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Unbundled Higher Education – exploring the potential impacts on learners and learning

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Global growth in digital education



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The use of Digital Education to support education and training is growing rapidly across the globe. Online learning is impacting on all education sectors and professional learning. Digital Technology is becoming ubiquitous in society and expectations are growing for use of digital technology in education.

Expected 13%
growth in CPD
online training,
within corporates
(RolandBerger)

262m students
in Higher Education by
2025
(up from 164m in 2009) OECD

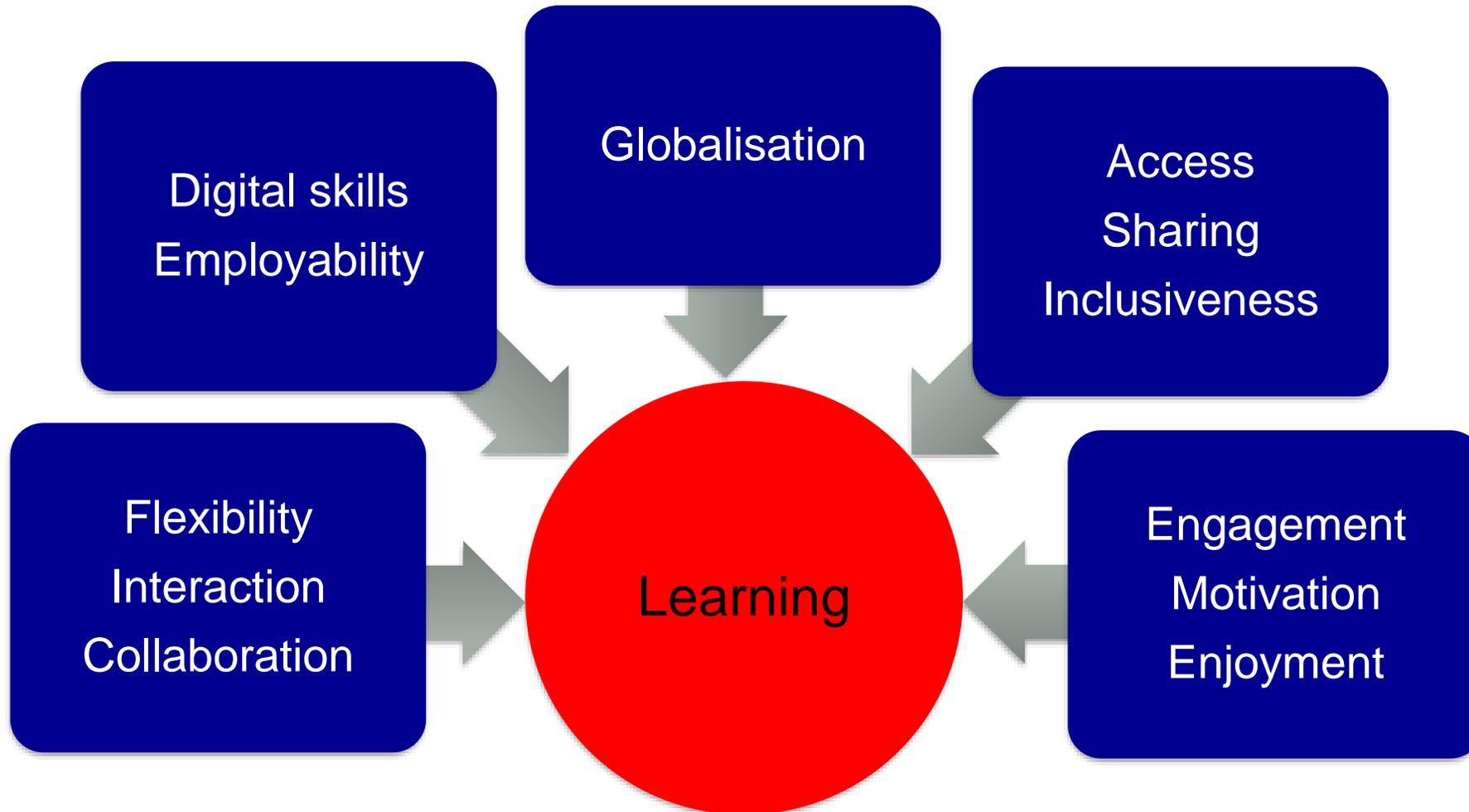
24% growth in smart
education and learning
market between 2015-2020
(Research and Markets)

Self-paced eLearning
grew 55% in India
2010-2015 (Ambient
Insight)

Opportunities provided by digital technology



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Literature on the impact of digital technology demonstrates the value it can have to support learning. Research also shows that digital education can enhance learning outcomes.

Digital exclusion

Inequality

Technostress

Technocentricity

Digital literacies

Literature demonstrates how digital technology can have unintended consequences and create problems.

Supporting learners studying in multiple modes



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Many universities are now catering for students studying in multiple modes: campus-based, hybrid and fully online, at a variety of levels of study.

Campus-based blended learning
(Undergraduate; Postgraduate)

Hybrid mode for work-based learning
(Continuous Professional Development)

Online Distance Learning (courses, modules
and programmes)



Learning spaces

Online courses

Learning content

“An appropriate mix of face-to-face and online learning activities, using traditional instruction, guided support and independent learning, underpinned by the use of digital technologies and designed using strong pedagogical principles, to support learner engagement, flexibility and success.”

In-room technology

Digital literacy

(Morris & Laurillard, 2015)

