

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
ELG SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMINATION – FIRST SEMESTER

COMMUNICATION AND ACADEMIC LITERACY

AUGUST 2023

MARKS: 100

TIME: 3 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **all** questions.
- Write your student number, course code and **group** clearly.
- Write each question on a fresh page.
- Write legibly.

QUESTION 1: ESSAY WRITING

The COVID-19 pandemic struck the world when higher learning institutions in many countries were involved in the on-going process of globalisation, demographics and the rapid pace of technological advancement to broaden access to lifelong learning opportunities. This implies that it has brought some changes to higher education system. Therefore, read the following passages and write an essay on **one** of the topics below.

EITHER

- a) **Descriptive essay:** The impact of COVID-19 on higher education in the Southern African countries

OR

- b) **Argumentative essay:** Has COVID-19 impacted higher education positively?

Guidelines:

- Your essay should be 1½ pages. You should have an introductory paragraph, three (3) body paragraphs and a conclusion.
- Select relevant material from the given passages.
- Sources are also provided for citation and compilation of bibliography, and each entry is jumbled. Re-arrange them as you compile the list of references and use all of them.

- Pages from which the text appears in the passages are reflected by: [p.].
- Include one direct and more than one indirect quotation in your essay.
- Marks will be awarded for the following:

Correct format

Appropriate content

Relevant quotations

Effective paragraphs

Correct grammar and spelling

Academic style

Complete reference list

[60 Marks]

Passage 1

[p.7] The pandemic resulted in an opportunity for higher education institutions (HEIs), the government, the private sector and non-profit organisations to work jointly in searching for strategies to ensure national health and safety. The evidence of the collaborations and research in fight against COVID-19 has become a chance for HEIs to reinforce their in informing government decisions and contribute to building public trust. Some people said that the COVID-19 should only be used as a ‘great leap’ forward. The pandemic offers the African university a fresh start. Others view that this pandemic has also created an opportunity for science and evidence to regain credibility in informing government decision and public trust and for universities to demonstrate respect for evidence. Universities are making progress in manufacturing personal protective equipment, developing new technologies for non-intensive care unit provision of oxygen to COVID-19 patients, funding methods of testing for the virus to reduce turnaround times and various other specific advances.

[p.11] The pandemic also had a negative effect on research and postgraduate research projects. Many research projects were suspended or terminated due to the national lock down regulations. This included experimental research projects, which affected the achievement of possible medical solutions, and research projects, which included animal studies as the animals could not be kept alive or maintained. The postponement of postgraduate research studies being conducted meant that their completion and graduation could be delayed by a year.

Source: *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*; <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182412888>; 18; Inge K. Sonn, Marieta Du Plessis, Carel D. Jansen Van Vuuren, Jarene Marais, Emma Wagener, Nicolette V. Roman; 2021; Achievements and challenges for higher education the COVID-19 pandemic: A rapid review if media in Africa; pp. 2-14.

Passage 2

[p.159] The COVID-19 pandemic has caused universities worldwide to close down their core business of teaching, research and community work in order to guarantee the safety of their students and staff from its infection. While in the beginning the world, countries and universities had thought that COVID- 19 would, like its preceding pandemics, dissipate shortly either by itself through self-displacing diffusion and /or through scientific discovery of its medical cure; and they would resume business as before, the reality is that COVID- 19 has come to stay.

[p.167] Positive impacts of COVID-19 on administrative aspects of the National University of Lesotho are many. Firstly, it fostered the university to test its timeous rapid response to administrative and governance challenges that require innovative governance. To this extent, the university management set up a COVID-19 Response and Management Team composed of top officers of the administrative units, deans of faculties and the staff members of the Faculty of Health Sciences to provide health expertise and advice to the team to develop, implement and monitor all COVID-19 response measures by the university in line with those stipulated by the World Health Organisation and adopted by the Government of Lesotho.

