Guide to Applying to Offer a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) at the University of Michigan

1. Introduction

The Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) offered by the University of Michigan (U-M) have extremely high visibility. The instructors who appear in these courses become *de facto* faces of the University. The University has a stake in the selection of classes and has a limited amount of resources that it can dedicate to publishing these courses. As a result, not all courses that would otherwise be acceptable will be approved. This is not meant to discourage applications, but instead to signal the difference in process with MOOCs versus traditional course proposals.

Applications to offer a MOOC will be evaluated by the Digital Courses, Innovations, and Platforms Committee (DCIPC) comprised of a group of faculty from across the University. This document describes how the application should be drafted, how the committee will process those applications, and the criteria by which the applications will be evaluated. The DCSC provides its recommendations to the Vice Provost and Associate Vice Provost for Digital Education & Innovation who make final funding and support decisions.

If you are interested in offering a MOOC, please contact the DEI team by emailing digitaleducation@umich.edu to schedule an appointment to discuss the process and receive three documents: (a) the MOOC Application Form; (b) MOOC-Faculty Compensation & Support Summary, which describes the faculty compensation and support model that has been put in place by the Provost’s office; and (c) a set of process maps and accompanying descriptions, including the MOOC Proposal Process, the MOOC Development Process, and MOOC Live Course Process (MOOC Process Maps).

2. Process

This section maps out the application process from inception through final decision. If you have any questions or comments about this, please email James DeVaney, Associate Vice Provost for Digital Education & Innovation (jdevaney@umich.edu). Further information about MOOCs, creating digital courses, and the Office of Digital Education & Innovation is available at http://digitaleducation.umich.edu/

The process for submitting a MOOC is described below. In addition, the faculty member taking the primary leadership role in offering the MOOC (Faculty Champion) must agree to and meet the prerequisites that follow.

1. Instructors should first submit the application through the school-level approval process, copying, DEI (digitaleducation@umich.edu). This process will vary by school and faculty will need to determine how approval for offering a MOOC can be obtained.
2. After completing the school-level process, the completed application with evidence of Dean-level approval and containing the information described below should be forwarded by the Dean’s Office contact to Gautam Kaul (kaul@umich.edu), Chair of DCIPC and James DeVaney (jdevaney@umich.edu), Associate Vice Provost for Digital Education & Innovation with the subject “DCSC application: Course Title.”

3. When the application is received, both the instructor and the Dean's Office contact will receive an acknowledgement email from a DCSC representative.

4. The application will be reviewed by the DCSC at its next meeting according to the criteria spelled out below. In the meantime, DEI staff will review the application (consulting with the faculty applicant where necessary and appropriate), looking for unsupported features, potentially risky technology, possible errors in the application (such as copy-paste errors), while making sure the course as proposed conforms with University standards.

5. The DCSC will share its recommendations with the Vice Provost and Associate Vice Provost for Digital Education & Innovation who will determine levels of funding and support.

6. The approval decision will be relayed to the instructor, the Dean's Office contact, and the UM/college staff charged with course production.

Once these steps are completed, the process of publication of the course can commence.

3. Prerequisites

The following are assumptions underlying the Faculty Champion's commitment to a MOOC (note that these responsibilities will be detailed in a Memorandum of Understand (MOU) between the Faculty Champion and DEI that must be fully executed prior to beginning the production process):

- The Faculty Champion must be enthusiastic about working with the platform providers, which currently consist of Coursera and NovoEd (other platforms may be considered). The University has contractual relationships with these two providers.

- The Faculty Champion should have a preference for one of these platform providers based on the pedagogical needs of the course and U-M will try its best to accommodate this preference.

- The Faculty Champion must have read through and become familiar with the information in MOOC Process Maps and “MOOC-Faculty Compensation & Summary”. The Faculty Champion must also have completed a MOOC Orientation Meeting with DEI staff and signed the DEI MOOC MOU.
• The Faculty Champion should be willing to work with course production specialists from the Digital Education & Innovation Lab in order to ensure adherence to U-M MOOC production standards. These standards exist to provide a systematic and efficient creation of high-quality video and audio content. Faculty suggestions and feedback about the process are always welcome, and the video standards will be revised as needed.

• U-M staff will assist faculty with course design to ensure that all course materials and methods have been appropriately adapted and/or designed for effective digital delivery. Of course, the Faculty Champion and their collaborators are assumed to be the subject-matter expert(s) and will have ultimate decision authority on course pedagogy; however, this type of teaching is still relatively new and evolving, and we would like these specialists to be involved with pedagogical issues related to this project. The purposes of this are to make the course as good as it can be and to ensure robust data capturing to inform the University’s best practices as it relates to courses of this type.

• There is no expectation of a minimum amount or particular type of interaction between a UM Faculty Champion, their collaborators, and the users of a MOOC. Course Operations Liaisons (COL) are typically appointed to help develop and deliver a MOOC, monitoring student communications (e.g., in the online forums), and sending some of it along to faculty for general (group response). Faculty could, but are not expected to, schedule virtual office hours to interact with MOOC users.

• The Faculty Champion will need to make a promotional video to be displayed on the initial course page and also featured by DEI in broader marketing and knowledge dissemination efforts.

• After the application is approved, the Faculty Champion must be willing to provide the information for the faculty profile and landing page in a timely fashion.

4. Publication Process

Please refer to “MOOC-Production Process” for all matters related to the publication process followed by U-M.

5. Application Components

The application should contain the following information in a Microsoft Word or PDF document.

