EULAR
On-Line Course on Rheumatic Diseases

Section A
Author’s manual – General Guidelines

http://www.eular-onlinecourse.org
The EULAR On-Line Course on Rheumatic Diseases

A project of the Standing Committee on Education and Training (ESCET), approved by the EULAR Executive Committee meetings in Vienna, 6 June, and Zurich, 20 September 2005.

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Introduction

Dear author, welcome to the EULAR On-Line Course on Rheumatic Diseases. EULAR considers continuous education as a major aim of the organisation and very much appreciates your willingness to participate. This manual explains the background and structure of the course and gives you guidelines on how to prepare your contribution.

The Course on Rheumatic Diseases is an electronic form of Continuous Medical Education in Rheumatology. It is managed by a Course Committee responsible for its structure and content of the course and for ensuring quality control and promotion. The Committee is chaired by Eric Hachulla, scientific online course coordinator, and includes as convenors José da Silva, Michael Doherty, Fred Liote and Jaap van Laar, Marco Cimmino as well as Catherine Haines from June 2014 (educational advisor), Steve Schaedli (web master) and Gabriela Kluge (EULAR Executive Secretariat, logistic and administrative matters).

To develop and regularly update the content of this course, we need experts like you, who represent the highest quality of expertise available in Europe in this field. Your personal interest in this subject and your commitment are crucial for the success of this course.

This manual offers you, in section A, an overall perspective of the course’s structure and operation. In section B you will find guidelines on how to prepare the educational material we expect from you, listed below. Section C presents a series of useful appendices, referred to along the text.

The following summarizes what you need to produce (described in more detail in the detailed guidelines):

- **An update/review – main text** - on the topic (approx. 10’000 to 15’000 words) with learning objectives, pictures for illustration in the text (up to 30), summary points at the end of the review and references
- **Two in-depth discussions** (max. 1’500 words) expanding on selected clinical problems, with an evidence-based discussion
- **Two interactive typical clinical cases** with questions and prepared answers for feedback
- **Assessments questions**: **Two sets** of questions addressing core aspects of the module, adding up 20 marks each (1 mark = 1 correct choice from a set of possible choices). One of these sets will be used for the final examination.
- Be prepared to answer questions put by students to the professor/teacher/author

As a by-product of the on-line course, the “EULAR Compendium on Rheumatic Diseases”, a collection of all 50 reviews on core aspects of the rheumatic diseases, was published for the first time in 2009. A new edition, the “EULAR Textbook on Rheumatic Diseases”, was published in 2012 with a 2nd edition of the Textbook in planning for 2015.

We hope you will enjoy contributing to the EULAR On-line Course,

Eric Hachulla, Online course coordinator and project leader
Section A
Structure and operation

A 1. General

The course is run entirely through the web and is designed to last for two years. A pilot version was first introduced back in 2006. The course is being updated on a yearly basis, and every year in September a new group of students can register.

The online course consists of 50 modules. Each of these modules is dedicated to a specific topic. In four of the educational units, participants are invited to choose one of three optional topics. So each participant will work on a total of 42 modules. The study time for each module is estimated at about 8 hours with a total of around 336 hours of educational training for the whole course.

Knowledge and skills are targeted at the level felt to be appropriate for the final year of training of a Rheumatology trainee and established Rheumatologists as a form of Continuous Medical Education.

After starting the course in September, participants can enter one new module every two weeks (only after they have completed the previous one) and are able to complete the course after two (but maximum three) years with a final examination offered every year in October.

A 2. Topics and module structure

Each on-line module focusses on one topic or area and typically contains:

- A set of clear learning objectives
- A written main text, review on the topic, with 10’000 to 15’000 words containing 10 - 30 figures / tables / pictures (clinical images, X-ray…). Please note that all figures need to be free of copyright to be usable also by subsequent authors as well as being published in other EULAR publications. It is also crucial to obtain patient consent wherever indicated, for the same reasons.
- References IMPORTANT: They should not be numbered in the text. Correct example: (Demoulin et al, 2012). The complete list of all references should be added to the end of the main text in alphabetical order, marking the key
references with an asterisk. Key references should be limited to 10 (in some cases to a max of 20-30). This procedure should make it easier to add references (no re-numbering necessary upon updating), help to equalize the different versions.

- **Two in-depth discussions** (max. 1'500 words each) expanding on relevant clinical problems with an evidence-based discussion.

- **Two interactive typical clinical cases** with appropriate questions and immediate feedback.

- An “assessment” section consisting of **two sets of questions based on small clinical vignettes** addressing core aspects of the module. Each set of questions needs to have **20 marks** (1 mark = 1 correct choice by the student from a set of possible choices). MCQ should have at least 5 possible choices and there should be at least as many distractors (wrong answers) as there are correct answers. One set will be used at the end of each module, with the remaining set to be used for the final examination (exceptions are all modules with a letter (for example 29a), where only one set of questions is needed. For all clinical modules, the majority of questions will be case-based. Feedback on the reasoning behind the answer will be made available.

- An opportunity to ask questions to the author/teacher. The author/teacher undertakes to provide brief answers to questions as quickly as possible. It is not necessary to provide references. Questions and answers will become available to all students as they are added to the “ask authors” page.

- Possible feature, still under study: Access to an interactive forum/chat room with colleagues to discuss all issues.

### A 3. Final examination

Students may take the final examination only after completion of all required modules. The final examination assesses a sample of the learning objectives from the whole course. The examination is run on the web simultaneously by all registered participants and will take 90 minutes.

