

## Springer Nature and iversity

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**Abstract.** Springer Nature is a publishing house and not a university; however, we also offer high quality products in online and distance education areas. With iversity.org, Springer Nature is the first publisher in the world to integrate MOOCs and books, giving authors the unique opportunity to supplement their books with effective adds like videos and augmented reality. This year iversity.org expands its repertoire of course formats by adding micro-learning courses titled “Espresso Courses”. Micro-learning differentiates itself from normal e-learning or MOOCs in the following ways: a) courses seat time b) course design c) resources. The aim of offering accessible upscaling of skills through small, digestible chunks of information addressing only what the learner needs to know is met through Espresso Courses. In today’s age of information overload and very short attention spans, a micro-learning course is the best way to ensure quick and sustainable learning.

**Keywords:** Distance learning education, Academic partnership, Micro-learning courses, User friendly, Social learning, Creative design.

### 1 Introduction

As a global publishing company, Springer Nature publishes high-quality, innovative products in science, humanities, technical and medical areas. Lecturers at universities, scientists and professional experts publish at Springer.

Even if Springer Nature is a publishing house and not a university, we offer products in distance education and online learning as well. We cover a full spectrum from our full-fledged bachelor and masters distance programs, short certificate courses across various disciplines to short micro-learning online courses. The latest

addition to our offerings in the education space is our online learning platform [iversity.org](http://iversity.org).

It became a part of Springer Nature in October 2017, with the aim of providing easy, asynchronous online learning for professionals and students and getting course achievements recognized.

The platform develops high-quality online courses in collaboration with academics experts, institutions and corporate experts, and delivers these courses via the platform, distributing them to individual and corporate customers. Our courses, like our books and journals, have the Springer Nature stamp of quality since we work in close cooperation with top class instructors, higher education institutions and knowledge-based companies making our learning content engaging, interactive thereby making learning fun.

## 2 Our courses

The platform offers content in different formats:

- **MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses):** These are university courses offered online and available for free to everyone who has access to the internet. Upon request, the participants can get a Certificate of Participation. MOOCs at iversity are more than just filmed lectures; they contain interactive quizzes and additional teaching material. The content is customized and designed specifically for online teaching. MOOCs are a part of Springer Nature's open access initiatives.
- **PRO Courses:** These are paid-for professional courses developed by a University or a Corporate aimed specifically at continual professional learning. Learners can choose from ready-to-use online courses across profession areas such as Agile Management, Predictive Analytics and Digital Marketing. The courses are delivered by experienced subject matter experts with aim of helping professionals scale their knowledge at their own pace. Keeping the professional audience in mind, the engaging courses are a form of *edutainment* where the learner does not simply passively watch a video but learns, real hands-on skills that they can apply at in their day to day work. Just like royalties for our books, Springer Nature enters a revenue-share model with the course author.
- **ESPRESSO Courses:** With a view to facilitate point-of-need learning, iversity recently launched its new micro-learning course format 'Espresso'. To help learners learn only what they need an Espresso Course is no longer than 40 minutes and comprises a quiz and a downloadable Easy Guide.

Springer Nature and iversity cover the full spectrum of learning, and offer an active and social learning environment instead of passive and isolated one; this approach allows learners to achieve advanced learning outcomes.

### **3 Academies**

Besides what is described above, iversity offers institutions and organizations a Learning Management System of sorts, which is extremely user-friendly and completely customizable. An Academy can either be a closed or an open learning space, where learners can access either existing iversity courses, or courses created in-house.

There are two types of Academies:

- In-house Academy: users can be invited to join the academy by the administrator.
- External Academy: users need no prior invitation, anyone can access the course depending on course type (MOOCs/PRO/ESPRESSO).

### **4 The social learning experience**

Online learning is not the same as it used to be at the beginning of 2000. In order to avoid to spend time and efforts in monitoring learners through archaic and hard to implement Learning Management Systems, and not really seeing any concrete results, it might be time to move on to a savvy, practical and easy to use solution. iversity.org is an online learning platform that offers a user friendly platform, but also top-class content. The website is optimized for social learning and for a large number of participants. You can find video lectures, text lectures, PDF presentations, multimedia additional material and you can interact through quizzes, exercises, assignments and projects.

