



Paul Webb and Elisa Adams

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A Step into the Future of DIGI-FACE

The Resounding Success of the DIGI-FACE Platform

The digital age has ushered in numerous platforms designed to connect, educate, and innovate across various sectors. One such platform that has garnered significant success is DIGI-FACE.

What is DIGI-FACE?

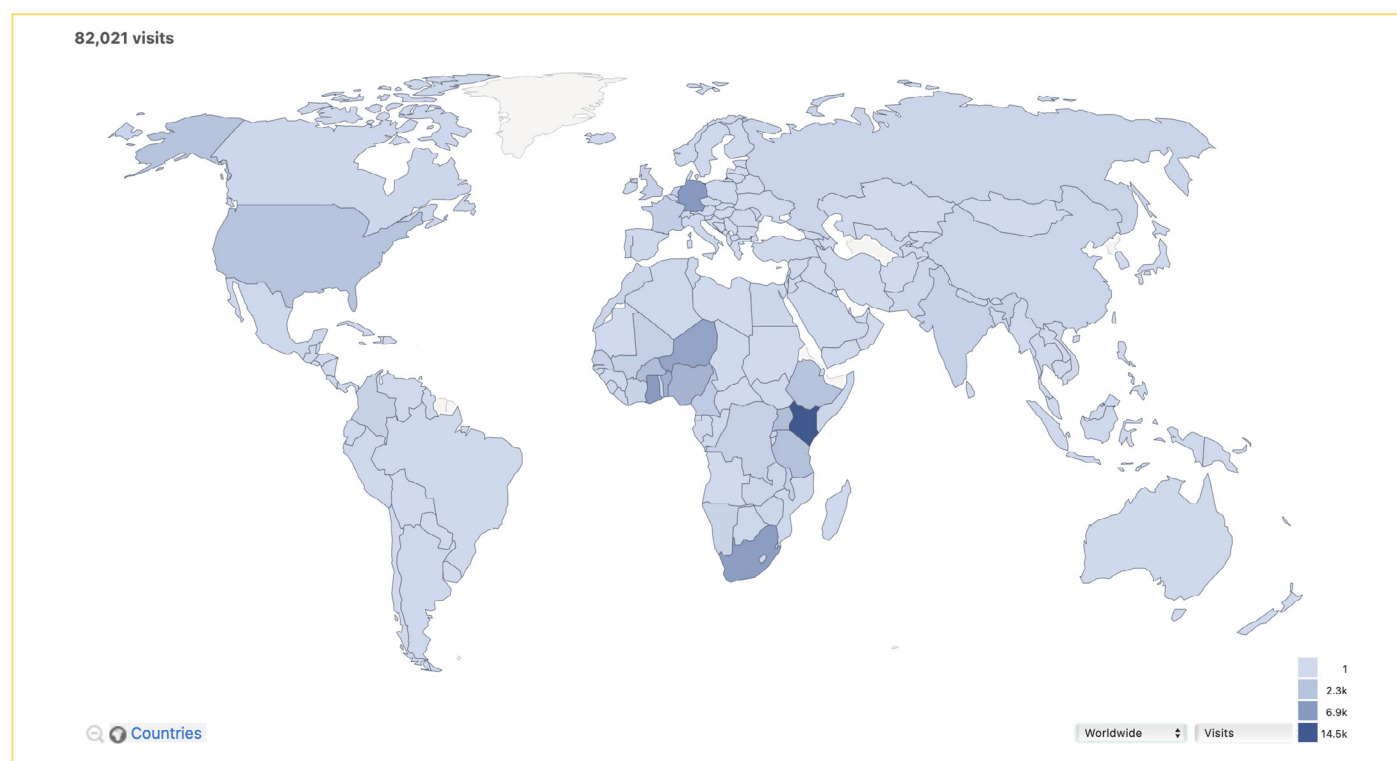
DIGI-FACE, which stands for **Digital Initiative for African Centres of Excellence**, is a digital platform aimed at fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, and innovation among Centres of Excellence across Africa. The platform serves as a hub for academic and professional communities, providing a space for the exchange of ideas, research, and educational resources.

Where is DIGI-FACE making an impact?

