INSTITUTIONAL POLICY ON

LIBRARY AND IT INFRASTRUCTURE

Policy Owner	Board of The APA
Responsibility	Quality Commissioner and Quality Committee
Status	Approved
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Introduction

Over the last few years at die Afrikaanse Protestantse Akademie the role of and activities taking place within the academic library appeared to be changing. Over the last few years fewer students visited the academic library facilities and more students accessed the academic information services via the internet.

The management of the institution noticed that many students have their own notebook computers and tablet computers. Most staff members and lecturers advocate the use and availability of notebooks and tablet computers in the classroom to enable the student to enrich the learning experience in the classroom.

During the course of a few years the management at our institution noticed a steep decline in students' use of the computer facilities at the library. In the meantime, students increasingly demanded internet access and network support on campus whilst using their own computers, notebooks or tablet computers. This tendency seems to be the norm at most tertiary institutions.

These facts affected the organisation of the library significantly. In 2005 we had a ratio of 1 computer to 3 students in the library. We reduced the amount of computers in the library to a ratio of 1 computer for every 10 students over the course of 10 years and made space available in the study area of the library for students to use their own laptops and tablet computers and gave students free internet access on their own devices at campus. This seems to have had a big positive impact on the amount of students visiting the library and studying at the available student study areas in the library whilst using their own computer devices. Currently, more students are using their own devices at campus and less are using the infrastructure available in the library. At the moment all students have their own computers and bring them to class every day. We also help students who cannot afford a computer by means of bursaries to buy themselves a computer of tablet computer. As the situation is currently the ratio of 1 computer to every 10 students available in the library is more than adequate and we continue to monitor the situation to give students the best possible options for IT support.

With regard to the availability of IT infrastructure to academic and support staff, we have a ratio of 1:1. Every academic faculty member is sponsored with a notebook computer by the institution. The notebook computer is replaced in a 3 year cycle of use. After 3 years the notebook computer of every faculty member is replaced with a new one. The replacement of the notebook computers are budgeted for annually. Support staff receive a new computer every 3 years as well and the ratio currently is 1:1. In addition all faculty and support staff receive all required licensed software (i.e. Office 365, Logos Bible Software, Antivirus software etc.)

In addition to the above, the institution began to develop local area networks in the 1990's to share central computer resources such as printers and scanners. Currently all lecture rooms and offices are connected to the LAN and TCP/IP filtering, MAC filtering and dedicated routers are in place to ensure the privacy of the network.

Library and study area

The IT infrastructure scenario changed significantly over the course of the last 20 years. Our institution noticed the renewed interest of students and faculty in the library as an important source of network access, printing facilities, copy facilities and most importantly for internet access. We offer free WiFi access to faculty and students on campus at the designated study areas of which there are currently two study areas on campus able to host many students at a time.

New student recreation and study centre

For tech-savvy students, studying is not an individual activity at home anymore but a group activity of brainstorming, swopping ideas and research online. To be in touch with this modern trend in tertiary students' needs we have recently bought a new premise adjacent to the existing campus building and we equipped it with "restaurant style" tables and chairs. We expanded our internet and network access to this new premises for the students' use. This facility is currently the centre of student activity when studying, brainstorming and surfing the web or doing online research.

Training for accessing information

The most obvious responsibility when requiring of students to be able to use IT infrastructure, is the acquisition of library skills or other training related to accessing information and doing online research.

Part of the move of our institution to enable students to use IT technology effectively is the requirement that students should supply their own portable (notebook) computers or tablet computers as a basic requirement when enrolling. The availability of IT technology when the students are off-campus was one of the basic concerns that underpinned this move. If a student only have IT technology available when they are on-campus, they are unable to really effectively master IT technology and use IT infrastructure when preparing assignments or when studying for exams. The availability of computers in the classroom had the effect that lecturers were able to move away from traditional textbooks to e-books and other forms of electronic study material (for example online resources). Powerpoint slides, data projectors, YouTube videos and other electronic learning materials are now part of the normal classroom environment.

