

2021

Collaboration Guide for COLCommons.org



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to promote the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.



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June 2021

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About This Document

This document provides the details about Commonwealth of Learning's new learning platform (<https://colcommons.org/>) and presents guidelines for institutional collaboration to adopt the courses and develop courses to be offered on this platform. These guidelines are only indicative in nature to encourage discussion and facilitate collaboration.

Audience

This document is for external partner institutions of Commonwealth of Learning (COL). Primarily, this is for educational institutions that are willing to adopt the platform for professional development and skills development of their staff and students.

Overview of the Platform

The COLCommons platform has been developed as a short-course delivery platform and offers several need-based courses for improving teaching and learning. It has been designed to scale the use of online learning in partner institutions by adapting the courses for their teacher professional development. As such, new courses will be added to the platform regularly in collaboration with partner institutions. The courses in this platform are short (ideally designed to be completed in about two to five hours) and addresses the just-in-time learning requirements of the stakeholders in education and training, especially policymakers and teachers. It may be noted that the platform does not have a course authoring tool, and all courses need to be developed elsewhere before porting these on the platform. The platform provides a robust mechanism for course delivery, feedback, and measuring return on investments for COL and partner institutions.

COL's new platform is a learning and analytics platform with a multi-course feature, and compliance with accessibility guidelines. The platform feature enables institutions to:

- Capture feedback from all users who have completed the courses on the portal;
- Assign and maintain a legacy system for certificates with LinkedIn share option; and
- Collaborate with multiple institutes and assist monitoring of the learners progress through an institutional dashboard.

Platform Features

The new learning portal:

- Is accessible on all types of devices (smartphone, tablets, laptops and desktops).
- All courses are delivered in HTML5 and requires only a browser with Internet access.
- Comprise features that enables the course management team to track learner progress, analyse data, manage learners, manage content, and roll out surveys to gather data.

Advantages for Partner Institutions

- Free to use the platform
- Recognised as a partner on the platform (sharing institutional logo)
- Possibility of joint certificate for users registered from the partner institution
- Possibility of collaborative development of need-based courses that can be used by anyone
- Commitment to promoting open educational resources (OER)

Advantages for the Users

- Just-in-time learning
- Short courses for skills development
- Flexible learning

- Free certificate
- Competence-based, quality assured courses
- Professional development
- In-built mechanism to share credential on LinkedIn

Course Design and Development

Courses offered on the platform follow the principles of online course development and are developed through collaborative efforts of subject matter experts, instructional designers and online learning developers, who take care to check the learning content, illustrate these in ways to help in learning and retention. Normally, the courses take a “tell and test” approach and are designed for motivated learners, who have less time to understand a concept or develop a skill and implement new learning in practice. As such, the courses can have video, audio, text, graphics, animation, and interactive quizzes. The course development process follows a rigorous process indicated in Figure 1.

