

eLearning Center in Ramkhamhaeng University

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Abstract

Ramkhamhaeng University is the largest university in Thailand. The number of students enrolled in each semester is approximately 500,000, which is why it is necessary to use technology for teaching and learning. Not only providing the classrooms for students, the university also use multimedia technologies which combine several communications media for the purpose of teaching and learning within the context of distance education, both throughout the country as well as overseas. As the University has launched a number of programs of study for students in Bangkok and its 20 regional campuses, Ramkhamhaeng University has to supply both on-site teaching and a “virtual” classroom via satellite. The students who enrolled in any courses can learn by themselves through the university resources, one of which is eLearning Center, at Ramkhamhaeng University.

☞ Ramkhamhaeng University (RU)

Ramkhamhaeng, by far the largest public university in Thailand, was established in 1971, and was named after King Ramkhamhaeng the Great, who invented the first Thai Alphabet. The university places great emphasis on the principle of “equality of opportunity” regarding higher education. It is designed as a kind of “academic marketplace” to which there is no entrance examination; in other words, it is an open-admission institution to which entrance is virtually unlimited. The main campus is located in the eastern suburbs of Bangkok, in addition to which

there are 20 regional campuses covering all the various regions of Thailand, all of which function as part of the Ramkhamhaeng University system. Currently, the total number of students enrolling at Ramkhamhaeng University each semester is approaching 600,000, which is why it is absolutely vital that we use technology for purposes of management and for the efficient enhancement of the university’s teaching and learning system. The University is also committed to the concept of providing quality education both at the undergraduate and graduates levels.

One of the University’s objectives is to provide students with the requisite skills, knowledge and professional competence, as well as a sense of ethics that they need to achieve fruitful and satisfying careers.

At present, Ramkhamhaeng University offers Bachelor’s Degree Programs, Master’s Degree Programs, Ph.D. Programs, International Programs and Non-degree Programs throughout its 9 Faculties. Given the scope of its mission, and its open-admissions policy, the university is committed to the effective use of educational technology both in order to maximize its human resources, as well as to enhance the quality of the education it provides at all levels.

☞ The Utilization of Technology at Ramkhamhaeng University

At Ramkhamhaeng University, the Institute of Computers and the Institute of Educational Technology, and the eLearning Center, are charged with the responsibility of organizing the implementation of technology for use in management and in the teaching

and learning system. The University organizes training courses in producing and using various forms of technology for instructors, educational personnel and students alike. Since there are a large number of students enrolled in each course both at the main campus and at the university's regional campuses, we have to provide them with various modes of instruction. The main system of instruction is a combination of on-campus instruction and distance learning via satellite. To contact the instructors in courses range from basic skills; consequently, instruction ranges from face-to-face contact with the instructor in class, mail, radio, television, and computer, to the use of multimedia in the teaching-learning process through the development of special eLearning materials. As an integral part of its teaching-learning process at both the Bachelor's and Master's degree levels, the University also focuses on increasing the use

of the Internet, interactive teleconferencing and interactive communication through satellite broadcasts, as well as other forms of modern information technology. Students may choose the mode of instruction that best suits their individual needs and their circumstances.

Ramkhamhaeng University has also created a "Mobile University", the first of its kind in Thailand. It is a revolutionary concept in both education and design, and is in the form of a luxury coach fitted with 39 computers complete with a satellite hook-up and scheduled to bring education via the Internet or satellite to rural areas of the country. Since 2002, the "Mobile University" has reached out to nearly 50 provinces throughout the length and breadth of the country.



