# ASIA THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION [INDIA]

# Crisis Response

# and Guidelines Document

# May 2020

# General Comments and Observations

We are living in unprecedented and uncertain times.  We have all been caught off guard with the sudden onset of the COVID 19 crisis.  The ATA India staff has been in conversation with several heads of institutions and we find that, without exception, all are concerned about several issues.  While some of the issues are beyond our control, for example, the financial situation that many of us find ourselves in, there are others related to the ongoing training and equipping of our students that can be mitigated with a certain amount of innovation and intervention on our part.  The general response has been more along the lines of dealing with immediate concerns related to the lockdown, but we know that we have to develop a long-term response as well.  The fact that a vaccine for the virus is still more than a year away (if one is found) adds a sense of urgency to this task.

ATA India's Managing Committee met via Zoom on April 21, 2020 to discuss these concerns.  The Regional Secretary and Assistant Regional Secretaries had a call prior to that and had several recommendations which the MC approved of.  The ATA staff were also part of a separate discussion initiated by the head of one of our institutions where close to 20 leaders in Indian Theological Education discussed their challenges and also possible ways forward.  The following sections will help to provide some direction for a common and unified approach to the crisis within the flexible parameters that ATA has developed over the years.  These guidelines allow for both an individual institutional response as well as a corporate, collaborative response.

# Some Basic FAQ's

Undoubtedly, the matter that is uppermost on everyone's mind is the new academic year. Murmurings about a whole half year delay to the start of educational institutions in the country is in the air, and if this is what the government requires, then we must be prepared for it. Our conversations and various emails have raised the following questions, to which a response is provided below each.

a. **What about those who were not able to complete the final exams before the lockdown?**

The best approach is to ensure that students who are yet to fulfill the final summative piece (exam) are given opportunity to do so by the use of other assessment methods. One institution, for example, has opted to conduct open book exams for the students in their homes. Another option is for faculty to design a summative piece, either in the form of a reflective paper in their subject, to be submitted online by the student. Alternately, the students may be required to do a project to demonstrate learning and accomplishing of learning objectives.

b. **When should we begin our new academic year?**

We do not anticipate a June start to any of our seminaries/bible colleges. **Even if** the lockdown is lifted by June beginning, it is best to avoid the students travelling and coming into a situation where "social distancing" is not possible. The ATA Managing Committee strongly recommends that we put off the return of our students to residence till such a time when there is sufficient evidence that the situation is well under control. We will follow Central and State Government directives closely in this regard. Nonetheless, **institutions can begin to offer courses to its students via non-residential modes of learning and continue in residential format as the situation stabilizes.**

c. **What do we do about admissions and new student intake?**

This is a difficult issue to address. However, the general principle that may be applied, as in the case of students who are awaiting results, is to do a provisional admission for those students who are yet to write exams or are awaiting results. This allows for others who do qualify to be enrolled and begin a course of study. We understand that registration of such students will most certainly be delayed. The ATA office will take all of this into consideration as we process the registrations.

d. **What is the best way to contact the ATA office with questions or clarifications?**

We will set up a Facebook group exclusively for member institutions. This will be checked on a daily basis and we will respond to your queries in a timely manner. This is a stop gap

**3**

arrangement till such time we are able to get a question/answer feature up and running on our website. Kindly assign an individual from your institution, as a single point of contact, to enroll into the ATA Facebook Page and provide his/her credentials in the survey form. **Please note, that only this person will have access to the page.**

# Non-residential Modes of Training

Many have emailed, called or messaged regarding shifting to a non-residential mode of offering to start off the new academic year.  Thoughts have mainly revolved around "online" education. For those who are familiar with online programs, it is not an easy shift to make, even if it is meant to be a "temporary fix".  ATA's "Tech Advisory Group" has discussed this at length, which has resulted in a separate document (**please take time to read through appendix B**) providing a way forward with the use of an Emergency Remote Learning (ERL) approach as opposed to setting up a fully functional online system which involves the use of a full-fledged Learning Management System (LMS).  We advise the leadership and faculty of each institution to take time to go through this document and plan your non-residential component accordingly.  Additionally, from an accreditation and quality assurance perspective, here are some fundamental points to keep in mind.

