Third Edition » November 2021

## DIGI-FACE REVIEW





## Editorial

Paul Webb and Merlin Kull

Platform Launch that took place on the 1st of October. The presentations and activities, as well as a specially prepared video that has found its way onto the landing page of the DIGI-FACE site, attracted many positive comments. As such, above and beyond meeting its expressed purpose, the launch can be considered as being a successful event.

Since the last newsletter in March the platform has grown tremendously as a repository for multiple sources of information, documents, tools, and activities. New generic and mini-modules have been developed and made available, many of which have already been taken up by DIGI-FACE members, while there are still some on offer this year. Proof of concept has been achieved via the number of Generic Modules that have been run by recently trained facilitators, including scholarship students facilitating modules not only for their peers, but also for academics at their universities. Newly developed mini-modules on specific issues such as 'Managing your DIGI-FACE Moodle Site', 'Using your Padcaster' and 'Module Makeover' have proved their purpose and will be offered again in future as required.

We have had to say goodbye to Nilly Chingaté Castaño, and have welcomed Anna Hettche who has taken her role at the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management. Simone' Scott and Brandon James have been actively engaged in the Learning Experience Design (LXD) team efforts, and Michael Kongo and El-Hadji Touré have provided additional 'French connections'. Vanessa Liehr, a student at Kehl University is completing a three month internship with the LXD team in South Africa. You can read more on each of the above here.

While much has happened, time has sped by, and there is still much to be done. For example the Publications and Project Management sites and the DIGI-FACE App are still in 'build' phases. Strategic planning for enabling the fullest possible participation and ownership by members on what DIGI-FACE offers is currently in process, helped tremendously by Centre Specific meetings that have been held with key members at almost every Centre. Please assist in this process in a small way by completing or updating your **personal profile**.

#### Time is relative to your frame of reference

#### IN THIS ISSUE

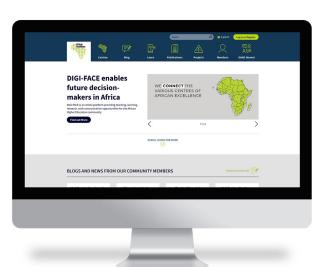


## **Official Launch of the DIGI-FACE Platform**

Simoné Scott

The DIGI-FACE platform launch on 1 October 2021 was a resounding success! Ninety-three participants joined the online event that was hosted by Merlin Kull, DIGI-FACE Project Coordinator based at Kehl University. Speakers included DIGI-FACE Project Leaders Ewald Eisenberg and Paul Webb as well as Eva Rothenpieler, Programme Manager for African Excellence at the DAAD.

The event featured informative videos about the platform and an in-depth website tour. Karlien Potgieter (DIGI-FACE Administrator and Coordinating Agent) also awarded Kibwana Zamani (from the Kenyan German Centre for Mining, Environmental Engineering and Resource Management – CEMEREM) a special prize for solving the launch-related crossword puzzle that was shared with all Centres. **Read more** about what happened on the day here, and watch the platform launch video **here**.



#### Participant Comments

Dear DIGI-FACE team, great effort. The platform will be very useful for all of us

Wolfram Laube

The platform is really good. I am impressed by the various modules on the platform.

Kibwana Zamani

# What to expect Find a Centre Read or write a Blog Explore Online Learning Modules Publish Research Connect with other Members

Manage Projects

## DIGI-FACE Launch Crossword Competition Winner



The winner of the DIGI-FACE Launch Crossword Competition, Kibwana Zamani from the Kenyan German Centre for Mining, Environmental Engineering and Resource Management (CEMEREM), shares more about his experience. **Read here** to find out how he went about completing the crossword, how he felt when he won, and which module he's going to be sharing with DIGI-FACE to benefit from the team's personalised support.

