

Is the Global NREN community ready to support Transnational Education?

Transnational Education (TNE) is an area of significant growth across the globe, providing education developed in one country and delivered in another. For thousands of students across the world, including Africa, TNE is offering opportunities that would have been hard to access even a decade ago. Where once students had to travel abroad to study at an overseas institution, now they can do it more affordably in their home country. The technology required to support TNE - virtual learning environments (VLEs), videoconferencing applications, online assessment platforms - relies on reliable, high-performance connectivity operating seamlessly between different countries and continents.

But is the global NREN community ready to provide the seamless intercontinental connectivity needed to support TNE?

For a number of years Jisc, the national research and education network (NREN) for the UK, has been working in partnership with NRENs and commercial internet providers around the world to improve the connectivity TNE students and staff depend on, helping them to reliably access services and learning environments hosted in the Europe, from both on or off campus.

Drawing on these recent experiences Jisc will highlight the services NRENs need to develop now to be ready to support TNE in their country, and identify what might be needed in the near future.

Jisc's work to date has emphasised the importance of strong NREN partnerships to provide the intercontinental connectivity needed to make TNE a success. To facilitate stronger NREN collaboration, in early 2017, working on behalf of GÉANT, Jisc helped establish the GÉANT TNE Special Interest Group (SIG-TNE) to act as forum for NRENs for address common challenges in supporting TNE.

In the long term the aim of the group is to harmonise country approaches and NREN collaboration to ease the delivery of TNE globally. Jisc will identify some of the barriers to overcome to achieve this aim, including gaps in TNE data at a regional, national and global level; the lack of global connectivity policy to support TNE; and the challenges of interoperability between NRENs.

Africa is a developing as a hub for TNE partnerships, from the UK and beyond, with forecasts indicating activity is only set to increase in the near future. The increasingly globalised nature of education means institutions are demanding as a minimum fast, reliable intercontinental connectivity to support their teaching and learning. And this, in turn, relies on NRENs cooperating and working effectively in partnership. Are we ready to support the education institutions we serve to achieve their aims?

The objectives for the presentation:

- Share experiences of working with NRENs and commercial providers to support TNE in other parts of the world, recommending approaches and operating models that can be adopted in West and Central Africa
- Describe which services NRENs will need to develop now and in future to effectively support TNE activity in their country
- Identify common challenges facing NRENs supporting TNE and highlight the ways NRENs can work together to overcome barriers

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