



From Compliance to Transformation: Lessons from Africa International University's Online Accreditation Journey

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Abstract

This reflective journey by Africa International University (AIU) illustrates a committed pursuit of academic excellence in higher education through its thorough journey towards accreditation. It explains how AIU's internal self-assessments, thorough internal audits, and dedicated commitment to quality have encouraged continuous improvement in its online education offering. At AIU, the desire for accreditation has not only served as a desire for formal recognition but as a transformative catalyst, which is enhancing learner equity, digital readiness, and academic rigor within its online learning environments. AIU indeed reflects on its internal governance structures, its online academic programs, the faculty and student support activities, while identifying its strengths as well as areas of weakness that require ongoing enhancement. Internal audits are used to reinforce compliance with regulatory standards while promoting transparent, data-driven decision-making. Central to this journey is the effort made to ensure that students earning remotely receive the same level of quality, support, and educational outcomes as those attending on campus. In the long run, the accreditation process has strengthened AIU's internal institutional capacity and reaffirmed its mission as a world leader to prepare learners equipped to meet global challenges. This reflective journey offers practical perspectives for other higher education institutions that aim to align their e-learning initiatives with international quality frameworks while addressing the unique local educational needs established by local accrediting bodies.

Keywords: self-assessment report (SAR), accreditation, commission for university education CUE), institutions of higher education, quality assurance, compliance.

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Introduction

The dedication to accreditation reflects a broader trend across the continent, where institutions of higher learning are actively aligning their internal operations and processes with international best practices to develop their academic programs and ensure their graduates meet global standards in online education (Nason, 2023). Accreditation is indeed a powerful tool of quality assurance, and it is used to assess the quality of a national system of higher education. Accreditation involves an independent evaluation of an institution's programs using predetermined and standardized criteria set by the local accrediting body for this purpose. There is a link between quality assurance and accreditation on the one hand, and the mission of higher education institutions on the other. Quality assurance and accreditation standards are indeed proper tools for measuring the quality of online educational provisioning (Vesce et al., 2021). At AIU, this transformative journey has been highly significant as we worked to meet the detailed requirements outlined in the Commission for University Education (CUE) Self-Assessment Report (SAR) (Gouws & Waghid, 2007). Usually, this document requires a comprehensive and honest evaluation of the internal operations by higher education institutions. Quality Assurance and Accreditation intensify competition among higher education institutions and rank them according to their commitment to the criteria set by accrediting bodies. Given the increasing global emphasis on quality assurance in higher education, a development influenced by several converging factors, it is seen as a value to be pursued for improving higher education (Odhiambo, 2014). Quality assurance in online education helps recognize award standards, serves public accountability, informs student choices, enhances teaching, learning, and administrative processes, and promotes the dissemination of best practices to overall improve higher education systems (Cagape & Prado, 2025).

Quality assurance is founded on the idea that quality can be continually improved. Systems and procedures designed for this purpose ensure that staff and faculty regularly and critically assess the quality of Open Distance and eLearning (ODEL) programs and processes and consistently seek ways to enhance them (Materu & Righetti, 2010). In Kenya, ODeL accreditation is viewed as a mark of quality, confirming that an accredited institution and its programs have undergone a thorough external peer review based on CUE's established standards and meet the minimum requirements (Lazić et al., 2021). This approach is especially relevant at a time when the benefits of accreditation—such as increased competitiveness, global recognition, and market adaptability—often outweigh its disadvantages. The focus of Quality Assurance is on the efficiency of the processes at work in the institution or program in fulfilling the stated, given objectives and mission of the accrediting body (Duarte & Vardasca, 2023). In whichever format this accreditation may be carried out, the importance remains in the principle of self-regulation and continuous improvement based on ongoing assessments under a local accrediting body's guidance. Therefore, quality assurance and accreditation standards are the best tools for measuring educational service quality, as the processes of accreditation ensure that the institution innovates and modernizes its online education ecosystem (Zuhairi et al., 2020). Under the guidance of the Commission for University Education (CUE) in Kenya, the management of quality assurance has matured into a three-step process: self-assessment, external evaluation, and accreditation (Li, 2023).

