

FutureLearn

Course Builder Guide



UConn

**Fostering Learning through Interaction
and Engagement**

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LEARNING THROUGH INTERACTION AND ENGAGEMENT

What are Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

Massive Open Online Courses are courses or programs available to anyone with a computer and internet connection. Since they are typically free, and can be accessed globally, they often have many learners in each course, sometimes as many as thousands, which is why they are called massive. These courses are offered for a defined period of time, usually lasting 3-6 weeks in duration, and are provided free to the learner, unless the learner wants to earn a certificate of completion, micro-credential, or bundle several courses together.

The University of Connecticut will be developing MOOCs and offering these open enrollment courses with our partner, FutureLearn. FutureLearn is a UK based social learning platform that fosters learner interaction and engagement through learner discussion, interaction and comments. Most FutureLearn courses are completed on a mobile device. Partnering with FutureLearn provides UConn an opportunity to showcase and amplify faculty scholarly expertise to a broad audience of learners to help build UConn's global presence and academic reputation, and strengthen awareness of faculty expertise and renown.

The goals of UConn MOOC offerings are to:

- Expand UConn's core academic strengths and areas of academic reputation to a global learner audience
- Enhance UConn's global academic brand in collaboration with UConn Global and UConn Schools and Colleges
- Provide a convenient platform for faculty to disseminate broader research impacts
- Create awareness and promote cross-enrollment opportunities within the global learner community of related UConn graduate certificate and degree programs
- Develop new relationships with other universities to create possible partnerships on course development

In our first year as a FutureLearn partner, we will launch a two-course series on [*Anti-Black Racism in the United States*](#) beginning March 12th. The Office of Continual and Professional Education is targeting to build 2-3 courses this year, and build up to 3-5 per year thereafter, with unlimited course reruns following initial course development and launch.

To understand FutureLearn's approach to learning click the link below.

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360033416894-The-ideas-behind-our-approach-to-learning>

MOOC Course Selection Process

The main pipeline for open enrollment MOOC courses will be through dean or department head invitation to showcase faculty work and the colleges' accomplishments. The provost office will convene a review committee of deans of the colleges and the director of the Office of Continuing and Professional Education, who together will select which course or topics are suited for MOOC development.

The committee will consider each dean's recommendations of 1-3 content area ideas that reflect cutting edge research or areas of focus that should be shared with a broad audience. The committee will base its review and decision on a set of variables and conditions that:

- Meet the interests and needs of FutureLearn's learner population
- Provide an impartial assessment of the proposed content's value and level of notability for the university
- Assess the likelihood the course may generate learners' interest in other learning opportunities at UConn

Additionally, there will be a Call for Proposal process where faculty can submit to the review committee their interest in creating a FutureLearn course by answering the questions below.

- What is the working title for the course?
- Who is the target audience? Including information such as: potential career stage, reasons for taking the course, industry sector, personal development
- What subjects are covered in the course, including 4-6 bullet points outlining what the course will cover
- What is the projected duration of the course – 3, 4 or 6 weeks?
- Why should learners join this course? - Explain in 5-10 sentences what the course is about and why it's important
- What are the learning outcomes of this course?
- What do you bring to the course content? Your research focus, data or other information you want to share

Introduction to FutureLearn

Thank you for your interest in learning more about FutureLearn and how to develop and build open courses using FutureLearn's design approach. Reading through this guide and linking to the many resources provided, will help you to understand the FutureLearn development process and design approach, so you'll be able to create a high-quality, engaging course for learners.

FutureLearn’s design approach is built on a social learning pedagogy. It incorporates storytelling, videos, articles, case studies and media to support conversation within each course. Learners are encouraged to add comments, insights, or questions related to the content directly in the course, promoting increased dialog between learners. This approach increases learner engagement and interaction. On average, 43% of learners who start a course and actively participate make a comment.

The link below provides an overview of FutureLearn’s pedagogy and design approach.