Curriculum design

Supporting campus-based and work-based blended learning



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In-room
multimedia
capture



At-desk / mobile
media creation



Interactive and
collaborative
tools



Flexible and
technology
enabled learning
spaces



Mobile tools and
apps

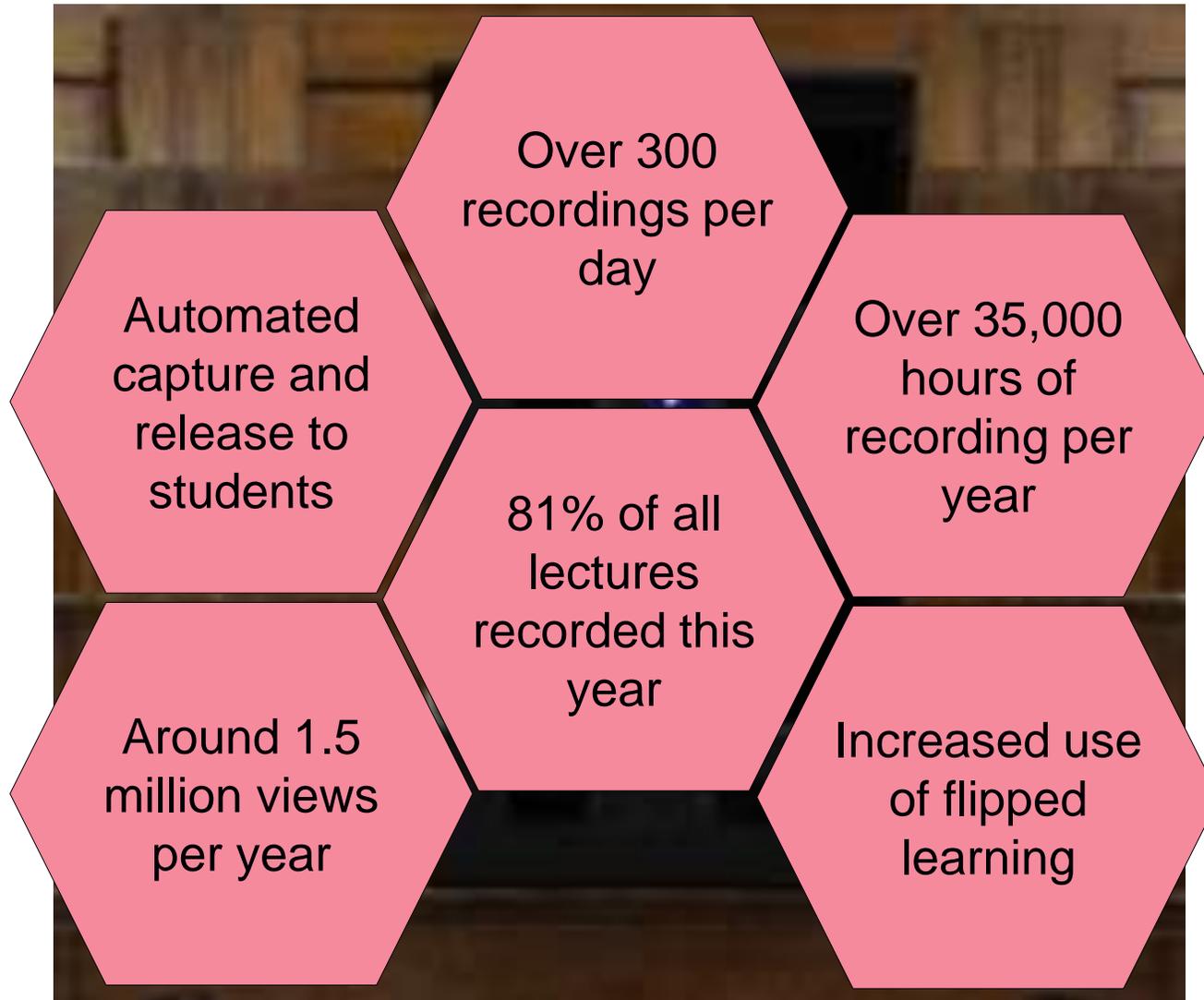


Digital Education
Service

Video recordings to support student learning



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Usage of lecture capture system



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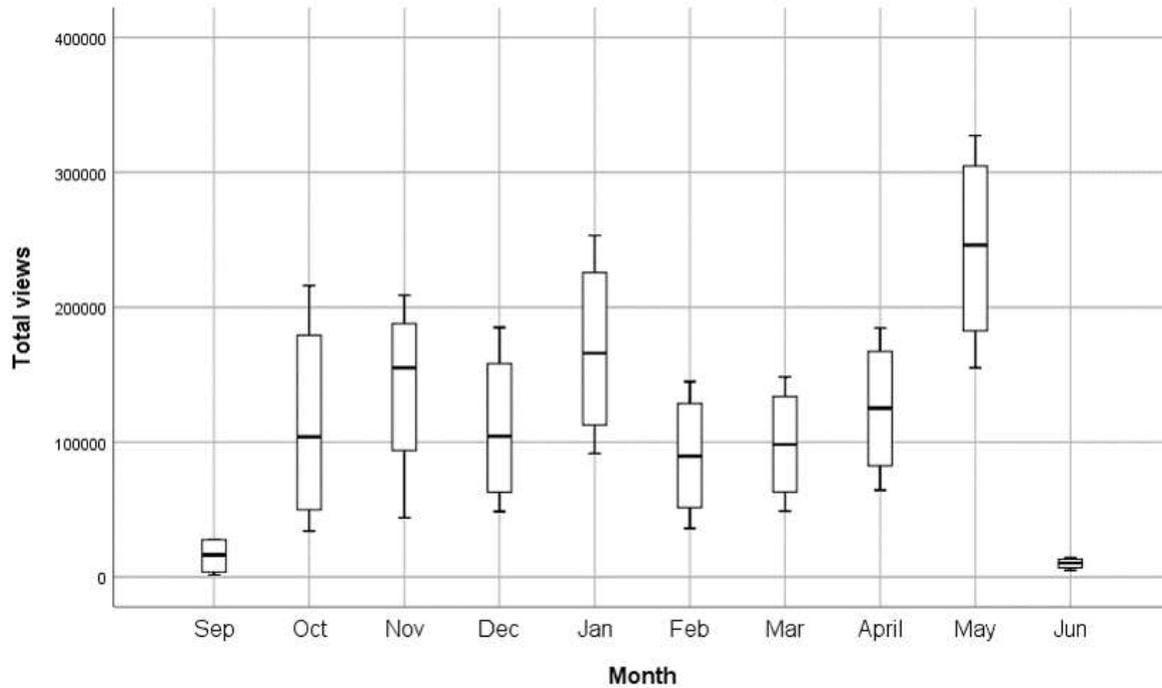


Figure 1. Lecture capture views per month over a 4 year period (2014- 2018)

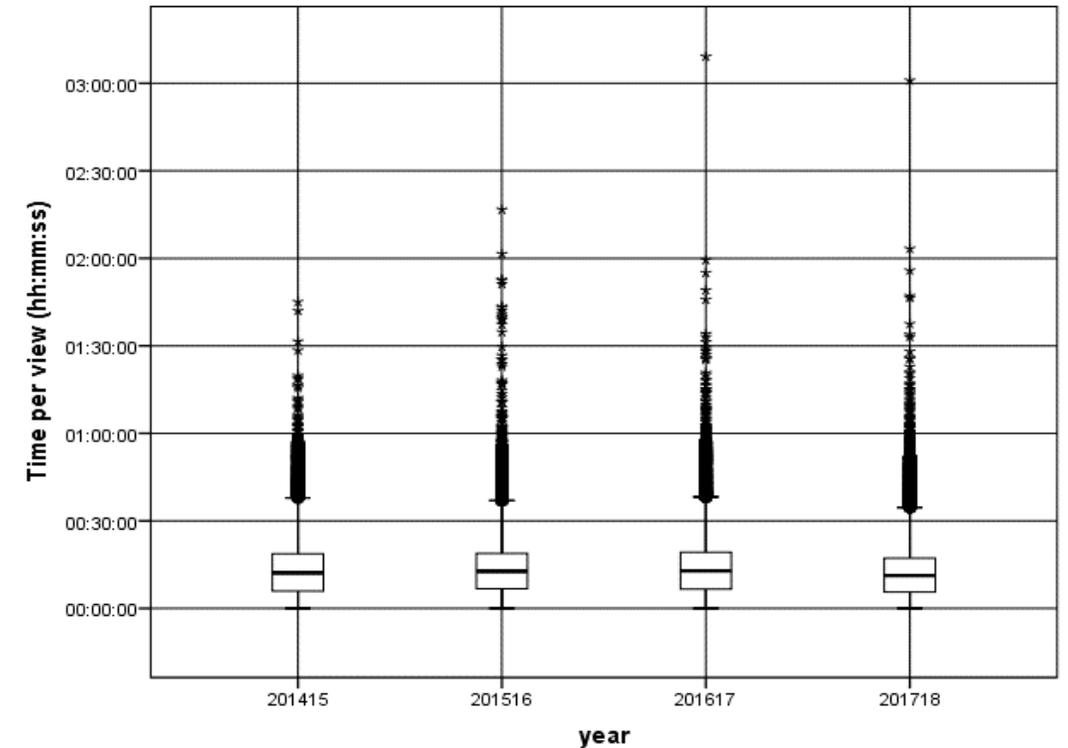


Figure 2. Time spent watching content per view per student each year over 4 year period (2014-2018).

