

# WRITING SAMPLE I

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E-Learning in Higher Education

## KNOWLEDGE ONLY A CLICK AWAY

**Class time! The student settles down on the couch and flips open her laptop. After starting the lesson with a click of her mouse, a three-dimensional projection appears, and the voice of the instructor fills the room: "Here you can observe a simulation of the melting of the polar ice caps. Now try to manipulate some of the parameters to test their influence on the speed of the process." Wait a minute, I've already worked through that part the day before yesterday, she thinks, and forwards to the next chapter.**

A lot of people describe a scenario like this, or some variation of it, when asked about their associations with the term *e-learning*. Is this the future of learning and teaching? Today, the previously constructed scenario is science fiction at best. According to recent research, it is neither technically feasible nor didactically sound to replace a human instructor with a machine, and thus reduce the learning process strictly to human-computer interaction.

However, new technologies offer a number of possibilities to enhance and improve the communication, interaction, and organization within a class. These technologies are likely to become more and more relevant over time. E-learning offers more flexibility for students and instructors alike when it comes to the time and place of a class, and therefore enables significant time savings. In order to take advantage of these innovations, the Media Department has been established as a new administrative unit within the university's Center for Information. The department mainly focuses on e-learning and the implementation of a diverse range of media in teaching.

Albstadt-Sigmaringen University is by no means a novice when it comes to e-learning. For several years, pioneer faculty and staff members have been promoting the topic and have been actively employing relevant technologies in their everyday teaching practice. Over time, a faceted multimedia infrastructure has developed that ranges from a learning management system to a video streaming server and a virtual conferencing and collaboration tool.

The Media Department will be providing access to each of these components to all members of the university's community. Moreover, a number of workshops are offered, covering not only the learning management system and other current software applications, but also strategies for the didactic integration of e-learning in the syllabus.

The strategic goal is to create an environment offering optimal conditions for the implementation of e-learning, enabling the adoption of new technologies with as little effort as possible, and to guarantee ongoing support during the entire development and implementation process. This way, the road to numerous new projects and teaching methods will be paved, contributing to the evolution of teaching. The fusion of traditional teaching methods with modern concepts promotes the teaching excellence of the university.

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