Through these processes, the universities ensure they uphold academic integrity, improve institutional effectiveness, and adhere to local and international standards. Aligning with institutional performance and compliance is the external evaluation carried out by externally trained reviewers appointed by CUE (Angel, 2023). Accreditation certifies and confirms that a university or its online education conforms to the set quality. The third factor is self-assessment, whereby institutions critically evaluate their teaching, research, and administrative activities. It is through this internal process that an institution can reflect and improve on its own, as opposed to external evaluation. Self-assessment then becomes a reflective exercise, not strictly confined to procedural requirements. It allows an institution to engage in critical reflection regarding its mission and fulfillment thereof in

academic undertakings. Some scholars observe that self-evaluation assists "*rethinking the sense of purpose*" of a university, thus initiating an evidence-based culture of quality enhancement. In the context of ODeL, the accreditation process follows the same structured approach: internal self-assessment, external evaluation audit by CUE, and awarding of formal accreditation. Currently, higher education considers quality to be a central aspect of any university's performance for accreditation. This tripartite process involves the university leadership, down to departments, faculties, and administrative staff, providing for full institutional participation in quality assurance. AIU is a Christian institution of higher learning based in Nairobi, Kenya. The university is unique as it serves a diverse, international student population and is currently comprised of four academic schools: the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST) offering theology and pastoral-related studies, the School of Education and Social Sciences (SEAS) providing programs in education, communication, and community development, the School of Business and Economics (SBE) offering courses in procurement, Accounting, and finance, and the School of Computing Sciences and Emerging Technologies (SCET), focusing on IT, computing, AI, emerging technologies, and other related discipline.

Like many other universities on the African continent, AIU embarked upon a transformative journey for accreditation due to the necessity of increasing the quality and relevance of learning against a backdrop of a highly competitive global landscape. Bearing in mind the university has a student population from over 34 nationalities, for AIU, this was an important undertaking. The purpose was to ensure that these students receive a high-quality and relevant education and are awarded credentials that are widely recognized by their home governments and a wide base of employers without having to travel to AIU. Learners are constantly demanding better quality educational services and provisions. This meant we had to pay close attention to quality in terms of our programs, internal processes, production, delivery systems, and online education philosophy. On the other hand, like any other institution of higher education, AIU is always under increasing pressure to meet students' demand for flexibility, credibility, affordability, and reliability as students have increasingly diverse backgrounds and needs. To meet this challenge, innovation and creativity are essential in online education provisioning (Wang et al., 2018). This undertaking, therefore, required a critical examination and restructuring of the university structures, policies, and operations for the purpose of bringing these into line with the strict standards demanded by the accrediting body, the CUE.

Methods

This research uses a descriptive-analytical case study method to document the ODeL accreditation compliance navigation process at Africa International University (AIU). The approach adopted the Kenyan CUE tripartite framework (Self-Assessment, External Evaluation, Accreditation), with a primary focus on the internal phase. The operational steps for implementing internal evaluations and developing compliance instruments at AIU include:

