

Feedback on the 2014 Nigeria Satellite Course

The 2014 Nigeria Satellite Course was hosted by the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS), and the class was held every Saturday at the Institute's premises, with Edefe Ojomo and Helen Chuma-Okoro serving as Leads and instructors. Other instructors included Dr Joke Oyewunmi of the University of Lagos, Prof Bambo Adewopo of NIALS and Mr. Ayo Kusamotu, a Lawyer and the Legal Lead of Creative Commons Nigeria. Though it started a week behind the rest of the global class, the Satellite was able to catch up during the one week break.

Thirty students registered for the Course while 22 met the minimum attendance requirement of 70%. The students came from different backgrounds, and included lawyers, students and media practitioners. Members of the academia, including librarians, people from the entertainment industry, including film producers, and from other sectors of the creative industry, including photographers, also registered for the Course. At the end of the 12 weeks, 18 students opted to take the exams. NIALS has agreed to issue out certificates of participation to all the students who satisfied the minimum attendance policy.

The Course adopted a contextualised version of the Harvard CopyrightX syllabus to address the Nigerian scenario. While the Harvard lectures formed the core content of the Course, these were complemented with Nigerian examples. The discussions basically involved comparing the American situation as presented by Professor Fisher in the lecture videos and the Nigerian situation based on the Nigerian legal provisions. Discussions were mainly interactive and very engaging. Participants were encouraged to watch the videos, and many appeared to have done so. The fact that the videos were easily accessible, having been copied to the students' systems, made it possible for most of them to watch the videos beforehand. This prepared them for the discussions and enabled them to particulate fully. However, the same cannot be said of the special events, which most of them could not watch because of their schedules and internet connectivity challenges. Participation in the garden and forest discussions was also adversely affected by their schedules. On the whole, the Saturday gatherings turned out to be the only effective point of engagement for the students and instructors.

The Leads tried as much as possible to stick to schedules that were agreeable to the students as well as the instructors. As such, there was no fixed time for the classes; rather, time was decided as convenient, but limited to two choices, viz, 12 noon or 5:00 pm. This arrangement was quite convenient for everyone provided the students were informed about schedules on time.

Most of the students expressed gratitude for having been given the opportunity to attend the Course and noted that they found it enlightening and useful to their profession and career. This feeling was enhanced by the association of the Course with Harvard. The status and perception of NIALS in Nigeria also helped. There is every reason to believe that if the Course holds again, there will be an upsurge of applicants hoping to participate.