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The University of Tokyo

The University of Tokyo to provide online courses through Coursera

The University of Tokyo (Todai) has signed an agreement to deliver courses through online education provider Coursera.

Coursera is a rapidly-growing Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) provider that offers free online courses to all and certificates on course completion. Other members of this leading provider include world-class universities such as Columbia, Princeton and Stanford.

Partnering with Coursera allows the university to engage with a much broader audience, and also has potential benefits for the university. Executive Vice President for Public Relations, Dr. Masako Egawa said, “We are very excited to join Coursera and to open up the University of Tokyo’s scholarship to people all around the world. We already receive students from more than 100 countries, but Coursera’s online platform will enable us to reach out to the many students who cannot make it to Japan. We also hope that this will attract more international students, further promoting internationalization of the university and creating a truly global campus.”

In the first such effort by a Japanese university, Todai will trial the provision of lectures through the Coursera platform as a means of reaching a broad, international audience. From autumn 2013, two English-language courses by Todai faculty members will reach many tens of thousands of users around the globe through Coursera. Professor Kiichi Fujiwara (Graduate Schools of Law and Politics and Director of the Northeast Asian Security Unit at the Policy Alternatives Research Institute) will teach “Conditions of War and Peace.” Professor Hitoshi Murayama (Director of the Kavli Institute for the Mathematics and Physics of the Universe) will teach “From the Big

Bang to Dark Energy.” In addition to studying the learning process and outcomes of course participants, this will enable the university to trial and evaluate the performance of the “flipped classroom,” which combines online lectures with face-to-face learning.

This is not the University of Tokyo’s first foray into online learning. Today OpenCourseWare has offered free online access to the university’s lectures since 2005, but Coursera’s platform will additionally allow the university to provide access to interactive education. Vice President Shunya Yoshimi, who has been driving efforts at the University of Tokyo as Head of the Education Planning Office, said “We are delighted to have this opportunity to offer courses taught by the University of Tokyo faculty to people around the world. While we have been making our educational materials available through OpenCourseWare and iTunes U, we believe that the additional educational support provided by Massive Open Online Courses such as Coursera’s platform will prove of great benefit to learners worldwide.”

Coursera is a social entrepreneurship company established in January 2012 by Associate Professor Andrew Ng and Professor Daphne Koller of Stanford University, and provides learners around the world with the opportunity to learn for free through online courses from the world’s leading universities. An ever-increasing number of global top-class universities have joined since Coursera’s launch in April 2012, and currently 2.5 million people are learning from over 200 courses provided by 33 universities from the United States and around the world. Including the University of Tokyo, twenty-nine universities are joining Coursera on this occasion.

Professor Koller said “I’m delighted to welcome the University of Tokyo as our newest consortium member. We are very privileged to be able to work with the University of Tokyo, who will be offering some amazing classes to students everywhere, and therefore opening up access to education to people who really need it.”

Coursera press release:

http://www2.marketwire.com/mw/release_html_b1?release_id=988276