Formal training for accessing online resources and doing research are compulsory for students and part of every academic programme at the institution. One of the focus areas of the formal training for accessing online resources are training on the risks and ethics of plagiarism, how to avoid plagiarism, how to prevent abuses like spam and identity theft, antivirus software, avoiding pornography, the effective and ethical use of social media and the consequences of hate mail and spamming.

Library and IT Infrastructure for distance learners

Student email accounts

All students receive an email account from the institution at enrolment. The typical address is example@my.apa.ac.za . This domain and these email addresses are registered at *Google Educational* and it gives every student access to Google Scholar for online research, Google Books (i.e. e-books and e-resources) and all related Google Software and applications free of charge. The email addresses are also used to create Google Groups and discussion forums on our Moodle System relevant to every academic program. All students have access to Google Discussion Groups, Scholarly debates and free online resources while they are enrolled at the

institution (see figure 1 below). When a student graduates, he/she has the option to keep the email address free of charge to encourage students to be actively involved in ongoing research and academic discussions even after they graduated from our institution.

Figure 1

Moodle system

What is the Moodle System of die Afrikaanse Protestantse Akademie?

It is used in communicating the information from lecturer and support staff to the user of the information. It is the customised *Information Communication Technology* of the institution used to communicate to students and to enable students to download recorded classroom lectures, e-books, additional study material and peer submitted reports; also to serve as a digital platform for students to upload assignments and reviews. It also serves as a platform to communicate questions directly to the lecturer or the class.

Access to Library and Information Services

The convergence of communication technology via Moodle offers die Afrikaanse Protestantse Akademie an array of options to deliver library and information services to distant students. The expanded use of Moodle in the delivery of library and information services has served to reduce the barriers to library and information services that are occasioned by distance for distance learners. A student can access the library of die Afrikaanse Protestantse Akademie 24/7 from any site via the webpage or the Moodle System.

If a student want to use a specific book he/she can log into the library system with their supplied credentials and place a hold on a specific book(s), or ask for the library resource to be couriered to any address nationwide within 24 hours or to have a look inside the book. Due to the unreliable postal system we opted out of using traditional post and decided to rather budget to use courier services to deliver library books to students when requested. This decision is in the best interest of our students and is adequate for the amount of requests we receive for books from the library.

With Google Books integration the system is able to give students a preview of the book in the library, but due to copyright on library resources students are not able to download an electronic copy of the resource. The resource must be physically booked out of the library and couriered to the student. This is currently a very reasonable practice for the institution and students and we foresee no immediate problems to keep students who are unable to visit the library in contact with the required resources.

Students also have online access to extensive online library resources linked to our library profile such as OpenLibrary, Jonathan Edwards Centre for Africa and ResearchGate. Our library is also linked to WORLDCAT, and other tertiary institutions in Southern Africa via a dedicated proxy server and we have an agreement to borrow resources not available in our library from other institutions as the need arises. Distant students are thus adequately catered for in obtaining library resources. We also make extensive use of online resources and e-books to enable distant learners easy access to study material.

How is Moodle implemented?

