

Distance Learning

- Has been evolving for a long time
 - Correspondence courses, School of the Air, Open University, etc.
- On line courses : degrees, qualifications, skills
- But Internet and mobile technologies have enabled –

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

What are MOOCs ?

- **Massive** : 100-10,000 Students
- **Open** : Open Access, 24/7
- **On-line** : Web-based
 - Student's own time and location, e.g. home, classroom, library, etc.
- **Courses** : Usually written by recognised authorities
 - X hours/week (usually 2 - 8)
 - Y weeks (usually 2 - 12)
 - Z parts (usually 1 or 2)
- **Cheap** : Usually free
 - Sometimes offer certificates of participation or accreditation exams at additional cost
- **Three popular platforms** :
 - FutureLearn, Coursera, and edX

- UK-based – part of Open University
- Many partner universities
 - OU, Kings, Shanghai, Sheffield, Cape Town, Australian universities, etc.
- Plus specialist organisations
 - British Council, BFI, British Museum, etc. – usually in English
- Courses are free, with tutors/mentors and discussion threads
- 13 Categories – over 100 courses scheduled up to 4 months ahead
- Courses 2-10 weeks, 2-4 hours/week, 15-30 items per week
- E-mail notice of responses to your discussion posts
- FutureLearn (free) is less academic than an Open Univ Degree (££££)
- A good place to start MOOCs
- Follow the link : www.futurelearn.com/courses/categories
for listings of current courses

Coursera

- US-based educational platform
- Many partner universities (e.g. Yale, Stanford, Manchester, Edinburgh)
- Online, free, weekly quizzes!, assessments, study groups, discussion threads, blended learning (complements on-campus studies)
- 26 categories, 1463 courses, 877 in English
- May ask for verification to ensure assessments are all your own work
- Best for arts/humanities and multilingual, good mentors/coaches
- Study groups are a differentiator
- Follow the link : www.coursera.org
for listings of current courses

- Another US-based educational platform
- 41 charter members (Harvard, MIT, Caltech, Sorbonne)
- 34 contributors (Smithsonian, Microsoft, etc.)
- 576 courses, 6-12 weeks, 2-10 hours/week
- More formal courses than some e.g. FutureLearn
- Some verified certificates available (cost e.g. US \$100)
- Free, feedback, good interactive tools, discussion boards
- Very good for technology
- Follow the link : www.edx.org/course
for listings of current courses

Other Sources for Group Leaders



- **Class Central** www.class-central.com
- **U3AOnline** www.u3aonline.org.au
 - Virtual U3A based in Australia
 - Successor to “School of the Air”
 - Individual or organisation membership (A\$15 - A\$25 pa)
 - Independent study is free – with course leader + A\$5 per course
 - 49 courses currently of which 14 have a course leader
- Plus many others
- A listing of some **MOOC** platforms is at –
www.u3asites.org.uk/advice-on-moocs/page/54736

Video Sources for Group Leaders

- **YouTube**
 - Millions of clips for Group Leader use
 - Some courses e.g. crash course, free or for small charge
 - Many Museums have their own YouTube Channels
e.g. Historic Royal Palaces, The RSA – www.youtube.com/user/theRSAorg
- **Gresham College** – www.gresham.ac.uk
 - London college, founded 1597 – free 1 hour lectures 2/3 times per week
 - 11 fields of interest – most available on video
- **Intelligence Squared** – www.intelligencesquared.com
 - Supported by Vanity Fair
 - Debates/videos in 6 areas
 - Many topics, e.g. Elgin marbles, Wagner vs Vivaldi
 - Weekly podcast
- **TED Talks** – www.ted.com/talks

- **Badged Open Courses** from the Open University
 - From £0 up to £1350
 - Permanently available – unlike MOOCs
 - More tutoring
 - Accreditation
 - Good for CV boost
- For further details follow the link –
www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses

MOOC Benefits for U3A Members



- Chose where, when, and pace of study
- Wide range of subjects
- Online discussion groups : good for peer group feedback
- Questions to tutor/mentor/peers
- Repeat modules as necessary
- Peer group support and/or study groups
- Free
- Supplement U3A group work – additional on main subject
- Complement U3A group work – related subjects
- Keep mind active and involved

Benefits for U3A Group Leaders



- High quality, accredited, open source material
- Use complete courses or modules
- Include in own group program
- Supplement own material
- Use as “homework”
- Could form virtual groups linking with nearby U3A branches
- Do part of course live (as scheduled) or use material after the event as examples or discussion topics
- Meet for tutoring or group discussion and quizzes!

- Courses to download are part of the Resource Centre
- Subject advisors could assess and recommend upcoming courses (recent Sources have suggestions for Maths)
- U3A advise providers on standards and content
- Link in to U3A Summer Schools
- Website with suggestions for using MOOCs includes –
 - Listing of providers
 - Experiences reported by those already using MOOC resources
 - Links to many other online resources –
www.u3asites.org.uk/advice-on-moocs/page/54700