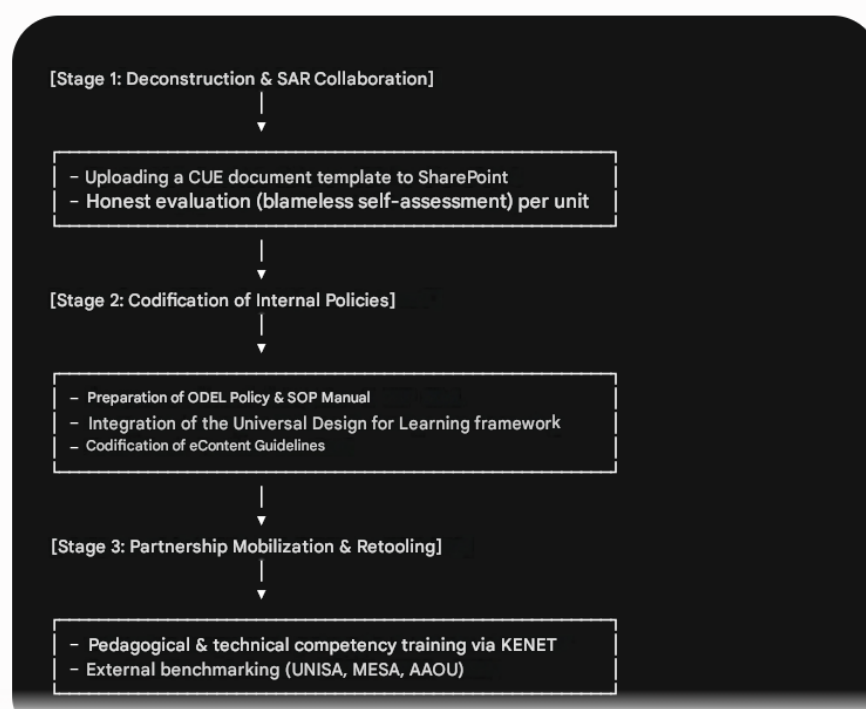


Figure 1. Operational steps for implementing internal evaluations and preparing compliance instruments at AIU

Operational steps for implementing internal evaluations and preparing compliance instruments at AIU: Platform-Based Collaborative Participation: AIU's ODeL Directorate led the SAR summary process and uploaded the working documents to the SharePoint platform. All staff, faculty, and administrative units were given full access to data entry and a blameless self-assessment of strengths, weaknesses, accomplishments, and areas for improvement (De Lara & Santos, 2024). Supporting evidence from internal medical records was systematically collected. Policy Instrument Formulation: The campus formulated formal compliance documents, including the ODeL Policy, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Manual, Equity and Inclusivity Policy, and eContent Development Guidelines (Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007). Capacity Interventions and Network Benchmarking: Facing challenges of faculty preparedness and institutional isolation, AIU adopted a capacity-building approach (faculty retooling programs) through strategic partnerships with external institutions.

Results and Discussion

Setting Up a Framework: Development of Compliance Documentation. The ODeL policy and procedure manual

These two documents show the university's focus on quality online learning. The ODeL policy, in particular, sets out clear rules for all online and distance learning activities to meet quality standards and best practices. Since there is no existing national ODeL policy, each university ought to create its own policies to guide online program quality and implementation. The availability of a quality assurance document facilitates recognition of the set standards, serves public accountability purposes, helps inform student choice, it contributes to improved teaching, learning, and administrative processes, while leading to overall enhancement of higher education systems. If available, a national policy could unify efforts, reduce fragmentation, and set clear quality benchmarks among institutions of higher education. Creating institutional ODeL policies helps universities set up management structures, online delivery methods, content development guidelines,

and quality assurance checks that follow emerging standards in online education. It also supports the university's efforts to get accreditation, which is important for maintaining high academic standards and for external reviews (Lemaitre, 2017). Supporting the policy is a full ODeL procedures manual, which gives step-by-step instructions and standards for implementing the policies. This helps staff, students, and faculty who are involved in online education to understand their specific roles and responsibilities and ensures that everyone follows the shared understanding of the university's ODeL set framework.

Equity and Inclusivity Policy

The Equity and Inclusivity Policy at Africa International University is based on the principle that all students should have equal access to quality online education. Content design adheres to the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework to create flexible courses that accommodate different learning styles and abilities through various methods of engagement, representation, and expression. The policy makes sure all its students receive equal educational rights, no matter how far this is from reality. It also requires that the eLearning platform itself should be accessible, using assistive technologies as aids, and taking into account diverse Internet and hardware requirements. In order to make it as easy as possible for the content to be understood and processed, various materials are used, including captions, alternative text for images, screen reader compatibility, and accessible document formats. The university offers technical support to students, including training on assistive tools and individualized learning. Course design on our LMS has flexible assessments that encourage everyone to join in interactive activities. Facilitators get ongoing training to make sure classes are accessible and fair. At the university, everyone, including the management, faculty, staff, and students, knows what their responsibilities are so that everyone can work together to make online learning easy to access and complete. This inclusivity framework upholds a fair and supportive learning environment in compliance with accreditation standards and best practices.

