nigerian colleagues, to identifying projects and research for us to do, to working beside us in evaluation and innovation, you help to ensure that CDE supports and enhances the University. The CDE Fellows, Mark Beasley (CDE Administrator) and I remain grateful and delighted to be with you all.

Finally, as Head of the Centre, I thank warmly my colleagues, the CDE Fellows, whose commitment to innovation, engagement and high quality distance education brings the Centre to life and enriches all we do. And I extend my gratitude to Mark Beesley for his excellent work supporting the Centre.

Dr Linda Amrane-Cooper
Head of the Centre for Distance Education

The Centre for Distance Education (CDE) is a University of London initiative to support the development of expertise in the field of distance education.

We support a community of practice, promote collaboration and knowledge sharing and provide a focus for the development of high-quality teaching and research in open and distance learning throughout the University of London, as well as nationally and internationally.

This report provides an update on the activities supported by the Centre in the period summer 2019 to the end of 2020.

(Commonwealth of Learning's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Edinburgh, September 2019. Left to right: Mike Winter OBE, Director of Global Engagement; CDE Fellows Dr Daksha Patel and Professor Alan Tait and Peter O'Hara, Regional Business Development Manager, Middle East and Africa.)

1: Introduction

2: Background and context

The Centre's objectives are to:

- promote excellence in teaching that is focused on distance learning

- promote and disseminate research into distance education within the University of London, nationally and internationally

- enhance distance learning and its status in higher education

- foster and evaluate pedagogic, technological and organisational innovation

- facilitate dissemination of best practice within the community of London Member Institutions, within the UK and internationally.

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CDE Fellows are fully integrated into the University of London Worldwide quality and governance systems thereby helping to assure the quality, standards and oversight of our awards and provision. Fellows sit on Academic Programme Approval panels and Periodic Review panels.

Fellows are full members of the Governance committees and working groups. CDE Fellows bring significant experience and expertise of distance education matched by their understanding of the UK higher education regulatory framework. Their commitment to the quality of the student experience is evident.

Tim Wade
Director: Student Services,
University of London

Our activity and impact:

International collaboration

- Networks: ICDE, EDEN
- Nigerian National Universities Commission
- Hosting Visiting Scholars

Applied research and consultancy

- CDE: Student Research Fellows
- 10-15 Projects commissioned each year

Funding awards, annual prize

- Annual teaching and research funding awards
- Annual prize for Innovation in Learning and Teaching

Capacity building

- Development workshops
- PG Certificate Learning and Teaching in HE
- Webinars

Dissemination

- Two annual conferences
- Publications, reports, journals, articles and books
- Conference presentations

CDE

3: Highlights

Professor Wendy Thomson CBE, Vice-Chancellor, University of London speaking at the RIDE conference 2020.

3.1 Unprecedented times required support for online education transformations

As we went into lockdown across the globe in spring 2020, many institutions responded to the coronavirus pandemic by moving their teaching and assessment online, transforming the experience for students and staff alike. The CDE rapidly mobilised a range of support mechanisms for working in online education during these unprecedented times.

In response to the pandemic our portfolio of support included:

- an extensive web resource base found at **bit.ly/covid-support-teaching** Our resources have been taken up by the Commonwealth of Learning, QAA Scotland and UUK, many UK higher education institutions and by the University of London's RTCs across the globe.

- three webinars to further assist discussion, planning and development:

  1. Jumping online: What have we learned? (May 2020) In this webinar we provided inputs from Centre for Distance Education practitioners on a range of topics including supporting peer engagement, online assessment, online pedagogy and curriculum design; the emphasis was on sharing issues, approaches and solutions arising from the impact of the pandemic.

  2. Jumping online: Sustaining quality learning (June 2020) Chaired by Linda Amrane-Cooper with input from CDE Fellow, J Simon Rofe, Academic Head of Digital Learning at SOAS University of London, and Diana Laurillard, Professor of Learning with Digital Technologies at the UCL Knowledge Lab, the focus was on opportunities to provide quality learning in a constrained environment.

  3. The future of social, creative and experiential learning (June 2020) The webinar, hosted by ULIP and Goldsmiths, University of London and chaired by Linda Amrane-Cooper, featured CDE Fellow Ayona Silva-Fletcher with an international panel of four other interdisciplinary experts and practitioners to discuss innovation,

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> I was particularly pleased that our Centre of Excellence, the Centre for Distance Education, has so quickly and effectively mobilised to support the rapid and emergency response to online education caused by the pandemic this year.
>
> Building on the expertise and broad experience of the Centre's Fellows, the CDE has stepped onto centre stage in these difficult times, providing resources, training, capacity building and considerable thought leadership in learning, teaching and assessment at a distance. Work with external stakeholders such as JISC, ICDE and the UK HE sector has been particularly significant.
>
> **Professor Mary Stiasny OBE**
> Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) and Chief Executive, University of London Worldwide

collaboration, interaction in digital education and digital tools to support social, creative and experiential learning.

- a bespoke series of Flexible learning in uncertain times webinars (July 2020), specifically designed to support our RTCs and reaching several hundred colleagues:

  - Approaches to interactive and distributed online learning led by Linda Amrane-Cooper, Stephen Brown, Vicky Brown and Matt Philpott

  - Student experience led by David Baume

  - Strategic planning and management led by Alan Tait and Stylianos Hatzipanagos.

- CDE hosted a number of practitioner blogs which explored the impact of the pandemic on learning, teaching and assessment on individual educator practice

- Linda Amrane-Cooper worked closely with JISC's Learning and Teaching Reimagined team, contributing to blogs and roundtable discussions. For an example, visit: **bit.ly/rising-to-challenge**

To view past CDE webinars, please visit: **bit.ly/cde-past-events**

> **"**
>
> In leading the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, CDE supports effective capacity building particularly relevant for our Recognised Teaching Centres and our online tutors.
>
> **Tim Wade**
> Director: Student Services,
> University of London

Participants at RIDE Conference 2020.

3.2 CDE's innovative staff development programme recognised by the Roger Mills Prize

CDE developed and leads the University of London Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCert LTHE), supporting effective capacity building. The programme has been specifically designed for those teaching, tutoring and supporting the learning of students in higher education and was awarded the 2020 Roger Mills Prize for Innovation in Learning and Teaching. To view the programme webpage, please visit: **london.ac.uk/lthe**

Key findings from the 2019–2020 Student Experience Survey on the PGCert LTHE include overall satisfaction rate of 90 per cent, with 93 per cent of respondents agreeing that the programme is intellectually stimulating. Satisfaction with learning materials enabling learners to understand the fundamentals of the subject was at 93 per cent. Opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth and opportunities to bring ideas together from different topics also scored 93 per cent which are particularly relevant for a practice-based programme. The level

of challenge (86 per cent) and flexibility (85 per cent) were also commended.

The postgraduate certificate has all the characteristics of excellent distance learning design such as clear structure, interactivity between participants and well-aligned and tutor-supported assessments, but the innovative use of online peer review was particularly successful. As one student reported:

'I felt the Peer Review Workshop helped me the most. I felt by looking at the review that others gave me and comparing it to mine, I learnt more than I learnt in any other activity.'

The CDE team are actively researching the programme, to explore the way in which design is influencing and impacting on participant practice and learning. We have already demonstrated that peer review is more strongly linked to student success than the number of discussion forum postings, which is interesting because discussion forum engagement is usually assumed to be a marker of success. The evaluation also demonstrated how students radically change their conception of teaching while engaging with students and tutors on the programme and completing the assessment, a shift which was captured well in this student's reflective writing:

'Prior to commencing my studies, I was akin to a rudderless ship, my mood and the success of my lessons were highly dependent on the proportion of naturally engaged students that I would receive each term, meaning that I taught in a defensive crouch, unaware of what was going on in my students' heads – scared to be found out by a particularly piercing question or even my own failure to perform or freeze up… Knowing that I can now call on my knowledge of pedagogy to explain or clarify my choices

NUC workshop in London 2020.

for learning activities has hugely contributed to my sense of self-assurance and conviction in my teaching... [As I teach today] my lessons are far more focused on the students being active, with me as their "guide" rather than their "sage". I find I am no longer quite so exhausted from my teaching sessions and have found a way to retain my improvisatory creativity into designing learning activities related to that week's topics which I find a highly rewarding challenge.'

Recent dissemination by the PGCert LTHE CDE research team included three international conferences:

- L Amrane-Cooper, D Baume, G Hughes, Authentic assessment design and scaffolding in an online teaching certificate to advance teacher self-perceptions and plans for practice, APT2020, July 2020 bit.ly/authentic-assessment

- L Amrane-Cooper, G Hughes, Evaluating the impact of an HE educator programme on conceptual learning and practice, Research in Distance Education conference, University of London, March 2020.