a.  ATA's Manual for Accreditation provides guidelines and parameters for offering non-residential programs.  We understand, however, that given the time frame we have to work with not all of these can be adequately met.  Nonetheless, we recommend that your faculty take into consideration the requirements set out in the Manual for Accreditation.  Here too, we are well aware that this mode of education may not necessarily be the best option, given connectivity issues, location etc.  In some cases, institutions may be able to use the postal system/courier system to send some material to your students and follow these up with phone calls etc.  In short, it is recommended that each institution address in the best way possible according to its capacity and with the limitations we are faced with.

b.  The ATA Manual as well as the upcoming Revised Version lays out clearly that one credit requires 2000 minutes of learning.  If we were to translate this into learning hours, it is based on the calculation that typically 50 minutes constitutes one learning hour. Some institutions may work on the basis of 60 minutes as the learning hour and that is fine.  It is important to keep in mind that this is the time given to ensure that learning has taken place, by way of facilitated learning, videos, assessment tasks and the like.  The following table will help clarify credits as they relate to learning hours.

| Credit Hours | Minutes | Hours |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | 6000 minutes | 100 – 120* |
| 2 | 4000 minutes | 66.6 – 80 * |
| 1 | 2000 minutes | 33.3 – 40 * |

(*Depends on whether it is calculated at 50 or 60 mins = 1 learning hour)

As you consider ERL or LMS, the important number to keep in mind is the total number of learning hours/minutes.  The course must be designed to accomplish learning outcomes and objectives in the total number of learning hours/minutes that is assigned to each course as per the degree being offered.  This means that faculty will have to re-work their existing courses

**5**

and design them creatively to fulfill requirements, or more specifically, learning outcomes.  It is back to the drawing board and approaching training from the perspective of what students need to learn (not know).

For example, since most of the learning will have to be on the part of the students, faculty can no longer be satisfied with merely delivering content.  In fact, faculty will have to determine what information needs to be provided by means of a several short video clips (either recorded by themselves or material found on the web), design assessment tasks that include additional reading, short reflections and the like, to ensure that the total number of learning hours is completed.  Please note that it is not possible to simply take your class lectures and convert them into video lectures. In this regard, we suggest more bite size formative assessments, as opposed to the "papers" we are all so fond of. **We have a small number of resource persons who will be willing to help train your faculty in this area as well as in the use of technology.  This can be done with the use of Zoom**.  Please do let us know if you need help in this area. **CLICK HERE** to fill a survey form.

The ATA staff are working on making the website more dynamic to include several resources (video talks, resource material and more) to aid our faculty in this effort. We are also communicating with partners like TBN to see how they can help us at this time. Kindly keep checking the website to see what resources are available.

c.  As far as assessments are concerned, it is obvious that the usual methods cannot be used.  So, given the limited resources that students will have access to, and also the fact that the breadth and scope of their understanding of the topic may be somewhat lesser, it is best to ensure that the student is engaging with the topic in a more in depth manner.   Our emphasis must be on ensuring that assessments are based on the student achieving learning outcomes.  Please note that credit cannot be given for work that is not based on learning outcomes or proper assessment.

It is also important that institutions maintain a record for quality assurance purposes.  These may include, but not limited to, the following:

i.  Class schedule along with faculty schedule

ii.  Records of synchronous sessions and if possible the live recording of any classes on zoom or similar platform

iii.  Export of full chat history by the day of the designated group on WhatsApp or messenger, FB etc, depending on what is used

iv.  Lecture notes and syllabus with clear requirements  including the schedule for getting in touch with each student over phone or VOIP like WhatsApp/SKYPE etc.

v.  Voice call discussion summary and observations

**6**

d. Some of you are probably already asking the question about the spiritual formation and practical ministry aspects of the training. As is evident from institutions that already offer online or distance education, these are built into the system.  While this already is a challenge – which can be overcome – the impact of the pandemic adds to the difficulty of implementing these effectively. However, here are some recommendations/suggestions.