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360033533834-Learning-design-guidelines>

FutureLearn has completed extensive research on their learner base, identifying three distinct learner cluster profiles:

- Work and Study—learners motivated to enhance career prospects
- Personal Life—learners motivated to affect/address a problem in their life
- Leisure—learners motivated by the love of learning, curiosity, and interest in a hobby or community activity

These learner profiles have been further separated into 7 archetypes - Advancers, Explorers, Preparers, Fixers, Flourishers, Hobbyists, and Vitalisers. Additional information can be found on the links below:

<https://about.futurelearn.com/research-insights/learners-part-1>

<https://about.futurelearn.com/research-insights/learners-part-2-work-study-archetypes>

These attribute-based profiles are one factor used to determine interest and demand in potential course content areas. The other key factor is FutureLearn’s existing course offerings and how new courses in similar areas can provide new insights and differentiate themselves. In the Course Outline (see below for more detail) there is a tab that allows you to map out learner personas, which can be very helpful in building a course with the learner in mind.

Developing a FutureLearn Course

FutureLearn courses are comprised of course weeks, which include activities that are blocks of learning made up of two or more steps. Steps are type of learning deliveries, such as, article, video, audio, discussion, poll, quiz, test, exercise.

FutureLearn offers several types of courses to its learners. These include, short courses, professional certificate, short premium course, microcredential and rapid response. This guide focuses on what UConn will initially develop and offer, which are short courses.

Initially, using the recommended FutureLearn templates to help you plan and write your course may seem different from how you’ve developed other online courses. However, by reviewing the material here and using the many resources FutureLearn provides to

assist faculty in building a course, you'll quickly learn the ins and outs of a FutureLearn course and be ready to start planning your course.

The first step to create a FutureLearn course is to complete the [Course Outline](#) to plan your course, including content, learning objectives, activities and steps.

See the link below for an overview of how to use the course outline.

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360014365977-Course-Outline-Guide>

After completing the Course Outline, and submitting it to FutureLearn for review, the writing phase of the course begins with development of the Course Manuscript. Building on what the outline identifies, additional content, videos and links to external resources, and any other assets are added here. The manuscript is what will be copied into the FutureLearn platform to build out the course. Click the link below to see a Course Manuscript template.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eJLRIfyFejXdzQS1CY4kBIC3InIzFWXrp8eG4RNMpVE/edit>

Designing and building a FutureLearn course follows a specific approach and process to ensure standardization across courses by partners, and for quality assurance of all courses. The link below shows a quality assurance checklist beginning with course design including learning outcomes and objectives and outlines how to add activities and steps to the course.

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360034579373-Course-design-1-1-1-5->

Course Examples

Now that you've gained insight into how FutureLearn courses are developed and the basic structure of a course, it would be helpful, before starting to develop your own FutureLearn course, to review several courses that show different levels of content offering, and to peruse the most successful FutureLearn courses, in terms of number of learners. (Please note not all courses are always open and available at all times.)

- Lighter content offering: [University of Leeds, WWI Heroism: Through Art and Film](#)
- Medium (more video than text): [University of Michigan, Storytelling for Social Change](#)
- More in-depth text content: [University of Glasgow, History of Slavery in the British Caribbean](#)

Most Popular Courses

Below is a list of courses that have historically performed well based on enrollment and revenue numbers. They are good examples of learning design on the FutureLearn platform.

- [Fashion and Sustainability](#), University of the Arts London
- [Genealogy](#), University of Strathclyde
- [Understanding Autism](#), University of Kent
- [The Many Faces of Dementia](#), University College London
- [Forensic Archaeology and Anthropology](#), Durham University
- [Management and Leadership: Growing as a Manager](#), the Open University
- [Food as Medicine](#), Monash University
- [Rome: A Virtual Tour of the Ancient City](#), University of Reading

Here are additional examples from US partners of top courses.

- [Programming for Everybody: Python Data Structures](#), University of Michigan
- [Digital Product Management](#), Darden School of Business, University of Virginia
- [COVID-19: Effective Nursing in Times of Crisis](#), Johns Hopkin University

FutureLearn Steps

Listed below are a few of the step choices you can use to share your content.

Articles

Article steps are any plain text, typically 500-800 words with a learner reading time of 5-20 minutes. Article steps are a core component of FutureLearn step types, though not every article needs to be at a maximum number of words of original content. An article step can also be an excerpt from an external source such as case studies, literary extracts, short essays, or a summary introducing an external link. Articles can include images, photographs, diagrams, slides etc.

See the link below to learn about Article step development.

