Updated Request for Proposals for Online and Distance Learning
September 29, 2013
revised January 14, 2014

Having recently created opportunities to advance online and distance learning for Cornell faculty, Cornell University is offering support for selected proposals through the following Request for Proposals.

1) Proposal to Create a MOOC on edX

Cornell University is offering grants for the creation of four MOOCs on the edX platform (https://www.edx.org/) to be released during 2014-15, at the latest by April 1, 2015. Eligible applicants will be current tenure-track or tenured Cornell faculty. Applications are due on February 15, 2014. Proposals will describe a specific planned course, and will be reviewed by a subcommittee of the Distance Learning Committee. Final decisions will be announced by March 15, 2014. Interested faculty are encouraged to review the accompanying document, MOOC Development Considerations for CornellX Instructors 2013-14 (Appendix A).

Funding will include $50,000 for each grant, distributed as follows:

• The faculty member (or faculty members in co-taught courses) will be provided with a total of $10,000 to support his/her or their research program or other university activities;
• The department (or departments) will be provided with $20,000 (shared in the case of multiple departments or colleges) to partially offset this new effort;
• $20,000 is allocated for production costs coordinated by Academic Technologies.
• The department or college—collaboratively in the case of joint instructors—will be expected to provide at least one TAship to support the course when offered and to provide the instructor with appropriate time compensation.

This funding will be provided for the period from March 15, 2014 to June 30, 2015.

In addition, support for the design and creation of the course will be provided by the university, through the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), Academic Technologies (AT), and the University Library. The CTE will provide pedagogical support including

* Updated to reflect an extension of the application deadline and to provide potential applicants with access to the formal agreement that successful applicants will be required to enter pursuant to the university’s agreement with edX.
assistance in developing an on-line syllabus, formulating learning outcomes, organizing course content into effective modules, designing effective presentation materials, and creating meaningful assessments. CTE will offer information on best practices in online learning and examples from relevant fields.

AT will provide support for the development and production of the course on the edX.org online course platform using edX tools such as online tests, homework submission, and discussion boards. Each edX open online course will be comprised of several learning units with video lectures and other presentations. Faculty will work with the AT production support team to record videos for their online course. Where appropriate, AT will collaborate in these support services with eCornell.

The University Library will support required permissions for materials under copyright and will collaborate with faculty and the production team in selecting and integrating supporting materials into a course. The Library staff will also provide assistance for faculty who are interested in including digital literacy dimensions in the course.

Applications will be assessed according to the following criteria:

1. The potential for the particular course proposed to advance Cornell’s mission “to discover, preserve, and disseminate knowledge; produce creative work; and promote a culture of broad inquiry throughout and beyond the Cornell community.”

2. The course or instructor’s representation of a distinctive Cornell resource or approach.

3. The potential likelihood that the course will attract a substantial audience, for whom it will provide a meaningful learning experience.

4. The relationship between the subject matter of this course and that of other proposed or currently developing CornellX online courses, in order to maintain a diversity of fields of study.

5. The potential for this online course to enhance on-campus education.

Successful applicants will be required to agree to the terms and conditions set forth by the edX Consortium. A copy of the agreement is available upon request to Amanda Kittelberger, abk36@cornell.edu.

Information for applicants:

By **February 15, 2014**, interested faculty should submit an application at the following site:  [http://cornellx.cornell.edu/](http://cornellx.cornell.edu/)
The proposal should contain the following information:
The proposal should be no more than 10 single-spaced pages, and include the following information.

1. Instructor(s) names.
2. Course information: working title, proposed launch date, length (e.g. 6, 8, 10, 12 weeks), subject category, brief course description (~140 words), prerequisites, if any.
3. Learning outcomes for the course (what participants will leave the course knowing or being able to do), and proposed assessments (how you might measure what participants have learned).
4. A brief description of the course’s prospective audience, including how this course might or might not appeal to an international audience.
5. A statement explaining why this course would be a good candidate to teach as a MOOC.
6. Any information you might have about whether a comparable course is offered as a MOOC by another university (e.g. through edX (https://www.edx.org/), Coursera (https://www.coursera.org/), Udacity (https://www.udacity.com/)).
7. If relevant, a description of the technologies that are currently used for teaching this course (e.g Content Management System, electronic presentations, video, etc.), and a brief description of the instructor’s previous experience teaching online, blended, or distance learning courses. Provide a URL of the course website, if available.
8. Brief statements from the faculty member’s department chair and dean, acknowledging the proposed application and including a commitment to provide at least one TAship to support the course when offered, and appropriate time compensation as described above.

If you have questions about the submission process, please contact Amanda Kittelberger, abk36@cornell.edu.
Appendix A

MOOC Development Considerations
For CornellX Instructors 2013-14

Center for Teaching Excellence, Academic Technologies, Cornell University Library

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) differ from face-to-face courses in a number of ways:

- **Resources** available to support your course innovations are greater.
- **Time commitment** is significant for developing a MOOC.
- Innovative strategies for supporting **student engagement** are essential.
- Creative methods for **assessing student learning** are necessary.
- **Alternatives to copyrighted course materials** need to be considered.

Below we list information around each of these areas, which we expect will be helpful as you craft your proposal. In advance of drafting your proposal you should also familiarize yourself with existing MOOCs offered by edX.

If you have any questions while developing your MOOC proposal, please contact our support team at: innovprojects@cornell.edu. Rob Vanderlan, Center for Teaching Excellence will be the key advisor in the pre-proposal stage.