Student usage and perceptions of lecture recording



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76% of students use recordings for note-taking after lectures

74% of students use recordings for writing assessments

85% of students use recordings to catch-up after missing lectures

“Recording lectures and then putting them on the VLE should be compulsory for every school within the university.”

“Record seminars not just lectures. Would be useful for revision near exams as not possible to write notes for everything said in seminars.”

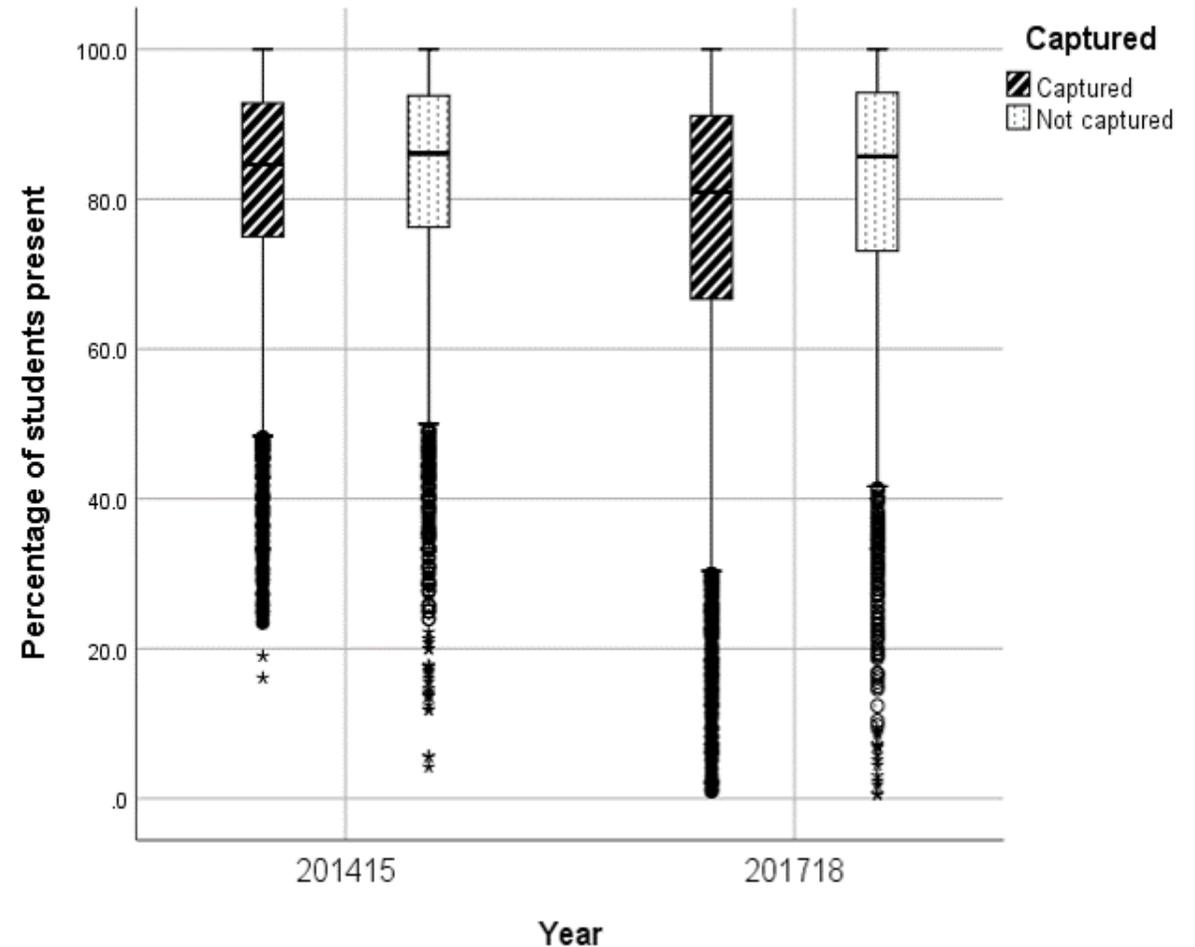
“Flip the classroom - if most lectures are recorded and change little from year-to-year, why can't students watch the lecture beforehand and use the time in class to broaden their understanding with the lecturer.”

Impact of lecture capture on attendance



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Our research demonstrates a small but significant reduction in attendance when lectures are recorded, but attendance is above 80% on average.



