

Responsibilities of Institutions

this document will become a complement to the rights and principles of networked learners found at this link;

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/11kl-ngaGYA7R3P-2-nfVjEYbA5fJ9Gv67J9Ggx3GAkk/edit>

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Preamble

The Internet has made it possible for institutions of learning to make available their resources and approaches to anyone with open internet access. New technologies and pedagogical approaches that can catalyze learning are bubbling up and being well utilized by traditional and online institutions. Some of these technologies have emerged from universities, some from publicly-funded research, some from the private sector, some from individuals and digital communities. In the past year, Massive Online Open Courseware, or MOOCs, have become the darling of the moment--lauded by the media, embraced by millions--so new, so promising in possibility, and yet so ripe for exploitation.

We (the traditional and online institutions of the world) believe that online learning represents a powerful and potentially awe-inspiring opportunity to make new forms of learning available to all people worldwide, whether young or old, learning for credit, self-improvement, employment, or just pleasure. We believe that online courses can create "meaningful" as well as "massive" learning opportunities. We are aware of how much we don't know: that we have yet to explore the full pedagogical potential of learning online, of how it can change the ways we teach, the ways we learn, and the ways we connect.

Think of television in the 1950s or even correspondence courses in the 1920s. As we begin to experiment with how new technologies might change learning and teaching **it is important to be mindful of this being a new world populated by the potential of reaching learners and disciplines just becoming known to us. To this end, we see opportunities for renewal of educational purpose without giving up our commitments to and traditions of free enquiry, and valuing those we come in direct contact with. [Scott] in favour of the status quo threaten to neuter or constrain the use of technology, propping up outdated educational practices rather than allowing for transformative ones.**

All too often, during such wrenching transitions, the power held by the existing structures work toward creating two-tier systems and exploiting new technologies in favor of limiting access and focusing upon profit rather than public good. For that reason, we feel compelled to articulate the responsibilities of online institutions in this brave electronic world, to look out for the public good and --we dare say-- the responsibilities of online institutions.

We also recognize some broader hopes and aspirations for the best online learning. We include those principles as an integral addendum to the Statement of Responsibilities below. Our broad goal is to inspire an open, learner-centered dialogue around the rights, responsibilities, and possibilities for education in the globally-connected world of the present and beyond.

I. Responsibilities

We believe that our culture is increasingly one in which learning, unlearning and relearning are as fundamental to our survival and prosperity as is breathing. To that end, we believe that all institutions of learning have responsibilities which transfer to new and emerging digital environments. They include:

The responsibility to assist learners

Learners have the right to engaged participation in the construction of their own learning. Learners are makers, doers, thinkers, contributors, not just passive recipients of someone else's lecture notes or methods. They are critical contributors to their disciplines, fields, and to the larger enterprise of education.

In an online environment, teachers no longer need to be sole authority figures but instead should share responsibility with learners at almost every turn. Learners can participate and shape one another's learning through peer interaction, new content, enhancement of learning materials and by forming virtual and real-world networks.

Everyone has the right to learn: traditional students, non-traditional students, adults, children, and teachers, independent of age, gender, race, social status, sexual orientation, economic status, national origin, bodily or cognitive abilities, and environment anywhere and everywhere in the world.

The responsibility to provide learning opportunities

To ensure the learning opportunities become affordable and available, offered in myriad formats, to learners located in a specific place of learning and/or remotely, adapting themselves to people's different lifestyles, mobility needs, and schedules. Such opportunities should be equitable, not dependent on colour, sexuality, religion or other discriminating factors - either explicitly or implicitly. Online learning has the potential to ensure that this right is a reality for a

greater percentage of the world's population than has ever been realizable before.

The responsibility to honour peoples privacy

Learner privacy is a right regardless of whether learning takes place in a brick-and-mortar institution or online. Learners have a right to know how data collected about their participation in the online system will be used by the organization and made available to others. Each institution should offer clear explanations of the privacy implications of learners' choices. Features within learning systems should not be dependent upon the amount of private information a learner chooses to disclose. And when financial benefit comes from the use of personal information these monies are used to improve the available learning systems, increase access to developing nations, and be used toward increasing global knowledge and learning.

The responsibility to keep knowledge open and public

Learners within a global, digital commons create an amazing amount of knowledge every day. Learners have the right to work, network, and contribute to knowledge in public; to share their ideas and their learning in visible and connected ways. Courses will encourage open participation and meaningful engagement with real audiences, including peers and the broader public. The knowledge created during learning is a public good and, as such, will not be locked behind paywalls and other closed systems. The knowledge and resources created during participation in online learning will never be deleted or archived where it is inaccessible. Discussion forums, community dialogue, and all artifacts (regardless of media type) will also remain open and accessible in perpetuity.

The responsibility to protect people's personal data and intellectual property

Learners also have the right to create and own intellectual property and data associated with their participation in online learning environments. Online institutions should encourage openness and sharing, while working to protect learners personal data, and honouring the licenses toward their data and creative work. Any changes in terms of service should be clearly communicated by the institution, and will never erode the original terms of privacy or the intellectual property rights to which the learner agreed.

The responsibility to provide financial transparency

Learners have a right to know how their participation supports the financial health of the online institutions in which they are participating. They have a right to fairness, honesty, and complete transparent financial accounting. All institutional financial information (including capital and operational costs, salaries and benefits, and the terms of partnerships or other like arrangements) shall be published openly and transparently. This is also true of courses that are

considered "free." The institution should offer clear explanations of the financial implications of students' choices.