

Free COVID-19 online course relaunches to learners worldwide

March 30 2020, by Murray MacKay



Imperial College London

J-IDEA

Abdul Latif Jameel Institute for Disease and Emergency Analytics

NOW AVAILABLE ON COURSERA

**SCIENCE MATTERS:
LET'S TALK ABOUT COVID-19**

www.imperial.ac.uk/j-idea @Imperial_JIDEA

Credit: Coursera

Imperial researchers and Coursera have partnered to offer a free Massively Open Online Course explaining the science behind coronavirus.

Reaching over 68,000 learners and attracting over 1.2 million pageviews, the course, "[Science Matters: Let's talk about COVID-19](#)", features experts from Abdul Latif Jameel Institute for Disease and Emergency Analytics (J-IDEA) and the MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease

Analysis (MRC Centre) who have been working on modeling the epidemic, estimating the epidemic size, transmissibility and severity since the first confirmed cases.

The course, currently the most popular launched on Coursera in 2020, provides updates on the current state of the epidemic while also explaining the epidemiological and public health principles that underpin the work of Imperial's world-leading researchers. Content is being developed in real-time as more information on the outbreak becomes available.

What does the course focus on?

Online learning partner Coursera are hosting the course, which contains video interviews with leading experts on a variety of key topics including:

- Basic Reproduction Number (R_0) of an infection
- Case Fatality Rate: Why it varies and why that matters
- Community participation and the role of social media
- Economics of an outbreak
- Emergency preparedness and the role of health systems

Professor Helen Ward, Director of Education at the School of Public Health and part of J-IDEA at Imperial, said: "Since we first launched Science Matters in February, the number of recorded cases of COVID-19 and deaths have grown exponentially. Today around one in three people in the world is under some kind of lockdown in an attempt to slow the spread. These restrictions are having a dramatic impact on all aspects of life, and now more than ever we need to understand the science underpinning the response.

"In this rapidly changing world, the Imperial College School of Public

Health is doing its utmost to study the pandemic in [real-time](#) in order to inform policy, and through this course we are also sharing our learning and methods with tens of thousands of people across the globe."

Dr. Katharina Hauk, Deputy Director of J-IDEA at Imperial, said: "Many people think that the spread of the virus is inevitable, but that is not true. We know that the spread of the virus follows rules, those of mathematics and statistics. Advanced methods of data analytics help us understand these rules and get ahead of the curve.

"In this difficult time, it is amazing that we can introduce the students of our course to these methods and show them that Science really matters."

The urgency of online public health

The "Science Matters: Let's talk about COVID-19" course adds to a growing library of open content from Imperial's School of Public Health, which hosts the MRC Centre and J-IDEA, on Coursera's learning platform. The School has launched a number of open specializations including "Epidemiology for Public Health," "Foundations of Public Health Practice," "Global Health Innovations," "Global Disease Masterclass" and "Statistical Analysis for Public Health."

These specializations form part of Imperial's first fully online degree—the Global Master of Public Health—which is also available via Coursera.

Gideon Shimshon, Director of Imperial's Digital Learning Hub, said: "This is an unexpected moment of acceleration in the history of online learning globally. We now have the ability to reach learners all across the globe.

"Thanks to the investment in digital learning capabilities over the past

few years we are able to bring our teaching and research expertise together to work hand-in-hand and help policy-makers and the general population make effective public [health](#) decisions at scale."

Learning from the experts

Imperial academics are at the forefront of efforts to prevent, control and understand COVID-19. They include Professor Neil Ferguson, Director of J-IDEA and MRC Centre, whose landmark report spurred [policy shifts on both sides of the Atlantic](#) last week.

The team at Imperial continue sharing individual country outputs, making the data available to enable countries to use it to guide planning. The latest full report "The Global Impact of COVID-19 and Strategies for Mitigation and Suppression" is available on the MRC GIDA report website.

Round-the-clock multidisciplinary initiatives span all four Imperial faculties, as students and staff redeploy their expertise. Professor Robin Shattock's team have developed a vaccine candidate that will shortly be ready for human trials. Retrovirologist Professor Myra McClure has converted an Imperial lab for NHS COVID-19 virus testing, able to handle 1,500 samples per day. Biomedical engineer Professor Chris Toumazou has developed a point-of-care COVID-19 test requiring no special training or lab equipment, and his team is urgently working to scale it up.

Critical work to reduce the mortality and morbidity rate include applying Professor Wendy Barclay's pioneering work into how respiratory viruses like influenza spread to the progression of [coronavirus](#), and Professor Peter Openshaw's research into why some patients become severely ill while others experience only mild symptoms. Prof Tony Gordon is leading national clinical studies of new interventions against severe

COVID-19 disease.

More information: Science Matters: Let's talk about COVID-19:
www.coursera.org/learn/covid-19

Provided by Imperial College London

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