- Hughes, G. and Price L. November (2019) Peer reviewing versus a discussion forum for promoting online learner success: an evaluation of innovative learning design at World Conference in Online Learning, Dublin. Published in Dr Mark Brown, Dr Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl, Dr Elaine Beirne and Dr Eamon Costello (2020, May 13). Proceedings of the 2019 ICDE World Conference on Online Learning, Volume 1, Zenodo bit.ly/2019-ICDE-conference

3.3 CDE Executive team

2018–2019 saw the introduction of the CDE Executive team. Working closely with the Head of the CDE and the CDE Administrator, the CDE Executive team has provided thought leadership, guidance and resource to considerably strengthen the work of the Centre.

Elected from the CDE Fellowship, the Executive team comprises:

- Head of the Centre for Distance Education: Dr Linda Amrane-Cooper

- Editor-in-Chief and lead on Communications: Professor Stephen Brown

- Joint Research and Dissemination Executive Leads: Professor Alan Tait and Professor Stylianos Hatzipanagos

- Joint Teaching and Learning Executive Leads: Dr Gwyneth Hughes and Dr David Baume.

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I feel privileged to be part of such a dynamic and innovative Executive team. I have felt inspired to contribute to the many Executive team meetings both face to face before the lockdown and online since March 2020.

Several very exciting projects have emerged from the meetings such as the highly successful Jumping Online webinars, which I helped moderate, and the webinars for the Recognised Teaching Centres. The CDE Fellow meetings, one of which I chaired, have all included up-to-date and relevant presentations from Visiting Academics and University of London staff. Discussion in the meetings is creative and productive.

Gwyneth Hughes
CDE Fellow

3.4 CDE Student Research Fellows

In a novel development, distance education students at the University of London have the opportunity to apply to become CDE Student Research Fellows. The students are selected and undertake paid research activities within the CDE Projects. Following over 150 applications for our pilot of six and, more recently, a further four Student Research Fellow opportunities, we now have our Student Research Fellows working with project teams. This opportunity for our students will help them to develop their research and evaluation skills. CDE Student Research Fellows have a CDE Fellow supervisor and will receive a certificate of participation, a transcript and remuneration for their work.

Details of the 2019–2020 CDE Student Research Fellows are included in Appendix 3.

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Serving as a CDE Student Research Fellow was an excellent opportunity to enhance my research skills and build relationships with faculty across the University of London system. I learned practical skills, including survey creation and research development, that enhances my own MSc work.

I also appreciated connecting with other University of London students. Particularly as an online international student, the program deepened my connection to the University of London and showed me the breadth of research developed by the institution. I encourage anyone who is interested in inter-disciplinary research with an online focus, as well as observing and collaborating with world-class researchers, to apply to be a CDE fellow.

Tiffany Tupper
CDE Student Research Fellow
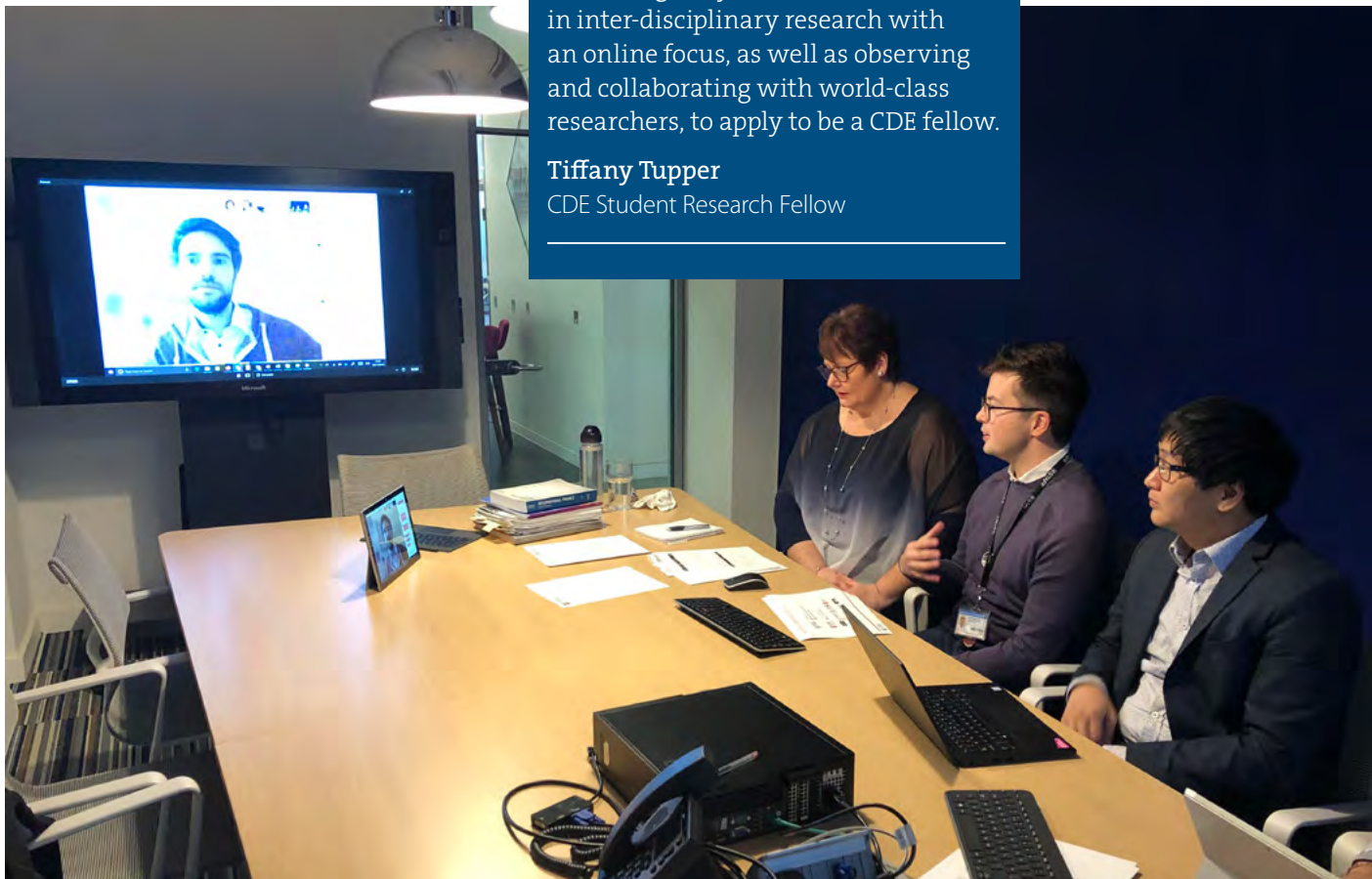
CDE Student Research Fellow induction meeting: Dr Linda Amrane-Cooper, Huw Morgan Jones, CDE Fellow Jonathan San Diego, and Oskar Ennlam on screen.

4: Year in review

4.1 Areas of activity

4.1.1 Background to CDE Projects

The Centre commissions a range of projects aligned directly with the University of London's operational and strategic plans and generally aimed at supporting innovation in learning and teaching; improvements in student experience; or staff development. Usually there are 10–15 projects underway annually, and these can take between a few months to 18 months to complete. Current and past projects can be viewed here: bit.ly/cde-projects

Projects fall into the following broad categories:

- production of content for students (e.g. on-boarding materials for the Student Portal and the plagiarism quiz which has been adopted by almost all University of London Worldwide programmes)

- production of guidance (e.g. how to embed information literacy into online programmes, approaches to active learning)

- capacity building/staff development including workshops and training (e.g. The Digital Educator projects, our webinar series)

- research/horizon scanning into aspects of online education/technology (e.g. impact of peer review on assessment success, artificial intelligence in student support)

- evaluation (e.g. evaluation of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Nigerian National Universities Commission, evaluation of the move to online assessment)

- thought leadership (e.g. literacies as an approach to skills development, impact of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on professional development)

- student support projects (e.g. dissertation support for online students)

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CDE Projects provide an opportunity for University of London and MI staff to develop their skills in research and evaluation and form part of an informal mentoring scheme that CDE provides to University of London and MIs.

Dr Linda Amrane-Cooper
Head of the Centre for Distance Education

- reputation enhancement and international recognition (e.g. four years of work with the National Universities Commission in Nigeria).

To identify the projects, a wide call is sent out to key stakeholders:

- University of London Worldwide directors and teams, Senior Leadership Team, School of Advanced Study, ULIP

- University of London governance committees

- Member Institutions (through a variety of channels and networks)

- Student Voice Group

- Deans and Programme Directors Forum, programme teams

- CDE Fellows.