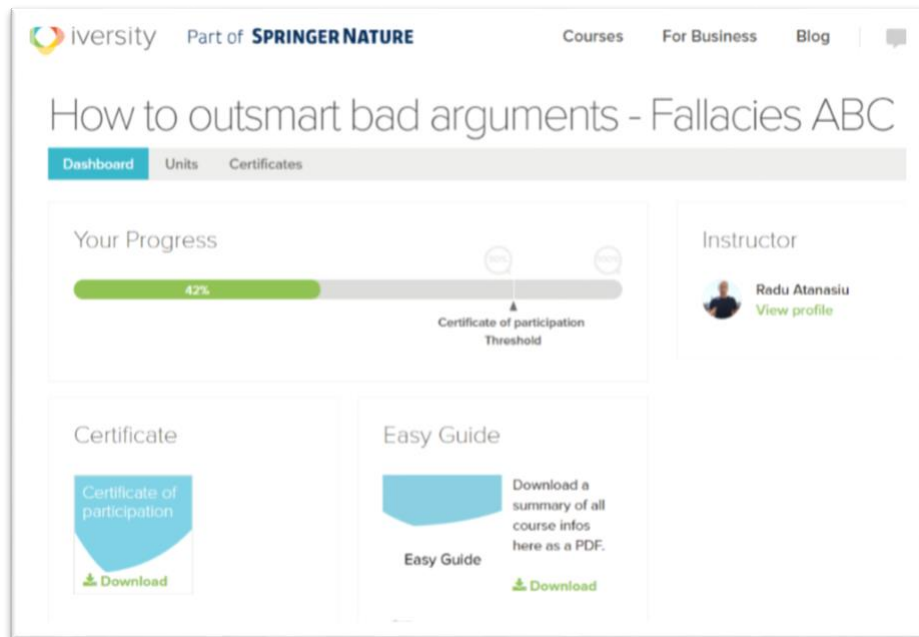
Social learning is one of the most important aspects on the platform: for this reason there is a section called “journals” where it is possible to communicate with other students.

### **5 Micro-learning through Espresso courses**

In today’s fast paced age not everyone has the time to sit through lengthy, time consuming courses. To offer professionals something they could easily dip in and out of and learn only what they need to learn iversity.org has launched a new course format titled ‘Espresso’. The basis of this course format is the learning concept of micro-learning, where learning content is disseminated through small, chunks of learning.

An Espresso course is composed of not more than 10 such small chunks of learning. Each chunk is called a Unit. Every Espresso course also has a quiz at the end of the course where learners can test what they just learned. At the end of each course

learners also have the possibility to download an Easy Guide, which is a quick summary of the key points of the course.



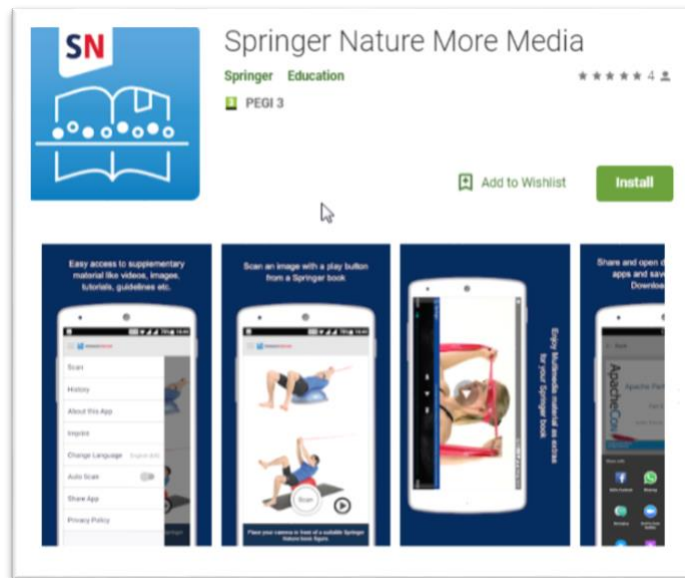
**Fig. 1.** iversity.org Espresso Course Dashboard. An Espresso course comprises small learning chunks called 'Units.' Learners can start and complete the course at their own pace, practice their knowledge in a quiz and download an easy Guide and a Certificate upon completion.

## 6 MOOC and BOOK

The cooperation between Springer Nature and iversity allows to place side by side the professional books by Springer Nature and the e-learning courses by iversity. Authors are given the opportunity to publish enhanced textbooks featuring multimedia content and complementary to an online course.

Springer Nature is the first publisher in the world to integrate MOOCs and books, giving authors the unique opportunity to supplement their books with experiences such as videos and augmented reality.

The most important feature of this innovative textbook is that it includes links to the material contained in the MOOC, which the authors consider relevant. The textbook will feature multimedia content, such as videos and augmented reality, which can be accessible by PC, tablet, or any other mobile device. Students who buy the print book can easily access this content through the Springer Nature More Media App, optimized for cell phones and tablets. Readers simply scan the image with their cell phone or tablet and they are taken directly to the video, figure, photo, table, PowerPoint slide, etc. Moreover, this content can be shared via other apps, email, messengers, and more.



**Fig. 2.** Springer Nature App. The SN More Media app uses augmented reality (AR) and image pattern recognition features to facilitate access to supplementary electronic material for scientists, professionals and students via their smartphone or tablet. It's designed to allow easy access to supplementary material like videos, illustrations, handouts, Q&As or guidelines that are otherwise hidden in online articles and chapters in Springer Nature books or journals. All books with the Springer Nature Multimedia logo include material that can be accessed with this app.

## **7 Social Learning on iversity.org**

iversity also offers learners the experience of learning in a social network. Through the following features iversity fulfills social learning.