Mediasite supporting active learning

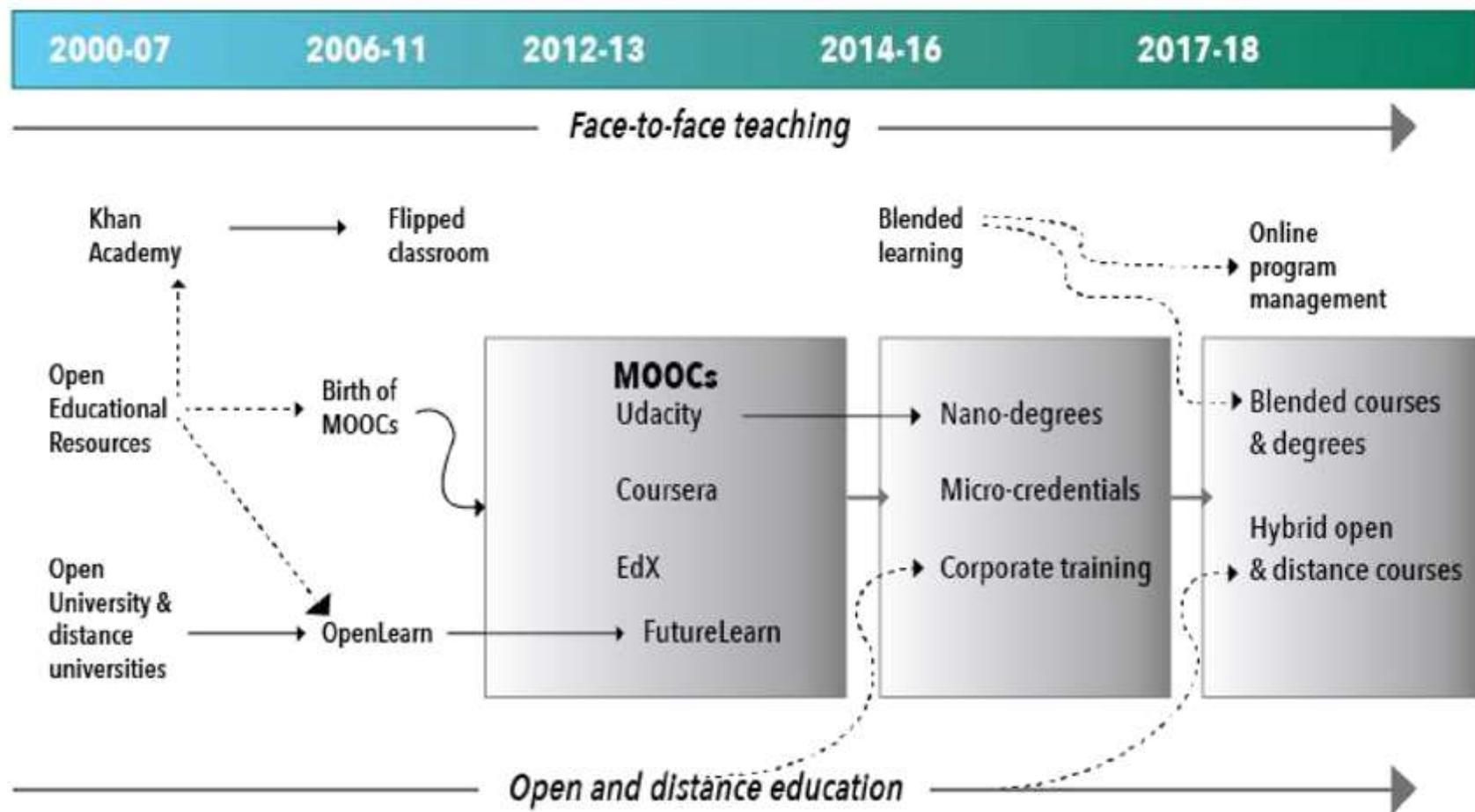


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Image CC by Jenko, FlickrR

Evolution of online education



Adapted from:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Timeline_of_MOOC_and_open_education_development_with_organisational_efforts_in_the_areas.png



Figure 1: Current trends (Sharples, 2018)

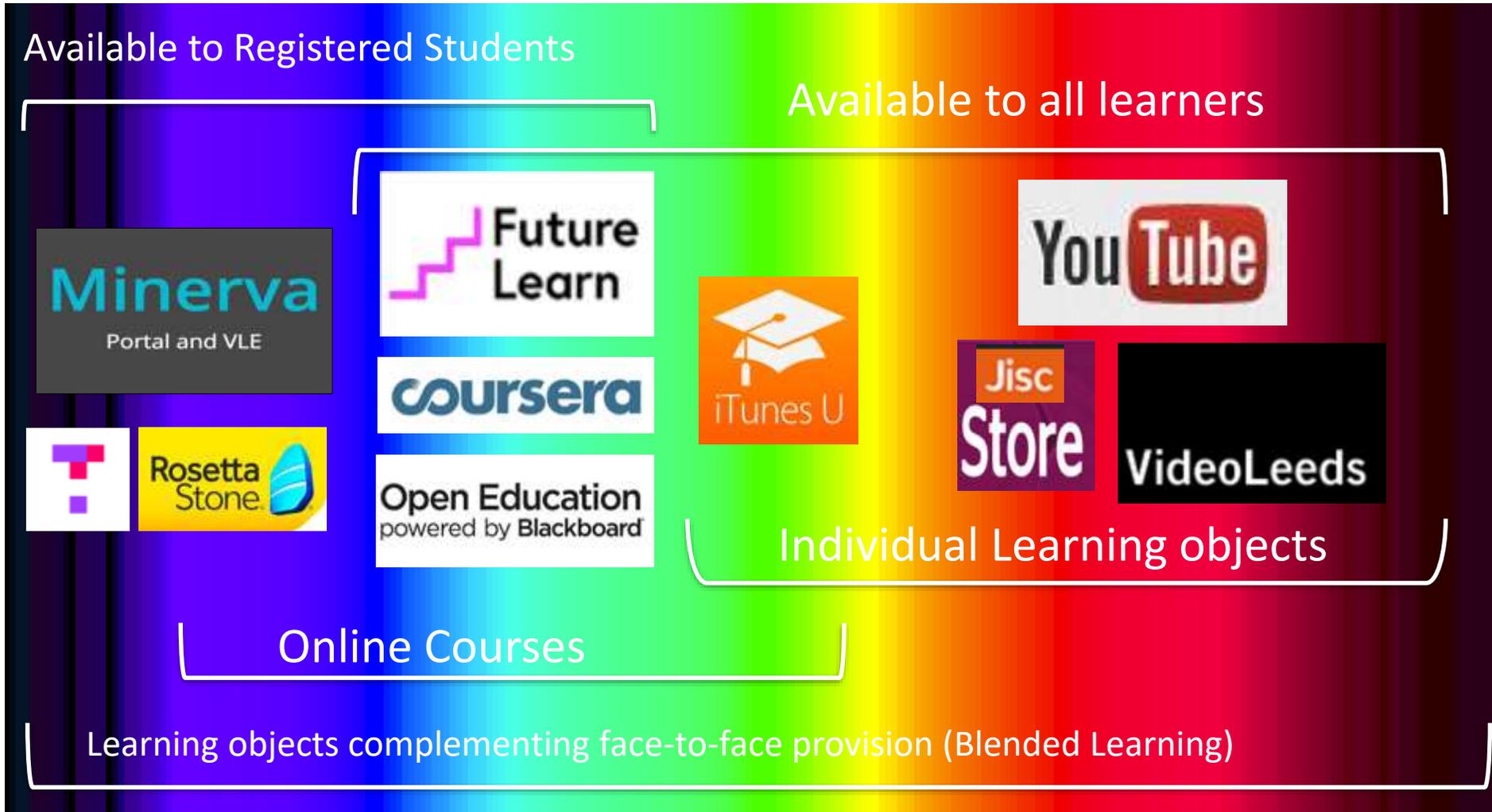
Permission was given by the author to use Figure 1 in a CC BY-NC publication.

