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## **Advantages and Disadvantages of Learning Management System (LMS) at AOU Oman**

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### **Abstract**

Arab Open University (AOU) is one of the leading universities in Middle East. AOU encourages Blended learning, which is a combination of face to face learning and e-learning. The University has developed a grid system that allows students to get various electronic services. AOU Oman Branch has the administrative control on LMS, hosted online by AOU HQ. This virtual learning environment support students learning by providing them access to course materials, supporting files uploaded by tutors, enable communication with peers and tutors via e-mail, forums and chat Live lectures (form different the AOU Branches) that are on the AOU YouTube Channel can also be accessed by students. A survey has been conducted at AOU to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning management system (LMS). This research paper is an outcome of a survey conducted at AOU amongst students, to evaluate the effectiveness of LMS at AOU. The result of the survey will support the faculty and management to improve the current learning management system (LMS).

**Keywords:** Learning Management System, LMS, Arab Open University, e-Learning, virtual learning

### **Introduction**

LMS stands short for Learning Management System. Learning, because you use it to deliver education courses or training programs. Management because it helps you organize the courses

(create them, change them, assign them to students, grade them, etc.). System, finally, is just a fancy word that translates to "software". LMS is a computer program. Just like Microsoft Word helps you write documents and Gmail helps you manage your e-mails, LMS is a software program that helps you to create, manage and deliver e-Learning courses. It provides tools to manage teaching and learning process and integrates various learning resources together (Althobaiti, M. M., & Mayhew, P., 2015, September).

LMS is an "engine" that powers eLearning, and in the most common form it consists of two separate parts:

- A server component that performs the core functionality (creating, managing and delivering courses, authenticating users, serving data and notifications, etc.)
- A user interface runs inside via a web browser used by administrators, instructors and students.

Anybody who is doing eLearning is using LMS — and that includes some educational institutions for example:

- Traditional educational institutions (schools, universities, colleges).
- Online and eLearning based educational institutions (online universities like Arab Open University).

Blackboard, WebCT, DesireToLearn, etc. are the best commercially available LMS (Cavus, N. et.al., 2006, Kruger, D. et.al., 2013). LMS enables learning to have a wider range of spectrum with higher efficiency (Kulshrestha, T., & Kant, A. R., 2013).

## **Usages by different kinds of End Users**

### **Students as the End Users**

A learning management system can provide instant feedback to a student. For example, a student can attempt practice tests by entering responses to the displayed questions. The system immediately acknowledges the student with correct and the potential reasons for a wrong answer. The students also can get their grades immediately after finishing the given tasks like homework assignments or tests.

### **Educator as the End Users**

Because the learning management system can easily grade true-or-false and multiple-choice questions, it reduces the time the professor needs for grading. LMS gives educator a provision to store important documents like course syllabus, so that students can go through the required documents whenever they need.

### **Academic Discussion**

A learning management system restricts academic sharing. According to Edu clause, in many courses, only the current students can see the links to papers, discussions in course forums, and responses from the professor, unlike a web page the professor posts that the public can visit. The course closes at the end of the semester, so students can't go back and refresh their knowledge.

These systems often provide easy ways for teachers to create and deliver their own content with concurrent participation monitoring and performance evaluation.

These systems provide students and teachers the ability to interact with video conferencing, interrelated discussions, and forums. LMS can track and report on events. Universities can teach various number of courses through LMS.

### **Key benefits of LMS**

- It is user friendly and very effective.
- The session list shows description of each module on the server, including accessibility.
- LMS saves time for management, educators and students by providing access to their accounts online, so that they all can work from anywhere in the world.
- It provides ease to manage users, roles, courses, teachers, facilities and generate reports.
- Systems provide reminders to the end users such as: delivery dates, test dates, answering questions, etc.
- A flexible set of course activities-forums, contests, glossaries, resources, options, surveys, assignments, chats, and workshops to choose from (Kadir, A. Z. A., & Aziz, N. S. 2016).
- A learning management system offers several types of communication tools. The system can host its own web forum, mail service and chat client. Using the learning management

system ensures that each student can easily access these tools without installing additional software programs, and that all students are using compatible communications methods.

The above discussed are few of the many other advantages of LMS.

### **The drawbacks of LMS**

- Traditionally, LMSs tend to be course-centric rather than student-centric. The availability of tools can be used as dictated by the need to re-skill teachers. Now, an LMS does not accommodate a complete range of teaching styles nor do they provide tools for specialized pedagogical practices, e.g., audio discussion boards.
- Managing and administering an institution wide LMS requires a reasonably high level of technical expertise that most classroom teachers do not possess. Therefore, those who make the decisions as to what system is to be purchased and how it is implemented are often removed from classroom so only have partial views of the pedagogical implications of the final decisions made.
- Some teaching staff has poor computer and information literacy skills and little of the information management skills needed to effectively use LMS to support their teaching. These teachers must not only learn how to operate within these environments but also develop an informed critical perspective of their use of the LMS in teaching in a variety of modes.
- It is a challenge for many teachers to design and organize a mix of learning activities that are appropriate to student needs, teacher skills and style, and institutional technical capacity.

### **Implementation of LMS at AOU, Oman**

LMS is successfully implemented at AOU, Oman. Figure 1 shows the MTA schedule posted in LMS. Course details are given in Figure 2. Video lectures, activities, various links to upload the assignments are given under each course. Online video lectures are also posted in LMS which gives students the opportunities to study from home (Fig.3).