Project proposals are collated and a panel meets to identify the projects to take forward, within the available resources. The selection panel includes the Director of Operations and Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Education, Innovation and Development, and the Head of CDE. Consideration of University of London Worldwide's operational and strategic plans informs the selection and we look for a balance of projects across the project types. Selected proposals are allocated a budget and CDE Fellows are invited to express an interest in working on them. Draft project plans are submitted by CDE Fellows and teams (often University of London Worldwide or MI colleagues are

directly involved) and detailed milestones and outputs are agreed. Research ethics, where required, is managed through the UoL Research Ethics committee or within the MIs.

Dissemination of the project outputs is an important aspect of our work and is via our CDE conferences and events, the CDE website and publications as well as through special training events. Evaluation of projects varies depending on the type of project but is against the original agreed outputs. For example, conference presentations and publications are common outputs and there is always a requirement for a session to be delivered at our annual conferences. Student or staff feedback is gathered where relevant. Reports from projects are considered at University of London Worldwide Senior Leadership Team meetings and are used to inform development planning (for example the peer-review research has informed programme design). Some reports are brought to governance committees as appropriate. Project outputs and activities feed into the Deans and Programme Directors Forum and the Student Voice Group.

4.1.2 CDE Projects 2019–2020

Following a call for project proposals, we have 12 funded projects underway supporting research, innovation, exploration and evaluation, and aimed at identifying and developing solutions to challenges identified by stakeholders in the University of London and the MIs. Project teams are drawn from the CDE Fellows, and relevant University and MI teams.

Details of the current projects are included in Appendix 2.

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> In Education, Innovation and Development we are working increasingly closely with the CDE. We are the sponsors of several projects, and involved in several more, each of which is designed to interrogate, understand and learn from an area of practice (programme development, curriculum design, digital library services, employability, student learning strategies etc.) so that we have a growing evidence base from which we can continuously improve the development of new programmes.
>
> **Sam Brenton**
> Director: Education, Innovation and Development, University of London

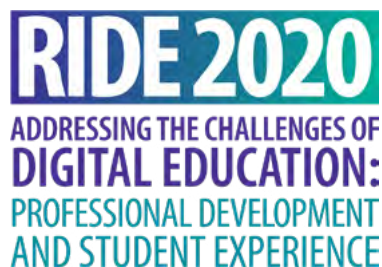CDE Fellow Dr Julie Voce at RIDE conference 2020.

The 2020 Roger Mills Prize winning team Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. Left to right: Dr Linda Amrane-Cooper, Dr David Baume, Catherine Morrissey, Professor Wendy Thomson CBE (Vice-Chancellor, University of London), Larisa Grice, Dr Gwyneth Hughes, Dr J Simon Rofe.

4.1.3 The Roger Mills Prize for Innovation in Learning and Teaching

The prize, sponsored by the University of London, is named in memory of Roger Mills, longstanding and well-loved former Fellow of the Centre for Distance Education and Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Open University. Roger made a major contribution to the support of innovation in learning and teaching in the University of London through his contribution to projects and academic policy development. This prize commemorates his contribution.

Our 2020 winners of the Award for Innovation in Learning and Teaching were presented with their awards by Vice-Chancellor Professor Wendy Thomson at a ceremony during the RIDE 2020 conference. There were two joint winning teams: The University of London Careers Group, led by Laura Brammar, awarded for their online careers support scheme, and the University of London Centre for Distance Education, led by Gwyneth Hughes, awarded for the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

4.1.4 The Research and Innovation in Distance Education and eLearning conference, March 2020

RIDE 2020
ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL EDUCATION: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The 14th Research and Innovation in Distance Education and eLearning (RIDE) annual conference, on 13 March 2020 addressed the theme of Examining disruptive innovations in distance education, namely:

- open educational resources: where are we in 2020?
- artificial intelligence in education
- decolonising the curriculum: what does it mean in the ODL context?
- professional development for distance/open learning
- digital skills for students and staff in distance education
- methodologies that positively disrupt learning and teaching tasks
- assessment, collaboration and peer learning in online communities.

In total, 220 delegates registered to attend the event. Those attending will have found its theme of 'disruptive innovation in higher education' quite extraordinarily apposite. The whole of the UK higher education cohort was in the process of taking itself online to try to contain the spread of coronavirus. During the day, many delegates – all enthusiasts for, or experts in, distance-based and online learning – could be seen taking time out to advise colleagues who were being expected to get fully online practically overnight. A number of speakers who were unable to attend due to illness or self-isolation delivered excellent presentations from their home offices.

The conference was rated as 'excellent/good' by 81.3 per cent and evaluated as 100 per cent 'relevant/quite relevant' to delegates' current professional role.

Attendees commented:

'Fantastic event – thank you for making it open.'

'Very good day. Organisers and speakers dealt very well with the Covid-19 crisis.'

'I would like to thank the team who organised the event – they did it amidst lots of uncertainty and disruption in higher education.'

4.1.5 The 2019 and 2020 CDE Supporting Student Success annual workshops

This annual CDE Supporting Student Success workshop is now well established and offers valuable professional development for colleagues in the field of distance and online learning.

In October 2019, the themes addressed included innovations in methods for enhancing student retention, progression and employability; innovations in programme design; embedding and exploring student literacies; and teacher educator development in Africa.

Sixty-five delegates, from institutions across London and south-east England, attended the event at Senate House. The conference was rated as 'excellent/good' by 94 per cent of respondents and evaluated as 93 per cent 'relevant/quite relevant' to delegates' current professional role.

In October 2020, following the rapid deployment of online assessment worldwide in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Supporting Student Success workshop

Dr Mary Bishop presenting remotely with CDE Fellow, Dr Christine Thuranira-McKeever chairing a parallel session at RIDE conference 2020.
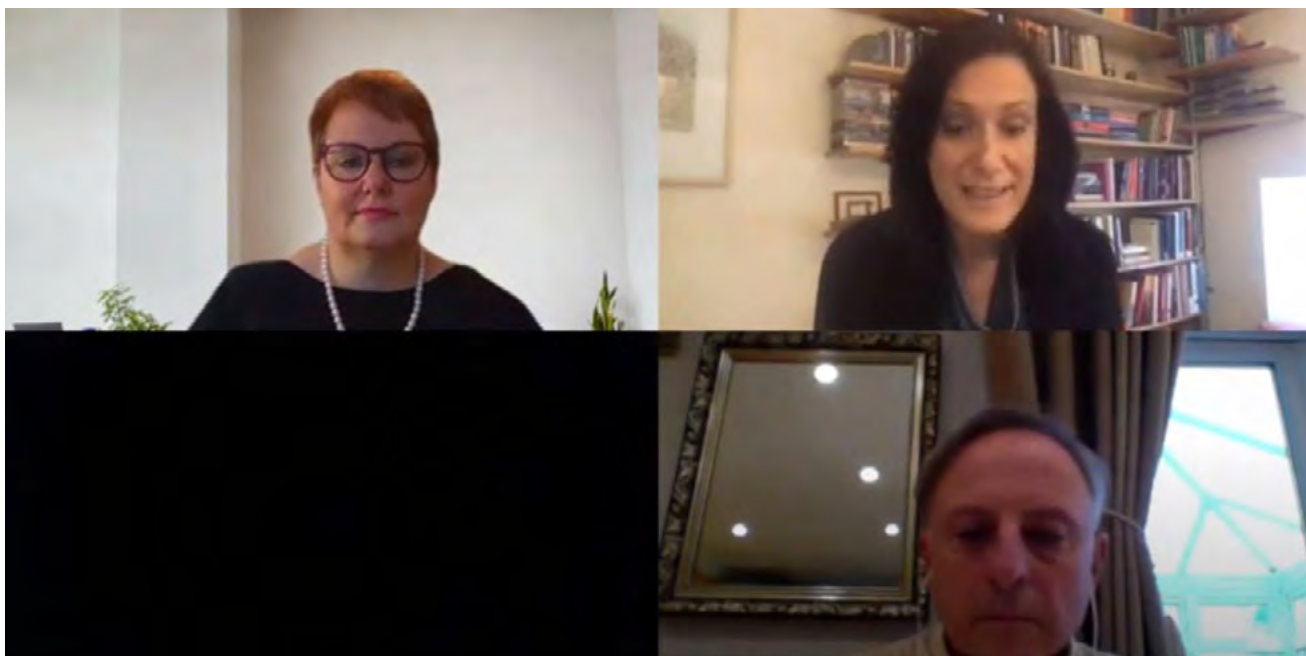
Supporting Student Success event, October 2020: Dr Linda Amrane-Cooper, CDE Fellows Professor Benedetta Cappellini and Professor Stylianos Hatzipanagos.

also moved online and focused on digital assessment practices. Drawing together colleagues from across the UK and with a large international audience, the complexities, challenges, triumphs and opportunities presented by current and developing digital assessment practices were explored. Presenters from the University of London, CDE, UCL, Heriot-Watt, Brunel and Quality Matters in the USA explored topics ranging from criterion-based marking schemes to online practical medical assessment.