Digital ecosystems at Leeds



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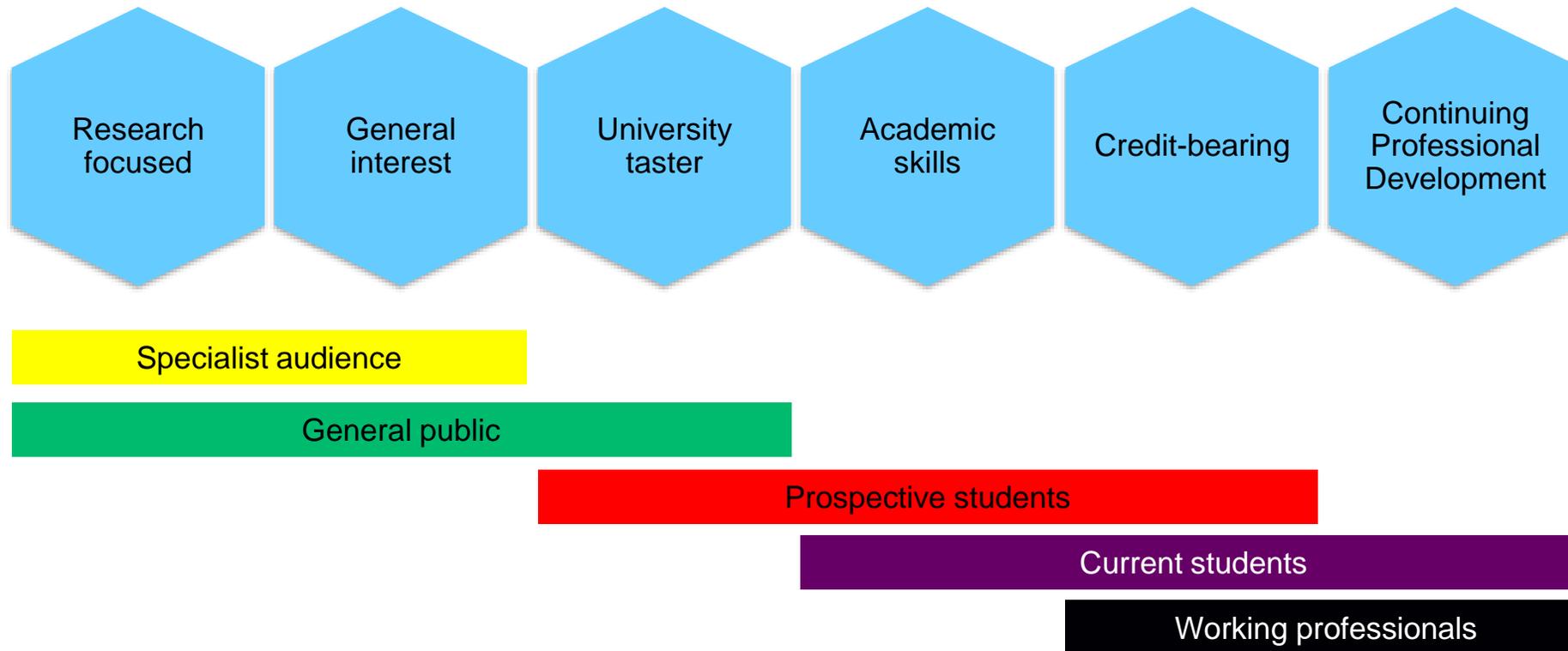
The University of Leeds provides learning resources, content, courses, modules and programmes via a wide range of digital education channels, to support a flexible and inclusive student education experience.



Supporting a diverse population of learners



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The University of Leeds offers online courses on a range of online learning platforms to a diverse population of learners.



Leeds online courses in numbers

MOOC producer since 2013

59 courses on FutureLearn

3 courses on Coursera

Over 1.2 million enrolments

729 runs of online courses (FL)

5 credit-bearing courses (UG and PGT)

>21% completion of 90% course (FL)

93% overall satisfaction (FL)

Produced *10,000 Women* on Coursera for Goldman Sachs Foundation



Older learners more likely to complete our courses

Experienced online learners more likely to complete our courses

Better qualified learners more likely to complete our courses

32% of participants on MOOCs make at least **ONE** comment

Those who are **better educated** and have **taken an online course before** are more likely to make more comments.

Commenters post an average of **6 comments** per MOOC

Instructor contributions are mostly social, followed by teaching and cognitive contributions (CoI framework)

Learners engage highly with instructor posts in online courses

The Unbundled University: Researching emerging models in an unequal landscape

Key research questions

Where does the discourse of unbundling come from and how is it used by the research literature, the policy literature, the media and the interviewees?

How do different stakeholders in HE understand unbundling and rebundling?

How is unbundling happening in practice in SA and in England?

How does the intersection of unbundling, marketisation and digital technology change the pedagogies available in the HE system?

Which aspects of pedagogy and provision can be / are being unbundled and/ or marketised?

What is the nature of the educational provision currently available in UK/SA HE at the intersection of marketisation/unbundling/digital technology?

The focus of the project: The Unbundled University



Elements of Higher Education provision being unbundled and rebundled



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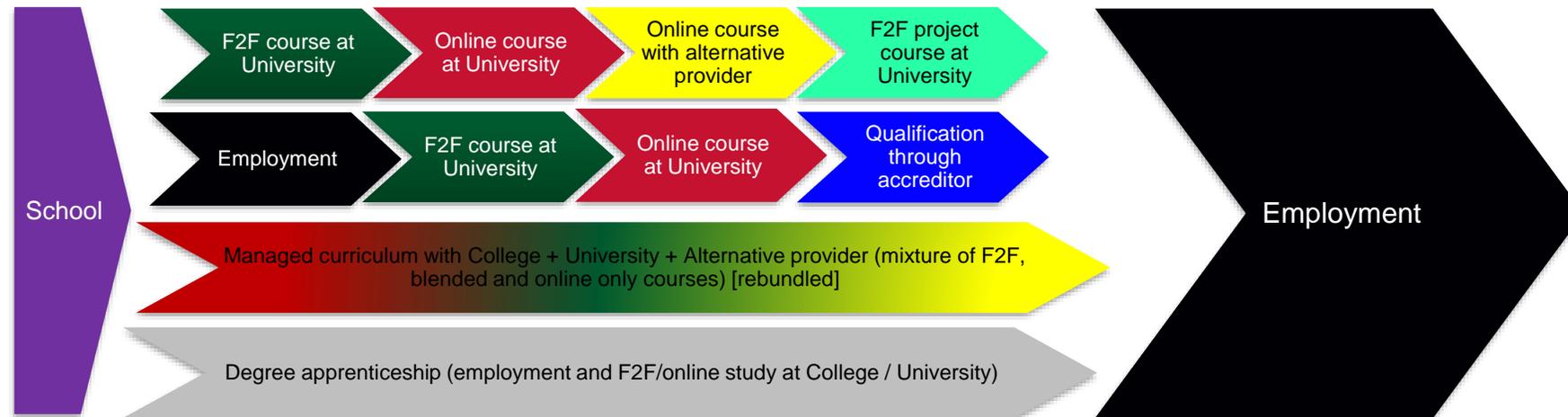
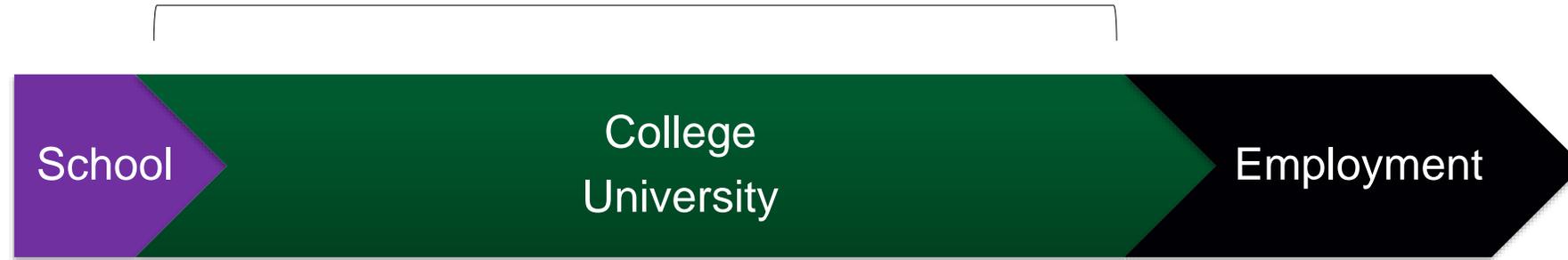


