
Converting to Online Teaching¹
A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions

Do You MOOC? ²

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Continuous learning is, or should be, a way of life for project managers and all members of the project team! According to a global survey³ by Pearson in 2019 a “40-year career is gone, replaced by lifelong learning and diverse career paths”. Even if you have gone back to college and earned a master’s degree, the need to continue learning new knowledge and new skills is ongoing. Work assignments and demands are constantly evolving. According to this same survey, “People expect digital and virtual learning to be the new normal in the next decade” and the “shift to digital delivery is well-established & accelerating”.

So, what are your options? How do you work long hours, lead a healthy family and community life, and stay current? No, I have not found the secret to adding more than 24 hours in a day! But scheduling time to read, participate in your professional association, and take short courses on MOOC’s is the best way we have found to stretch the day! Simply block the time out on your calendar! For the reading component, simply subscribe to the Project Management World Journal, it is free and a global resource for sharing knowledge in Program & Project Management⁴. Ok, so what is a MOOC?

MOOC stands for “Massive Open Online Course” and they are free, open to anyone, anywhere, anytime! They are a flexible way to learn new knowledge and skills. MOOC’s grew out of the Open Educational Resources movement and the MIT Open Courseware Project and started to be introduced in 2006. From an educational perspective, the key breakthrough was the conclusive research finding that class size and learning outcomes have no connection⁵.

¹This series of articles by the Director of the University of Maryland’s Project Management Center for Excellence provides information and advice for converting from traditional in-person classes to online teaching, based on their experience before and during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. See Professor Cable’s background at the end of this article.

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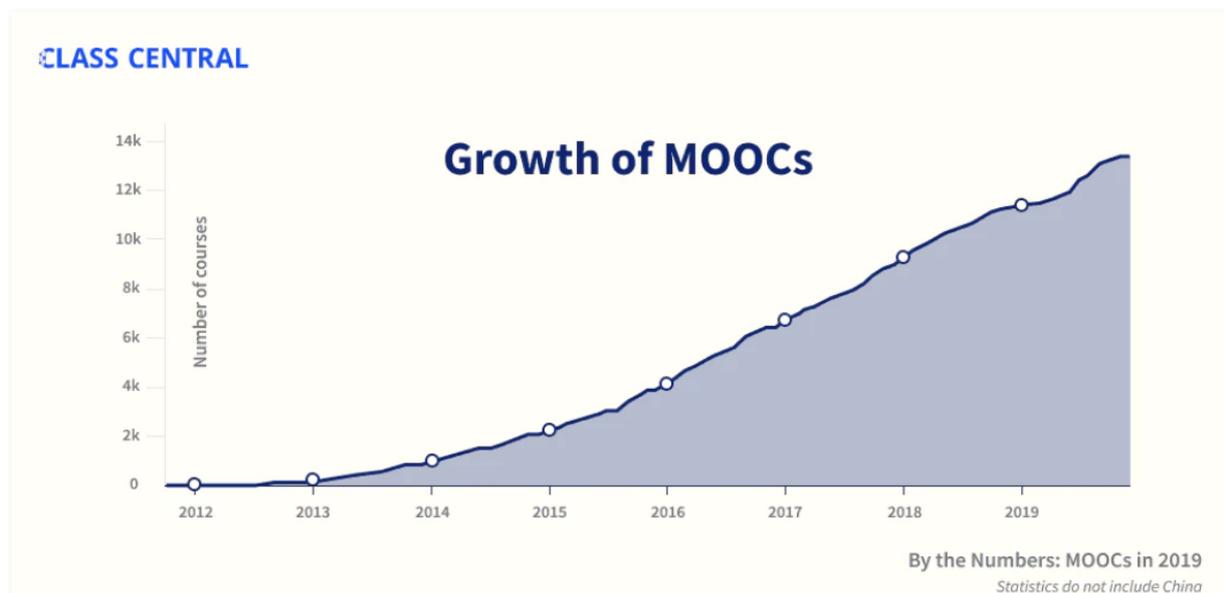
³ “The Global Learner Survey” September 2019

⁴ *PM World Journal* <https://peworldjournal.com/>

⁵ “Does Class Size Matter” by Daniel Barwick

By 2012 MOOC's became very popular and several providers started to appear. Coursera, edX, FutureLearn, Khan Academy, and Udacity are a few of the more popular ones. One of the keys to acceptance was the credibility of top tier universities that were generating most of the content in the courses. Today, MOOC's are widely accepted as acceptable credentials by numerous major corporations; IBM, Starbucks, and C3ai to name a few.

