Course Development Policy

Policy Sponsor: Provost and Vice-President, Academic  
Policy Contact: Office of the Provost and Vice-President, Academic  
Policy Number: N/A  
Effective Date: June 13, 2014  
Approval Group: Governors of Athabasca University  
Approval Date: June 13, 2014, Motion # 190-06  
Review Date: Annually  
Procedure: Course Development Procedures

Purpose

This policy, in conjunction with the principles outlined in Appendix 1, provides a framework for the development of Athabasca University (AU) credit courses.

Definitions

Course Development: the process of considering, creating, producing and getting a course ready for students; also includes the process of evaluating and revising a course

Course Design: the identification of learning outcomes, conceptualization of activities, collection of resources and construction of assessments that support effective and engaging learning in AU courses

Course Production: the final stages of course development before a course is opened, which includes editing, copyright approval and final compilation of the course components in the learning management system

Course Team/ Course Development Team: the group of academic, professional and support staff who work together to develop courses
Revision  
an update to a course. Revisions range from straightforward live updates and corrections, through minor adjustments due to changing learning resources including textbooks, to complete rewrites. Changes to method of evaluation require a formal revision.

Syllabus  
a description of the course that students, institutions and others can consult to determine the pre-requisites, course content, learning outcomes, assessment strategies and resources included

Policy Statements

1. AU courses will be developed and revised in alignment with university strategic, academic and operational plans and budgets, subject to the availability of resources as allocated by the Provost and Vice-President Academic.

2. Each Faculty, in consultation with the Provost and Vice-President Academic, determines the course development process that will be followed within its courses and programs.

3. The development of AU courses is led by the Course Coordinator, who meets with a community of specialists in content, design, online teaching and learning strategies, multimedia, editing, production and evaluation in ways co-determined by the Course Coordinator and the development team as described in the Course Development Procedures.

4. A syllabus for each AU course will be readily available to current and prospective students, other institutions and the general public. It is the responsibility of the Course Coordinator to ensure currency and accuracy in the syllabus, and to ensure its online availability.

5. Course development is not a singular process but an iterative one, recurring over time within a cycle of constant renewal. AU courses feature regular review and revision to allow for changes to design and content.

6. Assessment of learning outcomes in courses shall conform to examination policies.

7. Courses will meet AU quality standards and copyright policies.

8. The process of AU course development adheres fully to Canadian Intellectual Property and Copyright law.

9. AU will retain ownership of its courses in perpetuity.

Applicable Legislation and Regulations

Canadian Intellectual property laws
Alberta Post-secondary Learning Act
Copyright law
Related References, Policies, Procedures and Forms

Course Development Procedures
Academic integrity principles and policies
Syllabus policies and procedures
Examination policies including Examination Currency Policy
Undergraduate Challenge for Credit Policy
AU Intellectual property policy
AU accessibility guidelines

History

Governors of Athabasca University, June 13, 2014, Motion # 190-06 (approved)
APPENDIX 1

Athabasca University course development is based on the following principles:

Learning
Athabasca University courses are designed to support student learning through a wide variety of instructional methods and theoretical approaches, contextualized to the needs of students, course enrolments, and academic practices. More than collections of materials, they represent flexible and adaptive learning environments that engage and motivate students to be successful.

Quality
Quality assurance is an outcome of relevance, currency, academic integrity, accessibility and adherence to design and production standards. Athabasca University courses are responsive to changes in subject matter and student expectations. Systematic, consultative and formative evaluations of the course and student performance help identify changes that ensure courses are relevant, current, and effective.

Timeliness
New course development and course revisions are timely and responsive to changes as identified in the evaluation process.

Flexibility
Course development is flexible to accommodate the needs of courses differentiated by discipline, level, pedagogy and technology.

Accountability
The Course Coordinator, supported by colleagues and staff with expertise in the design and production of online learning, and by relevant evaluation data, leads the development process.

Appropriate use of technology
Course development makes effective use of the affordances of learning technologies and the digital environment in order to assist students to meet learning outcomes.

Design
Course design uses a collaborative approach that leverages the expertise of AU employees.