

Dear Students,

**Re: Provision of Course Materials in the CD-ROM Format**

We have noted the views expressed by some of you in relation to the above-mentioned matter. By way of clarification, I wish to inform you that WOU has launched the CD-ROM-based course material initiative based on the following considerations:

1. Global ODL trends show that the switch to an e-learning environment is inevitable and will have to come sooner or later. WOU, as a forward looking university, is preparing graduates who are well-equipped to operate and function in the e-environment of the future. As such, the University has embarked on an innovative plan to digitise all its course materials in preparation for the delivery of all its courses through the Internet (Web-based) by the year 2016. By then, it is expected that the whole country will be provided with high speed broadband access.

The University is aware that currently broadband provisions may still be inadequate outside the major population centers of Kuala Lumpur and Penang. For this reason, even though the technology is available, Web-based delivery is not a practical option for most students. On the other hand, the use of CD-ROM allows the digitisation process to proceed without any concerns about bandwidth issues. In addition, the delivery of digitised materials in CD has its own advantages, including the provision of:

- Value-added multimedia rich contents
  - Quick access to specific course contents
  - Internet link to web references
  - Course contents portability
2. The decision to introduce CD-ROM-based course materials was made only after a feasibility and viability study of the proposed project was undertaken by the University. This decision to move ahead also took into consideration the many repeated requests from students who have experienced/could see the advantages of learning through the use of such CD-ROM-based learning materials.
  3. A great deal of resources in terms of money and man-hours have been invested to develop and produce the CD-ROM-based course materials that you have received. In addition to the necessary academic content experts, WOU has assembled and trained a team of multimedia practitioners to develop good quality course materials to enhance your e-learning skills and enrich your learning experience.
  4. The presentation of course materials provided on the CDs has been enriched with many value-added user-friendly multimedia features for your benefit. These include flash animation, provision of hyper-links, and use of learning objects, etc. It is important that you make an effort to try them out even though it means a change from your normal comfort zone.

5. As the course materials are now contained in a light-weight CD, they are much more portable compared to the bulky printed hardcopy version. You may be pleased to know that the whole or parts of the course material can also be easily extracted or copied to the USB drive for even greater mobility. You can even print out the pages and compile them into a hardcopy if you wish to do so. Please refer to **Appendix 1** for more features of the CD-ROM-based material.
6. To the more adventurous students, you may want to make use of certain open-source software such as *Foxit* to facilitate effective learning. You can use *Foxit* to highlight text, add your own study notes or to locate specific terms by using the right keywords, etc. For your information, ETPU is in the process of preparing a power point presentation to explain the use of this software for the benefit of all students.
7. Nevertheless, we take note of some of the issues raised and the University is making following arrangements to address them:
  - Plug points in the ROs. If necessary, the RO staff will open up the Computer Labs in the RO for student use when they are not used for formal teaching purposes.
  - Additional hardcopies of the course materials will be made available at the libraries/ reading room at the main campus as well as the Regional Offices.
8. Students should note that the issue of course fee increase is not linked to the University's decision to produce course materials in CD-ROM format as an intermediate step in its migration plans towards a full e-learning environment. Wawasan Open University has invested a substantial amount of money in digitising its materials and developing the CD-ROM course materials. Indeed, as you well know, the fee charged by Wawasan Open University still remains one of the lowest for ODL programs in Malaysia.

I wish to reaffirm once again that Wawasan Open University always has the interest of its students at heart when embarking on new initiatives in our continuing efforts to enhance our students' learning experience. I trust you will find the above clarification helpful and wish you all the best in your studies.

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