



STUDENT GUIDE TO THE LEARNING ANALYTICS OF THE BOTSWANA OPEN UNIVERSITY

Introduction

The Botswana Open University uses data about students and their activities in the Institutional platforms such as ITS, MOODLE etc. to help understand and improve the educational processes, and provide better support to students. The use of data obtained through Learning Analytics should be for the benefit of students, whether assisting them individually or using aggregated and anonymised data to help other students or to improve the educational experience. More generally data obtained through Learning Analytics can be used as feedback to improve programme and course design as well as delivery. It is on this understanding that the University developed the Learning Analytics Policy on which this **Student Guide** is based.

This Student Guide must be read alongside with the Botswana Open University's *Learning Analytics Policy*, *Learning Analytics Strategy* and *Learning Analytics Procedures Manual* and must be read and used with a full appreciation of the principles detailed in the policy documents referenced. A key principle of the *Learning Analytics Policy*, *Learning Analytics Strategy* and *Learning Analytics Procedures Manual* is to be completely transparent about all aspects of the University's use of Learning Analytics for purposes of improving the student learning experience. This Guide aims to make you, the Student, understand exactly what data is being collected, how it is being processed, what the institution will be doing with the information, and how the information will benefit you. This document provides these details, and will continuously be reviewed as the use and understanding of Learning Analytics develops in the University.

What is Learning Analytics?

Learning Analytics is a relatively new field of study which has been defined by the Society for Learning Analytics Research as "*the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of data about students and their contexts, for purposes of understanding and optimizing learning and the environments in which it occurs*".

What the above definition means in simple terms is that Learning Analytics data is derived from a variety of "digital footprints" left when students use systems such as Learning Management Systems [*Moodle / Notesmaster*] and

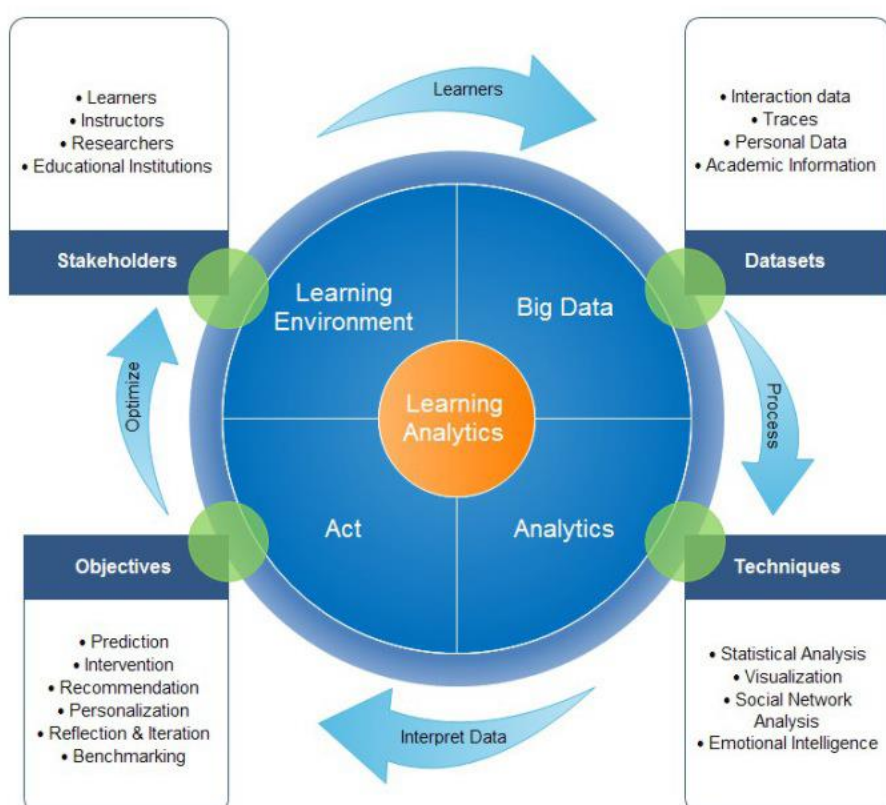
other institutional systems like ITS, Library Databases etc. that capture student activities. Data from these systems can be combined with other data such as grades and past academic history to provide information for predictions about student learning experiences.

