



# welan

World-wide E-Learning Academy  
for Natural Resources,  
Forestry and Wood Science

## Basic information

(September 2009)

In order to use the potential of e-learning for improvement of higher education the concept of WELAN has been developed by higher education specialists from IUFRO, IPFE and forestry faculties of six universities (cf. figure 1, contact details see at end). The basic idea is to build WELAN as a worldwide e-learning academy, which will promote, facilitate, organize and run e-learning courses in scientific education, further education and competence development in the fields of forestry and wood sciences as well as management of natural resources.

This academy will be of benefit to:

- universities, as teaching resources will be better used jointly
- developing countries in particular, as they will get access to teaching resources otherwise not accessible
- students, as learning resources will be better usable worldwide
- professionals, as learning resources will be better accessible while working
- employers, as actual and future employees will be better qualified

WELAN as a partnership for joint learning and teaching will be built around a core group of universities, among which there has been cooperation in earlier projects, already running e-learning programmes or courses. The partnership will in the progress of WELAN include more universities with e-learning experiences or plans to start e-learning, so that worldwide important regions and subjects will be covered. Also students from other universities and professionals may participate in the courses. The partnership will be supported by existing networks, which work in the field of improvement of higher education in the relevant disciplines (starting with IUFRO, SILVA-Network, IPFE, IFSA).

Activities of WELAN will start with the development of recommendations for administrative regulations including course formats, course delivery, credit recognition, accreditation, tuition fees in order to allow students from different universities as well as companies to have access to e-learning course information and to the courses of the collaborating universities and get their credits gained easily recognized. Didactical approaches, learning / teaching methods with a focus on blended settings will be explored and developed. Concepts of OER (Open Education Resources) will be explored for some WELAN activities.

In co-operation with IPFE a survey of existing e-learning courses relevant for WELAN ideas will be done, continuously updated and displayed through Internet, which then will be opened to students (model 0 of figure 2).

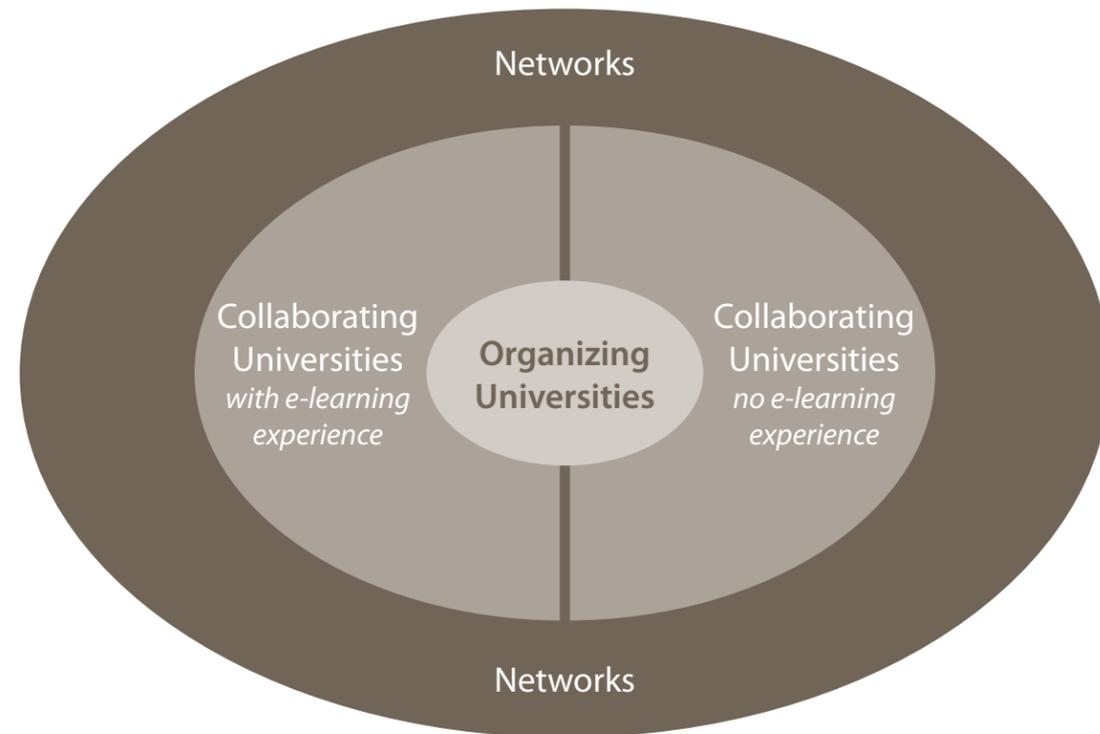


Figure 1. Structure of WELAN: organisers, collaborators and affiliates

Activities of WELAN will include (cf. figure 2)

- recommendations regarding didactical approaches, learning / teaching methods and administrative regulations
- make accessible existing courses and
- initiate and organise development of new courses and study programmes.