Guidelines for eContent Development

AIU goes to considerable lengths to guarantee that the self learning materials (SLM) are thorough and fair to all students from different backgrounds. The goal of these internal guidelines is to create a welcoming and safe environment for all students, regardless of their gender, race, religion, financial situation, physical location, academic disabilities, or other characteristics that could hinder their ability to learn or succeed. To provide for the quality and applicability of courses offered online, AIU put into place enhanced mechanisms for creating online courses with a focus on pedagogical effectiveness, interactivity and engaging learning materials, and alignment with expected learning outcomes. The processes yield a streamlined approach for faculty members to create and refine online courses that are not only pedagogically instructive but also prompt critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration, thereby providing a holistic and fulfilling learning experience for the learners.

Retooling: Supporting Online Teaching Capacity

Appreciating the value of faculty expertise as the backbone support for successful ODeL initiatives, AIU invested heavily in developing the faculty retooling programs so as to offer the facilitators pedagogical and technological expertise necessary for successful online pedagogy. These efforts combined a multi-faceted approach, which involved widespread training workshops based on the concepts of online instructional design, the facilitation of development of engaging and effective online learning spaces, comprehensive online courses for covering various aspects of online pedagogical methodologies and technology infusion, boosting understanding of best practices in the use of technology for teaching, as well as ongoing mentoring and support structures providing facilitators with customized advice and support as they face the complexities and opportunities inherent in online teaching. In addition, the retooling of the faculty went a step further from pedagogical training and included technological training so that the facilitators would easily use the

many tools and platforms used in online education, such as learning management platforms, video conferencing applications, and interactive tools for evaluation (Jung, 2022).

Student Support Systems: Facilitating Learner Achievement

Student support systems are also as indispensable for the success of ODeL programs, as they equip the students with the resources and mentoring required for successful learning amidst the online learning framework. The student support systems extend a variety of support services such as online mentoring, academic counselling, technical support, library facilities, and career advising. In recognition of the importance of creating a warm and engaging online learning environment, AIU dedicated utmost attention to the development of comprehensive student support structures, thus providing students with the appropriate resources and support for the successful completion of their academic programs.

Creating a favourable environment for Change:

Managing change for ODeL accreditation centers calls for more than just policies and procedures; it demands a paradigm shift in the organizational culture, developing a mutual commitment to quality and improvement. Here is how AIU created an environment to foster change:

Navigating Challenge: Culture Change and Institutional Support

One significant issue during the journey to accreditation by AIU included the need to create a transformative cultural change at the institution, encouraging the use of new teaching models and online education technologies among staff and faculty. Normally, changing an institution's mindset is one of the biggest tasks when undergoing "innovation". Such a change requires a great deal of courage and commitment from the top leadership. It also requires a many-faceted approach, including active engagement with the stakeholders for the purposes of allaying concerns and misconceptions, the undertaking of wide-ranging training programs for enhancing digital literacy and teaching skills, as well as the development of programs for mentoring the collaboration of learning and the sharing of expertise by peers.

Crossing Cultural Barriers

Shared values and norms can lead to better teamwork. This teamwork supports positive changes within an organization. AIU worked hard towards accreditation but faced challenges related to culture. There is a need to respect old academic traditions, at the same time, encourage new ideas and flexibility. This balance was essential for AIU's success. By balancing these two aspects, AIU ensured a successful accreditation process, and its leaders understood that old systems and ways of working could affect their work. AIU made its reform strategies better by adding cultural awareness. This change helped the institution work better together and improved its ability to meet international quality standards. At the same time, AIU kept its main identity and its core values that it has built over the years.

Constructing Strong Support Systems

Lack of robust supporting mechanisms stood out as a significant barrier, hence the need for the provision of robust resources geared towards meeting the unique requirements of distance students. The resources must include academic advising, technological support, counseling, and library resources, which may be remotely accessed. For better outcomes, these support mechanisms must also be easily accessible and clearly communicated to online students, facilitating them to easily fit into the online learning environment, enhance a sense of belonging, and ultimately contribute towards student success. AIU's deliberate involvement with Kenya Education Network (KENET) was key to addressing these notable challenges, utilizing their key expertise for our staff retooling, program reviews, enhancing knowledge transfer, and supporting best ODeL practices, which

ultimately enhanced students and faculty support.