The influence of DIGI-FACE extends across various regions in Africa, **connecting universities, research institutions, and professionals**. By focusing on Centres of Excellence, the platform ensures that high-quality knowledge and innovative practices are accessible to a broad audience, thus enhancing educational and professional standards on the continent.

When did DIGI-FACE achieve this success?

Since its inception, DIGI-FACE has swiftly grown to become a pivotal tool for academic and professional communities. The platform's success can be measured through its impressive statistics gathered over a relatively short period. **Since the start of 2024, the platform has been visited 82 021 times**, with the most visits coming from Kenya, followed by Ghana, Germany, Niger and South Africa. 65 438 of these visits have come from the African continent.



Who is behind DIGI-FACE?

DIGI-FACE, a DAAD funded project, is a collaborative effort involving various stakeholders, including educators, researchers, and professionals from Centres of Excellence across Africa. The platform's user base reflects this diversity, with **3963 registered users**, 1644 of whom are members assigned to different Centres of Excellence, showcasing the extensive reach and engagement within the community.

How has DIGI-FACE achieved its success?

The success of DIGI-FACE can be attributed to several key factors:

- **Community Engagement:** The platform boasts 466 blog posts, highlighting the active participation and contribution of its users. This high level of engagement has fostered a vibrant community where knowledge and ideas are freely exchanged.
- **Quality Content:** The 53 publications from the community are a testament to the high-quality content available on the platform. These publications cover a wide range of topics, reflecting the diverse interests and expertise of the DIGI-FACE community.
- **Accessibility:** DIGI-FACE provides easy access to a plethora of resources, including publications, blog posts, and educational materials. This accessibility has been crucial in facilitating learning and collaboration among its users.
- **Strategic Focus:** By concentrating on Centres of Excellence, DIGI-FACE ensures that its resources and initiatives are directed towards institutions and individuals who are well-positioned to drive positive change and innovation.

The DIGI-FACE platform stands as a shining example of how digital tools can enhance collaboration, knowledge sharing, and innovation in the academic and professional spheres. With its impressive statistics and strategic focus, DIGI-FACE has not only connected a wide array of users but has also enriched their educational and professional experiences. As the platform continues to grow, it will undoubtedly remain a cornerstone of digital collaboration and excellence in Africa.



A Collaborative Offering by King's College, London, and DIGI-FACE

Paul Webb

In August 2024, DIGI-FACE facilitated a transformative AI course, offered by King's College, London. This self-paced online course over two weeks was designed for anyone interested in higher education, addressing the rapid advancements in generative AI, such as ChatGPT, and their significant implications for students, academics, and professional staff.

The course explored foundational AI concepts...

The course explored foundational AI concepts, the ethical and social dimensions of its use, and its impact on teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education. Participants also delved into how AI is reshaping the employment landscape, highlighting the need for new literacy in this evolving field.

DIGI-FACE members, both academics and students, joined the course as a cohort, interacting through forum blogs and sharing insights. By the end of the course, participants could summarize AI basics, identify its capabilities and limitations, and discuss its ethical implications. They also gained an understanding of how AI is influencing job roles and curricula in higher education.

Thirty-four participants successfully completed the course and received a certificate from DIGI-FACE, signed by the DIGI-FACE Co-Project Leader and Martin Compton, College Lead for AI and Innovation in Education at King's College, London. This course marked an important step in equipping higher education professionals with the knowledge to navigate the future of AI in education.



DIGI-FACE Expands its Social Media Presence

Since March 2024, DIGI-FACE has expanded its social media presence beyond LinkedIn to include Instagram and Facebook, aiming to reach more members and a wider audience. On these platforms, we share updates, new module offerings, event reports, and general information about who we are and what we do.

Initially launched with the help of Kehl University interns Joana Fakler and Julia Weber, the effort is now managed by Yannis Traenkner. Visit our Learn page or the DIGI-FACE website for links to our social media accounts. Connect with us on Instagram (@about_digiface), Facebook (Digi-Face), and LinkedIn (DIGI-FACE).

