Business Education Online

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Academic freedom goes global

It is possible to teach more students in one massive online class than any single institution has ever taught, discovers Della Bradshaw

about games, there are some things that the Wharton business school professor takes very seriously. One of those is the latest generation of online courses Moocs, or massive open online courses – and just how his Ivy League institution, the University of Pennsylvania, can take advantage of them.

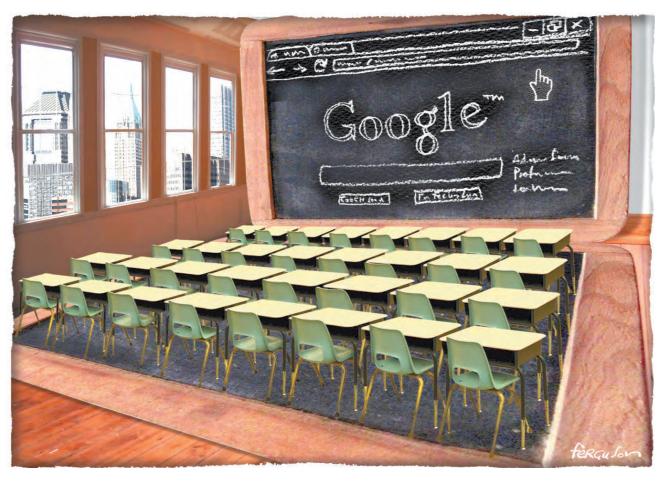
"They are an extraordinary opportunity for us," says Professor Werbach. "For me it's a platform to experiment on...I think these online resources free us up to do in the classroom the grammes. In the early days, they were things that can only be done in the classroom.

Though Moocs have been around for less than a year, they are one of the trendiest topics in education, says Jeff today is that, unlike residential pro-Seamen, co-director of the Babson grammes that tend to compete in a www.ft.com/bized-video

lthough Kevin Werbach has Survey Research Group, which pubmade his name teaching lishes an annual report on online learning. "What we see at the moment is a genuine excitement that this represents a fundamental change in the way we can deliver education.'

On campus, business schools have often been quick off the mark to adopt the latest technologies. From Kindles to iPads, and from videoconferencing to the latest online networking, MBA programme directors have been enthusiastic adopters.

Just as technology has advanced, so Just as technology has advanced, so has the perception of online proseen as local alternatives to classroom Ray Carvey, Harvard programmes, says Idie Kesner, interim dean of the Kelley School at Indiana university. "What's changed



specific geographical sphere, online education is competitive worldwide."

This gives established business schools access to students in inhospitable regions. Kelley is launching a degree with the American University of Mongolia in September, says Prof Kesner. "We will do courses completely online - particularly in the winter months. As you can imagine, it is very cold in Ulan Bator.

Business Publishing looks at radical changes

Increased bandwidth and the latest internet technology are giving a second lease of life to more traditional technologies such as videoconferenc-

Soumitra Dutta, dean of the Johnson school at Cornell University, says there are plans to extend the videoconferencing executive MBA it runs with Queen's university in Canada. In the past year the programme has been run in Mexico and Colombia using boardrooms, where students participate in broadcast lectures. In the coming year the schools plan to expand further in South America.

"This is an interesting hybrid market," says Prof Dutta. "It is running and it is successful."

The Wharton school has recently invested in this kind of point-to-point video through agreement with computer giant Cisco to link classes on its two campuses, in Philadelphia and San Francisco. It is still in trial phase, says Wharton dean Tom Robertson. "I don't know what percentage [of programmes] we would deliver [in this

Online technology permeates all levels of business education, from undergraduate degrees to executive courses.

In the UK, Nicola Adamson has been studying for a Masters degree in management from Ashridge, the UK business school, while working fulltime in senior management at a healthcare trust and looking after three children under the age of nine.

