

The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) presents
Rethinking higher ed: Beyond {the buzzwords}
November 7-8, 2013
Sheraton Centre Toronto

Day One
November 7, 2013

Session 4A | Would you like a MOOC with that?

The explosion of MOOCs and what it really means for students and teachers

Facilitator: Keith Hampson, Acrobatiq, Carnegie Mellon University

Jennifer Campbell, University of Toronto

Wendy Wilson, Fanshawe College

MOOCs can't be based on what instructors do in class, because that doesn't translate well to the online platform. An instructor's personality won't necessarily shine through in the same way on video, which presents the challenge of how to deliver material in an effective manner. Wilson noted that it might be more effective to find someone interested in a topic to go around and interview others, rather than having a "sage on stage" talking at the camera.

MOOCs present many opportunities for research and learning, and can be either recorded or live. Some students want to skip a class because they've taken the corresponding MOOC before they arrive at an institution. However, there are tools to integrate prior MOOC experience, such as testing knowledge with a final exam, or making it mandatory to take another course to replace it.

It can be a challenge to set up the infrastructure and funding to support MOOCs, but the reality is that it doesn't have to cost very much to get started, said Campbell, who added that her first MOOC was created with \$3,000 worth of equipment and a room. Wilson began with a small handheld camera and Microsoft movie suite. Funding at the University of Toronto and Carnegie Mellon University is both internal and from grants, and U of T receives support from the Gates Foundation.

There are opportunities to test out MOOCs in the classroom, said Campbell, who had students watch videos. She began class by handing out worksheets and finding out where students were stuck, which helped her be prepared for "people at home staring at a blank piece of paper."

Wilson and Campbell were quick to dispel fears that MOOC administrators would one day replace instructors, noting that instructors continuously develop new materials for the classroom.