- The chaplain/dean of student affairs can work with the individual student to decide on a mentor/spiritual advisor who is accessible to the student via phone, WhatsApp to be their guide.  Clear guidelines on what this engagement will look like will need to be established by the institution and a feedback/follow up needs to be done periodically.  Additionally, students may be required to provide some brief reflective pieces, maintain a journal etc. to highlight key insights and learning that leads to their personal growth.

- Opportunities for active going out into ministry situations will obviously be extremely limited, but students may be encouraged to prepare studies, messages etc. for certain groups of people, for eg., prepare a short reflection for young people addressing the issue of the crisis, or something related to spiritual growth and present it over a conference call to their youth group.  Some may already be helping their churches with online services – leading singing, speaking etc.  These may be recorded in a diary along with learning insights for later assessment.

- The practical ministry coordinator, chaplain and faculty may set up periodic calls with a group of students to provide care and counsel as the need arises.

# Additional Helpful Information

The ATA India Managing Committee, staff and other volunteers are here to serve you as best we can. Here are some ways we can help you during this time.

1. Webinars for institutional leadership and faculty on matters related to teaching and learning, especially in the areas of designing courses using outcomes-based learning, creative assessments and more.
2. Webinars for administrators on the use of technology for offering courses using ERL and/or LMS.
3. Resources on ATA India's website for free use (videos, access to printed material, seminar talks/lectures and more) for both faculty and students.  While these will be curated, faculty will need to put in some effort at determining what is best for their course and purposes.
4. ICETE Academy courses are freely available to ATA Member institutions.  Faculty are encouraged to take this time to be updated in areas related to teaching/learning, leadership, administration etc. **(See appendix A for details on how your faculty can access these courses).**
5. Last, but not least, just a listening ear and the opportunity to pray with you all at this time.


In service to you,

**The ATA India Staff and Tech Advisory Team**

# (Appendix A)

## Enrolling for ICETE Academy

The International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) invites all faculty members of ATA member institutions to enroll for ICETE Academy courses.  There are several that focus on online learning, pedagogy etc. that will be of immense use at this time. Below are the details on how you can enroll for these.

- Please register ithrough the login page by creating a new account. Here is the link for registration: https://icete.academy/login/signup.php?

- During the registration process, you will find a payment plan section. Please choose:

  - *option2*: **I am sponsored by my organisation**

  - and in the next text box: *Name of your Sponsoring Organisation enter -* **ATA MEMBER SCHOOL**

*(This Value-Added Service from ATA gives you full access to all the courses in the site.  ATA has made advance payment for you.)*

- After the Registration is done, you will have to wait for the ICETE administrator to confirm your registration.
  - Once registration is ratified you will get an email. (Be sure to check your spam. Normally it lands up there.)
  - You may then login with your username and password that you used to register the account.
  - You will find the login option on the top-right side corner of the homepage- https://Icete.academy

- After logging in:
  - you may go to the top menu and under **Courses**, choose course by the various filters that are there.

- Once you find a course of your choice;
  - Go through the description
  - If still interested, click the **Enrol now** button at the bottom
  - Make note of the **Course Enrolment Key,** you will need this to enrol into the course.
  - Once enrolled into the course, you will get an enrolment confirmation. (do check the spam or UPDATES tab in gmail.)
  - Even if you don't receive this you could continue to do the course, it will appear on your dashboard every time you login.

# (Appendix B)

## Harnessing Ed-Tech for TE in India

### 1. Education and Delivery

Education in simple terms is the process of facilitating learning.  And thus at the core of the process is communication/delivery, the quality of which determines the effectiveness of transmission and by that success in achieving the purpose/goal/objective/.

