

WANT to learn the best way to give a presentation or how to read your boss? Perhaps you'd like to learn how to manage your time, money and career or how to develop your leadership skills. Or maybe you just want to do something fun like learn how to play music or understand the art of poetry.

Chances are at some point in your life you wished you could learn something new. But time and money are in short supply for many of us, so studying at a university or tertiary institutions isn't an option.

But all that is changing. If you have the discipline, an internet connection and a desire to learn you could study at some of the world's finest institutions of learning. Prestigious international universities such as Yale, Princeton, Harvard and locally the University of Cape Town (UCT) are making it possible thanks to the growth of the massive open online course (Mooc, which rhymes with fluke).

Moocs are becoming increasingly popular around the world. UCT recently announced it will be offering Moocs too.

"Several courses are currently being developed in fields such as medicine, health, sciences and the arts," says Professor Sandra Klopper, UCT's deputy vice-chancellor: strategic issues related to teaching and learning. "We believe there's an opportunity to share knowledge generated by our leading academics and researchers."

Institutes from California to Copenhagen are teaming up to offer online courses in the arts, sciences and business. And the best part? Most are free.

We take a closer look at this exciting new development some education experts believe could revolutionise the world.

What these online courses are

Moocs are offered by service providers who link up with universities. UCT will launch its first courses next year with British-based Moocs online learning platform FutureLearn and is in discussions to work with American Moocs platform Coursera and edX in future.

The Moocs have the platforms and systems in place to make online learning possible – for example, video systems to watch lectures, ways to submit essays and chat rooms to discuss classes or content. The uni-



CLICK & LEARN!

Whether you want to ace bookkeeping, brush up on the Beatles or learn to be happy, there's an online course – or Mooc – for you By KIRSTIN BUICK

versities provide the learning material and lecturers.

There are a few major Moocs (see box, right). Coursera offers courses from US universities Princeton, Stanford and Duke, and even offers courses created by the World Bank and the Museum of Modern Art. And edX is backed by the illustrious Harvard and Berkeley universities and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

But they're by no means the only ones

– there are more than 500 Mooc providers worldwide. There's Japan's Schoo, Germany's iversity and Australia's Open2Study to name but a few.

Courses on offer cover all subjects imaginable, from computer programming and business strategy to English grammar. Not all are intellectual or technical though – Berkeley for example offers a course on the science of happiness through edX, while Coursera has offered a subject called Listen-

ing to World Music by the University of Pennsylvania.

How they work

You register for whatever subject you want in much the same way you would for a traditional course. Moocs, which are on average about eight to 10 weeks in length, have no entry requirements although it helps to know a bit about the subject so you can keep up with what's happening and not lose interest.

You'll need a computer or tablet device to watch the video lectures. Mooc courses are not just about passively sitting through a video lecture however – they're highly interactive. The sessions are mostly made up of clips interspersed with readings and exercises you download or read online.

Marking is computer-based for most subjects but for those that require essays a peer review system is used. This encourages interaction among students and is also a way to deter cheaters.

What's the catch?

The challenge is sticking to taking your classes and finishing your assignments. "Signing up for a class is a lightweight process," says Professor Andrew Ng of Stanford, one of Coursera's founders.

About 104 000 people signed up for Professor Ng's course on machine learning in 2011. Only 46 000 submitted the first assignment and just 13 000 completed the class to earn their certificate.

Also, you won't earn a full degree. "Moocs represent UCT's commitment to lifelong learning," Professor Klopper says. "It doesn't replace regular credit-bearing, formal degree courses."

But the variety of courses (many of which are too specialised to be offered at physical tertiary institutions) could boost your CV. "The use of Mooc certificates on CVs and online profiles has become increasingly common," Professor Klopper adds.

Who it works for

It's great for anyone interested in learning new things or polishing old skills. "Moocs are proving popular among people who have already completed a tertiary qualification and in some cases among high school learners," Professor Klopper says.