Secondly, the management together with the NUL COVID-19 Response and Management Team developed a COVID-19 Response and Management Strategy laying out specific measures to be followed by the university to operationalise the WHO and national strategies. As a result of this in its implementation, among others, sanitisation points with sanitation sprays and/ or ointments have been mounted at all strategic points throughout the campuses from the entry points at all the gates, [p.168] ablution facilities, corridors of offices, entry points to lecture halls, library, and halls of residences for students and so on. Lecture rooms and common use spaces have been fumigated, sterilised and sanitised as well.

There have also been administrative challenges at the National University of Lesotho presented by COVID-19. Firstly, the full deployment of the COVID-19 Response and Management Team encounters technical challenges that would require close cooperation with the National COVID-19 team, which is based in Maseru with a poor link to and coordination with lower units. Secondly, the NUL COVID-19 Response and Management Strategy requires financial and resources capacity, which are very scarce at the NUL to become fully implemented. Thirdly, the specific resources such as sanitizers and masks are scarce at the NUL. However, the NUL itself is not taking full advantage in self-provisioning on these resources because it has capacity. For instance, the NUL has the Department of Consumer Science, which should have been mandated by management to produce face masks for sale to both staff and students when they return to campus; and to sell to the external markets within the communities in which its campuses are located like Roma, Maseru, Mophale's Hoek, Leribe and Thaba-Tseka. However, this has not been done yet, and it should be done.

Fourthly, the use of online meetings might be ideal to use in the case of small groups of people who constitute its membership. However, for a large body like full senate or faculty boards where membership exceeds 50 people it is not workable because first all members should be in possession of smartphones and/ or lap tops or desktops to be able to participate. At the NUL many members did not have these gadgets when online meetings were made. Moreover, even those who have gadgets must be located where there is internet access, and they must have data or units to be connected to the meeting. Again, some were not in such locations or had such data or units to last the length of a meeting. This was aggravated by the fact that the technical link that was supposed to enable those [p.169] using computers to access the meetings and take part in them experienced technical failure in some cases while many did not have microphones to enable them to do full participation in the meetings and decisions taken. This means they were left out of critical decision-making arrived at in and by the meetings by technical default. This issue raises concerns about participatory and democratic institutional management and governance. This needs to be urgently revisited in future.

Another positive impact is that the THUTO learning management system, which has since its launch in 2010 operated very negligibly, and picked up slightly since 2014, has finally become fully active to aid teaching and learning at the National University of Lesotho. It has also meant

that the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) in charge of administering this system has become more directly contributory to teaching, learning and assessment by staff and to the students (Mphatsi, 2017; Tlali, 2019). Therefore, by default COVID-19 has helped the University to implement fully its strategic goal 2, which states that the NUL shall be “a university of choice providing high quality educational experience and relevant scholarship”, especially under this goal’s objective 2.4, which is “to increase students’ technological competences” (NUL Strategic Plan, 2015: 14). Similarly, COVID-19 has inadvertently helped the university to promote strategic goal 5 under its objective 5.4 whose aim is “to improve ICT governance and planning” (NUL Strategic Plan, 2015: 16).

Source: COVID-19 and National University of Lesotho: Experiences and challenges; Vol. 8 No. 9; 2020; pp. 157-180; Mashinini Vusi; *International Journal of Education and Research*.

Passage 3

[p.246] Many African HEIs were not ready for online instruction but most of them have started developing some kind of digital or self-study solutions (Koninckx, Fatondji, & Burgos, 2021). These universities do not seem to have sufficient institutional readiness, experience, and or capacity for quickly establishing online learning environments or optimally using available learning platforms. Following campus closures, they tended to develop a general understanding that technology integration could help them to ‘keep going’ until normalcy is restored. However, the ‘digital divide’ between students from low and high socioeconomic backgrounds regarding access to technology and connectivity challenged their ambitions. Overall, although this category of universities has resorted to online instruction following campus closures, success seems compromised by limited access to dependable facilities and equipment, unreliable Internet connections, faculty and student limited technology skills, and or pedagogies not relevant to online learning environments.

