
Course Development Procedures

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Policy Contact:	Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic
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Review Date:	Annually

Purpose

These procedures outline general guidelines for the development of Athabasca University (AU) courses that interpret and apply the Course Development Policy. Individual faculties are responsible for the specific processes involved in the development of their courses.

Definitions

Course Development	the process of considering, creating, producing and getting a course ready for delivery to students; also includes the process of evaluating and revising a course
Course Design	the creation of activities, the collection of resources and the 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



Course tracking system	a digital record-keeping system for course development that includes such information as course history, workload assignments, SME contracts, dates, course team members, etc.
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, delivery mode and resources included.

Procedure

A. New Course Development

There are four foundational elements in the development of a new course at AU. The data generated from decisions and approvals are recorded in a course tracking system. A member of the course team is assigned to record the outcomes of all meetings.

- Course Proposal

The Course Coordinator provides the relevant course parameters in a prospectus that makes the case for approval, including:

- program and university relevance, fit and alignment of course to program outcomes
- anticipated course lifespan
- market potential and expected registrations
- evidence of collegial and accountable review, as appropriate
- learning resources (with examples)
- resources necessary to the project, including identification of potential course team members, their roles, and workload implications
- rationale / justification for external (SME) resources if applicable
- other details as appropriate

The relevant groups provide approvals as appropriate. Upon approval of the Course Proposal, the Course Coordinator and/or approved academic (e.g., Program Director, Chair), submits a request to the Office of the Registrar and/or designate as per individual faculty procedures, for a course to be readied for student registration.

- Course Design



The Course Coordinator presents the course proposal at a design meeting with members of the course development team. Course design details, including learning outcomes and assessment strategies are discussed, and roles and responsibilities for development are determined. Copyright issues are considered; library resources are reviewed; tasks are assigned. Formative evaluation measures unique to design decisions are identified for inclusion in the course evaluation process. Relevant data from students, tutors, coaches, academic experts, course professors, etc. are examined to determine their applicability and to inform the design decisions. Criteria for meeting course production standards and timelines are established and agreed upon in accordance with faculty-based resources and processes. Follow-up meetings are organized as appropriate. As course design is an iterative rather than a linear process, there will be multiple course design meetings and discussions throughout the development of the course.

- Course Creation

The various tasks involved in course creation may occur concurrently, as informed by the course design decisions and as per established faculty roles. The Course Coordinator modifies, creates, and/or locates course content or directs such course creation according to the processes established by the various faculty course production units. Timely contributions of their expertise by team members responsible for learning design, multimedia production, visual design, and editing are provided as agreed in the design meetings. Courses are composed of content, activities, learning resources, assignments and assessments as appropriate to the identified outcomes and discipline.

- Course Sign off and Launch

Once the course design criteria are met as per individual Faculty standards, all course elements are secured (e.g., via AU Materials Management, AU Library, AU Copyright Office, other providers), and course review (comprising both content and learning platform presentation) is complete and approved by the Course Coordinator and/or approved academic, the course is then ready for launch.

Relevant information is updated within a course tracking system, as per individual Faculty procedures and P&VPA requirements. The course is now considered 'active' and open for registrations.

B. Course Revisions

Courses may be changed through live updates and revisions.

- Live Updates/ Maintenance

The Course Coordinator makes or directs relatively minor changes (errors, replacements) and additions in active courses as needed, as per processes established within each Faculty, and in response to peer and student review. This process may be time-sensitive, and may include examinations.



- Revisions

If a new text or other resources are required or if the student evaluation plan changes significantly in form or substance a course revision will be necessary. The Course Coordinator will generate a revision plan for approval by the relevant groups before beginning any work. The process may vary in complexity and detail. Planned revisions should take workload planning into account, while just-in-time revisions (such as textbook changes) may need to be addressed immediately. A member of the course team is assigned to record the outcomes of all meetings.

Applicable Legislation and Regulations

Related References, Policies, Procedures and Forms

[Course Development Policy](#)

History

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