The University collects a lot of data about students and use it in various ways, for example, to review some aspects of courses offered and/or to manage its use of resources more efficiently. Therefore, this will not be a new thing in the University. However, the use of this data for Learning Analytics is new, and it will provide additional information to you as a student, to your lecturers, tutors, and support staff for improvement of the learning processes and experience.

The resulting picture will give you as a student a better idea of how your learning is progressing and what mitigating action you may need to undertake. It will also help the University understand how it can best provide support to meet your goals, and achieve your full potential.

Predictions and Interventions

Another use for learning analytics is to make predictions by comparing students' patterns of activity and achievement with those of previous groups of students. These can help identify those students who may be struggling academically and thus provide an opportunity for them to be assisted. They can then be contacted to come up with appropriate interventions to assist them.



Monitoring Progress and Mitigation

Many students, particularly when starting at the Botswana Open University, do not have an accurate perception of how their learning will be progressing and what learning through the Open and Distance Mode entails. For this reason, Learning Analytics will help you as a student by making available to the Lecturers/Tutors and Support Staff information on the progress you are making or the challenges you are going through. Learning Analytics will help you to view information on your learning activities, progress, challenges and assist in enabling you to be assisted.

A record will show student engagement accumulated from details of their activity on the learning platforms [ePortal]. The student can use the record as their own study data, to set goals, and to work on their own time management if they wish to. Any data that a student inputs themselves will be viewable by the relevant University staff. Emails or text messages may also be sent to students automatically to suggest additional support or resources, or as reminders for assignment submission or discussion forums to participate in etc. Congratulatory messages may also be sent to students for good performance or improvement through the Learning Management Systems.

Provision of Information about Students to Tutors/Lecturers

The other way that Learning Analytics will help the student is by providing their Tutor/Lecturer with better information on their progress. Tutors/Lecturers can then contact students through phone, email or text messages to make follow up and check if students are on track and arrange appropriate intervention to review their progress and provide assistance.

Focus Engagement

Tutors/Lecturers and other Support Staff have access to Learning Analytics data, which has information about student engagement and attainment, and can be used to provide a focus for conversations between the student and the relevant University staff member.

Alerts about Students

Tutors or members of support staff may also receive automated alerts about students predicted to be at risk, this will help them to decide if they should make contact with the students and provide assistance or direct the student to more resources or where they could be assisted. It is important to note that the risk scores are only predictions: the model will always have a degree of inaccuracy, and cannot indicate with certainty what grade a student will achieve but can guide. It simply helps the University to prioritise those students who are most likely to require additional help.

What data is being collected for Learning Analytics?

The data used for Learning Analytics, is collected in compliance with the Botswana Data Protection Act, 2018, and in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policies. Data is derived from all University systems used in capturing students' information from the application process, registration, use of the Portal, and other learning systems through to graduation stage.

Is the students' personal information safe and secure?

Your data as the student is subject to strict security procedures in compliance with the national and institutional data protection policies. Only those members of staff who have a professional requirement to support your learning are permitted to view the analytics about you. In particular, your Lecturer/Tutor and relevant Support Staff will be able to view data about your engagement, attainment and any predictions made. If you have any concerns about the University using your data for the purposes of Learning Analytics, do discuss these with your Lecturer/Tutor or any member of the Support Staff in your Regional Campus.

Your data will also be combined with other students' data to help the University to improve its courses, update its library resources, and support students better overall. This data is not individually identifiable. It is first "de-identified" i.e. fields such as your student ID are encrypted. It is then sent to a central learning records warehouse managed by the University *or* contracted agents, and hosted on servers in a physically secure place.

Conclusion

Learning Analytics is one way in which BOU seeks to achieve its strategic goals of providing a superior student experience and improving student success rates.