Absence of a National ODeL Policy

Further complicating issues for AIU was the lack of a national ODeL policy, thus creating confusion and uncertainty regarding best practices and compliance requirements due to the omission of definitive regulatory standards and guidelines. On the other hand, the absence of a national policy for inclusivity of ODeL in education causes great concerns of equity, which could further exclude students with disabilities and deny them access to both quality learning opportunities.

Restricted Transmission of Knowledge between Institutions

Another factor that affected the progress at AIU was the unwillingness by some institutions previously accredited or working towards accreditation to freely share their experiences and knowledge, thereby leading to a deficiency of context-based knowledge, which could otherwise accelerate and optimize the accrediting work of institutions, and by extension, AIU. This reluctance highlighted the need for additional collaboration and sharing of knowledge by the community of higher education for the wider adoption of the best ODeL practice, sharing of use cases as well as for the emergence of a learning community.

Strategic Collaboration for Capacity Building of Staff through Retooling Activities

Noting the importance of faculty development as a factor for the success of the ODeL initiatives, AIU has engaged the Kenya Education Network, a consortium of Kenyan universities providing shared resources and services, in staff retooling. Such carefully designed interventions seek to develop in the faculty a command of current online pedagogic techniques, a skill set of the effective use of the latest educational technology, as well as the capability of designing and delivering highly engaging and effective online learning modules. The journey of AIU towards achieving accreditation offers a valuable case study for other learning centers looking to advance their online learning endeavors, highlighting the integral functions of planning, the involvement of stakeholders, training of faculty, and a persistent focus on continued improvement (Balalle, 2024). The adoption of adaptive learning technologies, complementing customized pedagogical methods, is coming to be equally valued as central to the progress and further development of contemporary online educational platforms. Through AIU's collaboration with the University of South Africa (UNISA), MESA Global, KENET, and the African Association of Open Universities, significant progress has been made. In response to these challenges, AIU proactively sought advice and partnerships from external stakeholders to enhance its ODeL programs. These collaborations allowed AIU to adopt best practices, benchmark its ODeL offerings against international standards, and gain external expertise to strengthen internal capabilities. This helped in demonstrating the institution's commitment to ongoing development and the strategies needed to address the challenges of delivering high-quality ODeL. The established partnerships have been critical for staff and faculty development, improving curriculum, and supporting students effectively. They have also helped share expertise and resources to build a stronger and more sustainable ODeL system.

The Africa International University Experience: Lessons Learned and Implications for Institutional Development

The case of AIU offers a critical framework for understanding the intricate ODeL accrediting dynamics amidst the African context, thereby providing valuable reference for institutions aiming to deepen their online learning endeavors and gain prominence in the era of digitization (Azares, 2026). The AIU experience highlights the critical role of progressive leadership by advocating for and guiding the accrediting process, as well as creating an environment with a spirit of collaboration, openness, and mutual responsibility between all stakeholders (Pusoc et al., 2025). This active involvement ensures that the faculty not only becomes aware of online pedagogical methods but also

becomes proficient in the use of the latest technological tools for the development of compelling learning experiences for students. Institutions of higher learning need to commit strategic resources for a robust technological infrastructure, comprising learning management systems, high-speed connectivity, and facilities to produce multimedia, for the smooth execution of online programs (Didisyahrir et al., 2023). The process of seeking accreditation is a transformative undertaking for any higher education institution, requiring a thorough evaluation of its functions, a commitment to continued improvement, and a willingness to adopt innovations. As such, the accrediting experience at AIU provides a comparative case study for understanding the intricate issues and strategic refinements institutions operating in similar situations must embark upon to successfully manage the accrediting terrain within ODeL. The insights garnered from the experience of AIU hold the potential to positively impact policy development, shape institutional plans, and shape resource allocation towards enhancing the quality and reach of higher learning for the people of Africa and the globe at large. In its pursuit of ODeL accreditation, Africa International University formed a strategic partnership with the Kenya Education Network. This partnership helped AIU conduct scheduled staff training programs. This demonstrates a clear plan to equip faculty and staff with the skills and knowledge needed for online learning (Ramezani & Mostafavi, 2025). Using KENET's expertise and resources, AIU aimed to improve the quality of its online programs and promote innovation and continuous growth. Through these strategic retooling efforts, AIU is actively preparing its staff to effectively navigate the evolving domain of online education, ensuring they remain leaders in effective pedagogical methodologies and the integration of technology.

