

Leading universities will put thousands of free courses online in what has been called a revolution in higher education. Members of the Russell Group, including Bristol, Warwick and St Andrews universities, will announce today that they have joined the Open University in the venture. It will give free access to top academics and a taste of courses for which students are paying up to £9,000 a year in fees, raising questions about the future of campus-based education. World-renowned universities in the United States have pioneered free online courses, allowing potentially unlimited numbers of people from developing economies to study with an institution thousands of miles away. The platforms that host such content have all, until now, been American, but the Open University is leading the project to set up a rival British company called FutureLearn. Courses will be free, but it will be for universities to decide whether to allow virtual students to sit exams, accrue credits and gain a qualification. On the FutureLearn website people will be able to search by institution or subject area to see what is available. They will have a lecturer, be able to access written, audio and visual content and will learn by participating in discussion forums with other online students.

(Fonte: The Times 14-12-2012)