

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN

23. Online and distance learning courses – Current provision and plans to increase

The Hon. Member for Onchan (Mr Callister) to ask the Minister for Education and Children:

What online and distance learning courses are delivered by his Department and what consideration has been given to increasing provision?

The President: Question 23, Hon Member for Onchan, Mr Callister.

Mr Callister: Thank you, Mr President.

I would like to ask the Minister for Education and Children what online and distance learning courses are delivered by his Department and what consideration has been given to increasing the provision?

The President: The Minister for Education, Mr Cregeen.

The Minister for Education and Children (Mr Cregeen): Thank you, Mr President.

UCM currently provide a range of distance learning courses and modules. These are accessed through the Gemini Portal and through the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment Platform. Examples of subjects currently offered at full distance learning are: the European Computer Driving Licence, which is accredited by the BCS with attendance to the UCM for final examination; digital marketing accredited through Chester University at Levels 4, 5 and 6; work based and integrated studies, a range of modules through distance and blended learning at Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 – this includes our MBA. Examples of subjects include, but are not limited to: managing and leading people, practical marketing and communication. This is effective for the Island, with the benefit for both the use of distance learning resources and the value that is added through face-to-face tuition.

In addition to this schools also use blended learning modules, meaning that activities are online or using technology with other aspects being face-to-face. Schools and the UCM also access content from a wide variety of sources. For example, itslearning, Google Apps for Education, iTunes U, FutureLearn, Vocabulary.com, Yacapaca, GCSEPod, BBC Bitesize, Khan Academy, MyMaths.

In the future UCM will be developing its online content plus reviewing existing packages that can be purchased to broaden our offer. This mode of study will provide increased opportunities and flexibility for our lifelong learning.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Supplementary, Mr Callister.

Mr Callister: Thank you, Mr President.

Some of those descriptions sound like an entry level at school, not professional qualifications.

Having spent several years undertaking distance learning myself I fully understand the benefits of distance learning compared to sitting at a desk at the college after a full day in the office. Would the Minister therefore agree with me that the Isle of Man is missing out on a vital revenue stream by not running more professional courses from here in the Isle of Man and with more local teachers on hand to give the support?

The President: Minister for Education to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I think in my answer, I did say that we are providing a number of courses and we will be reviewing this as part of our lifelong learning.

The President: Supplementary, Ms Edge.

Ms Edge: Thank you, Mr President.

The Minister has just described very limited courses that the college are offering online. A number of the items he has just mentioned are purely software resources that teachers utilise. Can the Minister confirm that he will look at introducing further courses rather than describe software resources?

A Member: Hear, hear.

The President: Minister.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr President.

I thought I did at the end, I said that we were going to review it as part of our lifelong learning process.