

# MOOCs at Fontys University of Applied Sciences

Robert Schuwer<sup>1</sup>, Fred de Vries<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of ICT, Fontys University of Applied Sciences (r.schuwer@fontys.nl)

<sup>2</sup>Department Education and Research, Fontys University of Applied Sciences (fred.devries@fontys.nl)

## 1 Summary

Several trends force Fontys University of Applied Sciences to formulate an open policy regarding MOOCs and other forms of open education. These trends encompass the ambition to offer more tailor-made education and the need to enlarge an international focus. In formulating this policy, Fontys can build on some experiments and experiences from recent initiatives within Fontys.

## 2 Introduction

Fontys University of Applied Sciences is located in the Southern part of the Netherlands. It has 44,000 students participating in 85 Bachelor programs and 22 Master programs. Fontys has 41 research chairs (“lectoraat” in Dutch), mainly conducting applied research in close cooperation with practice and education<sup>18</sup>.

Universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands offer professional education, applying a practical approach to (scientific) knowledge. Both education and research are determined by the needs of society and work field. The majority of education is campus-based with students coming from the close region of the university. There are some exceptions. At Fontys these are a.o. an International Business School (with many students from Germany), the School of Arts and an international program at the School of ICT (with ~500 students, being 18% of the total number of students at this school).

From these characteristics it seems that for the majority of schools at Fontys publishing a MOOC for international visibility (the most mentioned primary objective to publish a MOOC in the research described by (Jansen & Schuwer, 2015)) is not an option. Instead, more and more teachers reuse and sometimes adapt MOOCs and other forms of open online education (like OER) and design their educational activities around them. Experiences on these reuse activities are hardly shared and communicated. But trends demand a different viewpoint in these as will be shown in the next chapter.

## 3 Problem description / challenges

Fontys Focus 2020 (Fontys, 2016) describes the medium term ambitions for Fontys. The focus will shift to talent-based education: “Talents are the future; the future shapes our talents”. The main challenges to realize these ambitions are:

- Realize maximal development of each individual talent
- Students are educated to become critical professionals

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<sup>18</sup> Source: <http://fontys.edu/About-us/Who-we-are/Who-we-are.htm>

- Education as personalized as possible
- Demand driven education with both the student and the work field as starting point

Connecting the classroom with the outside world and reusing OER, MOOCs, open data and open research enables the tailor made programs necessary for realizing these ambitions.

As mentioned in the introduction, the education programmes of Fontys in general do not focus on students abroad. However, current trends demand a stronger international orientation in which forms of open and online education can be of use:

- An increasing number of students want to move from an international orientated program in English at a research university to a university of applied sciences. To facilitate this, more English programs should be offered in an international classroom setting. The same counts for incoming students from Dutch secondary education offering an English stream.
- Especially for the field of ICT, in the near future the demand for graduate students in the Eindhoven region cannot be met by the current population. This demands for the need to attract students abroad and thus to be more visible internationally. Publishing MOOCs can be a means to become more visible in the region and internationally, enabling different stakeholders including future students, current students, collaboration partners and the experts and part-time students in the regional industry to work and learn together on shared interests. MOOCs can thus be a primer for the collaboration in the regular curricula and applied research.
- The future working environment for the student is more and more becoming globalized. This provides the demand to prepare students for working and living in an international environment, with a mixture of cultures, values and beliefs. Participating in an international learning environment is one of the means for education to prepare students for this. An online learning environment based on a pedagogy that supports cooperation and group learning (e.g. in the form of a MOOC) is a way to realize this.
- In fast-developing areas like ICT, employers demand to have an up-to-date program addressing these developments. Developing learning materials from scratch is not feasible in that situation. Instead, reuse, adapt or remix existing open online resources is one way to go.

And lastly, it seems that MOOCs are here to stay and will likely play an important role in lifelong learning activities. Involvement with MOOCs in their program is a way to make current students aware of these forms of open online education.

These trends demands for an institutional policy on openness. The next chapter will elaborate on this.

## 4 Policy options applied / recommendations

Within Fontys, policy on openness is currently under construction to address the challenges as outlined above. There are however a few initiatives on MOOCs and other forms of open online education. In this chapter, three of these initiatives will be described.

### 4.1 Promote Open Access including OER

Recent research on adoption of forms of open online education indicate that a majority of teachers still are not aware of the existence of these resources and the advantages these can bring (Allen & Seaman, 2014),

(de los Arcos et al, 2015), (Schuwer & Janssen, 2016). A way to overcome this is to promote and support using existing open resources from other academics in compiling MOOCs and other learning resources as much as possible. Once teachers get accustomed to this, the move to sharing resources written by themselves under an open license or reuse and adapt resources from elsewhere may become obvious for them. Awareness on the reuse and adaptation of learning resources is the pivotal role librarians can play. In the libraries on location and through their online portal the principle of academic sharing and reuse of electronically and sometime editable resources can be promoted. The most obvious way to realize this situation is the university wide application of an Open Access policy, including the use of Open Educational Resources. Such a policy is under preparation for the Fontys institutes.

## 4.2 FINE innovation programme

In January 2015 four pilot projects under the FINE innovation programme started. FINE stands for 'Fontys Inline Education', a combination of online and offline education. The objective of the programme was to experiment with a balanced combinations of open offline and online educational offerings. Results included learning resources (OER) consisting of instructional units and exercises on Statistics and products of Arts students which are shared in offline and online environments. Broader use of the resulting products is one of the objectives of the programme. The policy initiative mentioned can accelerate the actual reuse of resources for online and offline education in and between the Fontys institutes.

## 4.3 Open innovation stream

At the School of ICT, in September 2016 an open innovation stream will be offered to interested students in their second year. This program will be part of the Bachelor Program. In this program, students have many choices in shaping their individual program, both in subjects and in didactics. A student in this stream starts with defining their learning objectives around a subject of his own interest. Where possible, they are connected to business partners and students with similar objectives to realize their objectives. The knowledge and theory needed will be mainly offered by reusing available OER and MOOCs. Teachers are coaching the students during their learning experience. Assessment of the student will be portfolio-based. This stream is an example of realization of the talent-based education ambition.

# 5 Recommendations

To realize the ambitions of Fontys as outlined in their program Fontys Focus 2020, tailor-made, personalized programs are necessary. For efficiency reasons reuse of available open resources is a *conditio sine qua non*. MOOCs are one of the many options to address the challenge. Formulating an open policy should start from the vision on education. An open policy should also connect to the trend that different manifestations of openness becomes more and more integrated: OER, Open Data, Open Access publications, Open research and Open online courses, whether or not Massive.

This demands for an open policy with an integrated vision on these diverse forms of openness. This policy should also take into account the opportunities of MOOCs and other forms of open education in being more visible internationally and to support the demands the global oriented environment of Fontys are setting. Collaboration with the regional internationally oriented work field can be boosted by involving experts from these companies in the realisation of current open learning resources to be used in MOOCs and the regular programs.

At last, openness in education is much more than just MOOCs. The acronym MOOC is given many meanings, sometimes even equalizing it with open education (Jansen et al, 2015). Maybe, to avoid the latter trap mentioned, the acronym MOOC should be replaced by OOC(EM), to become more meaningful: Open Online Course (Eventually Massive).

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