She began studying online in 2010 and has taken breaks as family and job required. As with many online students, flexibility has been the key, Continued on Page 3

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Deans from two top US business schools look at a changing landscape

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Customised tuition

Supporting study anywhere in the world is key

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Degree of quality

The stigma of online business degrees has all but been erased

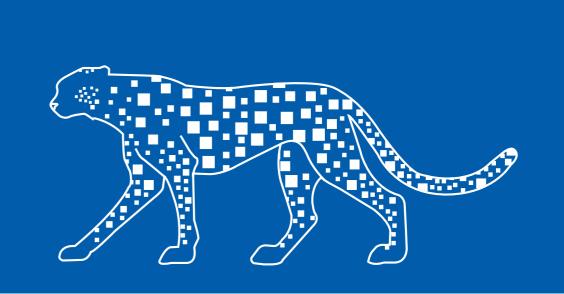
Social media aids teaching

Facebook, Twitter and YouTube earn place in academia

Strategic study

Australia's RMIT has an executive MBA that can be done in as little as one year

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Business Education Online



James Dean: 'Using traditional education as the gold standard is outmoded'

Virtual classes give lesson in reality

Point of View James Dean

Similar tests for both online and full-time students have produced near identical performance

Can an online MBA programme be of the same high quality as a campusbased programme?

From a teaching and learning perspective, there can no longer be any doubt that online education can match and, in some ways, exceed the performance of conventional education.

Online MBA programmes match or exceed the quality of on-campus programmes when done right. Doing it right does not mean simply transmitting taped lectures or using Powerpoint slides with a voice-over lecture. It does mean:

 \bullet Rigorous courses taught by excellent teachers who assess students' work and provide feedback: • Students working in teams on

group projects: Students actively engaged with classmates and professors, forming a

Doing online right is very hard work, and requires investments of time and resources. But it is possible and worthwhile, and MBA@UNC is

the proof. Any quality programme is built on the foundation of excellent students, faculty and curriculum. It must be engaging, interactive and supportive.

A quality online programme is no different. Furthermore, while the experience is not exactly the same, the differences might surprise you. With the right design, an online

programme can offer experiences that you might think students miss by not being on campus. Our students participate in simulations and group projects, listen to corporate speakers and engage in a virtual consulting project. Live classes, capped at 15 students. feature a high level of direct studentfaculty interaction. Students build strong relationships with each other and the school. They have virtual happy hours and virtual hallway conversations. When our first class graduates in July, a member will serve on our school's alumni council.

Frankly, what we discovered is that using traditional education as the gold standard is outmoded.

· In our small, live classes, professors and students are visible at all times. There is no back row, so everyone can and must participate in ways that do not always occur in oncampus classes. Students are more accountable and their levels of energy and engagement are higher.

Professors can better gauge their understanding in real-time.

· We archive everything, including live sessions. Students watch taped classes as many times as they need to master a subject; the class does not "evaporate" when the session ends. Professors can evaluate sessions and go back to a specific moment - for instance, to identify when a student became confused. Importantly, we have given essentially the same tests to our fulltime and online students and seen virtually identical performance.

· Online students master virtual teamwork - a skill that companies

require and value. • Professors think deeply about what exactly they want students to learn and how to communicate that in new ways and then redesign their courses. They often incorporate those changes into their on-campus classes.

Beyond the purely curricular perspective, the picture is more complicated. Full time and online programmes have a portfolio of strengths and weaknesses, and meet the different needs of different student populations, with EMBA programmes, in many ways, the intermediate between the two.

For students who want to make significant changes early in their career paths, full-time programmes offer on-campus access to recruiters in ways not easy to replicate. Yet MBA@UNC students receive individualised career management support, assessments and coaching as students. And their employers reap the benefits of what they are learning. MBA@UNC students apply what they learn in class on Thursday at work on Friday morning. Employers so value their learning that about 30 per cent of our students have received promotions and new jobs after only one year in the programme.

Among the most compelling reasons for a top online programme are increased access and unparalleled flexibility for people who thought a quality MBA programme was out of reach. Those students might live in a place without proximity to a top programme and cannot or do not want to leave their jobs or relocate their families. What is the highest cost for on-campus students? To forego income for one or two years.