The abovementioned email addresses of the students are linked to our secondary domain (i.e. my.apa.ac.za). This domain is served by a Moodle System customised especially for distance learners. We offer all students online training as well as a user manual on how to access the system, use the resources and how to submit required assignments etc. The system is secured by a unique username and password for each user (see figure 2 below)
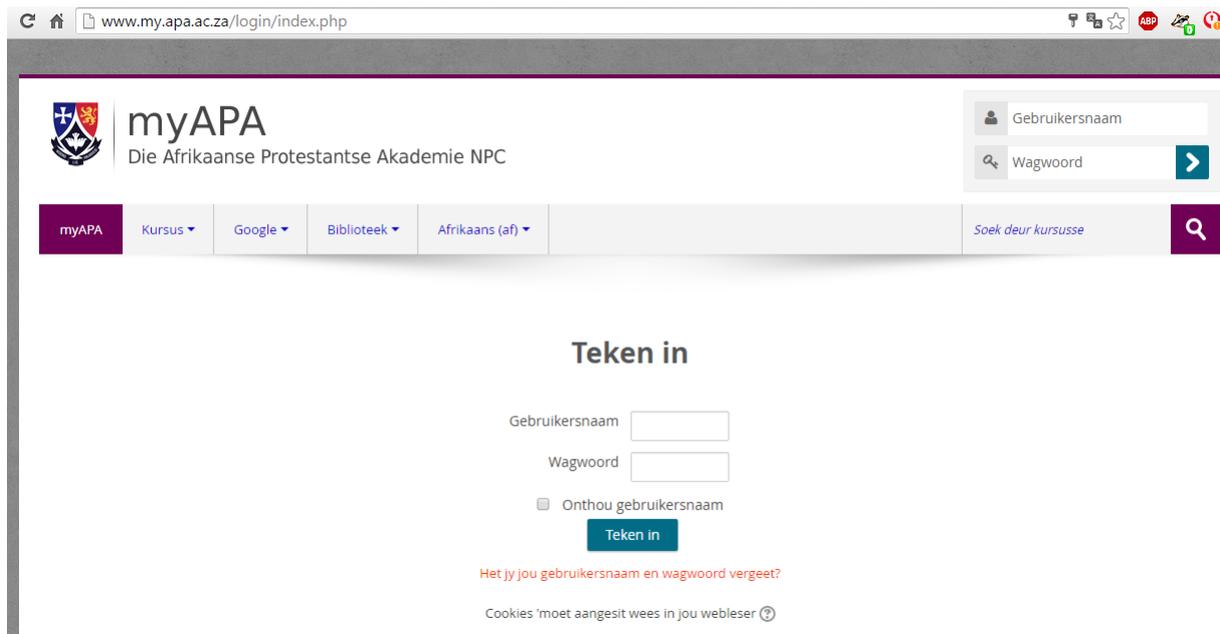
Figure 2

All academic staff members are registered on the Moodle System as well and a student is able to contact a lecturer via the Google Applications which are integrated in the system or the Moodle Messages at any time if he/she needs help on a specific subject or assignment (see figure 3 below). All courses a student is registered for is listed on a student's home page (see figure 4 below for an example).

The Moodle system is also linked to the electronic library system and other relevant e-learning facilities, as well as to the official home page (apa.ac.za) and the official calendar of the institution (see figure 5). Students also have a linked calendar to their online profile they can use to add to Android/Apple Devices in order to be notified of upcoming events, notifications and changes.
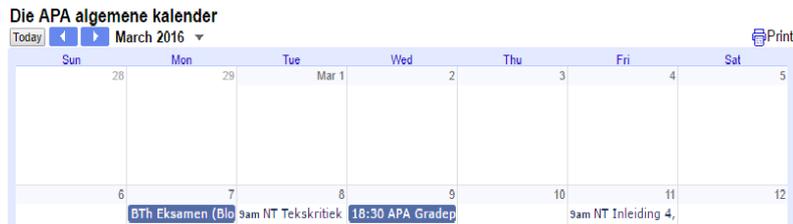
Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Lectures for distance learners students on Moodle

All class lectures are recorded and uploaded to the Moodle System (see Figure 6 below for an example). Distance learners students are able to download the lecture and listen to the presentation every week.

Figure 6

All relevant announcements and scheduled meetings/changes are communicated to the Distance Learners via Moodle. The lecturer is able to see who have noticed the announcement and who still need to acknowledge the notice when he/she logs into the system (see Figure 7 below for an example). This enables the lecturer to follow up if a student fails to respond to a scheduled notice.

Figure 7

Awareness of latest publications

The library occasionally arranges with publishers and bookshops to exhibit their latest publications on campus. These are themselves available in the library on campus and in this way the library promotes communication between the academics and the book trade. The library and the Registrar also distributes information on new publications to academic staff. The academic staff can therefore evaluate and select current and suitable publications to prescribe and recommend.

Prescribed and recommended titles

The library purchases all prescribed titles and most recommended titles in all academic programmes for students' reference and use and also make these available for learners on loan where possible. We arrange with booksellers to keep prescribed titles in stock. As was mentioned earlier we make extensive use of e-books and most new titles prescribed are available on Amazon and other online book shops.