The MOOC's ecosystem has been growing steadily and as you might expect with the Covid-19 pandemic has skyrocketed. According the Class Central⁶ as of the fall 2020 there are over 15,000 courses available with over 110 million active learners. Over 900 universities have posted content and in addition to the short courses there are approximately 50 MOOC-based academic degrees available.



So, are courses really free? Yes, the basic offerings are free to audit. All content is online, and you may learn at your own speed. If you want to document that you took and completed the course you will have to pay a nominal fee to become a “verified” learner and as part of that have to pass an exam at the end of the course.

One of the things that I think is significant about a lot of the courses is that some serious effort is focused on how people learn best. Course design takes into consideration our learning style preferences and is effective for visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners.

⁶ <https://www.classcentral.com/> Class Central is a listing of online courses primarily free from universities offered on massive open online course platforms.

The University of Maryland is a partner with edX⁷ and our Project Management Center for Excellence has launched a massive effort to add approximately 50 new courses to edX over the next 24 months. We already have certificates (3 to 5 courses) live in Agile, Communications, Leadership, Product Management, and Digital Transformation with more to follow.

Each of our courses has 4 to 6 “weeks” of material and each week includes 4 or 5 self-paced learning modules. Each learning module includes: a series of short (6 to 8 minute) videos that are also transcribed, key point learning summaries, references for those that want a deeper dive into the material, and knowledge checks to see if you got it. Each learning module takes between 10 and 30 minutes to complete. In general, course take anywhere from 10 to 15 hours to complete.

For verified learners there is an exam at the end of each course. Verified learners earn a certificate at the completion of each course documenting their accomplishment. Sometimes 3 to 6 courses are grouped to form a “Certificate” which is also awarded by EdX and the University of Maryland to document completion.

The bottom line is that online delivery is effective and affordable. At UMD our goal is to deliver state-of-the-art content to project teams globally, when and where they need it.

Previous articles in this series

Cable, J. H. (2020). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Video Production Guidance, *PM World Journal*, Vol. IX, Issue XII, December. Available online at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/pmwj100-Dec2020-Cable-converting-to-teaching-online-8-video-production-guidance.pdf>

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Cable, J. H. (2020). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Facilitating Virtual Classes, *PM World Journal*, Vol. IX, Issue X, October. Available online at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/pmwj98-Oct2020-Cable-facilitating-virtual-classes.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.edx.org/> edX is an American massive open online course provider created by Harvard and MIT. It hosts online university-level courses in a wide range of disciplines to a worldwide student body, including some courses at no charge. It also conducts research into learning based on how people use its platform. [Wikipedia](#)

Cable, J. H. (2020). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Blended Learning Classroom Guidance, *PM World Journal*, Vol. IX, Issue IX, September. Available online at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/pmwj97-Sep2020-Cable-converting-to-teaching-online-5-blended-learning.pdf>

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Cable, J. H. (2020). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Video Conference Etiquette, *PM World Journal*, Vol. IX, Issue VI, June. Available online at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/pmwj94-Jun2020-Cable-teaching-online-series-2-video-conference-etiquette.pdf>

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About the Author



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John Cable is Director of the Project Management Center for Excellence in the A. James Clark School of Engineering at the University of Maryland, where he is also a professor and teacher of several graduate courses in project management. His program at the University of Maryland offers masters and PhD level programs focused on project management. With more than 1,300 seats filled annually with students from many countries, including more than 40 PhD students, the program is the largest graduate program in project management at a major university in the United States.

John Cable served in the newly formed U.S. Department of Energy in 1980, where he was involved with developing energy standards for buildings, methods for measuring energy consumption, and managing primary research in energy conservation. As an architect and builder, Mr. Cable founded and led John Cable Associates in 1984, a design build firm. In 1999 he was recruited by the University of Maryland's Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering to create and manage a graduate program in project management. In his role as founder and director of the Project Management Center for Excellence at Maryland, the program has grown to offer an undergraduate minor, master's degrees, and a doctoral program. Information about the Project Management Center for Project Management at the University of Maryland can be found at www.pm.umd.edu.

In 2002, PMI formed the Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Educational Programs (GAC). Mr. Cable was appointed to that inaugural board where he served as vice chair. In 2006, he was elected as chairman, a role he held through 2012. As Chair of the PMI GAC, John led the accreditation of 86 project management educational programs at 40 institutions in 15 countries in North America, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and the Asia Pacific Region. John was awarded PMI's 2012 Distinguished Contribution Award for his leadership at the GAC. He can be contacted at jcable@umd.edu.