COURSE DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

2021

The following course development guidelines must be followed when developing courses for ChildCareTraining.org. These guidelines may be revised to accommodate changes to the website or various types of courses, such as synchronous, hybrid, etc.

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Introduction

Online courses require specific manuscript preparation and formatting to successfully translate to an internet environment. Based on online education research and Child Care Resources' experience developing and teaching distance learning courses, and the standards set by the Montana Early Childhood Project, the following guidelines for course development have been established.

CCR must interact with the course developer before course development begins if the course is intended for ChildCareTraining.org, no matter who is paying for development. Interaction alleviates confusion and allows CCR to consider and respond to proposed course design, thus minimizing misunderstandings and frustration. Course developers are content experts and have many creative ideas. These guidelines cannot anticipate that creativity nor are we necessarily experts on the course content. We have over a decade of experience delivering professional development courses to child care providers both in the classroom and online. Our audience is significantly different than a college audience or other professionals who interact with children such as nurses and social workers.

Proposal

An outline, including learning objectives for each module, must be submitted and approved by Child Care Resources' staff before the course content is developed.

The learning objectives should be appropriately designed for the level of the course and should include measurable outcomes. The course may be written for an entry level audience, such as course that are for new caregivers or introductory courses. Others are intended to build on the prior training and experience of practitioners who have been in the field for a period. In general, advanced courses must be in depth, longer courses and may be offered for academic credit.

Courses must include information that is:

- based on recent research, referenced by recent journal articles/scholarly materials,
- connects research to practice,
- grounded in Montana's Early Standards, and
- relevant and practical enough that learners will put the suggestions into practice.

Courses that appeal to providers' interests and needs are a priority to attract participants.

There are a couple of ways to present your information. Text or PowerPoint.

Text

Research indicates that most people reading nonfiction will cover 20 pages in an hour, decreasing to 10 pages an hour for highly technical information (Hanna, Glowacki-Dudka, and Conceicao-Runlee). Therefore, a three-hour course should be between 21-25 pages in length unless there is a great deal of media included. This allows approximately 90-120 minutes for reading the material and viewing the related media and links, and 60-90 minutes to complete quizzes and activities. The calculation of course length includes the introduction, conclusion, all modules, quizzes and activities. It does not include references, glossary or supplemental material (described below).

PowerPoint

You may choose to present your material via PowerPoint. This will be then turned into either a Moodle book or an H5P presentation.

Below you will find a list of benefits to PowerPoint in your class:

- You may easily embed a voice over for your slides. Adding an audio component enhances distance learning.
- Vibrant images enhance and embed learning.
- It can provide a more interactive format.
- Assists in providing visual examples of the information.

If you choose Power Point, please include vivid images, graphs, or other visual aid on every or nearly every slide. We also encourage 20 or more slides per module for a three-module class. Please have minimal text on the slides and then you may include details and clarification in the notes. Refer here for power point best practices.

If you include text on the slide, please do not repeat it in the notes. These should provide different information.

If accessing media is required, as opposed to being supplemental, this must be stated in the course catalog, so we can market the course with the requirement that participants have access to high speed internet. Media includes video or audio segments. **Media is a highly desirable aspect of online training**. CCR has access to a video catalog of short videos taken in a lab child care setting. CCR can research possibilities to support various training topics during the development phase to enable these resources to be an integral part of learning and course activities.

**We can provide you with examples of the elements listed above, just ask!

Course Formatting

Courses presented in narrative form should be developed in a Word document with one-inch margins and 11-point Calibri font. The document should be single spaced with one space between paragraphs. Use Microsoft Words heading styles to format headings and subheadings.

Courses to be converted to a Moodle book or h5 p format should be developed in Power Point. Each slide requires a heading and vibrant image with a few important messages on the slide. The rest of the text can be added into the notes. In Moodle book format, each slide should have the bulk of the wording in the notes section. Both formats will also include audio. If you are uncomfortable with doing that, we have staff who are happy to record for us.

Introduction

Each course needs a short introduction to the course and one to two modules per training hour. A typical two-hour course would have three to four modules. The introduction section should include a pre-course question that must be answered prior to moving forward to the modules. Each module includes reading content, possibly media, a quiz and one or more activities in which the participant applies the content to practice and reports on that effort. Each course also needs a conclusion.

The introduction should familiarize the student with the purpose and components of the course. If a course requires student preparation or prerequisite knowledge it should be clearly stated in the introduction of the course. If the participants must acquire/read a book to prepare for the course or in conjunction with the course, complete information about the book, author and a link to Amazon.com should be provided in the introduction. If media is a required part of the course, it is necessary to advise learners that they must have access to high-speed internet to participate in the course. If a course contains activities that require a participant to implement a strategy or practice over time and then reflect on the process, it should be stated that the activity requirements make it impossible to complete the course is one sitting.