Asking whether an online programme can match the quality of a traditional programme might ultimately be the wrong question. As technology evolves, the question will increasingly become what are the characteristics of a highquality programme for a particular student segment, however it is

The author is dean of the University of North Carolina Kenan-Flagler Business School



Garth Saloner: 'A life-changing process for those who embrace it'

Confidence builds in unique setting

Point of View Garth Saloner

For students, this is about human relationships, experimentation and mutual support

Higher education is entering a new era in which educational technology will bring - as the president of Stanford university John Hennessy put it recently – a tsunami of change. The MBA will be no

exception. But how should it change? Rooted in Silicon Valley among some of the most innovative organisations in the world, people ask me: "Why not make the MBA an online degree?" My answer? While technology can greatly enhance the learning experience, it simply cannot replace the faculty-student interaction, experiential learning and self-discovery that occur in the MBA classroom.

The issue is an incremental experience versus a transformational one. The two-year, residential MBA is an immersive experience that delivers a life-changing process for those who embrace it.

In Stanford's two-year programme, students learn about themselves and how they want to lead others through highly interactive eightperson leadership labs in which coaches and fellow students provide real-time, personal feedback. They engage in hands-on, multidisciplinary classes where new products or processes go through brainstorming exercises and rapid prototyping sessions with scores of ideas flying across work tables as one student builds on another's idea. MBAs serendipitously bump into potential business partners in the dining pavilion, which draws engineering, law and other students.

Pre-eminent economists challenge students to analyse problems that involve anything from big data to tax policy and employment practices Real-world business protagonists, such as Google's Eric Schmidt or former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, appear in classes where they dissect operational problems and adjourn for coffee to mentor students. Venture capitalists review business plans and failed entrepreneurs explain why things did not work - and why it is important to try again. Students develop confidence in their ideas.

Much of this intense experience is about human relationships, experimentation and mutual support, and a mid-programme summer job where a student can find out whether an industry or function is right for him or her. Little of

this can be replicated online. That is not to say that educational technology should not be exploited. It can and will reinvent the oncampus experience as business schools apply technology in service

to the learning process. Recently faculty members Dan Iancu and Kostas Bimpikis implemented a "flipped classroom" model of instruction by developing online software tutorials for their core course on optimisation and simulation modelling. In the flipped classroom, students view online instructional videos in their own time and at their own pace, dedicating in-class time for active discussion and challenging exchanges. Screencasting maximises faculty-student time in the classroom and presents valuable opportunities to monitor and capture information about how students learn so we can

There are many ways for people to access the knowledge of management education, some of which is more suited to different stages of a career than the MBA. Like other schools, we are exploring how to use better distance education (based on highdefinition video conferencing) to disseminate rich faculty expertise to broader audiences beyond the university campus, without having to always jet the faculty around the world.

analyse that data to support changes

in the way we teach.

To that end, we are extending Stanford Ignite, a nine-week programme for non-business graduate students and practising entrepreneurs to locations such as Bangalore and Paris. Distance technology will enable more faculty to participate and engage with these students. We launched a purely online certificate programme in innovation and entrepreneurship with Stanford's engineering school late last year. It is a programme that any working professional anywhere in the world can use to learn new techniques that bolster innovation and problem-solving in their organisations. Finally, we see across the business school landscape the development of asynchronous massive open online courses, or Moocs, on specific topics that can be shared with even broader audiences.

In the past six years, we have focused on an all-new MBA curriculum. To meet the changes, we have redesigned our work space to include garage-like classrooms for prototyping and small rooms for team meeting practice.

Educational technology will refine and extend but not override, the value of the full-time, on-campus MBA experience.

The author is dean and Philip HKnight professor at Stanford Graduate School of Business

Customised tuition proves a winner

Analysis

Of the MBAs listed, 85 per cent support study anywhere in the world, reports Adam Palin

To complement this report on developments in online education, the Financial Times has compiled its eighth annual listing of MBA degree programmes that are taught at distance.