When the traditional method of classroom-like teaching is not a possibility, the alternate methods must be employed.  Here below are suggestions that may be considered by the administrators, depending on a few key factors:

1. The techno-sociological demography of the learners
2. The availability of and ease of accessibility to alternate infrastructure
3. The dedicated (read family members) community of the learner
4. Access to/Provision for resources

### 2. Emergency Remote Learning (ERL)

- **What?:** Remote learning is probably the easiest way to transition from a traditional classroom style to an off campus mode of learning.  In ERL, while the faculty members and learners are separated by time and distance, especially during an unforeseeable event., they are brought together by an alternate and appropriate system/piece of communication technology. Thus remote in terms of time and space.  Three key factors must be kept in mind while thinking of ERL:
    1. ERL is a temporary arrangement and is effective with the returning/continuing students.
    2. Schedule and Structure are important to help the learner and teachers progress and remain focused.
    3. Mentoring with the help of a family member/pastor/leader, wherever possible, is critical to the learning.

- **How? Ways of doing:** ERL implementation could be done by using an accessible technology platform such as WhatsApp or Email in the Indian context as the cost of internet data services are cheaper.

**10**

**Example:** Process and Steps for Remote Learning through WhatsApp

1. The college administrator could create a WhatsApp group for each subject and add the students and faculty members to the group along with Teaching Assistants (TA) and Faculty Supervisors.
2. The Academic Dean could set the schedule for each day like in a college setting and ask the teachers to remain available for that particular class/WhatsApp group during that hour of the day to communicate, take questions and provide instruction.
3. It is desirable if the Academic Dean divides a 3 credit hour like course into small units of 1 credit each as Part 1,2,3 for the ease of teaching and facilitating improvisation by the teachers.
4. The teacher during the scheduled hour could send the lesson to the students by recording three audio clips, covering the lesson objectives and capturing the major topics/themes of the lesson/discussion.
5. The teacher could also provide lecture notes/additional reading for the day in pdf  or by taking pictures of it and sending it across.  Relevant links from the internet may also be posted.
6. The teacher could also utilize this hour to touch base with a few students on a rotational basis, over a phone call/WhatsApp call, which adds the piece of personal care to learning.
7. The learners could interact with each other and the faculty members in the group and even similarly submit their assessment by working on it and uploading the document or picture for evaluation.
    a. One thing that we need to keep in mind here is that the students may not be able to produce term-paper like assessments and it will be a cumbersome exercise for the faculty member to evaluate and provide feedback if they do submit it.
    b. So our assessment pattern and categories should move to a continuous/formative assessment pattern, wherein the students are reverting on the study at least once every three days. This also ensures ongoing participation in the learning process and takes the place of traditional classroom attendance.
    c. The grading system also must be considerate to the conditions prevailing and ease in strictness of standard (of grammar, language and the other possible trade-offs between the important and desirable) is desirable.  Primarily, focus on achieving the learning objective of each learning task.

**11**

8. At the end of the course, the Administrator may take a complete back-up of the entire group chat (with media attached) and export it for preservation, later use and accreditation requirements. **[N]**[1]
9. The college could also make one of the parents or older siblings of the learner as a mentor-supervisor for the student and may later ask for feedback through a phone chat.
10. The ministry internship could be achieved through ministering to a virtual community that the learner is connected to. The college ministry supervisor's office must establish clear objectives, recording/reporting and evaluation processes for this.

(A similar ERL experience could also be created via Facebook, Email, Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams (for advanced ERL) etc.)

- **Advantage:** A few advantages of ERL are:
  1. Learning the nuances of online learning and the fear of failure is minimized
  2. No major requirement of learning to produce course work, i.e. the preparation and planning for ERL is not as complex as using an LMS or even a traditional distance education mode.
  3. No major shift in the process of delivery, thus reducing the learning curve for both the learner and the teacher.
  4. Ease of shift for administrators because of minimal investment and training requirement for the teachers and learners
  5. A good amount of Open Educational Resources (OER) in every subject area is available online for use. So, the learners could access quality resources (e.g. oercommons.org). Institutions/Faculty members could curate it by the course for them.

