

Course Repository Policy Working Group (CORP) report

A group consisting of Nalini Singh (chair); Andrew Drummond, Costis Dallas, Heather MacNeil, Kristen Atkins (Masters student) and Asen Ognyanov (PhD student) met on March 20, 2014.

Terms of reference

The group reviewed the Terms of Reference drafted by Nalini (see end of this document). People believed that this matter was not the purview of Programs Committee, but that it was an administrative issue for the Dean's Office. Therefore, the Terms of Reference should say ... prepare a report for the Dean's Office, not 'prepare a report for Programs Committee'.

Environment

Nalini reported on what a quick scan of the environment showed, and was asked to consult with UTARMS about their policy on retention of course syllabi.

UTARMS on course syllabi

Loryl MacDonald, University Archivist, in an email communication (May 20, 2014) to Nalini stated that: "Unfortunately, the University Archives does not acquire course syllabi; we only acquire calendars. We recommend that academic units maintain these materials themselves for as long as they may require them."

U of T/SGS requirements

U of T and SGS websites revealed policy documents such as '*Policy on Graduate Courses & Other Academic Activities*'; '*Policy on Academic Continuity*' (1) and '*Developing Course Syllabi*' – CTSI. However, nothing that addressed open vs. closed access to course syllabi was found in these documents.

Current practices in other iSchools

A search was done by an Inforum student assistant, looking for the presence of course repositories, and public availability of syllabic content therein, on the websites of Canadian information schools, and on all schools listed at iSchool.org. Very few repositories were found. Of the 9 found, 8 had public access syllabi as follows:

- **OPEN:** University of British Columbia, Dalhousie, U de Montreal, University of Michigan, University of North Carolina, Rutgers, U of Kentucky, U of Tennessee.
- **CLOSED:** University College London has a repository that is not public.

Does ALISE have a position? CAUT?

No mention of access to course syllabi as an issue or position was found.

Thoughts & trends in academic community

There is a project called 'Open Syllabus Project' – <http://opensyllabusproject.org/> whose mandate is to "create the first large-scale online database of university course syllabi as a platform for the development of new research, teaching, and administrative tools." Also, the state of Texas has an education code stating that syllabi for undergraduate courses must be made public on the institution's website (2)

Current needs & uses by various constituencies

We reviewed these needs and uses.

Admin purposes: Faculty reviews & program accreditation; PTR, tenure & promotion; Teaching continuity (new faculty or adjuncts who take on a course previously taught by another

Current students: Deciding what courses to take

Prospective students/recruitment needs: High marketing potential that shows off the iSchool curricular offerings; Giving people material to make informed choices about choosing FI

Alumni: To demonstrate areas of knowledge/expertise/education to future employers

Scholarly community: Research purposes; Curricular comparisons

Access possibilities

Three possibilities were discussed.

- (1) Open to all
- (2) Open to internal community only [current status]
- (3) A mix of open syllabi and syllabi available to the internal iSchool community only.

Current system capability

Nalini has consulted with Alex Dvornyak about the ability of the database which houses the Course Repository to allow a mix of public and password-protected content. The database can accommodate this. The default setting would be 'closed' i.e, password-protected (since past content needs to be password-protected).

Publicly available syllabi would be set to 'open' at the point of uploading content to the repository.

Opting in or opting out

Complete open access to the repository does not give enough flexibility for those instructors who do not wish to make their syllabi open to the public. The sense was that MOST instructors would be fine with public access to the syllabus. The easiest course would therefore be to encourage people to make their syllabi public, but have the choice of password-protected syllabi for those who wish access to be to the iSchool community only.

Recommendations

The group recommends the following:

- Allow open access to syllabi as a default position, with a choice for instructors to opt out.
- If an instructor opts out, then the syllabus will only be visible to logged-in iSchool community members.
- If a request is made by an external person for a non-public syllabus, the requestor must contact the instructor directly.
- The new policy to take effect for 2014/2015. Summer 2014 could be a test period. Material already in the Course Repository would remain password-protected.

– Submitted to the Dean by N. Singh, May 21/14

Sources mentioned

(1) "Instructors are responsible for preparing course syllabi in a manner that supports academic continuity." (pg. 3)

(2) http://www.lawserver.com/law/state/texas/tx-codes/texas_education_code_51-974

Texas Education Code includes information about internet access to course information, and says that institutions of higher education (except medical and dental units) shall make undergraduate course syllabi available to the public on the institution's internet website.

Working group of the Programs Committee to draft policies governing the FI online Course Repository: Terms of Reference

Whereas:

- FI is required to collect syllabi of all courses taught at the Faculty for the purposes of reviews of the Faculty and accreditation of the Faculty's programs, and according to requirements of the School of Graduate Studies, as stated on the FI website;
- The syllabi are currently maintained within a UTORID password-protected, in-house online repository, that only current faculty, students, and staff, students may access;
- The online repository has been in existence since 2010;
- Since the advent of the online repository, there have been no formal policies or informal guidelines that govern access and use of the syllabi contained in the repository; and

Whereas:

- The need of Course Repository policies was raised by N. Singh of Information Services (who currently maintains the repository with the assistance of A. Dvornyak) through the faculty mailing list, and accompanied by a supporting document – *The need for iSchool Course Repository policies: Statement of problem & background information* submitted for discussion (Dec. 5, 2013);
- Dean S. Ross responded by requesting that the Programs Committee convene an ad-hoc working group to draft Course Repository policies, submit them to Programs Committee for discussion and approval, and then to Faculty Council for discussion and approval;
- Programs Committee convened such a group at its meeting of March 6, 2014

Be it resolved that an ad-hoc working group be struck to draft policies governing the use and access of the FI Course Repository

With a mandate to:

- Consider how the needs of the internal and external communities, such as prospective students, who require or desire access to FI course syllabi can best be met through policies governing the use and access of the repository;
- Consult with representatives of the various stakeholder groups who use the repository;
- Take into account the different views regarding access to the contents of the repository;
- Balance principles of open access with respect for intellectual property rights & academic freedom;
- Consider the balance between institutional needs and requirements with the benefits of promoting the intellectual breadth and depth of faculty members' and adjunct instructors' pedagogical interests and practices as embodied in the complex documents that are course syllabi;
- Keep in mind practices and procedures that are system- and maintenance-friendly;
- Create policies that do not subtract from current access limits on the repository
- Prepare a report with recommendations for the Deans' Office

And a proposed membership of:

Costis Dallas, Andrew Drummond, Kristen Atkins, MMSt student, Asen Ognyanov, PhD student, Heather MacNeil, Nalini Singh (chair)