✎ ELearning Center: Ramkhamhaeng University

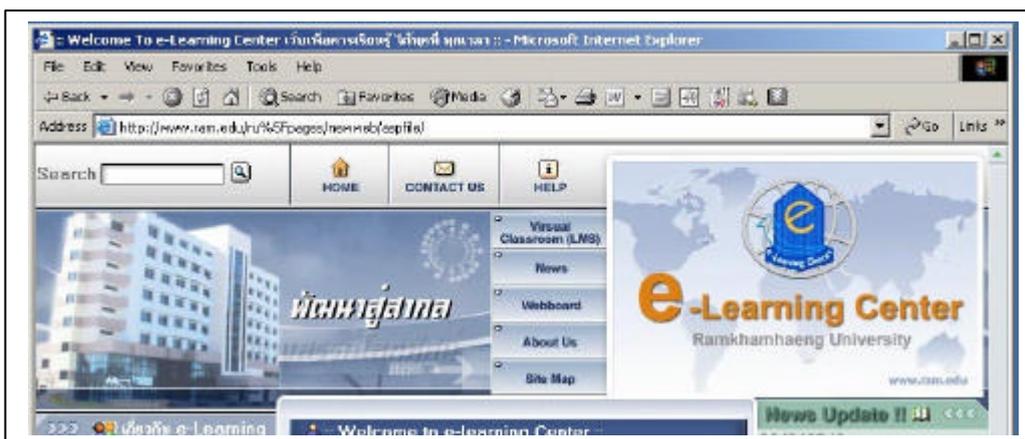
Given the increasing use of computer networks, the Internet, and telecommunication technologies, eLearning, as a key component of distance education or online learning, has become widely recognized as one of the major tools in the field of education with regard to enhancing the potential of any teaching and learning system. As an organization, the eLearning Center provides a vital service both in the academic field and in the technological domain and serves both instructors and students, in addition to working in close cooperation with the Institute of Computers and the Institute of Educational Technology. The main functions of the eLearning Center are to encourage the instructors and assist them in analyzing and designing their own content to ensure that the material subsequently placed on the web should be motivating, interesting, easy to understand, precise and concise. Currently, The eLearning Center at Ramkhamhaeng University provides a number of courses relevant to the curriculum for students to learn by themselves at their own convenience, anywhere and any time, via the Internet. The courseware is composed of 6 components:

- 1) The objectives of the course, the course syllabus and the instructor's name.
- 2) The presentation of the content, divided into 10-12 topics for each course using multimedia, consisting of text, still images, moving images and sound.
- 3) The linkages on each frame of the content presentation. This enables

learners to link to other web sites assigned by the instructor or to other external sources.

- 4) Assignments or learning activities, which may be in the form of a report or project assigned by the instructor and which are then submitted to the instructor or the tutor via the Internet. There is also a self-test after each topic.
- 5) The Learning Management System, which is a record of the interaction between the instructor and the students, and student to student via the Internet. These include chat rooms for asking and answering questions or for requesting and giving advice about assignments.
- 6) Personal profiles for the instructor to check, monitor and evaluate the students' progress and also access information on the students.

As an extension of eLearning combined with several communications media for teaching and learning in distance education, Ramkhamhaeng University also provides opportunities for Thais residing in 14 countries overseas to study 4 undergraduate programs and 3 graduate programs. Though they may have studied via eLearning and have done all the set assignments or projects, the final examination has to be administered at a specific time and at a designated examination center. In this respect, the University has received invaluable help from various Royal Thai Embassies and Consulates General who have offered to act as one of a total of 20 examination centers in those countries.



✍ Conclusion

Technology is essential in providing effective education for learners at all levels, but the effective process and skilled personnel are also essential to the success of any educational system that makes extensive use of such cutting-edge technology. Ramkhamhaeng University has been able to develop in such a rapid and efficient manner, both in terms of rising academic standards and enhancing teaching and learning system, by the effective use of technology in general and ICT-related technologies in particular. Most importantly, all personnel at Ramkhamhaeng University have helped promote the university as an institute that is on a par with international standards in the utilization of technologies for the purpose of providing quality education. As a result of its extensive experience in technology and IT in the service of education, Ramkhamhaeng University is considered to be at the forefront of the trend towards distance learning in Thailand.



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