Two hundred and forty global delegates attended the online event, including from the RTCs. The conference was rated as 'excellent/ good' by 100 per cent of respondents and evaluated as 100 per cent 'relevant/quite relevant' to delegates' current professional role.

Full details of the event, including a report, recordings of all the sessions and a variety of resources are available at: **bit.ly/support-student-success**

4.1.6 International activities

Hosting visiting scholars

The CDE Visiting Scholars scheme is open to individuals who wish to engage in projects and activities concerned with high-quality teaching and research in open and distance learning locally, nationally and internationally. Placements at CDE usually last for between four and six months. The nature of the placement can vary from specific research projects to skills development. A bespoke programme of activities is developed to support the intended outcomes for the placement. Our scheme is particularly useful for those looking to develop their skills and expertise in online education in response to longer term moves to digital education triggered by the coronavirus pandemic. More information can be found at: **bit.ly/visiting-scholars-pdf**

Scholars from Gansu and Ningbo Radio and TV University respectively, both branches of OUC, spent three months each with CDE researching distance learning issues relevant to their home institutions. They were supervised by CDE Fellows Linda Amrane-Cooper, J Simon Rofe and Alan Tait. See: **bit.ly/sino-british-visits**

Collaboration with the Nigerian National Universities Commission

CDE has led a programme of workshops and symposia delivered in Nigeria and London over four years in a strategic collaboration with the National Universities Commission (NUC) in Nigeria, aimed at building capacity for the development, delivery and support of open and distance learning in Nigerian higher education to meet national policy objectives.

Since 2017, the University of London has facilitated seven interactions for the NUC and colleagues within the Nigerian higher education sector: three symposia and a workshop all held in Abuja, and three longer workshops based in London. CDE, supported by the University of London Worldwide's Global Engagement team, and in close consultation with the NUC has ensured that the programme of engagement has supported senior colleagues across Nigeria.

In March 2020, a four-day programme took place at Senate House, attended by 67 vice-chancellors and senior leaders from universities across Nigeria. Drawing on the world-leading expertise of CDE Fellows, the workshop combined leading edge ideas with practical approaches to implementation for the African context.

A selection of participant feedback:

'The interactions, knowledge and skills, interaction was beautiful, knowledge and skills were gained.'

'The structure of the workshop was second to none.'

'Good selection of resource/facilitators; interactive, participant centred, excellent delivery and stimulating.'

'The manner in which the facilitators engaged us to "do the work" rather than listen passively was exciting.'

'Hands-on activities; opportunity to take a critique of personal, professional and institutional aspirations and goals.'

'Real practical involvement of industry, the environment was good.'

Workshop participants in a CDE workshop in Abuja 2018.

Open University of China visiting scholars (December 2019) and their supervisory team. Left to right: Dr J Simon Rofe, Dr Linda Amrane-Cooper, Carol (Luo) Xiaobo, Fengwei Cai, Professor Alan Tait.

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> CDE has enabled the University to engage with regulators and governments on a broader and more equitable basis than had been the case hitherto, when we were likely perceived as only concerned with gaining further market traction. This engagement "in the round" has nowhere been better exemplified than over the last four years working with the Nigerian National Universities Commission. Here, market development has played second string to CDE-led sustained academic and professional engagement that has been sector-wide, and secured for UoL public endorsement and credibility as the go-to partner for innovation and quality in open and distance learning. This in turn has transformed the market opportunity for us.
>
> **Mike Winter OBE**
> Director: Global Engagement, University of London

Knowledge Diplomacy

Following on from a successful conference workshop Linda Amrane-Cooper and J. Simon Rofe gave at the British Council's 'Going Global' conference in May 2019, a new area of activity has developed within the CDE: Knowledge Diplomacy. Working with colleagues at the University of London, Stirling University, Nottingham, SOAS and KCL, Simon and Linda, joined by Alan Tait and David Baume, then facilitated two Knowledge Diplomacy round table events in October 2019 and July 2020. We are currently preparing a further input for the June 2021 'Going Global' conference.

L. Amrane-Cooper, J.S. Rofe, Going Global 2019, *New models of learning – driving knowledge diplomacy?* May 2019, Berlin. **bit.ly/cde-blog-academic-learning**

4.1.7 Teaching and Research Awards

The annual Teaching and Research Awards (TRAs) provide project funding for MIs and University of London colleagues.

We received nine applications and selected four projects as our TRAs for delivery in 2020.

An example of the output from a TRA is illustrated in this publication from the RVC team. Tierney Kinnison, Christine Thuranira-McKeever, Ruwani Kalupahana and Ayona Silva-Fletcher (2020) Multi-level impact of continuing professional development on Sri Lanka's veterinary sector, Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning, DOI: **bit.ly/srilanka-vet-sector**

Team	Affiliation	Project title
Liz Wilkinson	University of London Careers Group	Evaluating the learning design of a career learning online micro-module, focusing on the impact of ipsative assessment, self-evaluation and self-reflection in increasing learning gain and depth.
Tierney Kinnison Claire Vinten Ruth Serlin Ayona Silva-Fletcher	RVC	Is there a difference in student experience and learning on the PGCert Veterinary Education when comparing blended and online only delivery models?
Alan Tait Gwyneth Hughes	CDE and UCL	Evaluating reforms in assessment practices in University of London Worldwide.
Oscar Mwaanga	University of London	Decolonising University of London Worldwide curricula and pedagogies: towards a 'collaborative' and 'transformational' model for decolonisation.

RIDE conference 2019.
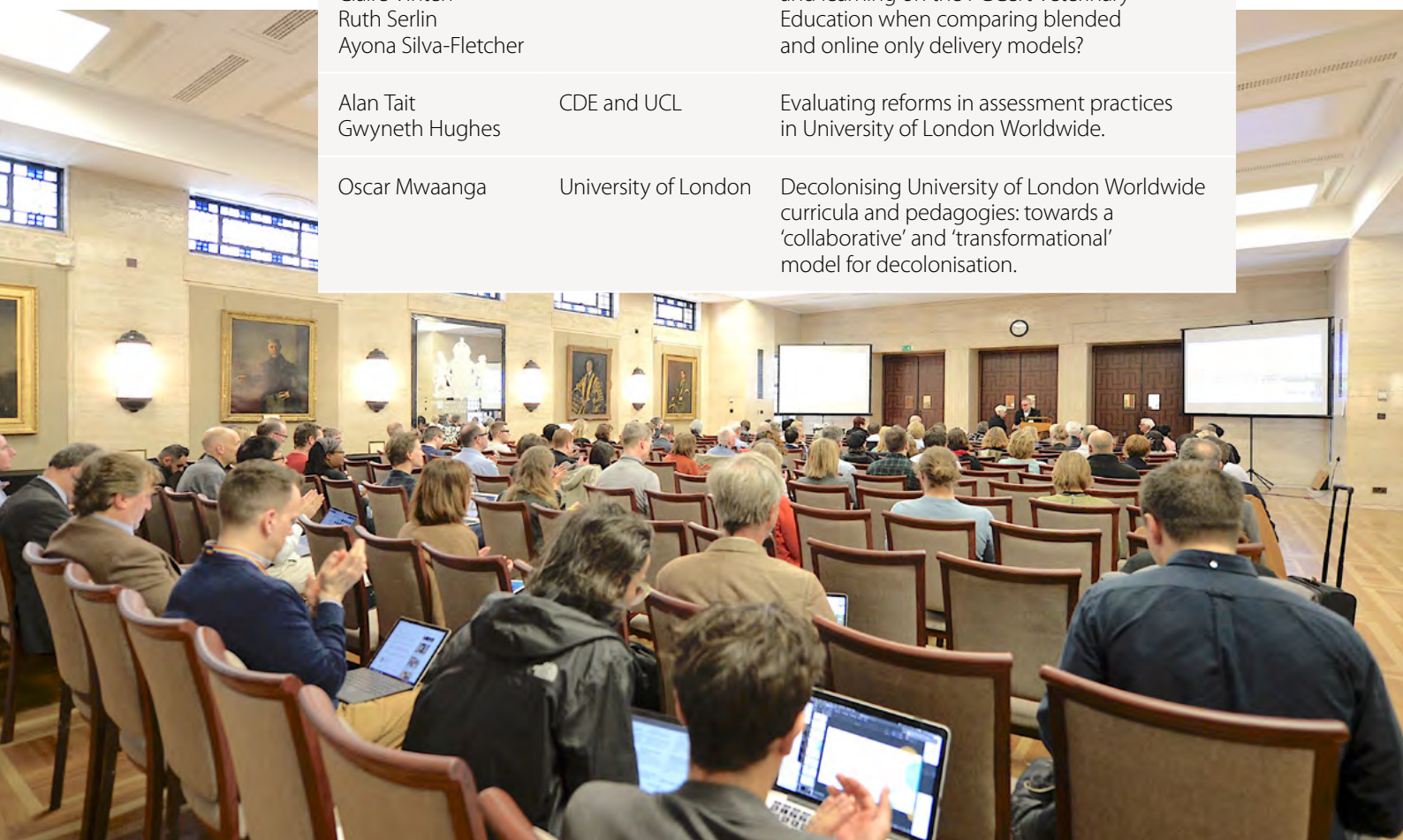
4.1.8 Spotlight on research collaborations in open and distance education

