



Statement on Massive Open Online Courses

QAA's role is to safeguard the standards of awards and improve the quality of UK higher education. We welcome the development of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) as an innovation with great potential to widen participation and promote lifelong learning, drawing on providers' experience of online and blended learning opportunities. The widespread interest in a broad range of MOOCs has given providers an opportunity to promote higher education opportunities more generally.

We are committed to protecting the student interest and the continued high standing of UK higher education. We want to help prospective students make informed decisions about the quality of MOOCs, while respecting the open and innovative nature of this provision. In this way, we seek to recognise rather than constrain the potential of MOOCs.

UK universities and other awarding organisations are responsible for the quality of all the courses they offer. Since MOOCs are typically non-credit bearing and have no particular entry requirements, they are not formally scrutinised during QAA review. Nonetheless, MOOC providers will be welcome to cite them in their self-evaluation documents as examples of pedagogical development.

It is in the interest of all UK higher education providers that offer MOOCs to ensure that they reflect the established reputation of UK higher education. The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) provides a useful reference point that may assist providers in applying or adapting their internal quality assurance processes to approve, monitor and review their MOOCs.

Students have a variety of motives for undertaking MOOCs, including self-improvement and enhanced employability. MOOCs offer a form of learning that may be capable of formal recognition towards the entry requirements for a higher education qualification, or for credit through providers' existing recognition and accreditation systems. Students can legitimately expect that the meaning and value of any certificates or statements would be made clear to potential employers, other educational institutions or other interested parties. Part C of the Quality Code provides comprehensive guidance to providers on making information available about themselves and their courses.

We are committed to working with those who currently offer MOOCs and those who may do so in the future, to identify and share sound practice in quality assurance and enhancement. Aside from formal mechanisms, we also recognise that the experience of the community of learners and providers will offer a strong indication of the true value of MOOCs, revealed in the reflections of participants through, for example, online forums and social media.

QAA is developing resources to facilitate the gathering and dissemination of good practice, in order to support providers as MOOCs continue to evolve. We will also explore ways in which we can assist with future arrangements including the development of assessment techniques and the award of credit.