

Professor James Vickers – UTAS – 16th June 2021

An online learning strategy to scale up dementia education nationally and globally

Purpose and context of the presentation

The presentation discusses the development of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) from the context of the Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre's courses designed to improve students' capacity to care for clients, friends, and family members with dementia.

The benefits of MOOCs include that they can cater for large numbers of students, they are online, they have no pre-requisites, so are open access, and they can be free.

Illustration of Practice

The *Understanding Dementia* MOOC has high enrolment numbers and over 30% completion rates. It comprises video interviews, as well as activities such as reflective notes, quizzes, case studies, scenarios, surveys, gamified learning, and external links. It also offers opportunities for engagement through discussions and application of learning to personal experience. Students receive a certificate when they complete the course, and have the opportunity to participate in ongoing research.

To set this up, they had to develop their own LMS which could be configured to incorporate research data collection.

Lessons learned about MOOC design and setup

It is important to build the MOOC in response to your student cohort. The MOOC is an open course, and not everyone comes from an academic background or is interested in an academic pathway. As such, consider the following:

- Avoid 'talking heads': include dialogue, such as videoed interviews.
- Use gamified learning such as quizzes to consolidate learning.
- Provide opportunities for students to participate in discussion forums which represent social engagement and social learning and are inclusive.
- Provide tangible outcomes such as a certificate of learning. This is also useful for health professionals in Australia who are required to accumulate a certain number of hours of professional development per year.

Challenges and opportunities from this practice

- At first, there was no funding, and the work was done 'off the side of the desk'.
- The pandemic led to increased enrolments.
- The student base is diverse, so they are seeking to translate the course into multiple languages for countries where the course is popular. This will require partnership with other universities.

- The unit is built and updated based on student feedback, which encourages students to offer more feedback.
- There are many avenues for research through the MOOC including:
 - Student evaluations
 - Assessing student learning outcomes and how their knowledge improved throughout the course. For example, assessment surveys assess student improvements in literacy in the subject (dementia), and a six-month-post-course survey follows up with student literacy in the subject. These have shown so far notable improvements in students reducing their risk factors for dementia.
- A second course, *Preventing Dementia*, was developed which incorporated more sophisticated content delivery through infographics and animations.

Benefits of MOOC based on this practice

MOOCs are an effective way to reach out and network with a broad community interested in a shared topic. It is an accessible form of education as it encourages both people with or without university level education. To connect to the course, people only need the digital literacy equivalent of being able to access Facebook.

Developing in-built ways students can apply their knowledge is crucial. Additionally, a MOOC must include tools to measure dementia literacy (or the course learning outcomes). They are currently conducting more research how to refine this, for example, through care of someone with dementia, or through reducing ones' own risk of dementia.

The Wicking Centre have used this framework to develop other MOOCs and expand into online degrees (undergraduate to post graduate) including Job Ready Certificates (University Certificates) and Aged Care Certificate.

The Dementia undergraduate degree program uses the university LMS and is fully online. It is available nationally. Learning design includes quizzes, short answer question tests, assignments and essays. A future goal is to offer modularised professional development courses that are fully online.