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360033302894-Article-step-guidance>

Discussion

The main purpose of a discussion step is to facilitate peer to peer learning through conversation and discussion, so these steps should be designed with that in mind. Questions should generate discussion rather than a list of answers. Click the link below for more information.

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360003211957-Discussion-step-guidance>

Videos

You can record your own original videos that are no longer than 5 minutes in duration. Or, you can use existing videos from your own programs or lectures and edit them to meet your current content needs. Linking externally to other videos, if you don't have copyright permission to share it directly on the FutureLearn platform, is also acceptable. When linking to external videos, YouTube is discouraged because though most learners are able to access it, not all learners globally can. In this case, it is important to

summarize a YouTube video, or any other external video, when providing a link, so learners can read a summary if they can't access the video.

To learn about all step types and how to use them in your course, click the link below.

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360035545053-Best-practice-for-individual-step-types>

Summary of a FutureLearn Course

- FutureLearn courses vary in depth and length of content and can be 12 steps total (6 steps per week, 2 weeks) to 150+ (25 steps per week, 6 weeks +). The amount of content within this range is entirely up to the content expert to decide as appropriate for the topic and audience.
- New, original written content by the educator can be as much or as little as the content expert thinks is necessary, and is willing to provide. Any original content in article format is valuable to the learner, but educators aren't expected to provide multiple articles of 500-1000 words per week.
- Most courses direct learners to read or watch content outside the platform at some point, so it is important to make sure the links are accessible and (where possible) not behind a paywall.
- If linking externally to a reading list, including an introductory summary to provide context is helpful. Alternatively, ask learners to read at least one of the listed pieces and share their thoughts in a discussion step. There is no copyright issue if you are linking out to sources rather than quoting them in full or importing media directly into the course.
- Quoting from external sources within a course is acceptable.
- Links to external articles are acceptable with a short introduction of a few sentences for each article
- Example of article step introducing a primary source and linking to it externally (University of Michigan course): <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/storytelling-for-social-change/2/steps/1025281>
- Example of article step using quotation from primary source (University of Glasgow course): <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/slavery-in-the-british-caribbean/1/steps/902021>
- Use of copyright on the FutureLearn platform should follow UConn's own copyright policy, but this reference article may be helpful. <https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360034515833-What-is-FutureLearn-s-Copyright-Guidance->
- With permission from the copyright holders/publishers and attribution, you can also import full articles/video/audio from other sources directly in the course.

FutureLearn has created a 3-week course on *How to Create a Great FutureLearn Course: A Guide for Partners*. <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/create-futurelearn-courses/8> it explores what goes into making a great online course, while allowing you to develop your own alongside it. This course may be helpful for you, but it's certainly not needed after reviewing this guide and the many resource links. (Please notify OCPE if you'd like to register for the course.)

Citations when Using Other Material

Any content that is not original and included on the FutureLearn platform and part of the course, must have permissions to be used. Any citation style you like can be used within the course, there is no specific style required, although it is recommended to provide links where possible.

Listed below are some options of which content can be cited on the platform.

Content can be quoted, and excerpts from books or articles is acceptable. Paragraphs from a book or referring to a book and quoting relevant passages is acceptable, as are images, audio, videos, or other content such as poems or songs all require permission. For more information, click the link below.

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360033969694-How-do-I-create-citations-references-and-bibliographies->

Office of Continuing and Professional Education

The Office of Continuing and Professional Education (OCPE) is available to support you in solidifying your course topic and subject areas and determining the course duration. This high-level information are the minimum requirements needed to submit a course proposal to FutureLearn.

OCPE will serve as the liaison between you and FutureLearn. Additionally, a project schedule will be outlined when a proposal is submitted to FutureLearn to ensure you know what tasks you need to complete and when. OCPE can help you stay on track through the development process, and provide guidance and support around the FutureLearn process.

Once a course proposal is submitted and accepted by FutureLearn, you can begin to work on the Course Outline. The outline allows you to plan the course, building activities and steps that align to course learning objectives.

Development Support

eCampus is available, if you're interested, to help you complete the outline before it is submitted to FutureLearn for review. After completing the outline and making any recommended changes from FutureLearn, you can begin to write the course manuscript.