CDE Project: Student learning hours and learning strategies

The 'Student learning hours and learning strategies' study was commissioned by Sam Brenton, Director of Education, Innovation and Development at the University of London. CDE Fellows Stephen Brown and David Baume investigated how students engage with different types of University of London Worldwide content and learning activities, both solo and collaborative, and thereby are advising on ways of enhancing programme design and operation to maximise opportunities for student success. Data were collected from students undertaking four programmes (BSc Computer Science, the Global MBA, Postgraduate Laws and MSc in Professional Accountancy) via an online survey, self-completed learning diaries and student interviews.

The study is now in phase 2, and phase 1 has already yielded useful insights into student behaviours and perception of University of London courses:

- For the most part, students report following the study advice given.

- Students who follow the study guidance closely tend to spend longer studying than is expected by the programme team.

- There is widespread concern about how the actual amount of time required to study the programmes effectively compares both with advised study times and with time available to students.

- Students strongly value course content over learning activities.

- Students strongly value individual study over collaborative activities.

CDE Fellow Sarah Sherman presenting at RIDE conference 2019.

The learning diaries in particular offer richly detailed insights into student study patterns, as illustrated by this summary of one diary from a clearly very effective student:

'Very organised; systematic; linear study pathway; regular study time slots morning and evening, follows guidance a lot; active note taking; lots of practice and connection making; but strategic assessment of amount of effort required for each component based on relevance, duplication, comprehension; later on exploratory learning (self-characterised as playing), application of theory and self-directed research; seeks tutor and peer support sometimes and external resources to supplement programme material; strong engagement with collaborative group exercise (ICARUS business simulation); meta-awareness: engaged in self dialogue regarding progress including monitoring, reflection, revisions and forward planning.'

The final report, incorporating student interview findings and a further survey will be published in Spring 2021. The interim report, on phase 1, is available at: **bit.ly/shl-report-pdf**

Left to right: Dr Suleiman Ramon-Yusuf, National Universities Commission, Nigeria, Dr Linda Amrane-Cooper and Professor Temisan Ebijuwa, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH).

4.1.9 Thought leadership from the CDE

CDE Fellows are highly active in a wide range of fields linked to flexible, online, digital and distance education, providing research outputs, thought leadership and holding significant roles in a variety of national and international organisations such as the Commonwealth of Learning, International Council for Distance Education, European Distance Education and E-Learning Network, Association of Learning Technology and Staff and Educational Development Association.

We present here a sample of CDE Fellow activity in 2019–2020.

Linda Amrane-Cooper
The Head of CDE has been working closely with JISC on the Learning and Teaching Reimagined project during summer 2020. Activity has included a presentation on online assessment on 15 July (LTR: Best emerging practice), blog articles and input to various calls for expert advice. Linda also worked with colleagues in the East of England ALT network, presenting at the Managing Change – Challenging Existing Practice (ALT EE & EMLT) online event on 11 June 2020.

David Baume
In April 2020, at the start of lockdown, David Baume produced 'Assessment when conventional examinations are not possible', a guide to issues and practices for taking examinations online: **bit.ly/exams-not-possible-pdf**

Stephen Brown
Brown, S. (2020) Distance learning: an introduction. Keynote presentation for the National Council on Education Conference, Republic of Serbia. Online, 3 September 2020.

Stylianos Hatzipanagos
Georgiadou, E., Hatzipanagos, S. et al (2020) Challenges of rapid migration to fully virtual education in the age of the coronavirus pandemic: experiences from across the world. BCS INSPIRE 2020 conference, July 2020.

Webb, M., Hatzipanagos S., San Diego, J., Khan, E., Goral, M. (2019) Designing assessments for blended learning scenarios. In: Tatnall, A. (eds) Encyclopedia of Education and Information Technologies. Springer, Cham.

Gwyneth Hughes

Hughes, G. and Amrane-Cooper, L. March (2020) Evaluating the impact of a HE educator programme on conceptual learning and practice. Research in Distance Education Conference, University of London, London.

Hughes, G. and Price L. November (2019) Peer reviewing versus a discussion forum for promoting online learner success: an evaluation of innovative learning design at World Conference in Online Learning, Dublin. Published in Dr Mark Brown, Dr Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl, Dr Elaine Beirne and Dr Eamon Costello (2020, May 13). Proceedings of the 2019 ICDE World Conference on Online Learning, Volume 1. Zenodo: **bit.ly/zenodo-online-learning-v1**

Hughes, G. (2019) Online learning tools and student retention project final report Centre for Distance Education, London: **bit.ly/cde-resources**

Matt Phillpott

Blog post Using MS Teams as a platform for blended learning, found at: **bit.ly/cde-blog-msteams**

Webinar: Approaches to interactive and distributed online learning for School of Advanced Study and University of London in Paris staff and then for RTCs.

CDE Projects: An interactive study guide on postgraduate dissertation research and writing, Literacies in the University of London.

Ayona Silva-Fletcher

CDE Project on 'Is there a difference in student experience and learning on the PGCert Veterinary Education when comparing blended and online only delivery models?'

CDE Project 'The impact of the University of London Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (PGCertHE) on the participants' thinking about teaching and learning and their practice' with Gwyneth Hughes, David Baume and Linda Amrane-Cooper.

Speaker in 'The Future of Social, Creative and Experiential Digital Learning' series organised by Goldsmiths, University of London and University of London Institute in Paris.

Alan Tait

Two webinars on the Covid-19 pandemic and assessment for Distance and Online Learning for the International Council for Open and Distance Education.

Contributed to a webinar on Covid-19 and online learning for the European Distance Education and E-Learning Network .

Webinar on Covid-19 and student support in distance and online learning for the University of South Africa.

Helen Xanthaki

Coordination and management of CDE-funded projects on contract cheating and student onboarding in distance learning.

Aiman Abousher, PGCert LTHE graduate and Senior Lecturer at the British University Vietnam, receiving the Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Excellence Award from Professor Ray Gordon, BUV Vice-Chancellor and President.

CDE Fellow Dr Gwyneth Hughes and Professor Wendy Thomson CBE (Vice-Chancellor, University of London) at RIDE conference 2020.

4.1.10 Consultancy

CDE offers consultancy, project management, staff development and evaluation in the field of open, distance, blended and online learning. Some examples of CDE training, development and consultancy work include:

Staff development

A programme of workshops for colleagues in The Careers Group to help them enhance online learning design capability, following a review of current practice and trends in the field: bit.ly/cde-our-projects

A series of interactive webinars following a training needs analysis exercise with colleagues at University of London RTCs (see section 3.1).

A bespoke online teaching workshop for staff in the School of Advanced Study and University of London Institute in Paris led by Linda Amrane-Cooper and Matt Philpott.

Online learning course design, assessment, tutoring and management

While moving to online education can mean simply uploading notes to the virtual learning environment and delivering lectures via videoconferencing, good use of learning technologies allows so much more to be done to engage students in active learning through exploration, reflection, debate, collaboration and creation. CDE has been offering practical assistance to University of London programme teams and others to develop effective, engaging learning technologies-enhanced courses for almost 20 years, as well as developing and running our own highly regarded online PGCert in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. For more information see: london.ac.uk/lthe

Distance learning courses that we have contributed to include Accounting (UCL), Business Administration (Royal Holloway), Citizenship and History, Education (UoL), Computing (Goldsmiths), Dentistry (Kings), Diplomacy (SOAS), Education (UCL), Energy and Climate Policy (SOAS), Eye Care (LSHTM), Global Public Policy (SOAS), Global Security (SOAS), History (SAS), International Development (SOAS), Law (Queen Mary), Livestock Health and Production (RVC), Molecular Biology (Birkbeck), Public Health (RVC), Veterinary Education (RVC).

