

SEN15D001

Title: **On-line Learning Strategy**
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Issue

To consider the development of a University on-line learning strategy.

Recommendation

To report

that the Learning and Teaching Committee, at a meeting on 11 June 2015, considered the development of an on-line learning strategy and resolved

- a) to endorse the developing strategy and criteria to be used to evaluate new online proposals;
- b) to approve new approval processes for MOOCs, online courses, on-line modules and non-credit bearing short courses.

(See LTC14 D219

<https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/9294209/ltc14d219dividerf.pdf/c8bf0dbb-5cc2-4636-b45b-fe53a341a3dd>)

To consider

the approval of the on-line learning strategy

Resource Implications

There are financial and other resource commitments associated with the developing strategy and a provisional budget has been set aside in the University's ongoing financial plan. The business plan for each new course will include an analysis and comment on the resources required to develop and maintain it.

Risk Implications

The risk of not having a strategic approach to on-line learning would be to risk the development of an incoherent on-line offer and potentially courses developed without full consideration being given to resourcing their development and maintenance with inevitable consequences for quality.

Equality and Diversity

There are no equality and diversity issues associated with the issues raised in this paper.

Timing of decisions

A strategy is required to mitigate the risks. The strategy as recommended by LTC is currently being implemented to give guidance to staff wishing to develop an on-line offer.

Further Information

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Attachments

None

Background

1. Progress

UEA has a growing reputation as a MOOC provider. Our collaboration with Future Learn is of mutual benefit with the University gaining and developing commercial expertise in the delivery of on-line learning plus a growing reputation for good quality on-line delivery. MOOCs are not inexpensive to produce and maintain. Consequently, in the strategy it is proposed that we only develop a MOOC if one or more of five criteria are met. The University invested in pump priming MOOCs, but in future Schools will need to absorb costs or find sponsorship, for MOOC development.

The two academic disciplines leading the way in terms of credit bearing courses are health and creative writing.

UEA Health On-line has experienced a number of obstacles being the first set of on-line credit bearing and non-credit bearing courses to be developed for large cohorts. It is to the credit of everyone involved that courses have been developed, formally approved and quality assured. A decision had been taken by the School to work with enthusiastic staff and one credit bearing module and six non-credit bearing modules were developed/ are in development. As a result of the work undertaken by all involved, and the lessons learned, the path for future on-line courses will be much smoother and easier to follow.

The MA in crime fiction has been developed with a 'low residency' model, where the students attend the University for 6 short periods of 3 days in the 2 years of the course. Bridges between these periods are made via a bespoke virtual learning environment built in Blackboard which mirrors closely the unique pedagogy of creative writing. The course design has been developed as template and will make the launch of future creative writing courses of this nature much easier

2. Resource considerations

To assist School and Faculties in reviewing the business case for on-line modules the Head of Learning Technology has devised a costing model based on a 30 credit module designed to be interactive to allow for maximum peer to peer learning and social construction. A sample budget for the preparation of a MOOC has also been developed.

In developing the strategy the resource needs are being determined to support on-line learning. It is acknowledged that the Learning Technology team needs sufficient resource to have capacity to not only develop and maintain on-line courses but also support academic staff in enhancing the delivery of campus based modules.

3. On-line Working Group

An online working group has been established to consider strategy and developments in on-line learning both for wholly on-line courses and for the enhancement of campus based courses. The terms of reference and membership are appended (Appendix A). It is considered that this working group will be required until such time as the creation and delivery of on-line courses are mainstream University activity.

4. Strategy development

The working group has been developing a strategy for on-line learning at UEA. On-line courses are resource heavy to develop and maintain and with limited support available it is critical that

resources are focussed on development that best support the University's vision. The developing strategy details the criteria that should be used when assessing potential new on-line courses and thereby helping Schools and Faculties identify the areas in which they should pro-actively consider making an on-line offer. Approval processes have been developed to control on-line developments and focus resources on those courses which will best support the University's 2030 vision and five year plan, see below.

The next step with the development of the strategy is to initiate discussions in relation to the ambition the University should have with on-line learning. This will give some scale in which to frame discussions of course numbers and student numbers and so to develop a five, ten and fifteen year plan.

5. New approval processes for MOOCs, on-line courses, on-line modules and non-credit bearing short courses.

In summary, a precursor stage has been introduced with the on-line working group considering the fit with University strategy and the ability to resource the development at an early stage. If the proposal is viable it will proceed along the approval process. Full details of the new approval process can be found in the LTC paper LTC 14 D219.

<https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/9294209/ltc14d219dividerf.pdf/c8bf0dbb-5cc2-4636-b45b-fe53a341a3dd>

- 5.1. New on-line credit bearing course approval process. The current process should work with some minor adaptations. A precursor stage has been introduced such that the development of a full new course proposal form is only undertaken in cases which fit with University strategy and can be resourced.
- 5.2. New on-line credit bearing module approval process. Due to the resource implications related to the development and maintenance of on-line credit bearing modules these will require a greater level of scrutiny than traditional campus face-to-face delivered modules. An approval process has been developed with Faculty level approval being the final stage.
- 5.3. New MOOC approval process. A new MOOC approval form has been developed. The process requires proposals to gain School, Faculty and LTC approval.
- 5.4. New on-line non-credit bearing courses (such as, but not limited to, a CPD offer). Due to the resource implications related to the development and maintenance of non-credit bearing on-line courses these will require a greater level of scrutiny than more traditional campus based non-credit bearing short courses. The process would be similar to that for credit bearing modules.