[p.247] Of the HEI that closed campuses, 22% of students indicated the absence of online or remote learning solutions at all (Koninckx, Fatondji, & Burgos, 2021). Universities of this type seemed overwhelmed by the pandemic, and they did not seem to have the economic and technical affordances to embrace technologies. They did not demonstrate institutional readiness and capacity to launch online learning anytime soon either. These universities seemed to acknowledge the bitter

reality that their competitiveness and resilience as institutions were publicly tested and were left behind. However, this unforgettable lesson might trigger these universities to aggressively embark on future technology integration.

Source: <https://ojed.org/jcihe>; Teklu Abate Bekele; Volume 13; pp. 243-235; COVID-19 and prospect of online learning in higher education in Africa; 2021; Issue 5; *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education*.

QUESTION 2: COMPREHENSION

Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow it.

THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN POVERTY REDUCTION

Education in general and higher education in particular has the potential to be a foundation for economic **development** and poverty reduction. Omoniyi (2013) asserts that, ‘Education is the backbone of growth and development of individuals and nation’ (p. 181). Education benefits society and people at local, national and international level. Education in general and higher education creates **experts** in several fields, which is inevitable for economic growth.

Higher education, also known as tertiary education refers to all formal **post-secondary education**, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes and vocational schools. Tertiary education is instrumental in **fostering** growth, reducing poverty and boosting shared prosperity. Tertiary education benefits not just the individual, but society as a whole. Graduates of tertiary education are more environmentally conscious, have healthier habits and have a higher level of civic participation. Also, increased tax revenues from higher earnings, healthier children and reduced family size all build stronger nations. In short, tertiary education institutions prepare individuals not only by providing them with adequate and relevant job skills, but also by preparing them to be active members of their communities and societies.

Higher education produces skilled human resources for all sectors of development. Therefore, it has a large potential for contributing to poverty reduction. Kiani (2011) emphasizes that, “higher education provides experts to all sectors of the economy and this is the requirement for any economy for poverty reduction strategy” (p. 31).

One of the most prevalent social problems in developing countries is poverty. It is not only an economic problem but also a social problem. To **eradicate** poverty, it is important to know the structure of society and its problems. In this connection, Kiani (2011) argues that higher education has the potential to study the social conditions, its needs, requirements, obstacles, complications and the ways to solve these problems. Likewise, social science education is needed to formulate better policies, planning strategies for development and poverty reduction at the local, national and global level.

Table 1 presents the financial situation of higher education institutions in Nepal from 2010/11 to 2014/15.

Table 1: Higher education budget as a percentage of national and educational budget 2010/11

Year	As % of National Budget	As % of Education Budget
2010/11	1.5	1.19
2011/12	1.6	9.5
2012/13	1.4	9.31
2013/14	1.28	6.64
2014/15	0.8	6.6

(Adapted from EMIS, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016)

- a) Define the following concepts:
 - (i) Education
 - (ii) Higher education (4)
- b) Using **three** points from the passage, state how higher education contributes to the economic development of the country. (6)
- c) At which **three** levels do people benefit from education? (3)
- d) Paraphrase an emphasis given by Kiani (2011) on the provision of skilled human resource. (3)

- e) From the last paragraph, explain how higher education is involved in poverty reduction.
Give **two** points. (4)
- f) Provide the meaning of the **bolded** words and phrase based on how they have been used in the passage.
- (i) Development
 - (ii) Experts
 - (iii) Post-secondary education
 - (iv) Fostering
 - (v) Eradicate (10)
- g) Table 1 shows that the education budget was higher than the national budget starting from 2010/11 up to 2014/15. In a summary of not more than **10** lines, discuss the difference between the national budget and education budget. Also, state the reasons that led to a higher budget in education.
(10)

[40]