- **Limitations:** Limitations of Remote Learning are:
  1. Requires familiarity with the instructor/teacher to be effective
  2. Teacher-centric: acquiring of knowledge is teacher-centric and if the teacher is not a good communicator or if he/she was held in disfavor by the student, learning may be adversely affected.
  3. This is a temporary arrangement. If you try to extend it for a long period of time, learners will show a lack of interest and motivation to learn will diminish.
  4. The good old practice of essay writing, which our educational community considers as critical, might have to give way to more bite-size reflective work presented creatively.

---

[1] ATA Requirement

5. Since the technology (WhatsApp/Email/Facebook, etc.) itself is based on bite-size communication philosophy, the limitation of delivering complex concepts will have to employ additional technology like VoIP services (Zoom, Skype, Lark, Webex, etc.) and production that is similar to YouTube/Vimeo.

## 3. Online Learning

- What is it?: Online learning is a result of careful instructional design and planning based on a systematic model for design and development.  The design has an implication on the quality of instruction. The following article is a good resource (https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning)

- **The difference - ERL/Online:** The major difference between ERL and Online Learning lies in its philosophy and pedagogy.  The careful construction of Online Learning/Education requires to consider proven educational theory of Distance Education, Adult Learning principles and theory & philosophy governing educational technology and tools.
    - While ERL is an emergency response, in that it maintains classroom pedagogy and philosophy of teaching and learning; Online Education like Distance Education is a planned delivery of instruction, which considers the learner and the context of the learner at the centre and the role of a teacher is more of a facilitator of learning.

- **How? Ways of Doing:** Online Learning as mentioned earlier requires careful planning and purposeful instructional design.  A learning management system (LMS) or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is a platform that is built around and based on the  philosophy & pedagogy most suitable for online education.  The best way to go about online learning is to use one of the established Open-Source or Proprietary LMS.  Listed below are a few good LMSs for your consideration.
    1. Top 3 Open-Source LMS Solutions
        a. Moodle
        b. Canvas
        c. Open Edx

    2. Top 6 Proprietary Solutions
        a. Neo LMS
        b. The Academy LMS
        c. Instructure Canvas LMS
        d. Adobe Captivate Prime

**13**

  e. Docebo
  f. Talent LMS

(A good resource to read: https://www.predictiveanalyticstoday.com/top-free-premium-open-source-learning-management-software/ )

- **Difference between Open-Source and Proprietary Solutions:** The open-source platforms are developed and designed by a community of like-minded people who do not charge for the use of the platform if you could manage the working of the platform.  Whereas a proprietary LMS much like Apple or Microsoft control both the platform and development of the LMS.  Both have their advantages and challenges.

- **Which one?** If you would ask what our recommendation is when it comes to open-source and proprietary, our response will be an open-source solution, serviced by a partner. Remember Open-Source does not mean free.

- **Advantage of Online Learning:**
    - It offers a complete learning experience and as the name suggests, it is an alternative to classroom/campus-based education
    - Statistics and reports have time and again proven the effectiveness of online education and have placed it as a verified equivalent to campus-based education
    - The Learners own the education process and the system places the learner at the centre of development
    - The reach is unlimited
    - The learning is more collaborative and in-context
    - It can also be used to offer a blended learning experience for those on campus

- **Challenges of Online Learning:**
    - Since it is not an emergency response tool, it requires planning and preparation
    - Course development has to consider the philosophy, pedagogy and various theories of education
    - The choice of LMS is crucial and has long term implication
    - The need for tech support can be limiting at times
    - Student, Faculty and Administrative staff requires an orientation
    - There is a need for regular monitoring and up-gradation

## 4. Tools for Education:

**14**

In addition to the choice of platform or method of response, one needs to consider developing using the below-mentioned tools for a holistic learning experience.

- Developing Videos
- Communication
    - For Synchronous session (Synchronous activities take place at the same time in the day as they would without a campus closure.)
    - For Asynchronous session (Asynchronous activities are independent of the time of day but specific due dates and timelines are still in effect.)
- Creating an Online Community
    - Facebook
    - WhatsApp
    - Instagram
- Building Resources
    - Curated websites
    - OER

If you have not already filled out the survey CLICK HERE to fill it out!

------end of document------

**15**