Discussion - UEA's Strategy for On-Line and MOOCs

1. Context

UEA has an excellent reputation as a provider of high quality higher education. To date, this has been mostly based on campus, but in 2013 we were amongst the first universities to join the FutureLearn MOOC provider and have enjoyed substantial success in that online. In addition, some Schools and Faculties are keen to develop new forms of provision online both to deliver taught HE programmes and also for CPD.

There are a number of internal and external drivers for the development of an online strategy for courses.

External drivers include:

- Increasing recognition of potential for online learning to play a greater role in higher education¹
- Extensive interest internationally in the potentially disruptive role of MOOCs²
- Increasing connections between online presence and face to face courses³

Internal drivers include:

- The need to harness technology to meet the expectations of increasingly digitally engaged learners⁴
- Increasing evidence that a 'flipped' mode of teaching can enhance student engagement in their studies, and the important role of technology in facilitating this approach⁵.

All this means that now there is a need for a more strategic approach to the development of online provision to ensure that initiatives at UEA develop in a planned and co-ordinated way, underpinning the University's overall corporate strategy, and with appropriate resourcing. This should mean we are well placed to maximise the benefits of technology enhanced learning both to grown online courses where appropriate and to make sure our campus based courses are competitive.

At the time of writing, the University tends to think of its online and campus based courses as two separate modes of teaching. However increasingly it may be that 'hybrid' mode of higher education will become best practice, where students on campus learning is guided and supplemented by technology enhanced learning.⁶

2. Strategic Principles

- 2.1. UEA is committed to continuing to develop online provision in a planned and coordinated way across Faculties.
- 2.2. New online initiatives should underpin the University's 2030 Vision and UEA Plan.
- 2.3. Online provision poses new questions in quality management, but also in the University's IT, finance and HR systems and the implications of increasingly online learning of all types are important for all the University's divisions and professional services.

¹ Online Learning Task Force (2011) *Collaborate to Compete: Seizing the Opportunity of Online Learning for UK Higher Education*. Report to HEFCE.

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2011/201101/>

² Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (2013) *The Maturing of the MOOC*. BIS Research Paper No 130.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/240193/13-1173-maturing-of-the-mooc.pdf

³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-29240959>

⁴ <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/october-2013/research07Oct2013.pdf>

⁵

<http://www.flippedlearning.org/cms/lib07/VA01923112/Centricity/Domain/41/HigherEdWhitePaper%20FINAL.pdf>

⁶ <http://mfeldstein.com/faculty-know-adaptive-learning/>

3. Strategy

3.1. Part A – MOOCs

The University will continue to work with its partners at FutureLearn to ensure a viable business model for the development and running of future MOOCs is established as soon as possible. New MOOCs should achieve at least one of the following:

- a) Help support UEAs recruitment and admissions to UG and PGT taught courses through either generically pitched or specialist subject-specific MOOCs built on our peaks of academic excellence
- b) Generate new content that enhances and enriches provision for all UEA's community and beyond, and which takes advantage of the opportunities afforded by Creative Commons licensing;
- c) Enhance links with other organisations such as subject associations, companies or other partners;
- d) Have potential for generating income through the sales of certificates or enhanced assessment opportunities;
- e) Help build capacity at UEA in the creation of digital learning materials and online courses. This is in terms of both staff expertise and the provision of necessary equipment.

3.2. Part B – Fully online courses

The University will use Blackboard as its on-line learning course platform. New online courses, both credit bearing and non-credit bearing, will exemplify the UEA's strong commitment to an excellent student experience and use the most appropriate technologies and approaches to teaching and learning. They will have at least one of the following:

- a) A clearly identified business case, based either on large scale national/global educational needs or based in a more niche area in which UEA has an international reputation. In both cases, course should form part of a complimentary online/on campus portfolio of courses
- b) The ability to work for the benefit of any campus based courses and share resource production and staffing where possible.

Appendix A

UEA On-line Working Group

Terms of Reference

Preamble

The UEA on-line Working Group will focus on:

- a) credit bearing on-line modules and courses;
 - b) non-credit bearing modules and courses;
 - c) MOOCs;
- and will also consider:
- d) e-learning on traditional campus based courses;
 - e) the University's digital presence and footprint.

Terms of Reference

- 1) To develop a University strategy for on-line learning.
- 2) To support the development of an on-line module(s) and/or course(s) or CPD course(s) and establish some firm objectives for the number of courses and MOOCs the University should be offering in 2020.
- 3) To establish a process for the consideration and approval of
 - non credit bearing on-line courses
 - MOOCs.
- 4) To recommend revisions to the current new course approval form to facilitate use for on-line credit bearing courses.
- 5) To consider proposals for new credit bearing, non-credit bearing courses and modules and MOOCs and recommend and prioritise proposals that meet the University's on-line strategy.
- 6) To review the University quality assurance process to ensure they are appropriate and relevant for on-line courses.

Membership

Chair – Prof Neil Ward PVC Academic

Academic Director of Learning Enhancement – Helena Gillespie

Academic Director of Taught Programmes – Dr Adam Longcroft

Pedagogical Innovation Ambassador, Prof Simon Lancaster

Faculty representatives:

- SCI - tbc
- FMH - Associate Dean for Enterprise and PGT Programmes, Prof Jim Gazzard,
- HUM - Associate Dean (L&T), Dr Clive Matthews
- SSF – Associate Dean (L&T) Ratula Chakraborty

Academic Director of Admissions, Dr Richard Harvey

Director of ARM, Angelina Bingley

Head of Strategic Marketing, Giles Whattam,

Head of Learning Technology, Alicia McConnell,

Director of Information Services, Jonathan Colam-French,

Director of LTS, Dr Andrea Blanchflower

Representation will be invited from the community of students studying on-line courses once on-line courses are launched