Fengwei Cai and Carol Lou from Open University of China.

Strategy and policy

A programme of workshops and symposia delivered in Nigeria and London over three years in a strategic collaboration with the National Universities Commission in Nigeria, aimed at building capacity for the development, delivery and support of open and distance learning in Nigerian higher education to meet national policy objectives (see section 4.1.6). For more information see: bit.ly/cde-blog-nigeria and bit.ly/london-con-beneficial-collab

Bespoke research, evaluation and reviews

Projects commissioned by other parts of the University of London on a broad range of issues including plagiarism, digital literacy, student progression and completion, student learning practices, equality and diversity, using artificial intelligence in teaching and student use of online tools. See: bit.ly/cde-our-projects

4.1.11 CDE book: Distance Education in a Connected World

The educational world has pivoted swiftly to distance delivery. This move has been forced upon institutions by the recent global pandemic. However, delivering education at a distance has a long history of success, with the University of London playing a leading role.

The book, which will publish in winter 2021, taps into the tremendous experience of developing and delivering education at a distance from the Fellows of the CDE. It builds on research and evidence and gives authoritative practical support to institutions and individuals who are leading, managing, developing and implementing distance education.

The book is structured into three sections. The first considers the drivers for distance education. The drivers are grouped around the strategic models for distance education. It investigates how different stakeholders view the value distance education provides for them and particularly focuses on students. Distance education has the potential to be more inclusive than face-to-face, but only if the opportunities for making it so are recognised. Distance education needs to be marketed successfully. The first section concludes with an African case study.

The second section of the book investigates design and delivery of distance education. This encompasses the role of digital, the pedagogies and the need for staff development. Supported by a case study, the section looks at digitally supported assessments and then proceeds to assess inclusive practice and the importance of online libraries in supporting effective distance education.

The impact of distance education needs to be measured and its impacts then extended. The third section of the book assesses retention and success, social interaction and employability and looks at open educational practice. Methods for research and development in distance education are investigated. It then reports on how distance education may be evaluated. This section is supported by a case study on MOOCs for public health and concludes by scanning the horizon to suggest how things will unfold in the medium and long terms.


RIDE conference committee 2020: Professor Alan Tait, Dr Linda Amrane-Cooper, Dr Daksha Patel, Dr Clare Sansom and Professor Stylianos Hatzipanagos.
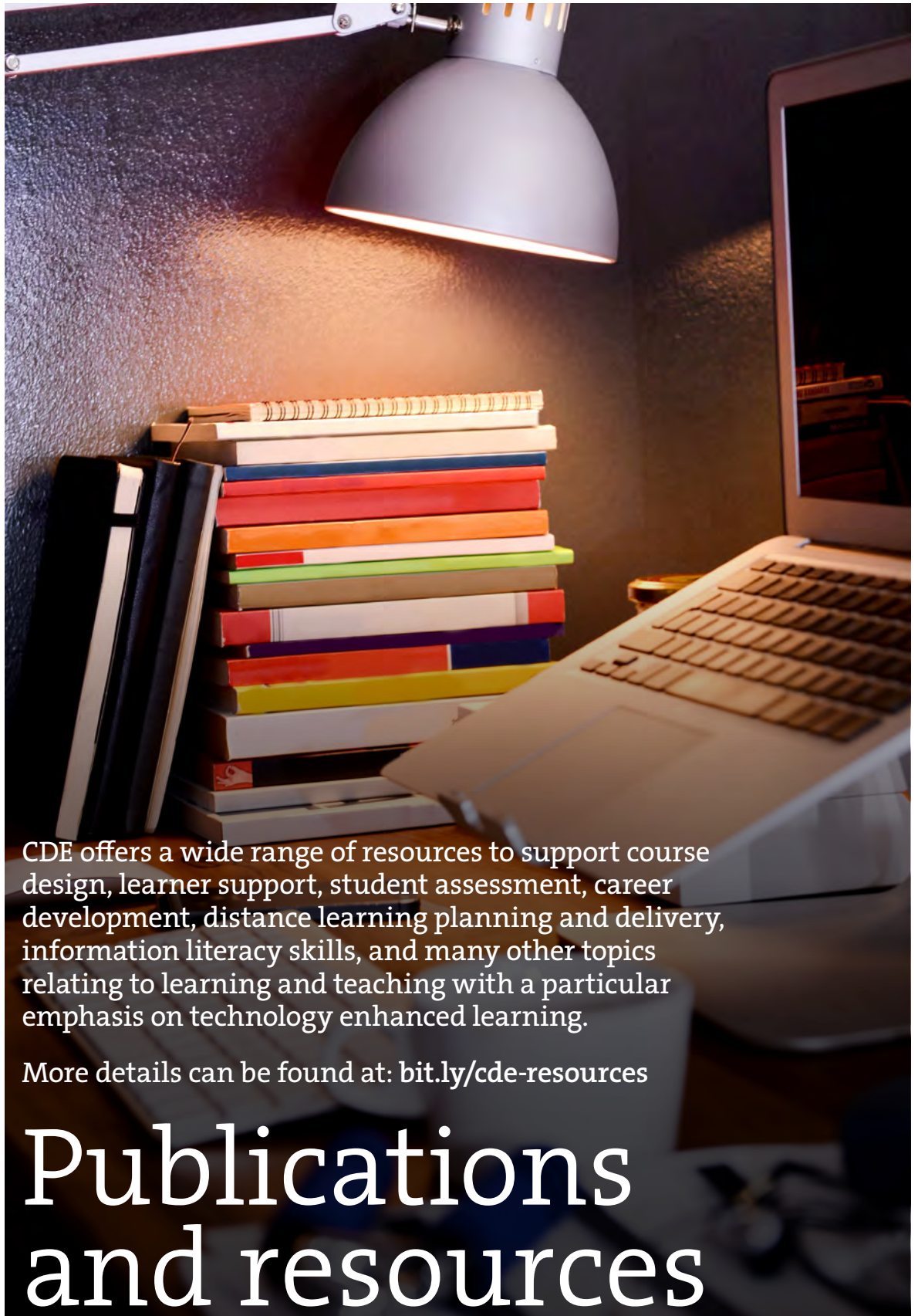
CDE offers a wide range of resources to support course design, learner support, student assessment, career development, distance learning planning and delivery, information literacy skills, and many other topics relating to learning and teaching with a particular emphasis on technology enhanced learning.

More details can be found at: bit.ly/cde-resources

5: Publications and resources
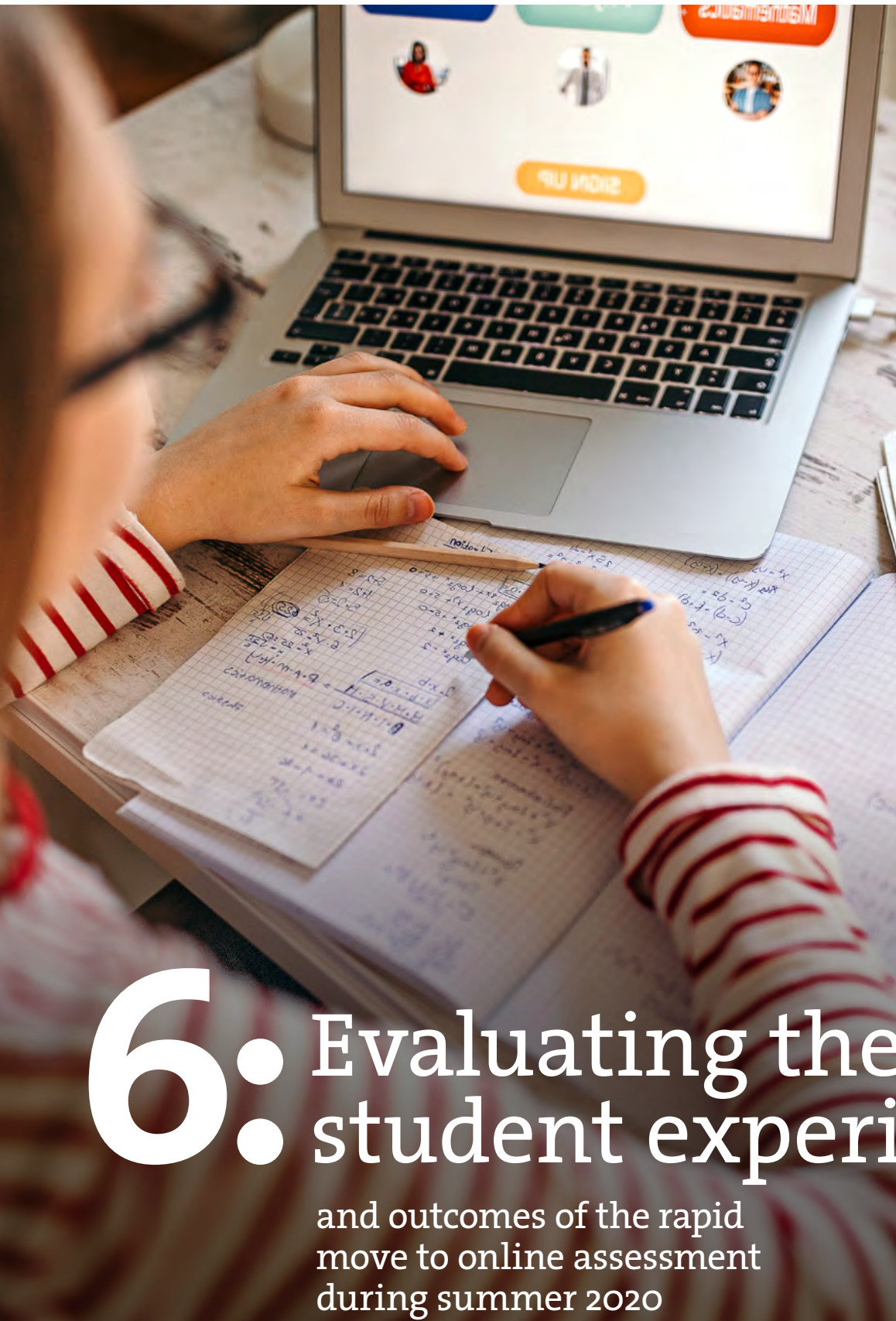
6: Evaluating the student experience