Of the 46 business schools whose distance learning MBAs are featured in our table (see page three), those accredited by either AACSB or Equis are listed separately to those that are not. Accreditation by either of these bodies is a pre-requisite for participation in the FT's Global MBA Ranking.

The contrast in tuition fees between listed courses offered by accredited and non-accredited institutions is striking, with the former costing an average of \$49,200 compared with \$19,500 for the latter. This year, fees of programmes listed in 2012 have risen by an average of 3 per cent. For accredited and non-accredited courses alike, those offered by North American schools cost 70 per cent more than their European counterparts.

The majority of courses are generalist degrees. However, many of these allow students varying levels of specialisation within the programme. One in six listed degrees is specialised, ranging from an data analytics MBA in Oil and Gas Management at the Aberdeen Business School to a how fast a student Healthcare MBA programme offered by George IS learning Washington University's School of Business.

geted at medical doctors says Darin Kapanjie, the and hospital administra- academic director. tors, is to be joined at the dents Washington DC-based school by the Professional Online MBA. The dean, tance MBA] but when Doug Guthrie, says the new degree, unlike many online offerings historically, is not intended for mass market appeal but is instead focused on delivering customised tuition. "The great opportunity with online [learning] is that you can build in data analytics . . . and monitor how fast a student is learning."

By following the progress of individual students, additional learning resources can be provided where needed to improve their performance. "You simply cannot do this on face-toface courses," Prof Guthrie

The three annual student intakes will have class sizes of up to 40. They are to remain small to ensure an "intimate classroom feel" in online seminars that form the degree's live component, conducted via a dedicated platform provided by Pearson, the global education group that owns the Financial Times.

With fees of more than \$83,000, the degree enters the increasingly competitive market for premium year's listing.

distance MBAs, with incumincluding the MBA@UNC at the University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School. The MBA@UNC, launched in 2011, and with fees of more than \$91,000, has been at the vanguard of integrating advanced classroom technology into distance MBAs through its partnership with 2U, the technology company. Another renowned US

institution that runs a small, cohort-based structure is Babson College's Olin Graduate School of Business. Its Fast Track MBA, which follows the same core curriculum as its counterpart. on-campus blends web-based teaching and collaboration with 14 face-to-face classroom sessions across the 21-month programme. Through these intensive campus visits, "[students] arguably get to know each other better . . . and develop stronger bond than fulltime MBAs", says Dennis Hanno, the school's dean.

requirement to attend courses on campus is shared by more than twothirds of courses offered by AACSB or Equis accredited institutions, compared with only one in four non-accredited courses.

Though campus study remains compulsory on Temple University's Fox Online MBA, its structure has changed from a cohort to a "carousel model" that allows students to "hop in

'You can build in

... and monitor

The latter, a course tar- and out of the programme", initially want the most flexibility when they're applying [for a disthey're in the programme, they want interaction and structure."

Of MBAs listed, 85 per cent are supported for study anywhere in the world. To ensure that students remain connected to their degrees, more than twofifths of listed institutions have off-campus study centres located in regions where their degrees are supported.

Richard McBain, director of the Henley MBA by Flexible Learning, says workshops held at the school's international offices by its faculty play a pivotal role in developing its student community of more than

Students' commitment to their distance programmes appears to be broadly proportional to their financial outlay. Some 88 per cent of those enrolled on MBAs costing more than \$30,000 complete their degrees within five years of having enrolled. The figure is only 75 per cent among students taking less expensive degrees included in this

Tablets offer immediacy in the global education market

Technology

Pen and paper continues to take knowledge to the world – just faster, writes Chris Nuttall

A MacBook, or any laptop, is usually the default educational tool of choice for students but there are signs that our latter-day electronic versions of slates are making serious inroads in modern education.

Apple disclosed in February that it had sold more than 8m iPads directly to educational institutions worldwide, quite apart from the unquantified number sold to individual students.

With Android and Windevices benefiting

tems and software, as well as student-friendly accessories such as digital pens, tablets are set to storm the bastions of education. In terms of screen size,

Apple recognised the popularity of the 7in category when it launched the iPad mini in October. This size is easier to hold

in one hand and makes for a better eReading experience of textbooks and other publications. Apple emphasised this with an update to its iBooks app for the launch.

