

Readme

The format of this Guardian Award-nominated MOOC is a little different from other online courses you may have encountered so far. Central to the course are peer interactions, through which you will communicate, reflect upon, and improve your work together with your fellow learners, emulating the real-world research experience. Our approach represents a constructivist mode of learning, underpinned by the belief that every single student on the course has the capacity to positively enhance the programme. Given the vastly global and diverse composition of the student body, you will have the opportunity to interact with peers from different cultural and professional backgrounds around the world and learn from them and help them learn.

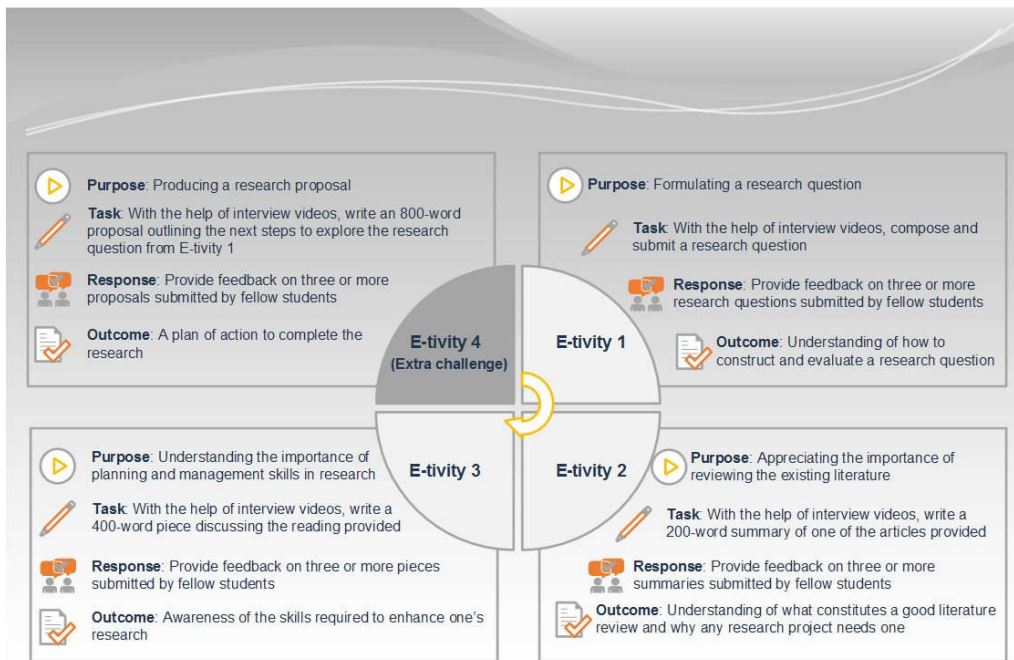
You will see videos nonetheless. The videos we have produced are a series of interviews with those undertaking academic research at various points in their careers. Those videos are there as another learning resource to support the discussions you will have with your colleagues.

The course consists of 4 e-tivities and it is anticipated to require 4 to 6 weeks to complete all four components.

- **What is an 'e-tivity'?**

E-tivity is a term coined by Professor Gilly Salmon (2002) to describe a framework for facilitating active learning in an online environment. Each e-tivity follows a format that clearly states to the students its **Purpose**, the **Task** at hand, the contribution or **Response** type, and the **Outcome**.

Below is a diagrammatic overview of the course. **In order to receive a Verified Certificate, participants will need to complete at least the first three e-tivities (all equally weighted).**



- **What does it mean to provide feedback?**

In each e-tivity, you will be asked to provide evaluations (i.e. **Response**) on the work of your peers. This is as important as your own **Task** submission. We will be using a Peer Review tool for this process, which will distribute at random submissions amongst the student body. In providing your evaluations on the validity of your peers' submissions, remember to be fair and balanced; you will be able to contribute to collective success.

- **What should I look for when evaluating a fellow student's submission?**

Given the nature of the subject and tasks of this course, we steer away from a pre-defined evaluation checklist. Instead, we use purposely-broad criteria here. Peer evaluation in this course consists of two parts:

First, it involves verifying whether the work at hand is a genuine attempt at the task (to be marked as '1') or gobbledygook (such as an incomplete text, irrelevant filler or spam; to be marked as '0').

Second, and more importantly, you are asked to provide a short comment. When you are making your comment, you should take into account whether and to what extent the work you are assigned to evaluate 'makes sense' to you. You may well be out of your field, but you are in a position to apply a qualitative judgement about the cogency of their project.

- **What if my work is criticised?**

Dealing with feedback can be a challenge for anyone – from those at the earliest stages of their academic journeys to esteemed professors. Sometimes it can be hard to hear that

the work you have dedicated yourself to has not been received well. Do not take it to heart. That can be difficult, we know, but feedback can make a valuable contribution to enhancing your work by encouraging you to reflect on your previous line of thinking. Please also watch the 'How to Work with Criticism' video below for some further thoughts on feedback.

One thing you can do, and we absolutely encourage you to do, is to make the most of the **Discussion Forums**. The forums are there for you to have a free-style discussion about each e-tivity task with your colleagues *before* you submit it. Testing the water before diving in, if you like, so you can have a go without consequence. You can 'try' as many times as you wish in the forums before you choose one to submit. It also constitutes a rich pool of examples, where you can benefit from reading how others go about their research.

Now you are ready for E-tivity 1!