Thank you, DIGI-FACE Team, for giving me a chance to participate in the crossword challenge. I am honoured to be part of this community and to be the winner of the challenge." - Kibwana Zamani

#### DIGI-FACE meet with Centres of African Excellence Karlien Potgieter

During the second semester of 2021 the DIGI-FACE team had catch-up meetings with various Centres of African Excellence. The aim was for the team to connect with their colleagues during a series of face-to-face Zoom meetings where everyone

#### The meetings proved to be highly valuable because it gave the team further insight into each Centre's operations and unique needs.

could have a frank discussion. Meeting participants took this opportunity to share about the latest developments, whether from a Centre or DIGI-FACE perspective.

Discussions covered digitalisation in general, the use of Moodle, updates made to the DIGI-FACE platform and changes to the Learn (Moodle) homepage. The DIGI-FACE team also shared the latest prospectus with the Centres, getting their input on the modules that would be offered. The concept of mini-modules was introduced to the Centres, and the difference between mini-modules, centre-specific modules and generic modules was explained. The idea of mini-modules was received very well by all Centres.

Each Centre also updated the DIGI-FACE team on any developments that took place since their regional training sessions (end of 2020 and early 2021). Centre team members also shared more information about module development at their respective Centres. The DIGI-FACE team was excited to hear about these developments and offered assistance where applicable. Each meeting was ended by taking a closer look at each Centre's next steps. The meetings proved to be highly valuable because they gave the team further insight into each Centre's operations and unique needs. The team looks forward to more Centre meetings in the future! If anyone needs to set up a Centre/DIGI-FACE meeting please make contact.

## **Reflections of a new Facilitator**



In the final months of 2020, Ray had just started learning how to fully use the Moodle platform. His goal was to learn more about how to use the platform because this would enable him to create effective module material, to better manage his modules and, ultimately, to help his students learn effectively.

At first, he felt

intimidated by this new platform with its vast array of features that are so useful to online learners and teachers alike. Ray explored the platform's tools and felt incredibly overwhelmed. Browsing through the settings of features like the quiz section brought about a mild headache. However, the need to learn far exceeded any fleeting discomfort he could ever experience and he soldiered on.

Enter DIGI-FACE's Explore the Online Learning Environment (EOLE) module. Right away, he was struck dumb at how he

had made his self-education of the Moodle platform more complex than it needed to be. The module broke down seemingly complex ideas into bite-sized easily digestible bits of information that could be managed quickly with little time dedicated to it.

Now this did not mean that Ray had the luxury of letting himself become lazy, he still had to put in the work! And with luck, a bit of time and steady guidance provided by the module material, the engaging assignments and astute Facilitators, he managed to work through the platform with minimal friction.

This led him down a different path than he had anticipated earlier. With the progress he had made thanks to completing EOLE, Ray assisted many of his colleagues who were not part of the module with the interactive and non-interactive features available on Moodle. These actions further solidified his understanding of the platform. Ultimately, the DIGI-FACE team came to notice that Ray was taking initiative. His actions were the precursor to him being invited to become the Facilitator of Exploring the Online Learning Environment EOLE!

Ray felt that the evolution from being a novice to becoming an expert and eventually a Facilitator was the ultimate accolated. He had truly come full circle and the experience was well worth the effort!

### The journey from Participant to Facilitator Sonja Ebbing

One of DIGI-FACE's goals is to create new Facilitators from among the members of the Centres of African Excellence. New cohorts of Facilitators have already been trained for two of DIGI-FACE's most well-known modules. Firstly, eight new Facilitators from various Centres have completed their training and took on the task of facilitating the September run of Academic Written and Graphic Presentation. Additionally, Strengthening PostGraduate Supervision (October 2021) was led by four new Facilitators who were still completing their training. Raymond Sawe also came on board as the Facilitator of Exploring the Online Learning Environment in August 2021. These new Facilitators have done themselves and the DIGI-FACE project proud. Their new role has helped them gain self-confidence and they have shown great determination in dealing with the challenges and opportunities that come with digital teaching and learning. In addition to that, these Facilitators will now be able to share their new modulespecific knowledge with others within the Centres of African Excellence and beyond.