"They're designed for mass participation and assume that learners will drive their own education while studying alongside diverse fellow students who may come from anywhere in the world."

The major Moocs

Coursera was founded by Stanford computer science professors Andrew Ng and Daphne Koller in 2012. Two years later the platform has 7,1 million students and 641

courses produced by their 108 affiliated institutions.

Coursera has a Facebook-like feel. New students are asked to build profiles, add a picture and can fill out an About Me section visible to other students.

All courses are free but students can sign up for a "signature track" in certain courses, meaning they'll pay a fee (anything from about R300 to R1 000) and receive a verified certificate which is essentially official recognition.

edX was founded in 2012 by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard. By June this year it had more than 2,5 million users taking more than 200 courses.

These courses are particularly interactive. Lecturers keep clips short and intersperse them with questions, equations and exercises, allowing the student to apply what they've learnt immediately.

For Mooc newbies, edX even offers a 20-minute course on how to take edX courses!

■ Go to you.co.za/latest-issue for more on Udacity, a smaller Mooc aimed at those interested in computer science.

SOURCES: NPR.ORG, USNEWS.COM, NYTIMES.COM, TECHREPUBLIC.COM, HUFFINGTONPOST.COM

YOU READERS WHO'VE TRIED MOOCS

■ **VIVIEN DICK, CLIENT SERVICES MANAGER, KRUGERSDORP**

"I did the Child Nutrition course on Coursera as a test to see if I liked doing online courses. I loved the whole cooking aspect and that you had to post a picture of the food you cooked online to be measured by Maya Adam, a child nutritionist at Stanford University, and the other people doing the course. I really enjoyed it. I might just attempt another one!"

■ **TRISTAN GERHOLD, ENGINEER, JOHANNESBURG**

"I've completed three Coursera courses and am busy with an edX course. I feel as if I've learnt a lot from them and they've definitely taught me practical principles I can apply in the workplace.

"Some gave a decent overview of the topic but I felt I didn't gain much from them. At times I struggled to complete assignments in time, especially with more challenging courses. However, the active communities for each course provided motivation and assistance when I was struggling"

TRY THESE FOR STARTERS!

BOOST YOUR CV

Our top 10 courses for getting ahead

- 1 How To Read Your Boss** by the University of Nottingham on FutureLearn.com
- 2 Managing Your Time, Money And Career** by the University of California, Irvine on Coursera.com
- 3 Think Again: How To Reason And Argue** by Duke University on Coursera.com
- 4 Becoming A Resilient Person - The Science Of Stress Management** by the University of Washington on edX.org
- 5 Leadership: Identity, Influence And Power** by Macquarie Graduate School of Management on Open2Study.com
- 6 How To Succeed At Interviews** by the University of Sheffield on FutureLearn.com
- 7 Creative Problem Solving** by Bellevue University on Canvas.net
- 8 Innovation: The Key To Business Success** by the University of Leeds on FutureLearn.com
- 9 Discover Your Value** by the University of Leeds on FutureLearn.com
- 10 Talk The Talk: How To Give A Great Presentation** by The Open University on FutureLearn.com

JUST FOR FUN

- 1 How To Change The World** by Wesleyan University on Coursera.com
- 2 The Science Of Happiness** by the University of California, Berkeley on edX.org
- 3 Exploring Play: The Importance Of Play In Everyday Life** by The University of Sheffield on FutureLearn.com
- 4 The Greatest Unsolved Mysteries Of The Universe** by the Australian National University on edX.org
- 5 Football: More Than A Game** by the University of Edinburgh on FutureLearn.com
- 6 The Music Of the Beatles** by the University of Rochester on Coursera.com
- 7 The Art Of Poetry** by Boston University on edX.org
- 8 Moralities Of Everyday Life** by Yale University on Coursera.com
- 9 The Mind Is Flat: The Shocking Shallowness Of Human Psychology** by the University of Warwick on FutureLearn.com
- 10 Google Ninja** by My Tech High on Canvas.net