

### **OpenCourseWare Policy discussion**

A paper by Doug Hunt, Deputy President (Education)

#### **Background**

Imperial College Union's Representation and Welfare Board passed a policy in January 2012 (appendix 1) that had a resolve of "Imperial College Union to support Imperial College establishing an OpenCourseWare platform."

Since then, OCW platforms have a significant number of universities offering online courses on them, which are commonly referred to as MOOCs (Massive Open Online Course) and the MOOCs have been hailed by some academics and politicians as the future of higher education.

Some of the potential benefits of Imperial having a MOOC are:

- It can be used as a marketing tool to increase Imperial's brand and the number of students and academics who wish to study/work here.
- It can help improve our e-learning portfolio to our current students.
- We can start offering online distance courses to our students, which will mean academics are teaching more people and Imperial could charge these students money e.g. Imperial College Business School are planning on giving a distance MBA programme, University of Edinburgh are offering distance courses already and the BPP Law School is already offering an online course, which is reportedly proving very popular.

Some of the potential flaws:

- It will cost Imperial a significant amount of money to offer MOOCs e.g. The University of Edinburgh is spending hundreds of thousands of pounds for its online courses on Coursera.
- The College only has a finite level of resources. If Imperial spend them on a MOOC or OCW then what isn't that resource being spent on?
- Once every university is offering MOOCs or an OCW, then how are we differentiating ourselves?

#### **Discussion**

Taking into account that producing an OpenCourseWare platform would cost the College at least hundreds of thousands of pounds, does ERB believe that this would be a good use of the College's resources?

In ERB's opinions should Imperial join an OpenCourseWare platform and offer MOOCs on one of them?

If the College does develop a MOOC then what level of study should the College aim at when trying to attract students? If we offer our own current courses, then it will be above the level of study for a 17 or 18 year old and may not increase our application numbers for undergraduates, but may increase our applications for postgraduate study. Would a virtual open day be a better use of money to increase undergraduate applications?

If the level of study we aim at is for A-levels or GCSEs then how are we helping our current members who are effectively paying for the College to resource these courses, so they can improve Imperial's brand?

## **OpenCourseWare Policy**

*Passed by RWB 19.01.12*

### **Background**

**This paper has been put together to decide if Imperial College Unions supports Imperial College introducing an OpenCourseWare system.**

OpenCourseWare refers to a free and openly licensed digital publication of high quality university level education materials (including lecture notes, slides, problems and videos).

Fellow IDEA League university member "TU Delft" in Holland have already got an excellent system (<http://goo.gl/QdegP>) where you have an interface of two video boxes (one for video recording and one for the slides) that you can change the sizes of, zoom in and easily navigate). Currently they spend annually €280,000 for approximately 1700 lecture video recordings.

They have now moved towards Open CourseWare, hence why we can view their podcasts. They are publically available in this interface as well as on iTunes U.

Universities in the United States have a rich history of OpenCourseWare and video podcasting. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has had their system for over a decade (<http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/>) and has just announced giving diplomas to "virtual" students. Similarly Stamford excels in OpenCourseWare (<http://see.stanford.edu/>) with material publically available on YouTube, iTunes U and available for download.

A proposal of what Imperial College's OpenCourseWare could look like can be found here (<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/opencourseware>) with an Organic Chemistry video lecture course available for viewing.

### **Believes**

- The general public will benefit from having access to these materials.
- Imperial College will greatly improve their international reputation by providing lecture courses open-source as well as catch up with the world leading American universities in this area.
- OCW can boost the image of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths subjects and inspire prospective and school students into pursuing a career in STEM subjects.
- OCW will allow students with an active interest
- OCW will allow prospective students to sample Imperial College lecture courses and allow Imperial College to showcase some its best lecturers.

### **Resolves**

1. For Imperial College Union to support Imperial College establishing an OpenCourseWare platform.

Education and Representation Board  
4<sup>th</sup> June 2013