**Resources**

One difference between creating a MOOC and designing a traditional course is in the level of support available. Once your proposal is accepted, you will have a team of instructional and technological specialists to assist you in the design, development, implementation, and launch of your MOOC, as well as to advise you about related innovations and sustainability.

**Who is your support team, as you design your CornellX MOOC?**

The team includes the staff at the Center for Teaching Excellence, Academic Technologies, and the University Library:
- The **Center for Teaching Excellence** provides pedagogical support including assistance in developing an on-line syllabus, formulating learning outcomes,
organizing course content into effective modules, and creating meaningful assessments.

Rob Vanderlan, Distance Learning Specialist
innovprojects@cornell.edu

• Academic Technologies supports the development and production of the course within the edX platform including recording video lectures, content digitization and distribution using edX tools such as online tests, homework submission, and discussion boards.

Mike Tolomeo, Instructional Media Manager
innovprojects@cornell.edu

• The University Library supports the selection of resources for the course and required permissions for materials under copyright, including textbooks, digital images, and videos.

Jaron Porciello, Digital Scholarship Coordinator
innovprojects@cornell.edu

Time Commitment

MOOCs are typically shorter than traditional courses, varying in length from 5 to 12 weeks, with shorter courses more successfully retaining students. But despite the shorter course length, creating a MOOC takes substantially more time than preparation for a traditional new course. The amount of time will vary depending on the duration and design of the online course.

What is involved when a MOOC is under development?

• Advance planning includes all aspects of the course design, from lectures to assignments to grading criteria. All course elements will need to be completed well before the course actually launches on edX, and a complete course blueprint is submitted within a couple of months of acceptance.

• A course development timeline is developed, designed to allow enough time to build and launch an edX course. An example for a course that would be launched in February 2015 follows:
Course design:
Develop course goals and blueprint that outlines the included learning modules and course duration. | July – September

Course initialization on edX:
Four months prior to course launch—Initial course information, instructional goals, and outline of weekly learning modules completed. | October

Course design and production:
Three weeks prior to launch date—Complete instructional design of each learning module, record video, and develop course on edX platform. | September – January

Launch and implement course | February – May

What is involved when a MOOC is launched?

• Course administration, including monitoring the class and responding to students, can take up a lot of TA and instructor time.
• TA support is vital for course administration (TAs can monitor discussion boards and help manage the course), but is highly recommended for course planning and production. TAs can also help develop course content and design assessments.
• Support for edX MOOCs will be provided by Academic Technologies during launch and implementation.

It’s useful to reflect on your other commitments, professional, travel, and teaching. If possible, don’t plan to teach or prepare a new course while you are developing and offering the MOOC.

Student Engagement

Engaging students in an online environment like a MOOC is challenging and essential. Large attrition rates are common for MOOCs.

How can you engage students with your course content, with each other, and with you?

This effort often requires innovative thinking and creative ideas. Some considerations around engaging students include:
• Students in MOOCs are different from typical university students. They come from all over the globe, and from different contexts, life experiences, educational levels, English language skills, motivations for taking the course, and levels of commitment to your MOOC.

• MOOC instructors thus must acknowledge a range different student motivations, including those who want to master all of the material and will complete all assignments, as well those who simply want to audit the course.

• To maintain student engagement, key effective practices include breaking the course down into smaller units, and identifying what students will be able to know or do after the unit and how the material will apply to them or answer their needs. Students are more likely to stay in a course if they find the material engaging and understand why it is important and how they might use it.

• You can increase engagement by building in frequent and varied opportunities for students to interact with the material through questions, problems, or projects.

• You can use discussion forums to deepen course involvement, encourage students to learn from each other, and broaden the course by giving a voice to diverse perspectives.

• Some other strategies that have been successfully used to engage students include peer review of student work and group projects or assignments.

• There are also methods available to enable you to simulate face-to-face interaction with the students. Some ideas include timely video updates on discussions or assignments, and videos that create the perception of office hours.

Assessing Student Learning

Methods of assessment you have used in the past will likely need to be reshaped to work for the extremely large numbers of students in a typical MOOC (30,000-50,000, on average). Assessing in MOOCs is challenging, but instructors and course designers have come up with many creative and effective ways to address this challenge.

What creative ways can be included to enable students to demonstrate their learning?

Considerations for designing assessment processes include:
• Manual grading of or response to quizzes, exams, or papers is not possible.
• Thoughtfully designed machine-graded quizzes and exams can effectively assess student learning.
• Self-graded and peer-graded writing assignments can offer opportunities for both substantive and reflective assessment.
• To support peer-grading, you can set clear expectations for assignments and provide grading guidelines and rubrics.
• Group projects or assignments can offer opportunities for collaborative learning.

Alternatives to copyrighted course materials

Most MOOC platforms, including edX, require that course readings be open access and free, which frequently means that traditional textbooks, books, and journal articles are not available to be used. In general, however, MOOCs rely less on outside reading than do traditional courses.

How can instructors find alternative resources to the copyrighted materials used in traditional courses?

• Work with the University Library to find out whether publishers will grant permissions for desired content.
• The support team in the Library will help you locate alternative readings when necessary.
• Design the course to work without substantial outside reading, if necessary.

MOOC Support Team

Rob Vanderlan, Distance Learning Specialist
Mike Tolomeo, Instructional Media Manager
Jaron Porciello, Digital Scholarship Coordinator

Contact email:
innovprojects@cornell.edu