

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to PREST A1 + A2: Research Foundations for ODL Practitioners. My name is <<tutor name>> and I am the facilitator for this course.

What is PREST A1 + A2? The course description is as follows:

".... is a self-study programme designed to support ODL practitioners who are planning to undertake research projects at their institutions. It is also meant for any learner who may wish to develop a research project in ODL. "

During the course, we will look at the differences between research and evaluation, analyse ethics and bias in research and explore the range of research areas and topics, with particular reference to research in Open and Distance Learning (ODL). The course is designed to allow you to develop a research proposal and it will give you the opportunity to carefully reflect on the issues that shape your research agenda. You will have the opportunity to work on your own as well as connect with your peers to share knowledge and experiences.

The course starts on <<course start date>> and runs through <<course end date>>. You will find the syllabus in the Course Menu. Enjoy wandering around the course site!

Conferencing: Seven conferences are included in the required course activity throughout the eight weeks we will work together, not including the Welcome forum. Conferences are meant to allow us to develop our on-line community. Participation is required and all seven comprise 10% of the total grade for the course. I strongly recommend that you try posting a message on the welcome forum as soon as possible, especially if you have never taken an online course with Moodle (the Learner Management System - LMS). You will see it is easy and it will build your confidence. If you run into any problems, please let me know and I will try to assist you as best as I can.

The conferences start with opening comments/questions to spark discussion, but the content of the discussion is yours to shape. Here you have the opportunity to clarify your understanding of material, and discuss the application of research in ODL. I encourage you to use this to connect with your peers, but I will participate as well. Conferences will be open for one week, including weekends.

Online Learning Journal: This learning journal is composed of 8 journal activities. Each journal activity will have guidelines for your entries. Make sure you use the journal entries to reflect on your learning, to keep notes and to record your learning activities. The journal entries will comprise 10% of the total grade for the course.

Materials: The materials for this course include the following:

1. The online materials on the course site
2. The PREST modules A1 and A2 (some of you may have the print modules, or you can download these from the COL website (www.col.org/prest) or you can print each unit as you go along, directly from the course site)

Assignments: There are two assignments required to complete this course:

1. Assignment 1 - due at the end of week 4: worth 30% of the total grade for this course
2. Assignment 2 (final assignment) - due at the end of week 8: worth 50% of the total grade for this course

You will find information on the assignments in the Welcome page of the course site. You can also browse the assignments description by clicking on the Assignments link in the Activities Menu.

Reach me: You can reach me at <<tutor's email address>>. Should the course site be down, or if my email is otherwise not available, you can use my alternate email address: <<alternate tutor address>>. You may also reach me on MSN Messenger <<tutor MSN id>> and my skype id is <<tutor's skype id>>. I may also be reached by phone at <<tutor telephone number>> or by fax <<tutor's fax number>>.

Your student profile: As you have some time, make sure you add some more information to your student profile. I have listed the countries and in some cases the cities where you live, but the entries may need correcting :-). In some cases I didn't know your city, so I just used the country name. To edit your profile, click on Participants in the People Menu, find your name and click on it. You will see a tab across the page at the top that says Edit Profile. You may also change your password if you want to. Just make sure you remember it!

Enough for now! :-). I don't mean to overwhelm you, but I just wanted to get this information to you in some systematic format. Please send me a note to acknowledge receipt of this e-mail, so I can ensure that our email accounts talk to each other. I look forward to an engaging course with each of you!

Cheers,
<<tutor name>>