

Online Undergraduate Course Initiative Report (OUCI) 2015-2016

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1: Online Course Development

This past academic year the following online undergraduate courses have been launched through the OUCI program:

Division	Course
FAS	• Introduction to History and Philosophy of Science (HPS100H1)
FAS	• Introduction to Neuroscience (HMB200H1)
FAS	• Religion and Popular Culture (RLG233H)
FAS	• The Practice of Statistics I (STA220H1)
FASE	• Introductory Chemistry from a Materials Perspective (APS164)
UTM	• Environmental Politics in Canada (POL/ENV250Y)

Six new courses are currently in development:

FAS	Introduction to Medical Genetics (MGY250)
FAS	Principles of Economics for Non-Specialists (ECO105)
FAS	Tibetan I (RLG 261)
FAS	Tibetan II (RLG262)
FAS	Intro Sanskrit 1 (RLG260)
FAS	Intro Sanskrit 2 (RLG263)

2. Student Feedback

In the fall of 2015 an integrated Course Evaluation component was implemented for courses flagged as 'Fully Online' in the ROSI system. A customized set of three items was presented to all students in these courses. In the fall semester there were 15 undergraduate courses in divisions where the Course Evaluation framework is implemented that served as a pilot for integrated data collection regarding effectiveness of support for online learners. Feedback was collected from 3501 respondents across all 15 courses, with an average response ratio of 37%. The aggregated results are as follows:

Course Evaluation Survey Item	Median
1. Online tools used to support course activities, like accessing content, sharing with peers, assignments, etc., were easy for me to use.	3.8
2. Technological and online requirements were articulated clearly at the beginning of the course.	4.1
3. Skills for how to learn in an online environment were supported throughout the course.	3.7

Based on this feedback we will provide additional supports to instructors regarding scaffolding development of online learning literacy and technical support for course tool use at the CDI. Particular attention will be paid to these domains during the new course pre-flight checks.

3. Instructor Feedback

A debriefing session with seven new instructors surfaced observations regarding both successes and challenges. Feedback regarding areas that were found to be challenging is as follows:

- Available synchronous portal tools were found to be cumbersome to use. In addition to limitations of functionality, some instructors had difficulty with the learning curve for facilitating webinars. Others avoided synchronous tools specifically due to difficulty in learner access and launch process using java-based platform.
- Communication with students regarding their expectations for online course requirements is challenging. Raising their awareness of active participation and time commitments is essential. In some courses students were found to be resistant to social/interactive requirements.
- Some instructors described issues with contextual or situational factors and the impact on course social norms. Consideration of relationship of an online section to parallel face-to-face sections was noted as important. Many students attend in class for the social/cohort experience although enrolled in online section. Another factor is non-participation of accommodation of students who are taking courses for credit-no-credit only. This option is offered as encouragement for students to expand possible course choices to new areas of interest.

4. Integration with eCampus Ontario Initiatives

This was the third year of UToronto participation in the provincial Shared Online Course Funding (ShOC) program, an initiative that has provided an ongoing opportunity to leverage MTCU resourcing to develop enhanced online learning resources. A total of two online courses and eight modules projects rolled out for students in the fall of 2015. For the coming year, funding has been awarded to develop four online courses and six modules projects. The module projects represent a breadth of discipline areas, including Engineering, Aboriginal Education, Data Visualization, Physics and Medicine.

In addition to regular meetings with design teams, customized faculty development programming has been provided to support design teams in the design and implementation process for ShOC-funded projects. For the current cohort of projects these have included a mix of online and face-to-face events:

Faculty Development Event	Attendance
Module Design Day	18
Video Strategies Workshop	14
Content Re-Use and Packaging Webinar	5
Accessible Web Design Webinar	13

Participant evaluations of programming showed respondents consistently ranking their experience as "Very good" and "Good." In the feedback there are several comments regarding the value of being guided through a backwards design process to align learning outcomes/activities/assessment components. Both course and modules teams find instructional design support to be key to advancing their projects to meet pedagogical goals.

To date a total of 13 courses have been added to the new eCampus Ontario portal, which promotes the courses to other students in the province who may be interested in taking them for credit transfer back

to their home institution. Online Learning Strategies is currently responsible for entering and maintaining course information in the eCampus database.

The screenshot shows the eCampusOntario website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the eCampusOntario logo, language options (EN, FR), and buttons for Register and Sign In. Below the navigation bar, there are search filters for various institutions. The main content area displays two course listings:

- CSC 108: Introduction to Computer Programming**: A course description focusing on the structure of computers, the computing environment, and programming in a language such as Python. It includes details about program structure, practical sections, and requirements.
- ECO 105: Introduction to Economics for Non-Specialists**: A course description covering fundamentals for consumers, businesses, and citizens. It details microeconomics (cost/benefit analysis, gains from trade, price coordination, competition/monopoly, efficiency/equity tradeoffs, government/market failures, environmental policies, income/wealth distributions) and macroeconomics (GDP growth, unemployment, inflation, monetary/fiscal policies, business cycles, exchange rates, government deficits/debt, globalization).

A new email address for online.learning@utoronto.ca has been established to as a contact point for queries and a common landing page for application information has also been put in place. Through collaboration with divisional registrars a common process for students to request for off-site exam arrangements has been implemented. Updates to the UtorID activation process for remote students is also an active file, with consultation on a new project to enhance student experience currently in progress in collaboration with the other units in ITS who are responsible for identity management processes. Improvement and integration of services to support online students and improve user experience are a continuing priority.