**Learning Management System – Oman Branch**

You are logged in as **Anwar Taaleb Al-Rasbi (Logout)**  
English (en)

**Main menu**

- Site news

**Calendar**

May 2017

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

**Site news**

**Makeup MTA Schedule 2016-2017 Second**  
by Mr.Turki Al-Hinai - Sunday, 23 April 2017, 03:45 PM

**Makeup MTA Schedule 2016-2017 Second**

Date	Time
19 February - 25 February	01:30 - 03:30
26 February - 4 March	04:00 - 06:00

FI 119 GR121 FI 320 A230R

**Elibrary & Online Exam**

Fig1: MTA Schedule 2016-2017

**M253 - Spring - 2017 Course Calendar**

- M253 - Calendar - Spring - 2017
- MOCK FINAL EXAM
- Previous MTA
- Risk and contingency planning
- News forum
- M253 - Video Lectures**
- M253 Video Lectures: Session 1
- M253 Video Lectures: Session 3
- M253 Video Lectures: Session 4
- M253 Video Lectures: Session 8
- M253 Video Lectures: Session 9
- M253 Video Lectures: TMA
- M253 - Video Recording Session 5 & 6
- Tutor Survey Spring 2013/2014
- M253 - Fall2015-2016 Final - MOCK

19 February - 25 February

**M253 - Team Working in Distributed Environment**

- M253-TMA1 Activities and useful links
- M253 - Weekly Activities (TMA01)
- M253 - Fall-2016-17 TMA is available for download. TMA Cut-off-date is 1st-May-2017.
- M253 - Spring-2016-2017 TMA
- M253 - Spring2017 - Late TMA upload Q-1

26 February - 4 March

**M253 - Week # 01**

**Topics Include:**

- Project Logs
- Working at a Distance

**Advanced search**

**Latest news**

27 Mar, 11:24  
Raja Waseem 0711010  
M253 - Spring 2017 - MTA - Review Questions more...  
Older topics ...

**Upcoming events**

M253 - Spring2017 - Late TMA upload Q-1  
Sunday, 7 May, 11:55 PM  
Go to calendar...  
New event...

**Recent activity**

Activity since Wednesday, 3 May 2017, 12:38 PM  
Full report of recent activity...

**Course updates:**

Added Assignment:  
M253 - Spring2017 - Late TMA upload Q-1

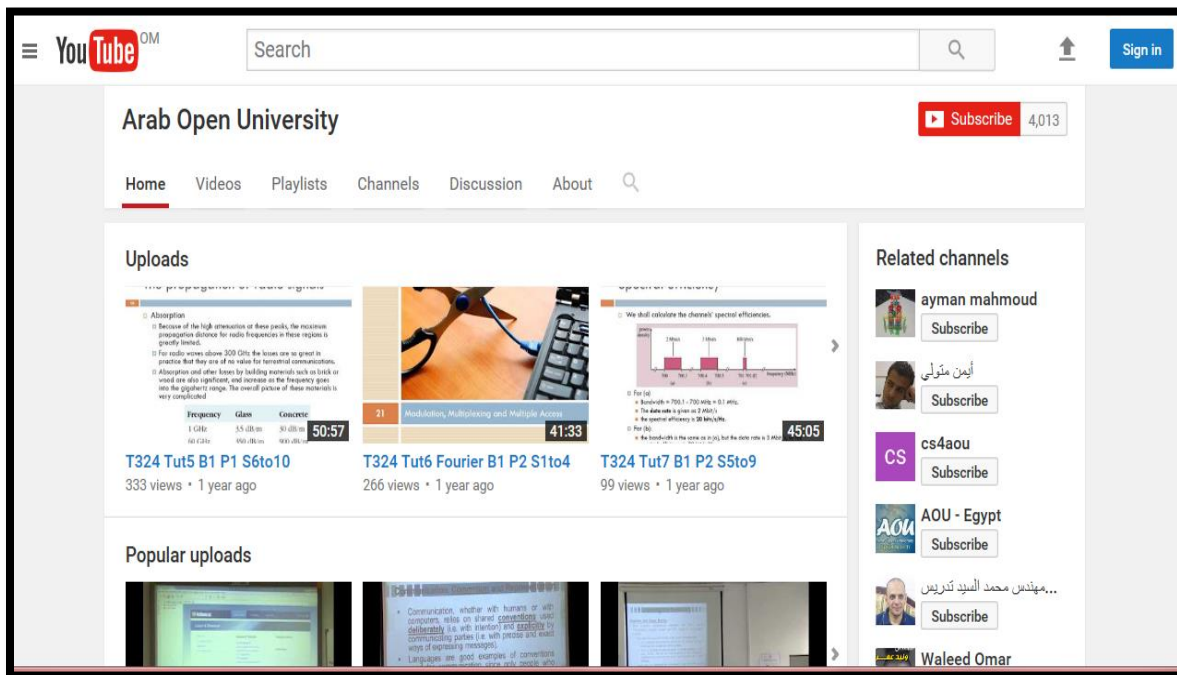
**People**

Participants

**Activities**

Fig2. M253 Course details

Fig 3. Online Video lectures in LMS



## Evaluation of LMS

A survey was conducted among the students to evaluate the effectiveness of LMS. The following is the questionnaire prepared for the survey (Table 1).

Table 1. Questionnaire

Components	Result (40%)
LMS design and navigate the pages	30% - easy to use
Degree of use	30% - weekly
Look and feel	25% - average
e-library	18% - sometime
Material information	20% - sometime
Submit assignment	35% - no difficult
Communication with other	14% - no
Educational resources for materials	30% - yes
Privacy and safety	33% - average
Other suggestions	Discussion room for students and teachers.

## Conclusion

The decision as to whether a Learning Management System would benefit any organisation is a complex one and this discussion is an attempt to clarify that decision. By bringing much of the current literature together and illustrating these findings using a specific implementation example, we illustrated the fundamental factors that emerge when determining whether a LMS might be advantageous in any given learning environment.

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