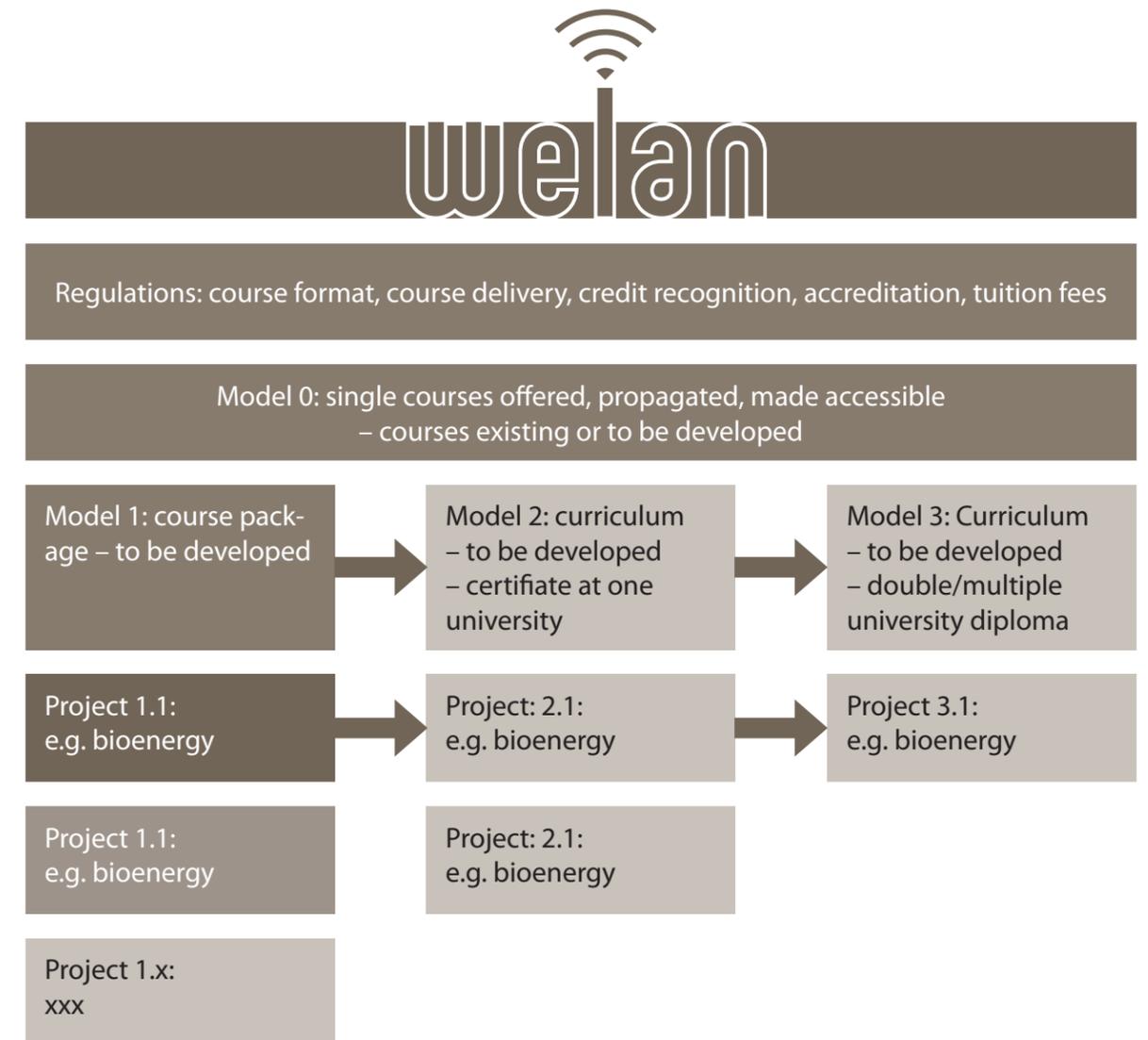


Figure 2. Structure of WELAN activities

Development and offering of at least twenty courses under the umbrella of WELAN within three years is aimed at. Thus in a growing and comprehensive system essential parts of Natural Resources, Forestry and Wood Science will be covered. Selection of courses will answer to actual needs and fill gaps in a “universal core curriculum” (IPFE 2008), thus in a participatory way contributing to learning/teaching profiles of the co-operating universities.

Because of the nature of science and education in natural resources management, forestry and wood technology including phases of practical application, field work and work on industry work sites will be of special importance even in e-learning. Solving this by blended courses will have to be explored and developed.

Accreditation of e-learning courses run by WELAN will be an important component of making available the whole set of courses: as there are different traditions and ways of accreditation in the different universities involved the compatibility of accreditation regulations will be defined and agreed upon by the universities involved.

WELAN will be a collaborative programme of projects to be assembled in one common project, to be co-financed under national and international projects. Organisers will be housed at the co-operating universities.

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“... the Internet may be the means of realizing a forestry lecturer’s dream. Imagine being able to discuss, for example, different timber harvesting systems used internationally with a group of motivated students from different regions of the globe in one virtual classroom.”

(Längin, Ackerman & Lewark, 2004)