



The Making of a MOOC: Reflections from the Journey!

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OVERVIEW

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have been variously hailed as 'the next big thing' in education or a 'bubble waiting to burst'¹. With big name providers such as EdX and Coursera expanding their provision and hundreds of thousands of students signed up to courses, it looks certain that the MOOC concept will remain relevant for some time to come.

"Cancer in the 21st Century - The Genomic Revolution" is the University of Glasgow's first MOOC and will run for 6 weeks from mid-May 2014. It is divided into six key topics, covering the Past, Present and Future of cancer causes, diagnosis and treatment. The host platform is Futurelearn (FL), a relative newcomer to the MOOC market and the first UK-based provider. This poster aims to summarize the lessons we have learned in developing this course and to highlight issues for consideration.

MOOC PARTICIPANTS: WHO, WHERE AND WHY?

- Cancer impacts most people's lives, so this course will likely appeal to a varied audience.
- Individuals with prior interest in biology or medicine, e.g. current undergraduates, nurses or medics who want to further their knowledge in this area.
- We anticipate 6000-10,000 registered students.
- Entry and exit surveys of student demographics and completion rates for each step.
- Registration open to anyone with internet access. Previous research shows most MOOC participants are college-educated and participate for general interest².

PLANNING THE JOURNEY: ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- Teaching or research-based staff or a mixture? Large or small team?
- Planning and setup VERY time-consuming: staffing commitment
- Extensive support from Media Services for video content
- Copyright - time and expertise (e.g. librarians)
- Content reviewers – external and internal, build time into schedule
- With a wide range of student motivations, are teacher-defined ILOs appropriate and what should they be?
- Platform functionality restricts teaching techniques and student interaction (FL ongoing development)

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

- Course can re-run multiple times, with minimal staff input c.f. development phase
- Increase social media presence for advertising
- CPD accreditation (Royal College of Nursing?) – may increase attractiveness to specific potential participants
- Develop "Certificate of Achievement" (£119 fee for MCQ exam in local centre with identity verification).
- FL platform development will enable: peer assessment; interactive exercises; small group discussion; e-mail targeting to particular student groups; student goal setting; shareable pages; shareable record of learning.³
- Scholarship projects: who completes / doesn't and why? Follow numbers and demographics from registration to end of course; in-depth tailored pre- and post-course questionnaires from next run onwards.

UNIVERSITY-LEVEL CONSIDERATIONS

- **MOOCs are not-for-profit.**
Even with high demand, the current MOOCs model is unlikely to be a 'money-spinner' for universities. Certificate of Participation costs £24; only small percentage goes to university. Significant staff time and resources required. Consider having individuals dedicated specifically to MOOC advertising and copyright.
- **MOOCs as a marketing tool.**
Tools should be developed to capture entry data at UG and PG level to determine whether MOOC provision affected students' choice of University.
- **Relevance to campus-based and distance learning provision**
Technical expertise gained by staff will be useful for future online learning in other contexts. Pedagogical models relating to MOOCs should be explored. In particular, MOOCs have the potential to deliver connectivist learning, with interactive discussions and student groupings based on different student needs. Student perception of connection with staff and other learners may be key to continued engagement, a challenge with thousands of students. Staff may need to relinquish some of the control associated with more traditional teaching methods, which are simply not possible with 10,000 students.

REFERENCES

1. Lewin, T. After Setbacks, Online Courses Are Rethought. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/11/us/after-setbacks-online-courses-are-rethought.html>
2. Christensen, G. *et al.* The MOOC Phenomenon: Who Takes Massive Open Online Courses and Why? (2013). Available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2350964>
3. Futurelearn Roadmap, March 2014

Try our course online at:

www.futurelearn.com/courses/cancer-and-the-genomic-revolution

#FLcancer21