The mini differentiates itself from the competition with a wider 7.9in screen that gives a noticeable expansion of the view of web pages and text on a

has been its Such popularity that Apple

33m of its 9.7in iPads, according to the Display-Search research firm.

Samsung may feel Apple has been trespassing on its territory after it popularised the 7in size three years ago with its first tablet the Galaxy Tab – and it hit back at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona last month with an 8in version of its Galaxy Note.

The Note 8.0 has the same intelligent SPen as other Note sizes and offers features such as "reading technology, which mode" optimises the resolution for eBooks

The pen allows notetaking in the S Note app and there are features such as recognition of mathematical formulas, as well as handwriting.

If you draw an imperfect expects to sell 55m minis triangle, the software recog-

from updated operating sys- this year compared with nises it and will straighten the edges.

The pen adds a "hover" ability to a tablet that was only available with a mouse before.

With this Air View feature, holding the pen just above the screen can give previews of emails, photos, videos and appointments without opening their respective apps, although this is still largely dependent on using Samsung's versions of such apps.

Samsung is targeting the education market with its tablets. Its Note 10.1, announced in January, is bundled with Kno e-textsoftware, giving access to hundreds of thousands of titles.

Kno once had ambitious plans for large-screen and dual-screen tablets education switched to a software-only operation two years ago as and it realised it lacked the scale to achieve its ambi-

Its latest software is Kno Me, a dashboard that shows students their progress and engagement with their interactive e-textbooks. It allows them to compare

ing their results with class-Handstand has just launched the Nota Reader, a website and Android app that gives students access to textbooks they can anno-

how they are doing by shar-

images; sharing them with other students. The textbooks are part of a free catalogue provided by the open educational resources (OER) commu-

tate with videos, links and

nity. There are more free resources at iTunes U, which offers online courses

lectures. Apple describes it as the world's largest online catalogue of educational content and announced the milestone last month of 1bn

content downloads. Although Apple has yet to embrace pens for its tablets, there are plenty of third-party versions that can be used on an iPad and numerous apps that allow

note-taking in this way. Penultimate is one of the most popular and a new version offers a cleaner interface and searchable text, with optical character recognition (OCR) of handwriting made possible.

Penultimate notebooks are viewable on almost any device, as they are stored in the Evernote note-taking service, which has apps for nearly every platform and acquired Penultimate last

Evernote stores recordings made on the new Livescribe Sky - a digital pen that I use to make notes every day with old-fashioned ink and paper.

Many students still prefer taking notes on paper and the Livescribe Sky offers the best of both worlds.

Handwriting is captured by a camera in the barrel of the pen and audio of a lecture is recorded by a

built-in microphone. The Livescribe Sky has wi-fi, so when the lecture ends, the notes and their audio are automatically uploaded to Evernote as online PDF documents with audio embedded.

They can be shared and accessed from any browser, disseminating a lesson from teacher to student to the world using the oldest educational aids of pen and

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Academic freedom finds a global market

Continued from Page 1

apply instantly business principles in the workplace. understand how to make executive of Ibis Capital - the market is demanding screen." [healthcare] services high supplier of services to the low-cost scalable alternaquality and viable."

the other.

investment banking indus- tives for junior managers. In executive learning, try – says as e-learning has

low-cast scalable education regulatory frameworks. Tradent of IMD in Switzerland. and training on the one ditional business schools she says. Ms Adamson also hand, and supporting high- also look set to benefit from e-learning will be a compleappreciates the ability to cost face-to-face teaching on this style of training. With ment, not a substitute. We on-campus executive In the finance sector, courses costing up to "I'm really beginning to Charles McIntyre, chief \$10,000 a week per person,

where short courses domi- become more available it is still be the ticket for top nate, technology is likely to seen as an efficient way of executives, though, says scalable training and

play two roles: delivering providing courses to meet Dominique Turpin, presi-"For the segment we are in, are selling an experience. You don't become a global leader by sitting behind a

In a world where the cost of university education is Face-to face learning will increasing beyond the means of many, low-cost

Moocs, which are free of charge at the initial point of entry, could help business schools reduce costs and reach a wider audience. Many already use online programmes to teach basic calculus or accounting.