Unbundling scenarios



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Higher Education





Benefits



- Access
- Flexibility
- Inclusiveness
- Student-focused
- Market-led costs

Risks



- Fragmented curriculum
- Quality / regulation
- Misalignment with employer requirements
- Cannabilitation of HE sector
- Further inequality

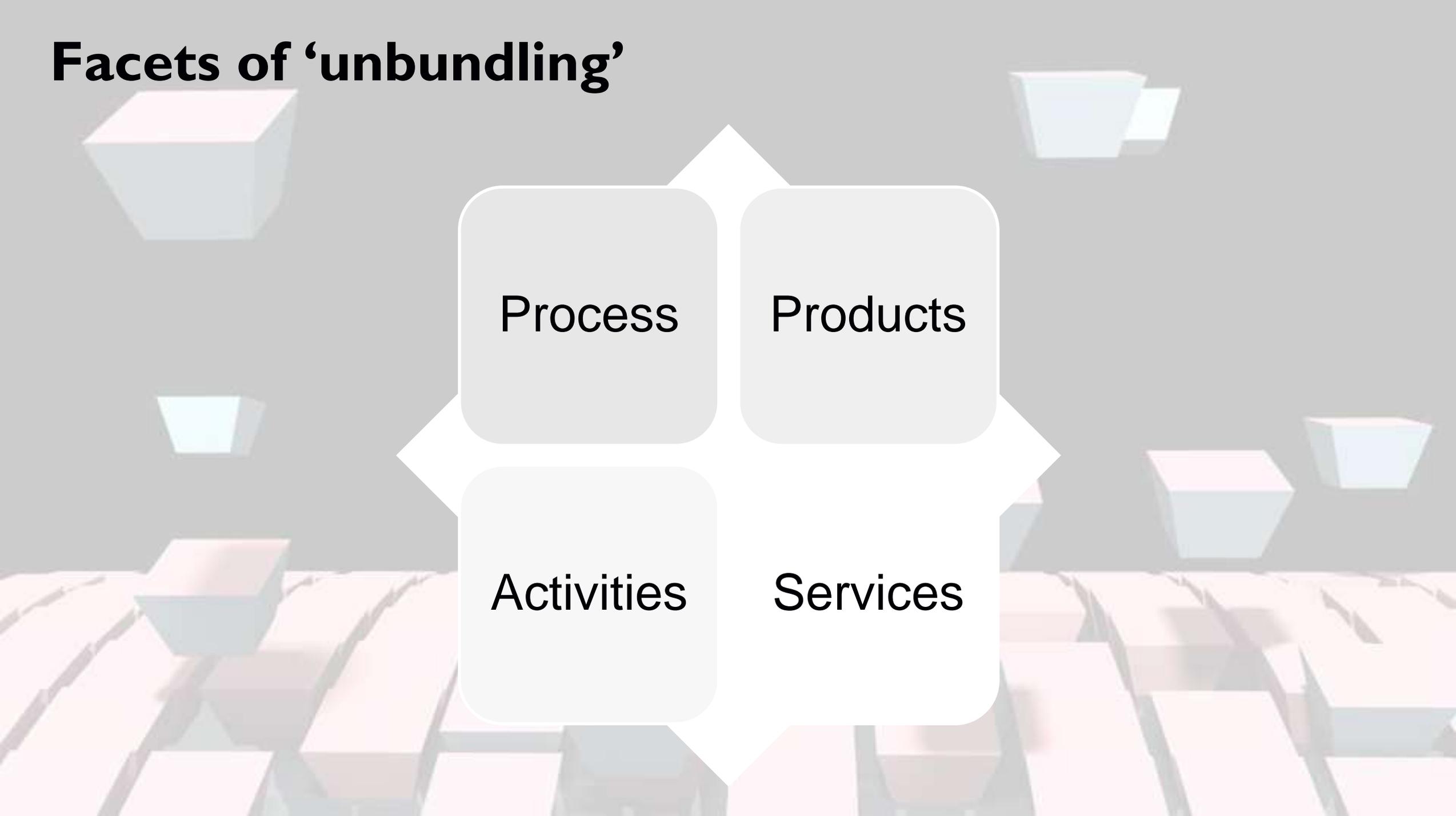
Facets of 'unbundling'

Process

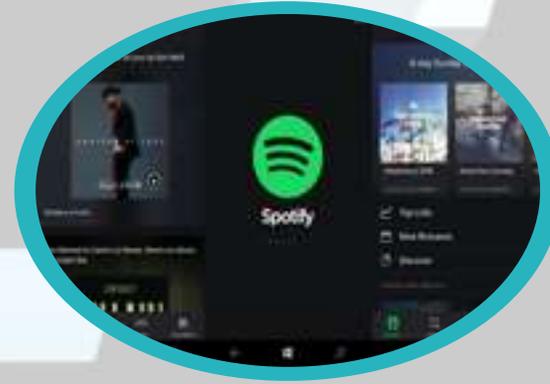
Products

Activities

Services



Unbundling: process



Unbundling is the process of disaggregating educational provision into its component parts likely for delivery by multiple stakeholders, often using digital approaches and which can result in rebundling.

An example of unbundled educational provision could be a degree programme offered as individual standalone modules available for credit via an online platform, to be studied at the learners' pace, in any order, on a pay-per-module model, with academic content, tutoring and support being offered by the awarding university, other universities and a private company.