## **DIGI-FACE Modules: Second Semester 2021**

While some of DIGI-FACE's firm favourites like 'Academic Written and Graphic Presentation' (AWGP), 'Exploring the Online Learning Environment' (EOLE) and 'Strengthening Post Graduate Supervision' (SPG) were on offer again during the second half of the year, a number of new modules and mini-modules also became available to date. The 'Technology Enhanced Teaching and Learning I (TETL I)' module generated interest, as did the 'Quantitative Research Methodologies 1' module, which was offered to two separate groups.

Quite a few new modules became available in the second semester of 2021.

The first mini-modules offered were the 'Module Makeover', 'Using your Padcaster' and 'Managing your DIGI-FACE Moodle Site'. The 'Managing your DIGI-FACE Moodle Site' mini-module specifically targeted 'Centre IT Managers'. Access to stable Internet connections and the cost of data remain important challenges for online teaching and learning within the project, while growing familiarity with the DIGI-FACE Moodle Management System bode well for the future.

Course name	Description
Exploring the Online Learning Environment (EOLE)	This module introduces participants to the DIGI-FACE Moodle platform and enables them to create their own courses by experiencing some of the pedagogical and technical activities that the platform affords.
Managing your DIGI-FACE Moodle site (MDFMS) mini-module.	Managing courses: Authenticating, creating course shells, enrolling and supporting peers.
Using your PadCaster (UyP) mini-module	From unpacking your PadCaster to editing your video.
Academic Written and Graphic Presentation (AWGP)	This course aims at providing post-graduate students and academics with the basics needed for presenting their academic work professionally.
Quantitative Research Methodologies (QRM)	This course introduces you to the basics of quantitative research processes. It covers methodology, an introduction to Microsoft Excel, some hints on self-organization as well as first steps into descriptive statistics.
Module makeover (MM) mini-module	Academics and media personnel who have already created an online course/s and wish to improve their user experience (UX).

#### Online Teaching Tips

#### How do you get more students to complete your module?

It's no secret that it can be challenging to complete an online course. In a brick-and-mortar classroom people can rely on face-to-face interactions and set lecture times to help motivate themselves to complete a module/course. With more and more institutions and individuals turning to online learning we thought we would share with you some tips from the "eLearning Industry" website: 7 Ways to Increase Online Course Completion Rates.

In the article you will find useful information around how to promote course completion, including the following:

**November** 

Coherence

Achieving Research

Canva mini-module

modules

Read the full article *here*.

Upcoming

#### dates/events

To register for any of the upcoming courses, visit **digiface.org** 

#### **5** Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

6 Reward and Recognise

4 Have a Clear "Why"

**3** Block Time in Calendars

7 Follow Up with Incompletes

1 Set A Clear Deadline for Completion

2 Break the Course into Smaller Steps

#### December modules

PowerPoint to e-Learning mini-module

#### 14 December 2021

Virtual meeting: Steering Committee and Advisory Board

## Monitoring the quality of DIGI-FACE modules

#### 2021 Quality Assurance Body meetings

The DIGI-FACE Quality Assurance Body (QAB) is made up of a group of experts in higher education whose main responsibility is to help ensure that all modules shared on DIGI-FACE meet a certain standard. The group of academics from around the globe met to discuss and define a clear set of guidelines and criteria during two online meetings on the 10th of May and 14th of September 2021. Both meetings were chaired by Professor Proscovia Namubiru from CERM-ESA, Uganda Management Institute.

During the meetings the various QAB members deliberated on the processes and standards that need to be put in place in order to ensure the quality of all all generic and modules of general interest made available on the DIGI- FACE platform. Specific criteria and guidelines were identified for both the production of generic modules as well as modules of general interest.

We invite all Centres to produce their own digital modules to be shared with all DIGI-FACE members. However, before being made available on DIGI-FACE, every generic and module of general interest will have to pass an assessment based on the criteria defined by the QAB.