Recommendations

The proliferation of Open, Distance, and e-Learning (ODeL) in Kenya has created opportunities to widen access to higher education. There is notable evidence of inconsistencies. To address these challenges and strengthen the credibility, consistency, and overall impact of ODeL offerings in institutions of higher education, the following recommendations are proposed:

Development of a National ODeL Policy Framework.

In the absence of a comprehensive national ODeL policy framework, the Commission for University Education needs to spearhead its development to provide clear guidelines for institutions of higher learning on the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs meant for online delivery. Such a framework, if developed, would establish uniform standards for program quality and delivery, set up minimum quality benchmarks, and promote consistency across institutions of higher learning. By providing a unified national framework, it would enable institutions of higher learning to design, develop, and implement ODeL programs that align with national expectations, thereby enhancing online education credibility, ensuring comparability, and strengthening both national and international recognition of online qualifications.

Establish a National ODeL Directors Forum.

Online education is currently limited by the lack of a national forum or group for directors of open, distance, and e-learning to exchange ideas, experiences, use cases and success stories. It is a good idea to establish a national ODeL directors forum. This will be a place where ODeL leaders exchange knowledge, share new teaching ideas, and keep quality high across institutions of higher learning. Building on the success of the ICT Directors and Managers forum, which has helped improve technology in higher education, this new forum if established can do even better. KENET should lead this effort because it's key to building Kenya's digital learning system. The forum would help institutions stay up to date with swift changes, use online tools better, and be more comprehensive and flexible, while boosting innovation, strengthening networks between ODeL directorates, and help solve common problems, making online education better for everyone.

Capacity Building and Professional Development

It's important to continuously build skills and provide professional development for those working in ODeL centres within institutions of higher learning (Mpungose, 2025). Therefore, to maintain the quality of online education, educators and administrators need ongoing support (Golden, 2023). The Commission for University Education should take the lead by conducting regular nationwide programs, organizing workshops, offering certifications, or providing mentorships in partnership with universities and professional groups that support ODeL staff and directors (Afroz et al., 2024). This should not be a one-time effort; instead, it should promote continuous growth so that ODeL practitioners can design courses that are innovative, engaging, and aligned with learners' evolving needs (Porter & Perris, 2023).

Accreditation Guidelines for ODeL Programs

There is a need for the CUE to come up with some solid accreditation guidelines, specifically for ODeL-based programs. These clear and transparent criteria would give institutions of higher learning a practical roadmap to follow when it comes to meeting the set national standards (Happyana & Khaudli, 2025). Having the Self Assessment Report as template is not good enough if it has no accompanying notes and detailed guidelines. Accreditation is important in higher education as it acts as a quality assurance tool that lays down specific benchmarks for compliance and keeps everyone involved accountable (Kayyali, 2024). This should be a serious business and not just about checking compliance boxes (Harvey, 2024). Getting a university accredited makes students, employers, and other stakeholders trust your online programs. It shows the university programs are authentic and valuable. These efforts are important to keep online programs credible and respected in higher education (Gardezi et al., 2023).

Strengthening Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Institutions of higher education have begun to redefine and reorient their institutional missions and strategic visions to incorporate and address quality issues (Guil Gorostidi & Rubio-Arostegui, 2026). Key stakeholders in ODeL have become increasingly interested in quality assurance matters. Learners are demanding better quality educational services and provisions (Širec & Rožman, 2025). Quality assurance for distance higher education is one of the main concerns among institutions of higher learning and stakeholders today. Quality enhancement has become necessary for ODeL providers, and most governments have established quality agencies to improve and regulate the quality of educational practice, as pressures for quality improvement have emerged from both internal and external parties (Krooi et al., 2024). In Kenya, the Commission for University Education is mandated to regulate university education (Sampe & Arifin, 2024). Therefore, CUE should come up with well-established quality assurance systems for ODeL-based programs. These systems ideally should go beyond the basic compliance checklists. Regular program reviews, peer reviews, and student feedback mechanisms should be part of these frameworks (Moh Ali Fauzi et al., 2024). By implementing such comprehensive approaches, CUE can ensure that ODeL programs maintain high-quality standards while promoting accountability, encouraging innovation among institutions of higher learning, and remaining responsive to students' ever-evolving needs. By aligning these systems with international best practices in ODeL education, working together and sharing information about quality standards, benchmarks, and best practices, Kenya will strengthen its capacity to offer effective and reliable online education.