Karlien Potgieter and Paul Webb

Karlien Potgieter and Paul Webb

DIGI-FACE Facilitators **Connect and Collaborate**



During a special Consultation Hour meeting on Thursday, 25 July 2024, DIGI-FACE facilitators gathered for an hour-long discussion via Zoom. This meeting provided an opportunity for facilitators to connect, share insights, and discuss their roles within the DIGI-FACE community. The agenda focused on expanding facilitation

beyond the current prospectus and developing key multipliers within their Centres. Attendees exchanged ideas, learned from each other's experiences, and planned their next steps. It was a valuable session aimed at enhancing the impact of our facilitators across the network.

Visit of *Dr Susan Kurgat* of CERM-ESA to Kehl University

DIGI-FACE recently had the pleasure of welcoming Dr Susan Kurgat from Moi University in Eldoret, Kenya, to Kehl University of Applied Sciences. Dr Kurgat is the project coordinator for the East and South African-German Centre of Excellence for Educational Research Methodologies and Management (CERM-ESA) at Moi University.

Currently on sabbatical, Dr Kurgat has been visiting partner universities, starting with the University of Oldenburg, and then joining us at Kehl University. During her visit, we engaged in fruitful discussions on current activities and explored potential long-term scenarios for the DIGI-FACE platform, particularly the role Moi University could play in its future. Moi university has shown a strong commitment to our e-learning generic module as participants and facilitators.

We look forward to continuing our close partnership!

Hannes Königer & Elisa Adams



The 17th eLearning Africa Conference

Karlien Potgieter and Paul Webb

DIGI-FACE had the privilege of attending the 17th eLearning Africa Conference at the Kigali Convention Centre in Rwanda from May 29-31, 2024. This prestigious event, Africa's largest conference on technology-supported learning, brought together over 1,225 participants and 235 speakers from 82 countries, including Paul Webb, Elmien Waring, Karlien Potgieter, and Elisa Adams representing DIGI-FACE.

Paul Webb delivered a session titled "Academic Bridges: Connecting Universities Globally," where he explored how international collaboration can create market-relevant curricula and support faculty development. His talk highlighted the importance of global university partnerships in fostering research, cultural exchanges, and online content development.

During the conference, we also had fruitful meetings with Bettina Onyango, Senior Desk Officer at DAAD in Bonn, Germany, and Dorothee Weyler, Director of the DAAD Regional Office in Nairobi, Kenya. This event was a remarkable opportunity to engage with leading experts and further our commitment to enhancing education and training across Africa.



CEMEREM visit

From June 11-14, 2024, five staff members from Taita Taveta University (TTU) participated in a transformative e-learning training session at Nelson Mandela University. Organised by DIGI-FACE and CEMEREM on a shared cost basis, the training aimed to elevate the participants digital learning capabilities. The robust digital infrastructure, reminiscent of advanced systems in Germany, facilitated a seamless hybrid learning environment.

The Nelson Mandela training team covered Moodle, Canva, and H5P, focusing on developing online learning content. This initiative marks a significant step forward for CEMEREM, positioning the Centre to meet the digital demands of the post-pandemic era.

Beyond the training, the visit offered a unique blend of learning and cultural discovery. The TTU team flew via Cape Town and admired the scenic landscapes, namely Table Mountain and the mountains of the Cape Fold Belt. They explored Summerstrand's urban planning and experienced local amenities at Port Elizabeth's Boardwalk Mall.

Nashon Adero wrote in his DIGI-FACE blog that 'This journey is just the beginning for CEMEREM staff, who now carry the responsibility of leading their peers in developing interactive digital content. The experience underscored the importance of digital fluency in higher education, thanks to the support of CEMEREM and DIGI-FACE'.

Andrew Thuo



My Experience as a Trainer with DIGI-FACE

Andrew Thuo

Training with DIGI-FACE has been both exciting and challenging. DIGI-FACE is a fantastic initiative aimed at improving digital literacy and tech integration across various centres, and I've had the chance to be a part of it in different formats—online, hybrid, and in person.

Working alongside professionals from various disciplines has given me a fresh perspective and a deep appreciation for the effort needed to make DIGI-FACE thrive. For example, during a recent session, we had an engaging discussion about protest actions by students from different countries. It was fascinating to explore how university and government policies vary across borders and how these differences impact student activism. This discussion provided invaluable insights that enriched the overall experience for everyone involved.