More information about the process and criteria will be shared soon. If you'd like to share one of your Centre's modules please submit a proposal to *Karlien.Potgieter@mandela.ac.za* to nominate your module as a module of general interest.

#### Roles of the QAB

Merlin Kull

- Setting the quality criteria for all Generic Modules and Modules of General Interest
- Deciding on the requirements and criteria that have to be met for a module to be published on the DIGI-FACE site
- Assessing the quality of newly developed modules (Generic modules and Modules of General Interest)
- The approval of Generic Modules and Modules of General Interest

#### What are the Generic Modules and Modules of General Interest?

#### **Generic Modules**

Generic Modules are not discipline specific and have been created for all Centres of Excellence. They aim at contributing to interdisciplinary, methodological and personal qualifications towards strengthening postgraduate teaching, learning and research. Modules of General Interest

Modules of general interest are modules developed by a Centre of Excellence, which concern specific disciplines and which are intended to be generally accessible to all the Centres of Excellence. The generic modules and modules of general Interest are presented in digital format using innovative scenarios and cutting-edge digital teaching and learning methods. These modules are available to be used as design exemplars to assist all Centres of Excellence in the creation and integration of their own modules into the platform.

## Beyond the African Excellence network

Merlin Kull

#### DIGI-FACE generates interests all over the world

DIGI-FACE has generated a lot of interest in recent months, even beyond their primary market: the African Excellence Network. Other African and international cooperation projects have also sat up and paid attention to the platform. As a result, the DIGI-FACE project was represented at several virtual events where the team could share more about their experience and the approach they've taken to the project. Their presence at these events allowed the team to engage in an active exchange, and to identify beneficial synergies among the different stakeholders. **Read more** to find out about their experience at two key online events that involved other DAAD stakeholders.

The DIGI-FACE project was represented at several virtual events

#### Two new Centres join the DIGI-FACE family

We are eagerly looking forward to working with these Centres The DIGI-FACE consortium welcomes two new Centres to the African Excellence family! Both new Centres of Excellence focus on resource management. Pro-RUWA (short for "Promoting Academic Capacities for Sustainable Agricultural Resources Use in West Africa) and SCO (short for Sustainable Operations for Resource Management and Food Supply) will be progressively onboarded, joining in DIGI-FACE activities, and becoming an integral part of the African Excellence network. It is believed that this is the start of a valuable partnership between DIGI-FACE and the two new Centres.

### Farewell to Nilly Chingaté Castaño

It is with regret that we say farewell to Nilly Chingaté Castaño, former Programme Manager at the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management. Nilly worked on the development of Sustainable Operating Systems for DIGI-FACE and was a member of the Congolese German Centre for Microfinance (CCAM).

She is currently working as Product Manager for QS World University Ranking where she helps manage the rankings of universities based on surveys from academics worldwide.

Nilly said "I am still in the higher education management field, but this is a little bit different. As soon as I have my visa for the UK, I will move there with my daughter. In the meantime, I am still based in Frankfurt". Nilly goes with grateful thanks and every best wish for the future from the DIGI-FACE community.





Anna Hettche

Anna Hettche (a member of the Frankfurt School staff) taking over her role. Read more about Anna here.



Eva Rothenpieler

## DAAD and the digitalisation of Centres of African Excellence

Eva Rothenpieler has been part of the Centres of African Excellence programme for many years and has provided essential administrative support to all of the Centres in her time at the DAAD. Eva has recently been promoted within DAAD to be the person responsible for digitalisation within the Centres of African Excellence programme. Her experience and current responsibilities will be of great help to the team, especially in the light of the fact that the platform is growing and opening up other DAAD-funded programmes. We are eagerly looking forward to working with her even more closely than before and will rely on her guidance and advice as the project grows and develops.

## New faces

As noted in the editorial, some new faces have contributed to the team. You can learn more about their contributions and interests **here**.



Simoné Scott



Brandon James



Michael Kongo



El-Hadji Touré



Vanessa Liehr







NELSON MANDELA



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