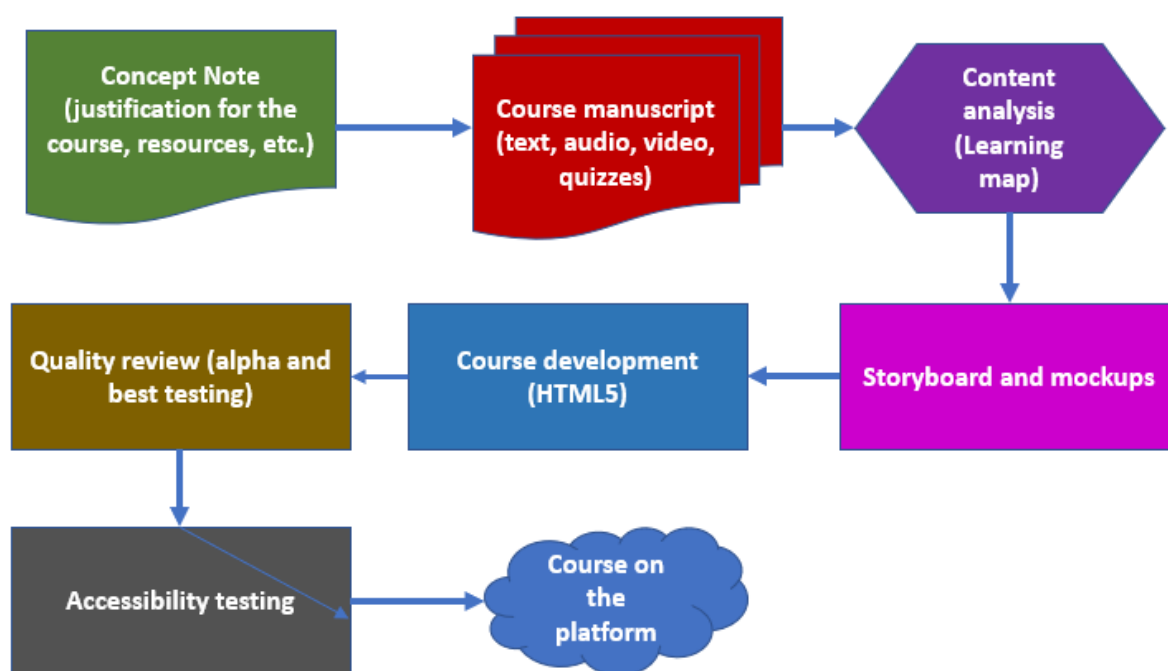


Figure 1: Quality process for COLCommons

Steps in Collaboration

There are two levels of collaboration: (i) supporting the platform as a partner and encouraging teachers and students to use the courses, (ii) using the available courses for joint certification and developing new courses to offer on the platform. Collaboration can be at both levels or just at the first level. In order to collaborate and use the platform, COL would expect the following steps to be carried out by interested institutions.

Step 1: Expression of interest

A letter from the head of the institution may be sent to President & CEO of COL using the template in Annex-1. The letter must indicate the following:

- i) Level of collaboration
- ii) Name, designation and contact details of a senior official, who will be the contact person for the platform related activities with COL.
- iii) Clear commitment to OER for sharing of materials.
- iv) Provide an overview of the institution, its legal status and explain how the platform will support its strategy to staff development and integration of technology in teaching and learning. This can form an annex to the letter.

Collaboration shall be encouraged with publicly funded organisations, and those with an existing partnership arrangement with COL. All other educational institutions shall be considered based on their commitment to share educational materials with open license.

Step 2: Signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU)

Upon receipt of the expression of interest, COL will review the proposal, and if required discuss with the nominated official, and aim to finalise the MoU (Annex-2) for signature of COL and the institution. After review, COL may decide not to collaborate with an institution without assigning any reason.

Step 3: Listing as Partner on the platform

Once the MoU is signed, COL will require the following details to add the organisation to the platform and announce the partnership:

- i) Logo of the institution
- ii) Digital signature of the authorised person (if adopting the platform for joint-certificate)

COL will also provide access to the nominated person to the institutional log to monitor the use of the platform by users from their institution.

Step 4: Promotion of the courses

Upon finalisation of the MoU and once the partner institution is added to the platform, the institution is expected to promote the courses and platform amongst its staff and students. Some of the courses can be used as learning resources in existing courses, while most can be used for professional development of teachers.

Step 5: Monitoring use

It will be the responsibility of the nominated official (coordinator) from the partner institutions to monitor the use of the courses by users from their institution. COL will organise regular meetings of the coordinators to discuss matters of common interest and how to optimise the use of the platform.

Annex-1: Template for Expression of Interest

Date

To
President and CEO
Commonwealth of Learning
4710 Kingsway
Suite 2500
Burnaby BC V5H 4M2
CANADA

Sub: Expression of Interest to collaborate and support COLcommon.org

Dear

This has reference to the platform COL has launched to offer short courses for supporting students and teachers develop 21st century skills for teaching, learning and employability. [Name of the Institution] is interested to collaborate with COL to promote the platform by encouraging our students and teachers to use the courses on the platform/ by adopting the courses for joint certification and develop new courses in future (strike one that is not applicable).

The contact details of the coordinator nominated to liaise with COL is as follows:

Name:
Designation:
Email:
Phone:

A short note on [Name of the Institution] is attached, which gives an overview about the organisation and our strategy to use the courses on the COLCommons platform. [Name of the Institution] is committed to sharing of educational resources.

Yours sincerely,

(Name and Signature of
Head of Institution)

Encl: as above

Annex-2: Template for Memorandum of Understanding

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING
AND
< FULL NAME OF THE ORGANISATION >

This MOU is made between the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), having its office at 4710 Kingsway, Suite 2500, Burnaby, British Columbia V5H 4M2, Canada, an inter-governmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1987 (hereinafter called "COL") of the one part and

the <full organization name and a brief description about its legal status – e.g. "established by Government of..... in xx"> having its office at < full address of the organisation> (hereinafter called <acronym of organisation> of the other part.

WHEREAS the <acronym of organisation> is charged with the responsibility in <country name or other region etc.> to undertake, aid, promote, and coordinate <the main mandate of the organisation>.

WHEREAS COL has the objective to encourage the development and sharing of open and distance education, knowledge, resources and technologies and to assist Commonwealth member governments to benefit from this.