Promotion of Collaboration and Partnerships

Under the guidance of the Commission for University Education (CUE), cooperation and alliances between universities, interested parties, and relevant authorities should be promoted (Onsomu et al., 2025). These strategic partnerships are important for sharing resources, encouraging innovation, and developing ODeL programs that align with Kenya's socio-economic goals and Labor

market demands (Paramole & Adeoye, 2024). Taking a collective approach ensures that ODeL initiatives in institutions of higher learning are more sustainable, relevant, and responsive, thus enhancing their contribution to national development and ensuring online education meets the changing needs of learners and society (Ahuja et al., 2025).

Enchmarking Minimum Requirements for Successful ODeL Accreditation

Although only a few universities in Kenya and elsewhere are currently accredited in Open, Distance, and e-Learning (ODeL), those that have succeeded provide valuable lessons and peer benchmarking opportunities as ODeL directors lead their institutions through accreditation (Ansong et al., 2017). It is strongly recommended that every institution aspiring for first-attempt accreditation in ODeL under the CUE should undertake a formal benchmarking exercise, comparing against the few currently accredited ODeL institutions locally and regionally, across all relevant domains of infrastructure, human capacity, systems, support services, and monitoring frameworks (Daud, 2024). The benchmarking outputs should guide investment prioritization, gap closure planning, and continuous monitoring, so that by the time of the accreditation application, the institution can justifiably demonstrate that it meets or surpasses minimal acceptable benchmarks (Vachry Dhani et al., 2023). AIU was fortunate to gain invaluable benchmarking insights from Zetech University and St Paul's University. By benchmarking and documenting these minimum requirements in advance, ODeL directors position their institutions to *get it right on the first attempt*, reducing the risk of delays, queries, or negative outcomes during accreditation review.

Conclusion

Getting accredited goes beyond a one-time goal. It's a continuous process of getting better and adapting. Institutions of higher education need to watch for new emerging trends, use the latest technology, and aim for high standards in online education. Building on the learnings and the experience of AIU, this study provides actionable recommendations for institutions of higher learning facing the complexities of ODeL accreditation. The main points are planning ahead, talking to everyone involved, and always trying to improve quality. The lack of a clear national policy on online learning is a big problem. Governments should make clear plans that help ensure good quality and consistency in online education. Accreditation requires shared responsibility of all institutions of higher learning staff, faculty, and management, and should not be treated as an ODeL directorate affair. Successful accreditation efforts can only work when everyone is fully aware and understands what is involved, and that it takes effort and commitment to make this happen. This can only happen when all stakeholders, from students to university management, are involved. On the other hand, the pathway of the AIU illustrates the strong impact that strategic alliances can provide towards propelling institutions closer to their goals, highlighting the value of collaboration and the sharing of resources towards the pursuit of online educational excellence (Latchem, 2016; Kayyali, 2024). In order to achieve the objectives of quality, accessibility, and growth for higher education, technology-based pedagogical techniques need to complement holistic plans for the development of the faculty as well as the production of relevant online resources. Additionally, the case of AIU celebrates the importance of investing resources into holistic student support services. This includes online tutoring, online advising, and online library facilities, to ensure online students have access to the resources required for their success, just like their on-campus counterparts.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Author contribution

Felix M. Obegi: Conceptualization; Methodology; Formal Analysis; Data Curation; Writing – Original Draft Preparation; Writing – Review & Editing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Declaration of Generative AI in Scientific Writing

The authors utilized generative AI tools during the initial drafting phase for structural outlining and subsequent language refinement. Crucially, all core concepts, data interpretation, and literature analyses were conceived and verified solely by the authors. The authors retain full ownership of and accountability for the manuscript's content and conclusions.

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