

E-Library response to COVID-19 Related University Closure

March 2020 to June 2020

Background

Amidst concerns of local spread of COVID-19, universities of the country were closed on the 13th of march under the directives of UGC. Since the re-opening of universities for usual business was not an option for an undetermined period of time, the UGC directed universities to initiate online delivery of their programmes. The faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya commenced a formal online programme for all the batches starting from 31st March 2020. This report presents the response of E-library to this newly emerged need of the faculty.

Improving Medmoodle platform

When the online learning programme began on the 31st March 2020, the existing MedMoodle platform had many features which made it less attractive to users and it was difficult to navigate through. A few key issues were lack of organization of the frontpage, inconsistency in the content included in a 'course' and the need to go through four to six clicks to reach a given resource. Moreover, the Moodle version was outdated (2.2) which lacked many advanced features including facility to login via a mobile App.

A. Restructuring of the platform

Due to overwhelming requests for an upgrade to improve the navigation a quick upgrade to the structure was planned and completed by the 7th April 2020. It is important to note that the work was done in-campus despite curfew being imposed to curtail travelling. The technical work of re-structuring was handled by Dr. Sisira Dharmaratne and Mr. U.S.K. Ekanayake. This saw an overhaul in the homepage to which a menu bar was included and it instantly made a huge difference to the user experience. Along with the introduction of menu bar, all the modules and subjects were organized at the 'course' level allowing teachers to organize their content under their names under relevant module/subject. This achieved user-friendliness in navigating the platform for both teachers and students.

Since teachers are allowed to upload material under their names, a topic format which includes the date for resources uploaded was introduced to help students to identify resources easily. However, this format is not adhered to when some of the resources are uploaded. As such, some students still requests to organize material according to dates rather than teachers' names.

B. Upgrading the version to Moodle 3.8

Soon after the Medmoodle was upgraded online traffic to the platform increased causing frequent shut-downs of the platform. These disturbance frustrated both teachers and students at times and casted doubts on the reliability and longevity of the platform. In liaison with the NCSU, E-library could organize a version upgrade to the platform along with a much needed migration to a new server with better capacity and functionality. This migration took three weeks to complete. Under the supervision of Dr. Sisira Dharmaratne, Mr. U.S.K.Ekanayake, Mr. D.B.Ekanayake and Mr. Jayantha Sumanasekera engaged

in the tiring technical work amidst frequent disturbances due to curfew and partial lockdowns imposed within the Kandy district. It is noteworthy that Mr. U.S.K.Ekanayake, despite working extended hours to ensure timely completion of work has refused to claim over-time payments for the Month of April.

The upgraded Medmoodle was reviewed by student batch-reps and teachers before the release and except for one major omission, which was rectified immediately, the transfer was smooth and relatively uneventful. The second upgrade saw that users could use Moodle mobile App to easily navigate the platform. There have been no complaints on intermittent shutdowns, too. Both students and staff have expressed their extreme satisfaction with the new upgrades.

