2A   Distance Learning Courses: A first attempt with perspectives on the development and day-to-day running

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Distance learning courses, in their various formats e.g. MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and SPOCs (Small Private Online Courses), are receiving a lot of press at the moment, particularly with the University of Glasgow signing up to deliver two MOOCs in the near future. Creating and running such courses is not a straightforward process and requires careful planning and continuous support throughout taking up a significant amount of staff time.

In the past academic year the annual University of Glasgow Summer School piloted a distance alternative which replaced three weeks of summer school campus activity. This was based within the Moodle VLE and involved staff members who have traditionally run the campus-based summer school.

This pilot involved Biology, Chemistry and Study Skills courses and, in this initial year, ran with a relatively small number of students. Each course took a different approach when designing and developing the distance experience. The aim was that, if successful, the distance alternative will be rolled out to other courses as well as substantially increasing the numbers of students involved. This presentation will explain both the staff and student perspectives of creating and running the new distance alternative to the summer school. To give some additional perspective the presentation will also include experiences from the postgraduate MSc Sport & Exercise Medicine programme. This programme had been running as a distance course for several years and is currently undergoing major redevelopment to be re-launched in 2015.

The lessons learned from these experiences as well as suggestions for further development and improvement will be useful for anybody considering developing any kind of distance provision.