This could be taken one step further, particularly for second or third-tier schools, replacing expensive professors. "This is a very easy way for them [under-

'We are selling an experience. You don't become a global leader by sitting behind

a screen'

courses," says Anand Anandalingam, dean at the Smith school at the University of Maryland.

Werbachs's course on gamigames in a non-game condevelop, Prof Werbach says the classroom.

graduate programmes] not he has been able to use, and to teach the first-year re-use, the videos in his campus-based courses. He is extremely happy

about the reach of his first Mooc. Although 82,000 peo-The strategy behind Prof ple registered for Prof Werbach's course in 2012, only fication - using the design 8,280 completed it. Though technology of computer just a 10 per cent completion rate, it would take Prof text – is clear. Although it Werbach a lifetime to teach took him 200-300 hours to that number of students in





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Business Education Online

Time and a little money are a worthy investment

Massive open online courses

Millions of students have discovered the value of higher learning en masse, Emma Boyde discovers

any in the world of higher education suspect they are witnessing the beginning of a revolution. The agent provocateur is the Mooc (massive open online course) and, if some pundits are proved correct, it could change the way all students experience learning including those at business schools and put a few professors out of a job.

Why the nerves? Moocs are free, millions have signed up and no one knows what the scene will look like after the dust has settled. Anant Agarwal, professor of electrical engineering and computer science at MIT and only 37. president of edX, a Mooc provider, thinks the result will be positive.

"I view online learning as a rising

improve the quality of education at all our universities.

At the moment there are three big university level Mooc providers – all based in the US and all launched within months of each other last year: Udacity, Coursera, and edX. Futurelearn, a British Mooc project being led by the Open University, the UK distance learning institution, will begin offering courses later this year.

Predating them is the Khan Academy. It began in the US in 2008, offering courses mainly for secondary school students, although some reach early college level. It also offers GMAT (Graduate Management Admissions Test) tuition.

The Khan Academy laid the groundwork for the higher education providers that emulated it. It also gives an idea of Moocs' potential. Khan boasts 5.5m unique users a month who complete 2m exercises a day. In all, there have been 235m videos viewed. This has all been achieved with a staff of

Coursera, the largest of the university-level Mooc platforms is reporting some phenomenal numbers. Andrew Ng, co-founder of Coursera and profes-

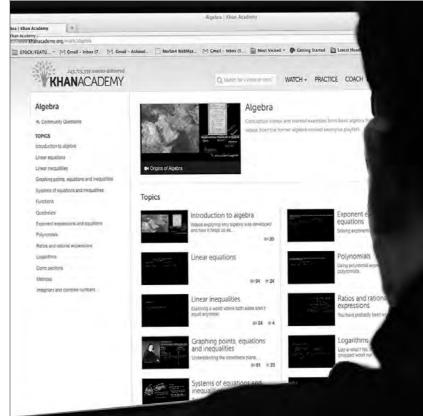
only increase access, it will also sor of computer science at Stanford University says between launching last April and August, it signed up its first 1m users. It reached the 2m mark in December and claimed more than 2.7m users by the end of February.

> 'We have had a slight acceleration in growth," says Prof Ng, modestly. Coursera's early lead in terms of

users may be because of its large number of courses. It offers 325 courses from participating institutions, of which 29 courses are in business and management. Some have not yet run and some are already repeating. One of these, Introduction to Finance, has been Coursera's second most successful - 119.658 students signed up for the first one.