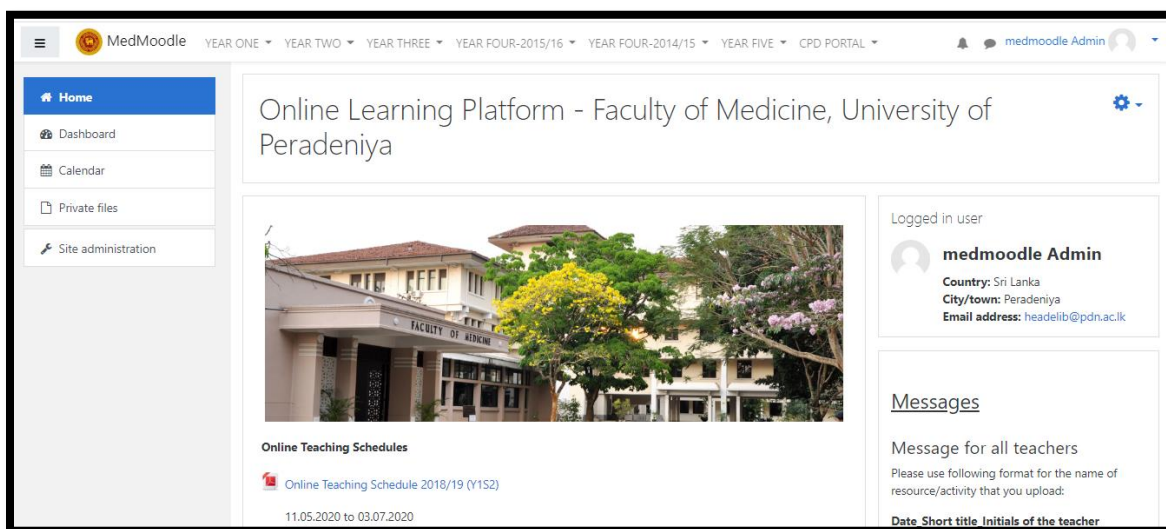


Figure one – Home Page of the upgraded MedMoodle platform

C. Creating the MedMoodle PG platform

According to data provided by SAR/Medicine on the 23rd May 2020, Faculty of Medicine currently has 59 registered Post Graduate students. Upon a request received from the department of Forensic medicine to create a platform for their post graduate diploma course, E-library, under permission from Dean, created a separate platform for Post Graduate courses. This site is entirely independent from the Medmoodle platform meant for UG affairs. It can be used to facilitate all Diploma, Masters and PhD courses through online means.

Establishing a reliable help-line to students and staff

Sudden transition to online teaching programme created a huge demand for technical support for both students and staff including extended staff. The needs were multifaceted and included re-setting login credentials, support to upload material, technical advice on audio narrating power point presentations, resolving technical issues in sound dubbed PowerPoint presentations, etc.

The E-library consciously stepped up its approach to technical support and entertained all requests for support 24*7 through Mobile calls, SMS, WattsAPP, Viber and Email. An opportunity to practice sound

dubbing to PowerPoint presentations and obtain hands-on technical support at the E-library was made available whenever teachers required such support. Dr. Sisira Dharmaratne and Mr. U.S.K. Ekanayake functioned as points of contact and worked from both in-campus and home to provide this service round the clock. A more formal helpline is now established for technical support and links are published in the Moodle platform.

E-library also undertook the task of downloading the sessions conducted through Facebook by some faculty and extended staff and uploading them into Moodle. Mr. D.B.Ekanayake continues to monitor, download and upload these sessions using his own data during the curfew period. He has refused to obtain a re-imbusement for the expenses of internet data which was arranged by the Head/E-library and Dean.

Help lines

E Library (Dr. Sisira Dharmartne)

Text/Email E-library with your registration number, name and mobile number for password re-set or for any other complaints/ suggestions about Medmoodle.

email: headelib@med.pdn.ac.lk

Telephone : 0773208288/ 0718248680

Whats app : 0718248680

Curriculum Coordinating Centre (CCC) Dr. Sulochana Wijethunga

You may contact CCC for issues related to scheduled online sessions

email : chairperson.ccc@med.pdn.ac.lk

Telephone : 077 736 6424

Whats app : 077 736 6424

Technical Resource Centre (TRC)

Staff Development

A. Online sessions and webinars

Due to sudden transition to online teaching, there was an immediate need for academic staff to develop their familiarity with online tools, mainly Moodle and Zoom. The E-library organized six Zoom based online sessions to familiarize them with Moodle and Zoom platforms. The lists of participants are not available as these were held online. About 50 - 60 academic and non-academic staff members participated in these sessions.

B. Face-to-face workshop on MedMoodle

Following initial establishment of online teaching, a need for training technical staff of all academic departments to handle basic functions of Medmoodle was identified by the E-library. This was endorsed by majority of teachers. Once the universities were re-opened for staff, E-library conducted five face to face workshops on basic functions of Medmoodle. These were conducted on 28.05.2020, 02.06.2020 and 09.06.2020. Both academic (12) and technical staff (22) attended this workshops covering all academic departments of the faculty completed the workshop. This should provide sufficient skills to help academic staff members of respective departments

Details of participants of the workshop are attached as annexure 1.

CPD Portal in MedMoodle

Quite apart from familiarity with basic online teaching tools, long term online delivery of programmes need to be based on existing educational principles and established good practices. A continuous education on these aspects was recognized as a need and most academic staff members expressed their willingness to further develop their understanding on online teaching/learning and assessment.