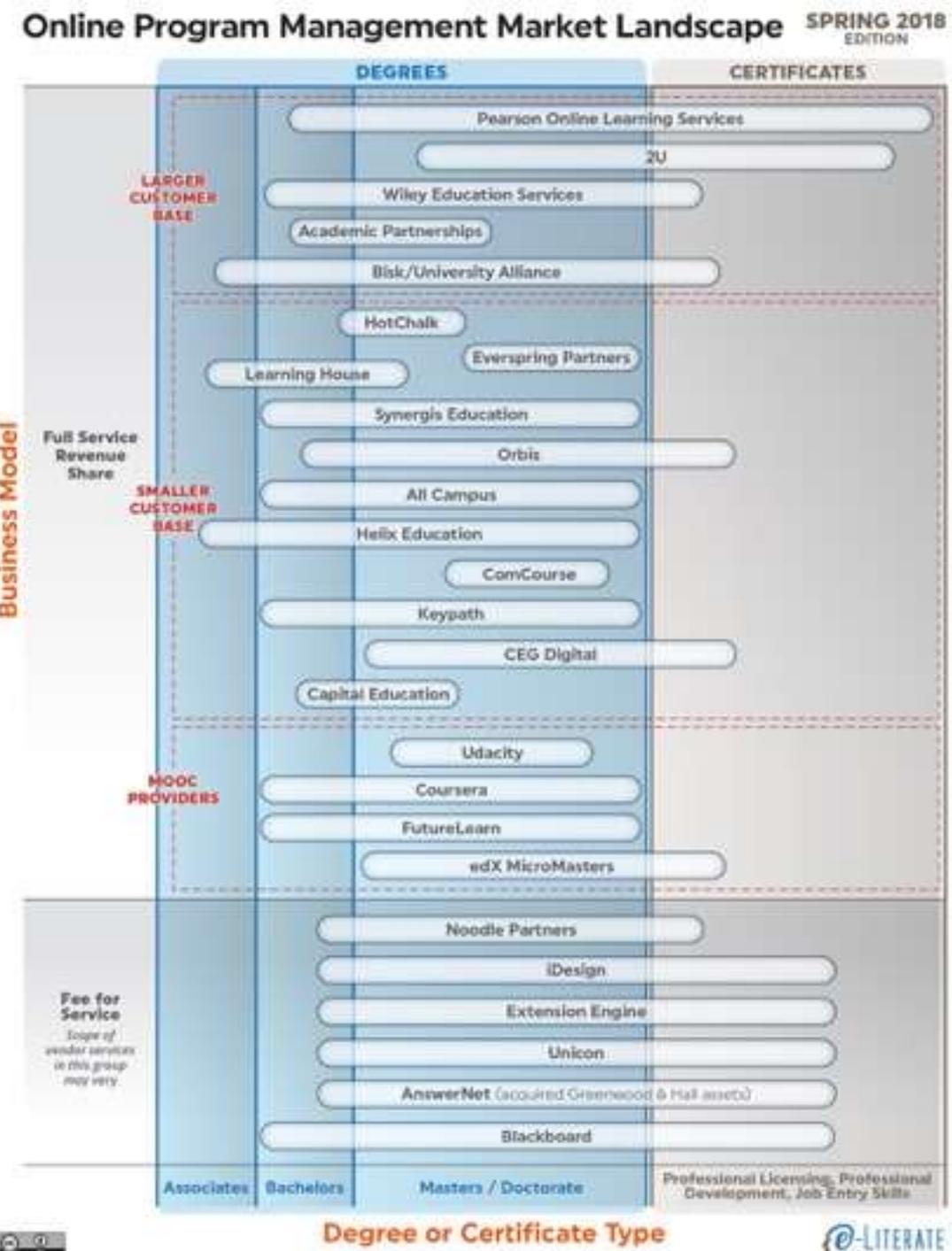
Internal unbundling – university unbundles L&T provision (e.g. standalone modules) and offers content to learners

Service providers – university procures services from a company to offer elements of the ‘bundle’ or services to deliver the provision

Partnerships

A – partnerships with platform providers (MOOC providers) – university partners with a platform provider to host university courses

B – partnerships with OPMs – university partners with a company to offer modules, programmes and services (full service or some services)



Unbundling: micro-credentials

- In the UK, some universities are accepting standalone credit-bearing courses as accredited prior learning ('MOOC to degree'), but not widespread and locally owned. There are discussions about introducing national micro-credential standards
- New Zealand has a nationally agreed system for accreditation of micro-credentials
- Some universities in Europe have 'virtual exchange' programmes where students study MOOCs for credit from other universities
- The OER university is a consortium of universities offering alternative models for stackable credentials e.g. pay for assessment only (<https://oeru.org/>)

Unbundled degrees on FutureLearn



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Categories ▾ Courses ▾ Using FutureLearn ▾

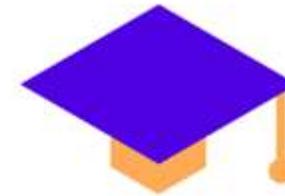
Search online courses



Sign in

Degrees

Learn flexibly and earn a postgraduate degree from a leading university. Complete pay-as-you-go programs and build to a Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma or a Masters degree. You can change the qualification you aim for as you study.



[How Degrees work](#)

[See all Degrees](#)

How a degree on FutureLearn works



FIND A DEGREE

Choose from a range of subjects and levels – from graduate certificates to full masters degrees.

+



LEARN FLEXIBLY ONLINE

You can pay for each program in the degree as you go, making it possible to gain a qualification in a flexible and affordable way.

+



PASS THE ASSESSMENTS

Complete online assignments or take in-person exams to get feedback and demonstrate your understanding.

=



EARN A DEGREE

Complete all programs and pass all assessments, to gain an internationally recognised qualification.

Unbundled online courses at Leeds



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Causes of Human Disease

Explore what causes human disease, through this flexible program of online courses. Earn 10 credits from the University of Leeds.

5 courses

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Discovering Science

Discover the fascinating world of everyday chemistry and earn 10 credits from the University of Leeds.

5 courses

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Environmental Challenges

Change how you think about the environment, by exploring how human society interacts with the natural world, through this flexible program of online courses. Earn 10 credits from the University of Leeds.

5 courses

courseera

Explore

What do you want to learn?

Managing Major Engineering Projects Specialization

Develop a Career in Engineering Project Management. Master the skills required to lead large engineering projects.

Enrolled

Starts Aug 10

Apply for Financial Aid

About This Specialization

Major engineering projects can positively affect the lives of many people and have long-lasting impact on the economy. They are also characterized by vast complexity and carry risks such as running over schedule, coming in over budget and failing to deliver expected benefits.

The University of Leeds offers standalone credit-bearing courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level on FutureLearn and Coursera.

These are used by campus-based Leeds students and external learners.