The members I've interacted with are always enthusiastic and eager to learn and share their expertise. This creates a lively and collaborative atmosphere where we all benefit from each other's knowledge. The unpredictability of each session keeps me on my toes and helps me grow as a trainer.

Our goal with DIGI-FACE is to build capacity across centres, nurture a sense of community, and create a wealth of shared knowledge. It's been a journey of mutual growth and continuous learning, and I'm excited to see where it leads us next.



Wonderful running into Oscar Kakpo in Dakar after meeting a year before in Kehl.



Hybrid training experience with our colleagues from Taita Taveta University

A STEP INTO THE **FUTURE** OF DIGI-FACE

Malve von
Moellendorff

Over the past few months, the DIGI-FACE team has taken a significant step towards securing the platform's future. As we approach the end of the current DAAD project funding phase in December 2025, we recognize the need to move beyond time-bound project funding, which often has a specific focus limited to a particular timeframe. To ensure the sustainability of our platform and its popular generic modules, we are actively exploring new funding avenues.

In support of this effort, we responded to a call for proposals to supply online modules for the DAAD's In-Country/In-Region Scholarship Programme in sub-Saharan Africa. This programme, which has been in place for over 25 years, supports Masters and PhD students studying in their home countries or regions. Some of these students overlap with those from our Centres of African Excellence, but they are funded individually to study in top-tier programmes at local universities.

We are thrilled to announce that DIGI-FACE won the bid to provide three online modules focused on academic

competence development to this group of students for the next six years. Based on a needs assessment conducted by DAAD among 250-300 scholarship holders in sub-Saharan Africa, we began developing the modules in July 2024. The modules are:

1. **Cutting-edge Methods in Science and Research**
2. **Science Communication and Networking**
3. **Academic Career Planning**

For more details, visit **our website**. The first offerings of all three modules will begin between mid-September and mid-October 2024, and we are excited to welcome the new group of students! Winning this bid is a testament to our team's dedication to creating meaningful and beneficial online modules for postgraduate students and academics on the DIGI-FACE platform.

Looking ahead, we hope to expand this service contract with DAAD to offer similar modules to scholarship holders in other regions of the world, as well as to academics and academic managers involved in DAAD-related programmes.

Exploring AI Tools in Research:

New **Comp³** Modules for DAAD Scholars

Elmien Waring & Paul Webb

By specific request from the DAAD, new Comp³ modules have been developed to help participants unlock their full academic potential (see Malve von Moellendorff's article in this Review). These exclusive modules are available to invited DAAD in-region/in-country scholarship holders. Although access is restricted to those enrolled, the content remains visible under the Comp³ Module category on the DIGI-FACE platform, showcasing the innovative nature of the material.

For the first time, AI integration will be explicitly woven into a DIGI-FACE module, enhancing the learning

experience where applicable and revolutionising how we approach digital education. The first Comp³ Module that delves into the pros and cons of using AI in postgraduate research is unit 4. This unit helps equip participants with a balanced understanding of this powerful technology by exploring the benefits of AI in areas such as data preparation, analysis, and academic writing while critically assessing the potential drawbacks, ethical concerns, and risks of over-reliance on AI-generated content.

One of the key focus areas of this module is the art of crafting effective prompts for AI tools.

Participants will learn strategies for refining their prompts to improve the accuracy and relevance of AI outputs. Through practical exercises, they will test and compare different prompt structures, ensuring they can guide AI systems to generate meaningful and reliable results. This hands-on approach helps scholars maximise the potential of AI in their research while remaining mindful of its limitations, fostering a responsible and informed use of technology in academia.

DIGI-FACE offers self-paced and facilitated courses

Elisa Adams



At DIGI-FACE we categorise our online courses (generic modules) into two different teaching formats:

- Self-paced e-learning course
- Facilitated e-Learning course

Both teaching formats have their advantages and challenges. Our primary goal with the courses is that learners get the most out of them. As for many of our participants they are new to online courses, they find it most helpful to follow a facilitated course.

Facilitated courses have the advantage that learners are in direct contact with the facilitators and their peers via zoom sessions. This gives them immediate feedback from both the teacher and their peers. There is also an opportunity for interaction, which can motivate learners in their learning journey. However, in a facilitated course, learners are tied to specific schedules, which makes learning less flexible. This is where self-paced courses come in.

