

EPFL and Mohammed VI Polytechnic University launch a new MOOC platform

EPFL and Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P) in Morocco have launched a new online learning portal featuring 41 MOOCs developed at EPFL. The platform, which took just days to develop, is the first output of a partnership deal struck between the two institutions shortly before the COVID-19 outbreak. It could eventually open to students from the rest of Morocco's engineering schools.

EPFL is regarded as one of the pioneers of the massive open online course (MOOC) model in Europe. The School's online distance learning capabilities were put to the test when in-person classes were halted on 13 March to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Having honed its production and publication capabilities under trying circumstances, EPFL is bringing the benefits of its expertise to Morocco as part of [Excellence in Africa](#), a joint program with Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P), a young university located 50km north of Marrakesh. Students at UM6P can now access 41 MOOCs developed at EPFL free of charge, while teaching staff can plan classes, track students' progress and set assessments based on the course materials.

Moroccan universities, like their counterparts elsewhere, have been forced to shut their doors as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff at UM6P, where classroom teaching was suspended on 17 March, called on colleagues from EPFL to help get distance learning up and running as quickly as possible. "EPFL's MOOC teams, led by Patrick Jermann, executive director of the Center for Digital Education, pulled off a remarkable feat," said Jérôme Chenal, academic director of the Excellence in Africa program. "The team developed a [portal](#) and uploaded 41 MOOCs, while training local staff in Morocco remotely to administer the system. The entire process took just ten days from start to finish, and the platform opened to students on 6 April."

UM6P, which allowed Morocco's Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training to use its state-of-the-art facilities to film a series of educational video clips, plans to open up access to the MOOC platform to students at the country's other public engineering schools. "We have no doubt that digital education is the future," said Hicham El Habi, the secretary general of UM6P. "We're already part of the edX global online learning community. This latest project underscores our resolve to further the cause of education here in Morocco and across Africa."

Communiqué de presse

Looking to the future, the platform built by EPFL will host new MOOCs developed at UM6P and, later, at other African universities. In the longer term, UM6P could serve as a central hub, developing and publishing online courses for learners across the continent. “Our Excellence in Africa program has delivered tangible results more quickly than any of us expected,” says Martin Vetterli, president of EPFL. “The new platform will no doubt support the initiative’s other pillars: developing junior African faculty and mentoring 100 PhD students enrolled in African universities.”

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