To address above need a CPD portal was created within the Moodle platform for staff members of the faculty. This acts as a repository for all the recorded online sessions conducted earlier and also for online/downloaded resource material on various aspects of educational theory and practice including online teaching, learning and assessment.

C. Access to Free MOOCs through COURSERA

E-library shared information about above free offer for more than 1000 MOOCs available for all staff and students. We facilitated creation of login accounts for three academic staff members and six technical officers who requested access.

Conducting surveys monitoring login statistics

E-Library conducted three online surveys with students and academic staff. These were conducted as and when a need arose to gather relevant information on online teaching and learning. Following is a summary of these surveys.

Name of the survey	Duration	Survey Mode	Focus	Response Rate
Online Learning Readiness Survey	30 March - 6 April, 2020	Moodle	UG Students	60% (761/1268)
Online Learning Follow-up Survey, May 2020	26 May – 1 June, 2020	Google forms	UG Students	89% (1123/1268)
E-Learning related attitudes, perceptions and needs of university teachers	27 April - 30 April, 2020	Google forms	Academic Staff	65% (76/117)

*Both students' surveys were followed-up with mobile conversation with selected students, including those who failed to respond.

Student and staff responses to above surveys have been used to shape the E-library response to COVID-19 related university closure included in this report. We continue to monitor overall login statistics of students. A few interim reports based on key findings of login data and survey results have been forwarded to Dean time to time which have been annexed as Annexures 2,3, and 4. Some of the graphs which carry key information are annexed as Annexure 5.

A key recommendation coming out from these surveys is the need for pro-actively contacting students who do not respond to any of the surveys, who also generally show very low login statistics in Medmoodle. Our mobile conversations revealed that students do not necessarily stay away from learning despite being cut-off from the online delivery due to network related issues, but this may not be true for all the students. It is important to note that Ms. Subhgya Liyanage, Temporary Lecturer attached to FQAC who conducted about 250 conversations with students using her personal mobile phone refused any re-imburement for the costs incurred.

Liaising with external bodies on behalf of the faculty

A- NCSU

The E-library frequently liaised with NCSU to upgrade and Create Moodle platforms for the faculty. We also frequently mediate creation and resetting of pdn accounts for faculty staff members.

B- LEARN

Liaising with LEARN is required for maintaining data free access to Zoom platform and to sort out issues regarding data charges which crop up sporadically. We investigated one such incident which affected

almost all students of one batch provided a report to ISPs and Telecommunication Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka through LEARN. The data charge issues has declined since then.

C- AHEAD

Under the instructions of Dean, Dr. Sisira Dharmaratne along with Dr. Veranja Liyanapathirana and Champa Ratnatunga submitted a proposal to obtain technical funding assistance to improve Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) facilities of the faculty. We are yet to receive a response from them.

D- Third party companies

E-library liaised with two private companies to obtain useful online resources for the use of academic staff for teaching purposes.

Acland Anatomy

This is a product recommended and requested by the Department of Anatomy. Wolters Kluwer, which provides this facility, is a global information services company, headquartered in Netherlands.

Upon our request we have been offered a free access to above online product for 450 users on temporary basis. We have requested funds through AHEAD grants to purchase this product which has been offered at a special rate of 1200US\$. Since the AHEAD funding is not guaranteed and the Department of Anatomy finds this product useful, it is recommended that the faculty find alternative option to purchase this product.

DxR software

This is a facility which provides access to online virtual patients for training clinical reasoning. This is only one of many such software commercially available. This is very expensive to purchase but the company has offered to engage in case development in the platform which will bring benefits to both the faculty and the company. E-library will negotiate with the company under the instructions of Dean.

Advocacy for future developments

With UGC directive to continue online delivery of teaching even after universities are re-opened, the faculty needs to plan for the future and draw out a plan to re-shape teaching, learning and assessment practices of based on online mode. While the E-library can play a key role in developing such a plan, it is recommended that faculty appoints a steering committee and subcommittees represented by Heads or nominees to propose plans under different aspects such as online teaching and learning, online pre-clinical assessment and online clinical assessments.

Dr. Sisira Dharmaratne

Head/ E-Library

17.06.2020