Fieldwork



Interviews

Policy-makers

Edtech developers

HE leaders

Private company CEOs



Focus Groups

Academics



Surveys

Students

Desk research

Universities & OPMs

UK

166 universities

- Russell Group
- Post-1992



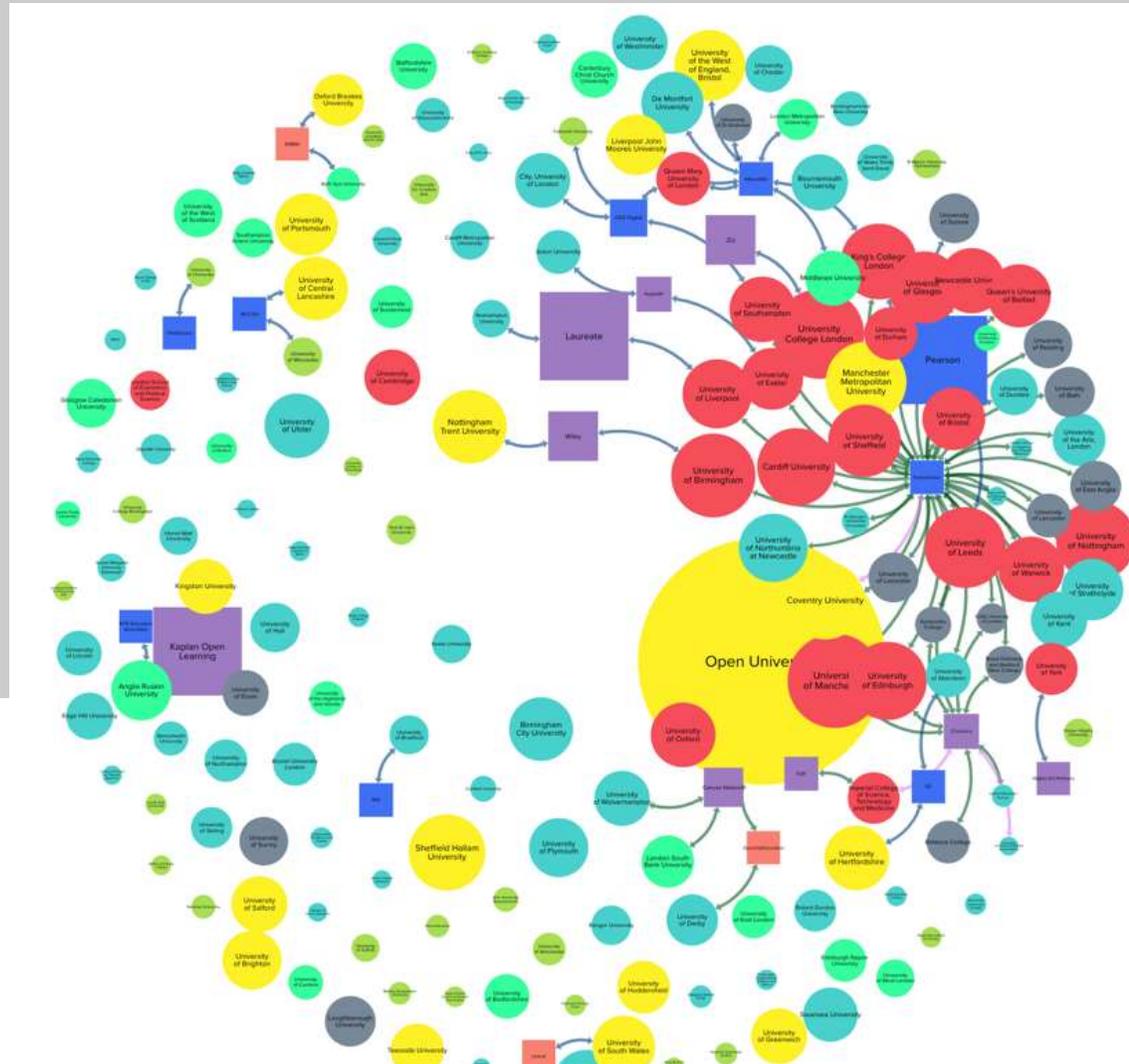
South Africa

20 universities

- Historically advantaged (elite)
- Historically disadvantaged
- Historically advantaged with historically disadvantaged sites (mergers)



Mapping partnerships in UK Higher Education



Partnerships between universities and private companies to create online learning courses are focussed around world rankings. Some vocational and technical universities serving specific communities of learners may be left behind.

- Circle: University
- 1994 Group
- GuildHE
- MillionPlus
- Non-aligned
- Russell Group
- University Alliance
- Square: OPM/Project
- Private Company founded in UK
- Private Company founded in US
- Project founded in EU
- Connections
- Partnership to provide MOOCs
- Partnership to provide Online Programmes (OPs)
- Partnership to provide MOOCs & OPs

Student Survey

Online surveys (formerly BOS)
Powerful, flexible online surveys



SAMPLE

- Russell Group
- Elite

- Russell Group
- Elite

- University Alliance
- Post 1992

- Non-aligned
- Post 1992



50



50



50



50

May-June 2018: face-to-face surveys, 4 institutions, 200 students

Findings from student survey data

Students had high personal ownership of, and access to, digital devices, and had received training, and felt prepared to use digital devices for learning

Postgraduate students were significantly more likely to have heard of online education than undergraduate students

Students who work full time (both UGs and PGs) were significantly more likely to have taken a free online course

Strong motivating factors to take an online course/ degree are practical (reduced cost and less travelling time) rather than pedagogic (online community and development of digital skills)

Students prefer an on-campus experience (but these were all contact-mode students): they seek the social learning experience, value networking and exposure to pedagogical role-models

Potential impacts UK HE landscape

Significant shifts in the demographic balance of students engaging with universities over the coming years;

Smaller population of campus-based undergraduate students;

Increased diversity amongst UK students;

Greater numbers of international postgraduate students (including a larger fully online population);

Greater number of professional learners undertaking sub-degree qualifications, including micro-credentials and continuing professional development, at a number of levels and using a variety of modes;

Wider range of qualification provided by universities, including growth in degree apprenticeships, and degrees of variable length.

Policy implications

In the UK context, as the number of universities developing online education grows, there are emerging issues as a result of unbundling:

- Universities need to consider their strategy for online education, in consultation with staff and students, including a clear approach to unbundling.
- Government should consider the barriers to use of unbundled credit between universities, through credit transfer and credit accumulation policies.
- The sector should consider the impacts of this approach on all student groups, including those currently struggling to participate.
- Digital Literacy – there is a lack of digital literacy within the academic and professional staff communities in public universities; this is limiting the potential growth of online education and use of digital technology.

Summary

The prevalence of unbundling is rapidly growing in the UK HE context.

The private sector is very active in this area, and relationships with UK HEIs are growing, evolving and shifting rapidly.

Academic staff have mixed views about the value of unbundling, and express concern about the growing marketisation of the HE sector.

Students have growing awareness of online learning opportunities and expect lower cost for online study, but still favour a campus-based education experience.

Digital education

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2. Goshtasbpour F, Swinnerton B, Morris NP. Look who's talking: Exploring instructors' contributions to Massive Open Online Courses. *British Journal of Educational Technology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12787>
3. Swinnerton BJ, Hotchkiss S, Morris NP. 2017. Comments in MOOCs: who is doing the talking and does it help?. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*. **33**(1), pp. 51-64

Unbundling project

1. Swartz R, Ivancheva M, Czerniewicz L, Morris NP. 2019. Between a rock and a hard place: Dilemmas regarding the purpose of public universities in South Africa. *Higher Education*. **77**(4), pp. 567-583
2. Czerniewicz L, Mogliacci RJ, Waljii S, Swartz R, Ivancheva M, Swinnerton BJ, Morris N. 2018. Negotiating the new normal: How senior decision makers in higher education perceive marketisation in the sector.. HERDSA Annual Conference, 2019 *Research and Development in Higher Education: [Re] Valuing Higher Education* HERDSA **41**
3. Swinnerton B, Coop T, Ivancheva M, Czerniewicz L, Morris NP, Swartz R, Walji S, Cliff A/ 2019. The Unbundled University: Researching emerging models in an unequal landscape. In *Mobility, Data and Learner Agency in Networked Learning*. Editors: Bonderup Dohn N, Jandric P, Ryberg T, de Laat M. Springer



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<https://www.facebook.com/unbundledHE/>

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