- **Messaging Feature:** Learners can privately communicate with other course members or the course instructor through this function. All they need to do is start a conversation using the 'Send Message' button. Group and video chat functions are also available.
- **Community Managers:** Upon assignment of 'course admin' a learner can access special messaging functions in which they can send E-mail announcements to either all course users or specific groups thereby fostering effective social learning in an online space.
- **Recent activities in a Course:** On the course dashboard learners can see a short preview of recent activities including latest comments or entries in a learning journal, allowing them to see all the movement in the course similar to Newsfeeds in other social media applications.
- **Peer-to-peer review:** Learners can ask questions, participate in discussions and also peer-review each other's work upon Instructors' request. Instructors can answer learners' questions, post questions relevant to learners and moderate discussions.

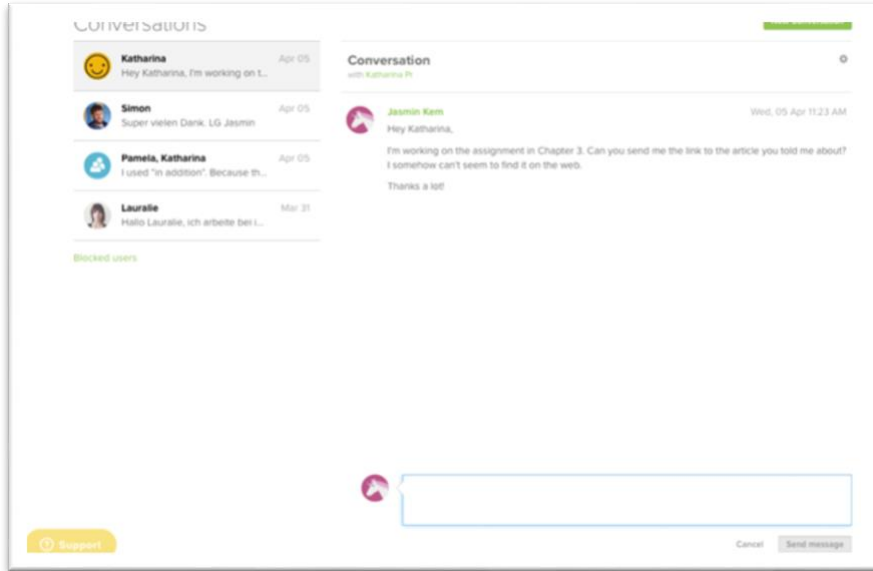
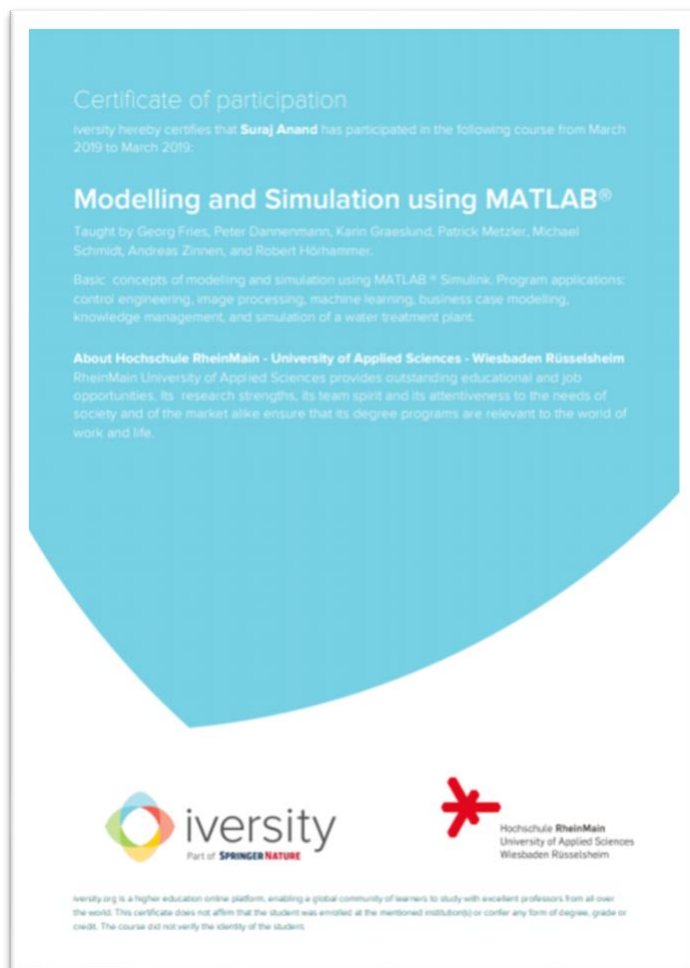


Fig. 3. Chat messaging function on iversity.org.

## 8 Certificates on iversity.org

All our iversity courses offer a Certificate of Participation. This official document issued by iversity.org confirms that you have participate in a course. Learners are eligible to receive a Statement of Participation only if they have passed the 80 % threshold of progress. In MOOCs, the Certificate of Participation must be purchased, whereas in PRO courses and Espresso PRO courses the certificate is included in the course price. Learners also have the provision to share the Certificate of Participation on social media channels like LinkedIn.



**Fig. 4.** Certificate of Participation from an archived MOOC.

### Further readings

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