The Mooc platforms have different approaches. Coursera and edX which plans to launch business-focused courses this year - have set start and finish dates and typically last from six to 10 weeks. Information is imparted largely by video lecture. Online forums take the place of semi-

At Udacity - with just one businessrelated course - once a course is uploaded it stays open and students can work at their own speed. Assess



Khan-do: Khan Academy boasts 5.5m unique users a month

ment, testing and certification can dif- computer and at edX by a combinafer quite significantly. Essay-type assignments pose problems because of the huge student numbers. At Coursera peer assessment is being used for these tasks. Students are "taught" to mark the work of others by being given marking criteria and

then marking previously graded work. At Udacity all assessment is by tion of machine grading, peer grading and self grading.

Testing and certification also differ. Although all courses continue to be available for free, all three institutions have begun offer different levels of testing and certification on some courses for modest fees ranging

Course How to build a start-up

Mooc platform: Udacity Tutor: Steve Blank, Silicon valley entrepreneur and author of several

What you learn: Key tools and steps to build a successful start-up. Ideally, students will join the class with at least a rough idea of the business model of the start-up they will work on. They shall learn how to identify and engage customers and to gather, evaluate and use feedback to make their business model stronger Start date: It does not have one students can start the course and finish it in their own time. Course length: Students study at their own pace

Costs: Free, with possible future option of paid-for certification **Assessment:** All Udacity courses are currently assessed by computer Certification: After completion of the course students receive a certificate of completion.

However, Udacity also offers an option to complete a proctored (externally invigilated) exam for a fee of \$150 on some courses

Course Surviving disruptive technologies

Mooc platform: Coursera Tutor: Hank Lucas, professor at the University of Maryland's Smith School of Business

What you learn: How organisations can successfully confront the challenges posed by technological innovation, using case studies of organisations that have

Start date: March 25 2013. The course will repeat at a future date Course length: Seven weeks Costs: Free, with possible future option of paid-for certification Assessment: As well as weekly online guizzes and discussion guestions based on course content, a number of essays will be subject to student

Certification: Students who successfully complete this class will receive a certificate signed by the instructor.

Coursera offers a verified certificate, with student progress linked to their online identity on a small number of its courses for a fee of \$30 to \$100

Fresh partnerships offer more than financial survival

Making the Mooc pay

Cashing in on vast numbers offers a new way to do business, writes Adam Palin

Amid the fanfare surrounding the nascent massive open online course (Mooc) movement have been looming questions concerning their economic viability. Leading platforms, including Coursera and edX, have committed themselves to providing higher education content online for free.

Until now, the costs of developing Moocs have been shouldered by the platforms themselves and the univer- \$30m to developing the platform. EdX ners choose whether to offer a paid-for

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consumers of the content.

Coursera, a for-profit Mooc platform that has more than 2.8m students, has raised venture capital to cover development costs. A \$16m injection from Silicon Valley-based Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers – an early investor in Amazon and Google – has been the most notable. Udacity, a for-profit platform that does not partner with universities, has raised more than \$21m in venture capital.

The case of edX differs, as the nonprofit platform has been developed by a consortium of universities led by founding members Harvard university and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Both have committed

sities supplying courses, rather than has since received between \$10m-\$20m from other member institutions, including Georgetown university and the University of California, Berkeley, in monetary and technology contributions, according to a spokesperson.

Hank Lucas, a professor at the University of Maryland's Smith business school, says: "We're all wrestling with the question of how to make this sustainable." He says universities such as Maryland, that partner with Coursera, cover the costs of course design and production and, more significantly, pay professors' salaries.

Part of the solution appears to be paid-for certification, as introduced by each of the three leading platforms.

Though Coursera's university part-

certificate, they face an incentive to do so. For any given class, 15 per cent of associated revenues, plus 20 per cent of gross profits, is apportioned to the academic institution.

Mike Boxall, a higher education expert at PA Consulting, argues that the revenue-generating potential for Mooc platforms does not truly lie in student fees, but through harnessing their vast body of users, much like Facebook and Google. "The value is in the carefully segmented market of users spending a lot of time on these platforms," he says. "And in the vast data generated to third parties."

Clarissa Shen, vice-president at Udacity, sees a further possible revenue stream from recruiters paying for access to student profiles.

For leading universities that have joined the movement, however, making money is not yet a priority.

