

“Well I wouldn’t start from here if I were you.” Designing a modern distance learning university

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Existing distance learning universities are facing competition from new online education providers. How do staff within these universities respond to the challenges?

In this participatory session, modelled after the format of a Choose Your Own Adventure™, you are in an education support role within a fictional distance learning university (though based on a real one, to preserve its anonymity all place names will only be referred to by an abbreviation). This university (“The OU”) has been a successful distance learning university for 50 years in a European country (“the UK”) but now needs to adapt to a changing landscape of providers. You will be faced with a series of challenges to which you will respond via a menti voting system. Each response will take you closer, or further away from, your goal of ensuring the survival of your university.

This session aims to present many of the challenges distance education providers, provide an opportunity to discuss opinions about the role of online provision, and perhaps come up with some solutions that could be implemented at a real distance learning universities. Knowledge of distance learning universities isn’t necessary; an outside perspective is, in fact, very helpful.