A variety of question formats are used in the modules and in the final examination. Questions should be primarily based on clinical cases. Questions (set(s) of 20 assessment questions) are provided by the authors of each module. Each question is evaluated by the Course Committee before being accepted into the pool. Questions for the final examination are randomly selected from the overall pool of questions.

Final examinations are run once a year in October. Participants will pass if they answer 70% of the questions correctly. The committee may change the pass percentage from year to year based on validation procedures. Students are allowed to take the examination a second time if they fail the first exam. The last possibility for them will be in their 3rd year of taking the course. Participants who fail the final exam twice are invited to re-register and take the course again.

Participants, who pass the final examination, receive a Certificate of Completion of the EULAR On-Line Course on Rheumatic Diseases, stating the percentage of their pass mark and a free edition of the latest version of the EULAR Textbook on Rheumatic Diseases
A 4. Faculty

Two teachers from at least two different European countries (to generalize the content) are invited to co-author each module. One author (Lead Author) is appointed as the overall lead for the module. After 3 years he/she will become the Senior author (for another 3 years) while a new Lead author (from a different country) is chosen (in cooperation and by suggestion of the existing team and appointed by the Course Committee. The new Lead author will then choose a supporting Junior author from either his or a different department. It is the responsibility of the Lead author to coordinate and work on the review and update, mainly together with the Junior Author.

It is in the hands of the Senior author to give the final approval after the updates are completed.

Experience has shown that starting to work with other peoples’ manuscripts leads to more rigorous updating than using one’s own manuscript. But of course this is not absolute.

Junior authors should generally be young rheumatologists or final year trainees and their commitment is not only as advisers but usually also as author of parts of the module. In the end all three authors of one module are jointly responsible for its content.

This means that in general, the Lead author will serve for 6 years (3 as Lead author and 3 as Senior author). This rotation system works in line with the EULAR Textbook editions, normally being published once every 3 years after a new round of authors was established. Previous authors will have a clear mention in the acknowledgements of the online course and in the ensuing textbook.

Normally The order of authorship is as follows: the Lead author should be the first author, his Junior the second author and the Senior author is last. It is up to the Lead author to decide if (in some cases) the Junior should be the first author. The order of authors should be written right beneath the main text title. Below that the previous authors must be mentioned.

A 5. Communication between authors and convenors

Faculty members are supported by the convenor, where necessary. Convenors will discuss all questions you may have after reading these guidelines. In case you need it, they can help you in formulating learning objectives, structure of the review, content of in depth discussions and typical cases. In addition they may give you feedback on the assessment questions. Of course you are also free to contact your convenor at any other time.
Some modules have possible content overlap, such as modules on rheumatoid arthritis, one on pathogenesis and diagnosis, another on treatment. Such modules are put under the responsibility of the same convenor to check for overlap and comprehensiveness.

A 6. Quality assurance

The overall structure and content of the course is under the control of the Course Committee.

Quality assurance measures include the following elements:

- Students are asked to fill in an on-line evaluation form at the end of each module. Completion of this is compulsory before starting the next module.
- 10% of the final examination questions are repeated every year for internal quality assessment. Marks for the first attempt of the formative assessments for each module are recorded and used for quality evaluation.
- Teachers/authors are chosen to represent the highest quality of expertise available in Europe.
- Before being approved for the web, each module is appraised by a medical educationalist. In addition, the project coordinator and the convenor for that module undertake an overall scientific appraisal of the module.
- Each module will be reviewed by the authors on a yearly basis. Authors will find module and examination feedback from the students directly online, and they will be asked to respond in writing to the Course Committee.

A 7. Financial aspects

The course is financially managed and subsidized by EULAR to keep the registration costs for students to a minimum.

As appreciation for the work of the authors, they will all receive a free registration for the full on line course.

A 8. Time schedule (subject to changes due to implementation of new online course management tool in June 2014)

The faculty is asked to provide their modules according to a strict time schedule. Initial information to start the update will be received about 3 months before the deadline.

Authors will use the online management tool: www.portal.eular.org and can enter with their email address and own password.
During the course
Every 2 weeks a new module will come online. It is therefore crucial to adhere to the time schedule. Once a new module goes online, there might be questions from students to the authors. Authors are asked to answer these as quickly and directly as possible. All questions and answers are collected and made available to all students on the “ask authors” page. Over time, a variety of specific questions pertaining to each module will have been answered and can be found on that page. Respond to questions as you might do in conversation with trainees in a teaching session – there is no need for long answers justified by references.

The review and communication process
is handled through our management updating tool. The author detailed guidelines as well as guidelines on how to use the tool can be found pressing the HELP button in the tool – or watch the 3 tutorial tool use videos.

A 9. Hard copy editions of the course
In 2009 EULAR launched its first Compendium on Rheumatic, containing the main body of the online course. This book is a comprehensive and updated collection of all fifty reviews of the course written by leading European authors in every field and thus represents an educational asset in itself. In 2012, the Textbook on Rheumatic Diseases was published, as the update of the aforementioned Compendium (in keeping with the same format). The next edition of the Textbook is planned for 2015.

The Course Committee feels that the dissemination of the Textbooks will not only serve as a valuable additional contribution to EULAR’s educational program but also as an important factor to properly reward the best faculty possible.

A 10. Copyright
Copyright of all material is held by EULAR. All educational materials will be considered to be free to use by the subsequent author groups in each module or for other EULAR teaching materials. All previous authors will be acknowledged.