

# Quality Assurance in Coursera Courses

Offering classes that provide high-quality learning experiences for our students and that accurately reflect the standing and image of our partner institutions is a top priority for us and our partners. At the same time, we want to encourage pedagogical innovation and new methods of teaching among our instructors. This document outlines some processes that will help us jointly ensure course quality and mitigate technological risk, while giving instructors the flexibility to experiment with their teaching pedagogy.

## A. Course description pages:

1. Before a class is publicly announced, the instructor will fill up a course description page, containing brief descriptions of the course content / syllabus, the course format, recommended background, and so on.
2. University staff (including administrators, instructional designers, platform experts, etc., depending on the exact composition of the university team) will review the course description page together with the instructors, looking out for unsupported features, potentially risky technology, copy-paste mistakes from existing class syllabi, etc., and making sure the class as described conforms with university standards.
3. University staff will inform Coursera staff once the course description page is ready to go live. Coursera staff will then review the course description page and publish it on [www.coursera.org](http://www.coursera.org). After this point, students can view the course description page and sign up for courses that are open for enrollment; university staff will also be able to make edits to the page without going through Coursera staff.

## B. Course Development Agreements:

The timelines below will apply to all classes whose first session starts in June 2013 or later:

4. At least two months before the scheduled start date of the class, the instructor will fill up an electronic Course Development Agreement (CDA). Among other items, this will contain:
  - a. Detailed descriptions of class content, assessments and grading policies.
  - b. 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.
  - c. A full list of any external software (e.g., Google docs, 3rd-party assessment tools) that instructor intends to use.
  - d. A commitment to prepare a specified amount of course material in advance (see C6-8).
5. Instructor, university staff, and Coursera will jointly sign the CDA. The CDA has to be agreed upon and signed by all three parties at least two months before the scheduled start date of the class. If the CDA is not signed within two months of the scheduled start date of the class, the class will be postponed (barring exceptional circumstances, at the

university's and Coursera's joint discretion).

### **C. Early uploading of course material:**

The timelines below will apply to all classes whose first session starts in May 2013 or later:

6. Instructor and university staff will jointly upload a minimum amount of course content at least one month before the scheduled start date of the class. This content includes:
  - a. First week's lecture videos
  - b. Descriptions of course syllabus / grading policy / course logistics within the class
  - c. Navigation bar
  - d. Welcome announcement / email, scheduled to be sent on the first day of class
  - e. First quiz, first programming assignment, and first peer assessment, if applicable
  - f. A list of any unusual needs, including, most especially, any external software that will be used in the class, including access to the relevant integration code for our engineering team to review.
7. Instructor and university staff will jointly upload two weeks' worth of course content at least two weeks before the scheduled start date of the class. In addition to the above (C6), this content includes:
  - a. Second week's lecture videos
  - b. Any assessments used in the second week
8. If at the one month or two week mark the requisite course content is not uploaded, or the quality of the uploaded course content does not reflect the standards of the university, as agreed upon by the university and Coursera, the class start date will be postponed.
9. Instructor and university staff will ensure that the material uploaded in C6 and C7 are in compliance with the relevant copyright laws and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. The latter can be found in more detail in our [support documentation](#), and is laid out formally in the agreement between the university and Coursera. In particular, while subtitles and platform accessibility are Coursera's responsibility, instructors and university staff are responsible for providing alternative text for images in quizzes and homeworks, and additional accommodations upon request, as specified in the agreement / documentation.

### **D. On-going class monitoring:**

10. Instructor and university staff will make best-effort attempts at catching issues with course content while the course is running. This includes previewing all lecture videos and testing all assessments before they go live to students.
11. Coursera will monitor the discussion forums and student help-desk to check for and address platform-wide technical issues. These include technical errors related to the core course platform.
12. In the first iteration of the course (or in iterations that differ substantively from previous iterations), instructor and university staff will monitor the discussion forums to check for and address course-specific issues. These include potential concerns about course

quality, errors related to the course material, and problems with any external tools that are implemented in the course.

13. In subsequent iterations of the course, if the course material has not changed from one iteration of the course to the next, Coursera will monitor the discussion forums to check for remaining course-specific issues, and escalate these to the instructor and university staff as appropriate.
14. Coursera will develop a centralized forum report aggregation system to allow instructors and university staff to see and escalate the outstanding issues across their classes. Likewise, Coursera staff will be able to escalate outstanding course-related issues to the instructors and university staff.

**E. Post-course feedback:**

15. Coursera will work with university partners to develop a system for students to give feedback (quantitative and qualitative) at the end of the course, to be used by instructors and university staff for future improvements to the course and university processes, and to be used by Coursera to enhance our best-practices guides and for future improvements to the platform.