and outcomes of the rapid move to online assessment during summer 2020

In summer 2020, 35,000 University of London students undertook 110,000 online assessments in place of conventional examinations in exam halls because of the Covid-19 pandemic, which precludes such events.

The University commissioned CDE to undertake a detailed evaluation of the move to online assessment. The project team is led by Linda Amrane-Cooper, with CDE Fellows Stylianos Hatzipanagos and Alan Tait and University of London colleagues Huw Morgan-Jones, Amardeep Sanghera, Mike Sawyer, plus Elsie Lauchlan, from data analysis company Shift Insight.

This project aims to collect data about, and generate understanding of, this transition to online assessment, primarily from the perspective of the experience of the students who have been affected. The final report will be completed in spring 2021.

> "CDE is working very closely to support innovation and enhanced student experience. And provides a robust and thoughtful approach to evaluation of developments. For example the work CDE is undertaking with University of London Worldwide teams to evaluate the impact of the 110,000 exams online is directly informing strategic planning and operational developments. By directing CDE expertise to lead projects that are sponsored by the University of London Worldwide and our Member Institutions we can be sure of the relevance and applicability of the work, generating meaningful and impactful outcomes.
>
> **Craig O'Callaghan**
> Director of Operations and Deputy CEO, University of London Worldwide

The areas of investigation

Student behaviours
- Exam take up
- Usage patterns of VLE
- Issues around proctoring
- Submissions of answers

Student sentiment
- Survey
- 2 weeks after
- Before marks confirmed
- Interviews
- CDE Student Research Fellows

Student outcome
- Average marks
- Across four years
- Distribution of awards

Operational
- Assessment choices
- Assessment offences
- Logistical issues
- Experience of programme and marking teams

Location, programme, module, gender, age and special arrangements and exam type.

CDE Fellow Professor Stephen Brown working with Nigerian workshop participants.

The period covered by this report, summer 2019 to the end of 2020, has been one of remarkable change in all aspects of our lives and the profile of the Centre has grown as we have had the opportunity to support innovation, staff development and provide thought leadership in the rapidly changing world of digital and distance education.

7: Conclusion

APPENDIX 1: CDE Structure

Head of CDE: Dr Linda Amrane-Cooper

- Appointed by University of London
- Budget holder, member of University of London Worldwide Senior Leadership Team
- Oversees CDE activity, projects, awards and events
- Represents CDE internally and externally
- Supported by **Mark Beesley , CDE Administrator**

Editor-in-Chief and lead on Communications: Prof Stephen Brown

- Manages CDE website development and oversees content
- Leads the social media and communications campaigns activity
- Oversees communications schedule

Joint Research and Dissemination Executive Leads: Prof Alan Tait and Prof Stylianos Hatzipanagos

- Coordinate CDE research activity and dissemination
- Support CDE Fellows' research activity
- Review opportunities for research grant capture
- Support visiting scholar activity
- Coordinate and oversee major CDE events including RIDE and Supporting Student Success conferences

Joint Teaching and Learning Executive Leads: Dr Gwyneth Hughes and Dr David Baume

- Coordinate CDE Teaching and Learning Activity (projects, capacity building, staff development)
- Support CDE Fellow Teaching and Learning activity
- Support visiting scholar activity.

Fellows

Made up of 25 Fellows, 14 of whom are drawn from the Member Institutions, with the rest drawn from across the UK higher education institution sector and from independent/retired distance learning experts and leaders, the Centre has considerable expertise in a wide range of areas including: course design, learning, teaching and assessment in flexible, distance and online contexts, learning design, technology, strategy, staff and educational development, student experience, student outcomes and analytics, open educational resources, skills and competency education, research, evaluation, quality assurance and management and leadership in distance education.

Title	First Name	Surname	Institution
Dr	Linda	Amrane-Cooper	University of London
Dr	David	Baume	Independent consultant
Professor	Stephen	Brown	Emeritus Prof De Montfort University
Dr	Pete	Canell	Open University
Dr	Benedetta	Cappellini	University of Durham
Ms	Lynsie	Chew	UCL
Dr	Marco	Gillies	Goldsmiths, University of London
Mr	Jon	Gregson	Development Dreamers Ltd
Professor	Stylianos	Hatzipanagos	Independent consultant
Dr	Gwyneth	Hughes	UCL
Dr	Dimitrios	Koufopoulos	University of London
Dr	Endrit	Kromidha	University of Birmingham
Ms	Patricia	McKellar	University of London
Dr	Alan	Parkinson	UCL
Dr	Daksha	Patel	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Dr	Matthew	Phillpott	Independent consultant, University of London
Professor	Philip	Powell	University for the Creative Arts
Dr	Simon	Rofe	SOAS, University of London.
Dr	Jonathan	San Diego	King's College London
Dr	Clare	Sansom	Birkbeck, University of London, Open University UK
Ms	Sarah	Sherman	Bloomsbury Learning Exchange
Dr	Ayona	Silva-Fletcher	Royal Veterinary College
Professor	Alan	Tait	Emeritus Prof Open University
Dr	Christine	Thuranira-McKeever	Royal Veterinary College
Dr	Julie	Voce	City, University of London
Professor	Helen	Xanthaki	UCL

APPENDIX 2: CDE Projects 2019–2020

Project	CDE Fellows and Team (Affiliation)	CDE Student Research Fellows 2019–2020
Student learning hours and student learning strategies – an exploration into the ways in which students study in our online programmes and the time they spend. The more we understand about student learning behaviour the more we can improve our provision.	Stephen Brown (Ind) David Baume (Ind)	Two UG students
Contract cheating – all universities face the challenge of ensuring that our policies and procedures fairly and robustly address the issue of students asking others to write their essays. And we need to be sure that students understand the requirements for written work to be wholly their own.	Helen Xanthaki (UCL)	PG student
Active learning in an online learning environment – we will provide ideas, suggestions and examples of ways in which active learning can be provided in an online environment. This will help those designing online learning to develop their approaches.	David Baume (Ind) Patricia McKellar (University of London)	PG student
An interactive study guide on postgraduate dissertation research and writing – this project will explore the needs of students who are writing dissertations in their studies and will develop a study guide to support students.	Matt Phillpott (SAS) Clare Sansom (Birkbeck) David Baume (Ind) Stephen Brown (Ind)	PG student
Digital Educator part 2 – this project explores the needs for teaching staff and students to develop skills and expertise in digital education. For more information on the first part of this work: bit.ly/ced-our-projects-educator	Jon Gregson (SOAS) Marco Gillies (Goldsmiths) Christine Thuranira-Mckeever (RVC) Jonathan San Diego (KCL)	UG student
Steps towards embedding equality and diversity in programme design and development – we will prepare leading edge guidance for teams developing or upgrading programmes to ensure issues such as decolonisation of the curriculum, appropriate assessment for all and access sit at the heart of our work.	Lynsie Chew (UCL) Alan Parkinson (UCL)	N/A

