



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH



News Release

Scots' Yes-No vote is focus of free online course

The constitutional future of Scotland and the UK forms the basis of a new university course that places learners at the heart of the Referendum debate.

The six-week long online course, which begins today (25 August), involves a mix of teaching styles, including video presentations, online debates and role-play exercises.

The University of Edinburgh course is free and open to anyone with access to the internet. No prior knowledge of the subject is needed.

Each week there will be a live-streamed Question Hour with a panel of experts. Regular opinion polls will be held, to see how the course is affecting the views of those taking part.

The course is the latest in a series of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) being offered by the University, in conjunction with FutureLearn, the social learning platform. More than 900,000 people have signed up for Edinburgh MOOCs since their launch in July 2012.

Towards Scottish Independence? Understanding the Referendum is led by three of Scotland's foremost political academics – Professors Charlie Jeffery, Dr Alan Convery and Professor Nicola McEwen.

It provides learners with background information on why the vote is taking place, along with discussions of the Yes and No cases. Learners can analyse the final few weeks of the debate, follow events at the polls on 18 September and examine the implications of the result.

Professor Charlie Jeffery, of the University of Edinburgh's School of Social and Political Science, said: "We will place learners at the heart of the Referendum question by examining arguments for and against independence, with lively debate guided by University academics.

"We will also ensure a distinct international dimension, by examining implications for other nations and regions whose populations have expressed desire for greater autonomy, including Catalonia, Flanders and Quebec."

Ranked among the top universities in the world

The University currently offers 16 MOOCs. Topics covered in these higher education standard courses include *The Discovery of the Higgs boson*, an introduction to particle physics based on the work of University of Edinburgh scientist Professor Peter Higgs. Other Edinburgh MOOCs include *Equine Nutrition*, *Football: More than a Game* and *Warhol*, which studies the work of the celebrated Pop art exponent.

FutureLearn is a social learning platform that provides free, online courses from world-class universities. Its 38 British and international university partners work with three renowned cultural organisations – the British Library, British Council and the British Museum – and the National Film and Television School to offer quality courses worldwide.

Learners can sign up for the new course at www.futurelearn.com and will be able to join the discussion at any point during the next six weeks.

For further information, please contact:

Ranald Leask, Press and PR Office
Tel +44 (0)131 651 4357 or +44 (0)7805 609264
E-mail ranald.leask@ed.ac.uk