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Bringing Quality to Technology Enhanced Learning

David Asch and **Martin Schader** explain why EFMD has launched EOCCS EFMD's Online Course Certification System

Five years ago many business schools were bracing themselves for disaster with the arrival of massive online open courses, or MOOCs. *The Financial Times* now reports that "far from cannibalising existing revenue streams the availability and accessibility of on-line content is broadening the reach of institutions".

This surge in the use of new technologies in higher education, often described as "mediatisation of the higher education ecosystem", and the hype about the perils and pitfalls of MOOCs has moved the discussion on to thinking about the changes and benefits of refining pedagogical approaches that incorporate new learning technologies.

These changes affect corporates just as much as business schools since they have to deal with diverse pressures such as time, costs and the impact of globalisation (for example, in increasing the diversity of employees). This leads organisations to re-think how they design, develop

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and deliver learning to employees and also to customers (for example, how to use some new equipment).

In embracing this brave new world institutions should recognise that major investments are necessary in hardware, software, and the development of skills and capabilities in the people involved. The design and delivery of technology enhanced learning (TEL) demands specific skills and capabilities in web design and the preparation of a wide array of learning materials and learning technologies.

Furthermore, new roles have emerged such as e-tutor, discussion leader and content specialist. Because of the nature of the learning experience, careful design of the range of materials and technologies used or proposed is needed.

In recognising the rapid growth of this phenomenon (it is estimate that the global e-learning market exceeded $100 billion at the end of 2015), EFMD established the TEL task force in 2014. The first stage of the task force's work focused on updating, where necessary, the EQUIS and EPAS Standards and Criteria to incorporate TEL.

Two guiding principles informed our approach.

First, learning in a digital age includes using the digital tools we employ daily and should encompass our new digital habits/ behaviours. Second, teaching in a digital age includes facilitating learners that are digital natives.

As part of the research undertaken for this project, it became clear that many institutions seem immature when considering digital approaches to learning and teaching and were

struggling to implement it properly. It also became clear that there were very few reputable bodies evaluating on-line education and none appeared to be focussing on business and management.

Given that there was no way of knowing whether or not an on-line course had been properly designed and delivered in a way that encourages and facilitates learning, the TEL task force designed a system to give online courses within universities, business schools, corporate learning organisations and public agencies a top international quality benchmark in the diverse education landscape where digital technology is applied to teaching and learning.

EFMD draws on the experience of both EQUIS, the premier business school accreditation system, and EPAS, the leading international programme accreditation system. In addition, EFMD has 12 years' experience in running CEL accreditation, which was designed to raise the standard of ICT-based learning programmes in the area of management education. The expertise EFMD acquired through these systems and processes ensures that EOCCS (EFMD Online Course Certification System) will bring value and an external seal of recognition to quality online courses across the globe.

EFMD officially launched EOCCS at the 2016 EFMD Conference for Deans & Directors General in Budapest.

EOCCS is designed as an international certification system firmly embedded in the general philosophy of EFMD accreditations, namely internationalisation, practical relevance and quality improvement. EOCCS is open to any institution delivering online business or management-related courses that may stand-alone or constitute part of a certificate or programme. The institution must be able to demonstrate that the four EOCCS standards are satisfied; these relate to institutional context, course design, delivery and operations, and quality assurance processes.

EOCCS can be seen as an add-on to EQUIS, EPAS and CLIP, where online provisioning is not a mandatory feature. The intended impact of EOCCS to institutions, and to the business

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and management education field, is high-quality online courses and the recognition of online learning as an effective and flexible way of learning.

The EOCCS certification system will be established and developed with a portfolio of prestigious pilot institutions representing both the corporate and business school world, including Iversity, Mazars, Sberbank, BI Oslo, HEC Paris, Henley Business School, IE Business School and the Open University.

The pilot phase is now underway and a great deal has already been learned from this early stage. For example, it has become clear that corporates tend to favour very short on-line courses with some having a duration of at most 12 hours, which was lower than the 20 hours that had been designed into early drafts of the standards. In the light of other comments from the pilots we have also reduced the administrative burden for applicants by making the application process more straightforward.

If you would like more information on EOCCS please contact the Brussels office or write to **eoccs@efmd.org**

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