Once the course manuscript is complete and all content is developed, including assessments and audio and video files, eCampus will use your course manuscript to

build the course in the FutureLearn platform. Once the course is completed in the FutureLearn platform, it is reviewed by FutureLearn and you will have opportunity to make edits or changes working with eCampus.

Depending on the complexity of your audio and video development needs, a media producer from EdTech is available to help you define how you may want to approach this. Additionally, a review of audio and video files will be completed to ensure the highest quality delivery.

Your Time Commitment to Build a FutureLearn Course

The development timeline for creating a FutureLearn course is dependent on many variables such as the length of the course, how much content is available, and how much time you have to work on it. It could take anywhere between 2 - 6 months for a 2-12 week course.

Typically, a full project lifecycle of a new FutureLearn course, including an initial orientation to the development process, is about 3-6 months. A weekly time commitment varies dependent on the development stage, with less time on the front-end when first getting up-to-speed, and more time in the build phase when you begin to write the course in the manuscript. You should plan for between 3-8 hours per week. When planning the course development schedule, we will consider other commitments you may have. Specifically, in the week prior to launch, after the course is reviewed on the FutureLearn platform, there may be several edits or minor additions needed that will require your availability.

Resources and Links

These collected links are provided to help you to begin to navigate the information you may need to start to create and build your course. The resources below can all be found on the FutureLearn Partners Page. <https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us> Feel free to explore it further as there is a lot of helpful information available on it.

Introduction to Designing a Course in FutureLearn

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360033533834-Learning-design-guidelines>

The FutureLearn Approach – Telling Stories

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360033416894-The-ideas-behind-our-approach-to-learning>

Using the FutureLearn Course Outline

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360014365977-Course-Outline-Guide>

Writing Learning Outcomes

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360034226793-Learning-outcomes>

Overview of all Available Step Types on FutureLearn

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360035545053-Best-practice-for-individual-step-types>

What are Activities?

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360014371777-Activities-Guide>

Activity Template

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1LTVbiYpryEoWhYdLRrvtXMRMTSLimMxB_DiJT_vP7b0/edit#gid=1053971389

Building Course Weeks with Activities and Steps

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360026747873-How-do-I-add-steps-activities-and-weeks->

Guidance on all Steps

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/sections/360004980333-Step-types>

Aligning Activities and Steps to Learning Objectives

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360034584453-Structure-4-1-4-7->

Course Design

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360034579373-Course-design-1-1-1-5->

Designing Week 1

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360034583333-Week-1-2-1-2-7->

How to Create a Great FutureLearn Week

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360034230093-How-to-create-a-great-FutureLearn-week>

Tips to provoke conversation in your course to engage learners and build discussion

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360006379697-Learning-Design-Bulletin-Provoking-Conversation-Issue-1-March-2020>

Finding Graphics

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360034154554-How-do-I-source-and-add-good-course-images->

Video Step Guide

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360033836413-Video-step-guidance>

Audio Step Guide

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360034572893-Audio-step-guidance->

Producing a Video When Working Remotely

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360007388638-How-do-I-produce-high-quality-media-while-working-remotely->

How to Add a Poll

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360003432037-Poll-step-guidance>

Quiz and Test Guide

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360031675393-Quiz-and-test-step-guidance>

Designing an Accessible Course

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360034458073-How-do-I-make-my-course-more-accessible-to-Learners->

QA Process Responsibilities for FutureLearn and UConn

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360034749353-Quality-Assurance-QA->

Administrative Processes

In supporting you and the development of a FutureLearn course, OCPE will work closely with FutureLearn to meet project requirements to ensure course success. If interested, the links below outline some of these processes.

Submitting the course proposal to inform FutureLearn of new course

development <https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360014159598-When-and-how-do-I-submit-a-course-proposal->

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360014046997-What-are-the-next-steps-after-submitting-my-proposal->

How to use the Course Creator – a content management system – to support you in the course design and build process (you can use the Course Creator or the eLearning Developer working with you may choose to use it)

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/categories/360001973014-Building-your-Course>

Timeline and Workflow for FutureLearn and Faculty Partner to Create a Course

<https://partners.futurelearn.com/hc/en-us/articles/360025970593-What-is-the-workflow-for-creating-and-publishing-a-short-course->