Even if we never earned a dime from Coursera, it's great value to reach so many people," says Karl Ulrich, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School which has offered six Moocs to date.

Universities' investment has been in part about building their own profiles, according to Prof Lucas, whose own forthcoming Coursera course will discuss challenges to higher education from Moocs. "If a technology is disruptive [to a sector], it needs to be incorporated," he says, adding that an early presence on platforms could prove a great advantage once a profitable business model is established.

Add value by going the distance a lot of interaction with

Case Study Warwick DLMBA

Online learning has many rewards, says Howard Marsden

I always wanted to do an MBA but the opportunity did not present itself until the global financial crisis had taken its toll and the project I was working on was put on care and maintenance. I liked the look of the Warwick Business School DLMBA, which suited me as I was then based in Gaborone, Botswana, and not able to study full-time or part-

time. My application to Warwick was accepted and waited eagerly for the MBA to start. In January 2009 a large box of files and textbooks arrived and. after the initial excitement of a child opening a special Christmas present, the reality set in about how

much work was involved. The first year was really tough; trying to schedule nine to 15 hours of study into my working week and balance the demands of living an expatriate life with a young family was a real challenge. The online element was useful, especially the WBS Live Sessions, which actually amounted to conversing with real people, not just text books. It was great to meet

fellow students in the flesh at the September seminar. These week-long events at Warwick were really helpful because there was

other students from around the globe and some good friendships were made, shared with some relatively expensive beers. The exams were a shock. It had been more than 15 years since I had handwritten more than a page, never mind four three-hour exams in five days. I do feel that these days exams should be computerised but, thankfully, I passed them.

So on to year two, and another box of study notes and textbooks, although this time opened with much less zeal. I have a mantra that "pain is a function of time" and thus I elected to do five subjects in year two, so year three would not be so pressured. I knew this would be tough, but I did not realise how tough. My work project, to build a diamond mine in the central Kalahari, was approved something I had been dreaming of for the previous four years.

Those years were focused on designing the optimal mine, concentrating on the environmental and social aspects to ensure minimal adverse impact and optimal social benefit from the mine's development. This involved an intensive social and environmental impact assessment with the focus on consultation. The excitement of the project starting, plus the extensive travel to the site meant I truly needed my home time to be spent with family. I decided all my studying had to happen when I was on site.

My "site" was a tented camp in the desert, with



Howard Marsden studied for his Masters in a desert tent

no phone communication and an unreliable satellite internet connection. Summer temperatures were more than 40 degrees centigrade and everything was covered in dust.

On top of the physical constraints was the management of the onsite team and contractors. The mine camp is reached via a 160km long sand track which takes four hours to negotiate in a four-wheeldrive. The site is a single status construction camp, designed to have as small an environmental impact as possible, thus the accommodation is tented and the central services building is modular so that it can be moved if required. It is 160km from the nearest village with power and

telecommunications. There was a good community of us out there and it was hard to balance my duties to the team and difficult to pull myself away from the prospect of a well-deserved cold beer after a 14-hour day, and retire to my tent to study. Yet the year passed in a blur, with the September

seminar a welcome relief and a good time to bond and I passed my exams. I planned to complete my

project and dissertation by June, then do two face-toface modules at Warwick, leaving just one subject with its exam in December. This meant just one small "present" in January (which did not get opened until nearer the September seminar at Warwick).

The year began really badly from a work point of view. Unforeseen technical problems at the mine sadly led to workers being injured. There were also delays and cost over-runs and I had no choice but to let my study plans slip.

It was not until the September seminar on campus, and two face-toface modules, together with good seminars and an excellent study partner, that I was back on schedule. The two modules were excellent, especially the Business in Society module which I think should be a core subject.

Thus three years of toil and sweat have ended somewhat abruptly. Would I repeat them?

Definitely not. Did they add value? Certainly.

The four key "take homes" for me are the content of each subject, the exposure to international students, discovering there really are no free lunches and, through sacrifice and discipline - and with some very fine balancing learning that anything can be achieved.

I look forward to turning all of the lessons learnt into value for the business and my family.

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