

Penn State Online
Guidelines for Selecting an Online Course Author

The author of an online course is responsible for successfully developing online course content and related activities and assessments with the support of a learning design team. The course author should be highly knowledgeable about the subject matter for the specific course that s/he is assigned to develop, keep current with research in that area, and be able to incorporate pedagogical principles and instructional strategies.

The course author will:

- Partner effectively with a learning design team in the development of the online course
- Create course materials and activities that consider the needs of adult and distant learners while addressing the needs of traditional students
- Be eager to share ideas and collaborate with others
- Possess excellent written and verbal skills (requesting writing samples is highly recommended)
- Have the capacity to write in a conversational tone that is in the active-voice, lively, engaging and incorporates humor where appropriate
- Appreciate the time and energy required to produce online course materials
- Appreciate and use the instructional design process in creating an online course
- Be willing to learn and incorporate learning strategies to make content more engaging and effective
- Effectively develop course objectives and explain concepts, principles, procedures, etc.
- Be accepting of feedback, constructive criticism, and new ideas
- Be comfortable with computer-based technology and be willing to learn about new technologies
- Possess excellent organizational skills
- Manage time effectively, meet scheduled deadlines, and produce a completed course within a specified time period
- Be self-motivated with a strong interest in exploring new ideas and trying new things
- Comply with relevant plagiarism and copyright guidelines

As part of the hiring process, one may want to consider requesting a portfolio of an individual's work to provide evidence of the above competencies. These items could also serve well as the basis for interview questions. In addition, it may be helpful to the interviewee to see copies of any contractual agreements that would ultimately govern the position, as well as examples of the type and quality of work that they would be expected to develop.