Section 1: Basic Information
• Course title
• Faculty Champion name and email address
• MOOC collaborators and email addresses
• Dean's Office contact: Name and email address

Section 2: Course Overview Information
• Course duration
• Assumed target audience (age, geography, interests, etc.)
• Prerequisites (preferably a description of some specified knowledge or skill, but could also refer to another MOOC)
• Learning outcomes
• Topics covered
• Planned assessments, including certificate criteria (if one is to be granted)
• Course collaborators (including guest presenters) who will be delivering content

Section 3: Rationale and Details
• Rationale for offering this course as a MOOC and platform preference (currently Coursera or NovoEd)
• The faculty member needs to address the following questions related the proposed MOOC:
  (a) Is this course similar to a course currently taught in your department, school, or college? If so, how would you use the MOOC to differentiate it from a residential class? [Some examples of differentiation already being practiced are: offering a different type of class suited to a much broader and diverse MOOC audience, offering a shorter version of a similar on-campus class, etc.]
  (b) How would you use the MOOC to enhance residential learning? [Some ways of enhancing the residential experience may be: using some of the MOOC content to flip a residential class; using a MOOC environment to experiment with new assessment tools, etc.]
• Information on whether the material for the class is being repurposed from an existing source and, if so, what changes are being planned to the existing material to make it suitable for a MOOC?
• A description of the plan to ensure copyright compliance.
• Description of the Faculty Champion's experience with teaching in an online environment
• Description of the Faculty Champion's recent classroom evaluations (with commentary to place it in context)
• The Faculty Champion should disclose whether any external sponsored funding will be used to develop content for the MOOC
• The Faculty Champion needs to be responsible for overall content of the MOOC. DEI encourages the use of collaborators (including guest presenters) to deliver MOOC content. If the Faculty Champion would like to deviate materially from the list of collaborators identified in this Application during the MOOC design phase, DEI will require the Faculty Champion to update the Application accordingly and route it back for both School-level and DCSC re-approval.
• The Faculty Champion may elect to include a letters of support with this Application for consideration by the Dean’s Office, and ultimately, the DCSC and DEI.
• In addition, the Faculty Champion must ensure that the Dean’s Office provide the DCSC with a letter of support upon Dean’s Office approval of the Application.

6. Criteria for Approving a Course

1. The University would prefer to have a diverse set of offerings, schools, and professors in MOOCs, representing the range of intellectual activity on campus.

2. The content should be of interest to a significant number of people in the U.S. and globally. All else being equal, broader outreach to alumni is preferred.

3. The faculty member should have substantive expertise in the course's proposed subject matter. This must be evaluated at the school level, before the application is forwarded to the DCSC.

4. The faculty member should have a history of successfully delivering on projects (especially teaching, but also research-related). Again, this must be evaluated largely at the school level.

5. The faculty member should have a clearly stated objective and goals that will enhance residential learning at U-M.

7. Copyright Guidelines

As faculty producing a MOOC, you are participating in a new endeavor to increase the diffusion of knowledge and learning. While online course delivery is not entirely new, you may need to reexamine many of your assumptions about copyright and the use of copyrighted material in the context of a MOOC. Fair use of copyrighted materials in the classroom for teaching is a well-established principle of U.S. copyright law. That said, copyright should also be considered outside the context of fair use that will apply differently in this case—probably in a more limited manner than you are accustomed. Consider the following as you prepare MOOCs to make your course run smoothly, to maximize educational opportunity, and to minimize legal exposure:

• You can use material that you create for which you hold the copyright.

• Unless the material is work for hire (that is, it belongs to an employer) or you signed an agreement that transfers or assigns rights, you are the copyright holder.

• If you produce work with other people, unless you signed something to the contrary, each creator has equal rights in the work and you may use the work as you choose. You may have to pay joint copyright holders for their share of the value of the use.

• You can use anything that is in the public domain, that is, works for which there is no copyright protection. For example, copyright is limited to a term of years and
work by federal employees created in the scope of their employment is not subject to U.S. copyright. Further, facts and data are not protectable.

- You may want to search for materials under appropriate Creative Commons licenses (but do not use material licensed under non-commercial CC licenses).

- You can use anything for which you obtain permission. Document the permission (an email exchange confirming the use is fine). Keep in mind, the permission has to be broad enough to cover delivery via the MOOC platform, which is worldwide.

- As always, give attribution. Provide credits as needed for any materials used in your course. If you are using material you created but which is subject to a contract you signed with a publisher do not assume you have the right to include the material in your course for delivery as a MOOC. You need to double check your contract to see what rights you reserved—or gave up. Contact your publisher if you are unsure. Work with U-M staff to determine the appropriate way to give credit for particular types of resources.

- Reconsider your course materials—especially material you've used over many semesters to ensure you know the source. If unsure, consider obtaining substitutions that meet your teaching needs. For example, think carefully about things like problem sets, assessments, test materials you used in the past. Did you create them or were they from materials provided by the U-M Library under license or subscription that would not have considered the MOOC platform?

- Keep privacy and defamation in mind. A MOOC will be accessible worldwide. Make sure that any anecdotes or hypotheticals about private individuals are sufficiently adjusted to respect their privacy. Regarding defamation, if you are criticizing someone or something, be sure that you are clearly expressing an opinion or that your statement is true. The point is not to avoid criticism per se—it is the norm in scholarship and education. We want our students to be critical thinkers, but this type of criticism is distinct from defamation (typically a false statement that harms a person's or company's reputation).

- Review the DEI Copyright Guide (please ask DEI for a copy)

- Review the accessibility guidelines for Coursera and NovoEd materials.

Still need help with copyright questions? Contact Michael Daniel, Director of Policy and Operations in DEI. Include “MOOCs” in your subject line.