Self-paced courses allow learners to study at any time and from any place. It also allows learners to be more independent in their learning goals, as they can choose to study only the topics that interest them, e.g. only part of a course.

Our self-paced modules:

English	French
Open Education, Copyright and Open Licensing in a Digital World	Éducation ouverte, droit d’auteur, copyright et licences ouvertes dans un monde numérique
Administration Essentials for Centre IT Managers and Coordinators	Moodle Manager DIGI-FACE
Exploring the Online Learning Environment	Explorer l’environnement éducatif en ligne

Apply here



BLENDED LEARNING

Blended learning is a teaching format that may be of interest to you at the Centres. Blended learning, also known as hybrid learning, is an approach that combines online instruction with face-to-face interaction. Learners can attend some classes in person and complete others online. Blended learning offers the benefits of both traditional and online education, providing flexibility while still allowing for direct engagement with instructors and peers¹.

Especially if you are just starting out with online learning, this is a very attractive option for you:

You can continue to have regular face-to-face classes and simply add additional online activities (further reading, quizzes, forum, etc.) in a Moodle course.

Our generic DIGI-FACE modules give you the tools to digitise your teaching and support you when you need it:

- **Exploring the Online Learning Environment**
- **Administration Essentials for Centre IT Managers and Coordinators**
- **CourseCraft: Building a Dynamic Online Learning Experience**
- **Technology Enhanced Teaching and Learning**
- **Using your Padcaster**

Food for thought: What form of online learning do you want to incorporate into your study programs? What type works best for you?

Some background info on Online Learning

Online learning can be categorized into various types.

Synchronous Learning vs Asynchronous Learning

Generally, online classes can be categorized into synchronous and asynchronous learning.

Synchronous Learning involves real-time interaction between instructors and students, often through video conferencing tools (like Zoom or Skype), chat rooms, or virtual classrooms. Synchronous learning mimics the structure of traditional

classroom instruction, with scheduled lectures, discussions, and other activities.

Asynchronous Learning allows learners access course materials and complete assignments at their own pace. While there may be deadlines for assignments and exams, online students have flexibility in terms of when and where they engage with the content. Asynchronous learning typically involves pre-recorded lectures, discussion forums, online quizzes, and other interactive elements.²

Open Educational Resources (OER) course

This year we offered a course on Open Educational Resources (OER) in English and French, which have been developed by the OER Foundation with funding from UNESCO. The courses were created in an Anglo-Saxon legal context (Common Law) and translated and adapted to Civil Law for the Francophone context.

Designed as self-paced courses, they will enable you to harness the potential of open education in pursuit of your own learning goals, while respecting the requirements of copyright in a digital world. You will learn to effectively apply your knowledge of copyright, open licensing and license remix compatibility using open education practices

to support tertiary learning in a global digital context.

You will:

- > Easily understand and define what constitutes an Open Educational Resource (OER).
- > Apply knowledge of copyright and the associated public domain to avoid copyright infringement.
- > Know about the Creative Commons (CC) open licence and its different components.

Apply for registration at <https://www.digiface.org/application-forms/>

¹Source: <https://www.learnworlds.com/what-is-online-learning/>

²Source: <https://www.learnworlds.com/what-is-online-learning/>

Quality Assurance of Online Modules

The DIGI-FACE Quality Assurance Body (QAB) has developed a checklist of quality criteria for online courses. It uses this checklist to assess and approve the quality of generic modules. It also provides course developers with guidelines for creating high quality online modules. This checklist is available on our platform, as well as an application template that you can use if you want your course to be assessed by the body.

View the quality criteria checklist [here](#).



Annual DAAD Network Meeting

The annual DAAD Network Meeting will take place from November 26-28 in Cape Town. Additionally, DIGI-FACE Centre Admin and Moodle Training sessions are scheduled for Thursday, November 28 afternoon and Friday, November 29 for those already at the Network Meeting. These sessions will be facilitated by key DIGI-FACE members.



The Digital Initiative for African Centres of Excellence (DIGI-FACE) is a DAAD funded project and includes all DAAD funded African-German Centres of Excellence

www.digiface.org

CONSORTIUM PARTNERS



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