NOW THEREFORE, COL and the <acronym of organisation >, collectively referred to as the Parties, inspired by their common objectives to promote and accelerate the use of short online courses for teaching, learning and employability, have decided to enter into this MOU and agree as herein contained:

Objective and Purpose

- 1.1 The objective of this MOU is to promote the use and adoption of the courses on COL's short course platform (<https://colcommons.org>).
- 1.2 To this end, the Parties agree jointly to explore and coordinate activities of mutual interest that will be implemented in conformity with the regulations and policies of both Parties. The purpose is to establish a formal basis of cooperation between the Parties in a collaborative effort to promote the use of the course platform (<https://colcommons.org>) through information sharing, and knowledge delivery and capacity building.
- 1.3 Parties are committed to work together in the spirit of good governance, accountability, avoidance of fraud and gender equality in promotion of online learning.

Mutual Interests

- 2.1 Without limitation to the generality of the objective(s), the possible areas of collaboration may include:
 - 2.1.1 adoption of the courses on the platform to integrate these in existing curricular offering;
 - 2.1.2 use the courses for professional development of teachers and staff;
 - 2.1.3 use the courses as stackable credential for its stakeholders;
 - 2.1.4 develop new courses collaboratively as open educational resources for offering through the platform; and

Assignment or Transfer to Third Parties

- 3.1 The responsibilities of the Parties under this MOU are not assignable or transferable without the prior written consent of both parties. Any attempt to assign or transfer, including by operation of law, is void unless there is the prior written approval of both Parties.

Financial Arrangements

- 4.1 The Parties concur that they will each use their own funds or funding sources to perform their respective responsibilities under this MOU. This MOU does not represent any commitment with regard to funding on the part of either Party. Financial terms of each party on identified activities or projects shall be addressed in the specific agreements that will be executed to undertake such projects.

Amendments

- 5.1 The terms and conditions of this MOU may only be changed by mutually agreed written amendment signed between the Parties.

Duration and Termination

- 6.1 This MOU shall enter into force on the latest date of its signature by the authorised signatories of both Parties and shall remain in effect for a period of <insert number of years> years or until the platform is active, unless terminated by either Party with advance written notice to the other. It shall terminate sixty (60) days after receipt of such notice. The MOU is renewable for a further <insert number of years>-year term upon written mutual consent of both Parties, to be received one month prior to the expiry of the initial term. The renewal can be initiated by either party.
- 6.2 Notwithstanding its termination, the provisions of this MOU shall survive to the extent necessary to permit an orderly settlement of accounts between the Parties and to bring ongoing activities to a proper close with the least disruption to the pending work.
- 6.3 However, termination of this MOU shall not effect any written agreement the Parties enter into unless such specific agreement also is terminated in terms of the provisions therein.
- 6.4 The Parties confirm that they shall exercise good faith efforts to resolve any dispute between the Parties arising from or in connection with this MOU through mutual negotiation and consultations.

Confidentiality

- 7.1 Each Party agrees to treat with the utmost confidentiality all documents, information and/or data obtained in the course of the execution of this MOU and deemed confidential by the other Party or which due to the nature of such information should be treated as confidential and shall not disclose same without the prior written confirmation of the party that disclosed the information unless compelled by a lawful order of a court of law or as a result of binding legislation. Each Party shall return to the other all the Confidential Information received from the other Party and any copies thereof promptly upon request and one copy may be retained for archival purpose. All confidential information submitted by one Party to the other shall remain the property of the Party from which it originates.

Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights

- 8.1 All information submitted by one Party to the other shall remain the property of the Party from which it originates
- 8.2 Content developed for the platform by either Party shall be available under a Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike (CC BY-SA) license. A copy this license is available at: [Creative Commons — Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International — CC BY-SA 4.0](#).
- 8.3 No patent, copyright or other intellectual property rights are transferred by this Agreement nor is any right or license under any invention or patent granted hereunder.

Warranty

- 9.1 Each party warrants that it has the right to make the disclosures under this Agreement. No other warranties are made by either party under this Agreement and all information exchanged under this Agreement is provided “as is”. The disclosing party shall not be in any way responsible for any decisions or commitments made by receiving party in relying on the disclosing party's information.

The Parties hereto, each acting through its duly authorised representative, have signed this MOU in two (2) originals in the English language.

Signed on behalf of the
< full organization name >

.....
< full name of the signing authority >
< full title of the signatory >

Place:
Date:

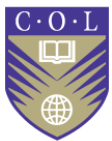
(COL ref: MOU #xx)

Signed on behalf of
Commonwealth of Learning

.....
Doris McEachern
Director: Finance, Administration & Human
Resources

Place:
Date:

~End of Document~



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Web: www.col.org