Project	CDE Fellows and Team (Affiliation)	CDE Student Research Fellows 2019–2020
The impact of having access to multiple examination sessions on student performance – we explore the impact on student outcomes of various examination schedules.	Alan Tait (Ind) Stylianos Hatzipanagos (UWL) Pete Cannell (Ind)	N/A
Exploring applied uses of artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing (NLP) within University of London Worldwide – we wish to understand how AI and NLP can help us to support students more efficiently and effectively.	Christine Thuranira-Mckeever (RVC) Jon Gregson (SOAS) Marco Gillies (Goldsmiths) Daksha Patel (LSHTM) Sam Brenton (University of London)	N/A
Impact of PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education on teaching practice – this programme, run by the CDE, trains university teaching staff across the globe. We are exploring the ways in which the programme is helping teaching staff to improve their teaching practice and positively impact their students.	Gwyneth Hughes (UCL) Ayona Silva-Fletcher (RVC) David Baume (Ind) Simon Rofe (SOAS) Linda Amrane-Cooper (University of London)	N/A
Information literacy part 2 – we are looking at the ways in which we can enhance the delivery of key information skills in our programmes. These skills help to ensure students understand how to access, process and evaluate information. If you Google and find an article saying the 'World is Flat' do you have to believe it? The report from Part 1 of this project can be found at **bit.ly/cde-info-lit-part1**	David Baume (Ind) Sandra Tury (University of London) Sarah Singer (SAS)	N/A
Literacies in University of London – this project is an investigation into the wide range of skills (careers, group work, presentation etc) students require and approaches to developing those through online and distance education.	David Baume (Ind) Julie Voce (City) Matt Phillpott (SAS) Liz Wilkinson (University of London) Sandra Tury (University of London)	N/A

APPENDIX 3: CDE Student Research Fellows

Student level of study	Programme (member institution)	Project name	Domicile
PG	MSc Climate Change and Development (SOAS)	An interactive study guide on postgraduate dissertation research and writing	USA
PG	LLM	Contract cheating	Trinidad and Tobago
PG	MSc Agricultural Economics (SOAS)	Active learning in an online learning environment	Zimbabwe
UG	LLB	Student learning hours and activities	Malaysia
UG	BA English (Goldsmiths)	Student learning hours and activities	Malaysia
UG	BSc Computing and Information Systems (Goldsmiths)	Digital Educator	Germany
UG	LLB	Evaluating the transition to online assessment	Norway
PG	PG Laws	Evaluating the transition to online assessment	Kenya
PG	MSc Global Diplomacy	Evaluating the transition to online assessment	UK

APPENDIX 4: CDE Website and Communications Progress Report

Stephen Brown and Julie Voce, August 2020

Background

The CDE formerly managed its own web presence via a WordPress blog site. In March 2019 the CDE website was relaunched as part of the University of London site at: **london.ac.uk/centre-for-distance-education** Related CDE social media accounts were created on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Initially all CDE content had to be sent to the University of London web team for uploading to the content management system (CMS) but, from June 2019, Stephen Brown and Mark Beesley have been able to publish and edit page content directly to the CMS. Since then there has been a marked increase in both the number and range of CDE items posted and in the level of interest shown in CDE content.

In December 2020, we were pleased to launch an enhanced web presence, with a fully-fledged microsite with its own internal navigation, within the overall University of London website. This allows easier navigation and discovery of CDE online content and also allows us to provide more nuanced reporting on site visitors and usage.

### Current position (August 2020)

Social media

The CDE currently has two main social media channels in use managed by CDE Fellow Julie Voce.

• Twitter (**twitter.com/cdelondon**)

• LinkedIn (**linkedin.com/company/cde-uol**)

As part of the 2019–2020 CDE communications strategy it was agreed to revive these channels and the following targets were set:

Twitter

• **Number of followers increased to 600 (from 500 in July 2019).** @CDELondon currently has 692 followers.
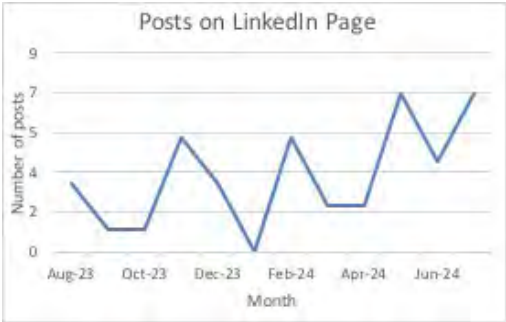

New followers by month
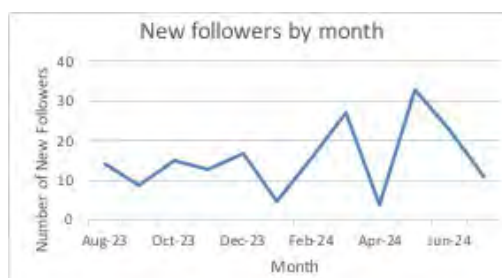
- **Tweets/retweets occur at least 1–2 times per week.** Not managed every week, but still a good number of tweets throughout the year (224), with peaks of around 50 when key events have been taking place.

Tweets by @CDELondon
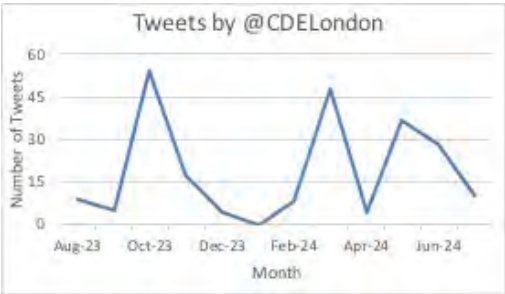
- **CDE hashtags established for every CDE event.** #CDELondon used primarily, but RIDE maintains its own hashtag. In addition, live tweeting took place for RIDE, Supporting student success and two webinars.

LinkedIn

- **CDE has a professional profile with all Fellows with LinkedIn profiles listed as employees.** Updates have been posted regularly with an average of three per month.

Posts on LinkedIn Page

Statistics

Twitter	2019–2020
Followers	187
Tweets	224
Profile visits	1,227
Impressions*	171,209
Mentions	97
Link clicks	436
Retweets (without comments)	275
Likes	598

Linkedin	2019–2020
Followers	64
Employees	5
LinkedIn: Posts	40
Clicks on posts	96
Impressions*	1,818
Shares	14
Likes	91

* Impressions is the number of times a tweet or post is displayed, but not necessarily read.

Targets for 2020–2021

Twitter

• To increase the number of followers to 1,000

• To maintain regular tweets – at least 1–2 times per week.

LinkedIn

• To increase the number of followers to 125

• To ensure all CDE Fellows list their Fellowship on their profile (employee of CDE)

• To maintain regular posts – at least 1–2 times per week.

Website highlights

CDE webpage views totalled 75,998 from 1 January 2019–31 July 2020.
The homepage alone was visited 57,498 times in this period.

Added a new Covid-19 support resources page in early April 2020 (3,554 page views by 31/07/20) in addition to our regular distance education resources page (1,234 page views). CDE resources have been adopted/promoted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, the International Council for Open and Distance Education, JISC over the last six months.

Published 40 blog posts, including practitioner blogs from those outside CDE as well as Fellows, that have captured some of the challenges of, and responses to, Covid-19. Showcasing activity from across the MIs is a new and exciting development to the blog pages. Page views suggest our blogs are reaching a wide audience. For example: Putting 110,000 exams online (882), Practising putting 110,00 exams online (349), Jumping online: what have we learned (361) and our blog gateway page has achieved 1,323 views in this period.

Published 50 news items on a wide range of distance education-related topics including a range of popular new webinars as well as annual CDE events such as the RIDE Conference and Supporting Student Success workshop, our pioneering CDE Visiting Scholar and CDE Student Fellow schemes, CDE awards, and successful distance education initiatives within the University of London Federation and elsewhere. Our news pages were viewed 1,177 times in this period.

Reached out to wider audiences by posted recordings of CDE webinars on the University's YouTube channel and promoting CDE events via other organisations (ALT, SEDA, EDEN, EADTU).

Finally, some statistics on the social media engagement with blog posts:

• nine blog posts were shared via LinkedIn (between November 2019 to July 2020), generating 28 clicks to the blog in total

• 14 blog posts were shared via Twitter (between November 2019 and August 2020), generating 339 engagements (e.g. clicks, likes, retweets).

Follow us on:

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cdelondon

linkedin.com/
company/cde-uol

london.ac.uk/centre-for-distance-education