Synchronous courses should also include a syllabus or schedule for the course, as well as information clearly stating requirements for instructor-student and student-student interaction. CCT has sample guidelines to share with course developers. We can also set multiple schedules to offer several sections of a synchronous course.

The introduction section must include a pre-course question that will be used to provide the course facilitator with information related to the student's understanding and experience with the subject matter prior to taking this course. This is valuable information for interaction between the facilitator and student in future modules.

Modules

Courses should be broken into a minimum of three or four modules for a two to four-hour course (not including the introduction and conclusion). Unless the course involves outside reading. When outside text is involved, the course may require different module breakdowns that follow the text. Each module shall contain clearly stated learning objectives and end with a short summary of that module's content and a transition to the next module.

Each module should contain one or two photographs, videos, or other forms of media related to the course content. If you do not have photographs, CCT can use images from our archives or acquire stock photos. However, if you submit photos or other forms of media for your modules, please be sure to submit a signed model release form for each person or property in the photo.

If you have difficulty obtaining media for a course, please notify Child Care Resources for assistance. We have access to a video library taken in a lab child care program which may have appropriate materials.

*Please see the section on **Photos, Media, and Usage** below for more information.

Content

For a course to meet the Early Childhood Project distance learning approval requirements, several components are necessary. Courses must contain:

- an application component in which a concept or strategy is applied in a childcare setting. The participant then reflects and reports on the experience.
- a communication component where the participant communicates with others (peers or parents, usually) about the information and then reports on that experience.
- an inclusion component. This could reflect differences in culture, development or other kinds of diversity.

- the opportunity for students to interact with the course facilitator and individualized response from the facilitator to the student submitted activities.

These requirements are met both through thoughtful consideration of the content in the modules and the activities that participants complete.

Each module should be four to six pages in length (unless content is provided outside CCT such as in a text) or 18-24 slides in PowerPoint, depending on the amount of text also provided.

If teaching via video, each module needs around thirty minutes of instruction. This may be recorded on zoom. If you want to use a different format, you must request approval prior to recording so we can ensure our system is compatible with your choice.

These practices allow students to review a workable amount of information, test their knowledge about the material, and apply the material without having to learn all the material and then recall it. Modules should contain sufficient instruction for the student to learn the subject. The instructional material in each module must clearly support the learning objectives.

Course developers need to include stories or examples to help students take abstract information and make it more concrete and usable. Instructors often spontaneously tell stories to illustrate a point in a classroom setting. It is equally important in a distance format to provide stories and examples. Stories should be italicized, to keep with CCR formatting.

Quizzes

At the completion of each module the student completes a quiz. This allows us to ensure that the student has some review of what was covered, and as a result, some understanding of the key concepts in each module. Quizzes can be multiple choice, true/false, fill in the blank or matching. Matching works well if a module has multiple definitions or concepts that the student should specifically remember. Quizzes are self-grading, and upon submission of their quiz, will provide immediate feedback to the student, telling them if their answer is correct or incorrect and why. ChildCareTraining.org has a question bank that allows quiz questions to rotate. Course developers must provide *8-10 quiz questions per module*. Quizzes must include a variety of question types, not just true/false. Questions shall be taken directly from the content and require that the participant has read the material. You must provide a Word document for each quiz with the following:

- List the question.
- Provide the correct answer.
- Provide 3-4 incorrect answers if the question is multiple choice, fill in the blank or matching.
- Provide an explanation of why the answer is correct. When students get the wrong answer, CCT automatically tells them what the correct answer is and why, using your explanation.

Activities

If your class is automated, please include a quiz for each module and a final quiz. Automated classes do not have graded activities. You may always include reflections and self-guided activities, but they will not be monitored or graded.

For facilitated classes, each module should have a required activity. Activities can require participants to take a key concept learned in the course and apply it to their unique situation and report back. Activities can also require the participant to conduct additional outside research and report back. Application of material is essential to memory and change in practice. Activities should be used to reinforce key concepts in each module. Some activities may require the provider to prepare a meal with their children or complete an activity with them and then report on their experience.

Authors are required to write model answers to their activities for instructors to use when reviewing submitted activities.

Activities should be designed to require the participant to build on course content by applying it to their own work experience. There are two primary types of activities. The first is simply open-ended questions which require a typed response. The second option is to have the student upload a document after completing it. For instance, you could put together a checklist, which would be available for students to download., The activity may require them to complete the checklist and upload it for the instructor to review. Another might be an observation that would be uploaded. You could also do a combination activity where a student uploads a document and must respond to a question, perhaps a reflection about the activity they uploaded. Participants could be asked to upload very short videos, portfolios, or photographs. For example, the course might require students to take before and after photos of a learning or activity center as part of an environments course and to describe why they made the changes and how that impacted children's learning. Participants could upload a video of themselves conducting an activity with kids. Because these photos and videos will not be available to the public, CCT does not need a release, though employees must obtain permission from the childcare business and it is important to inform parents.

Required Supplemental Materials

We required the following materials when you submit the rough draft of the class:

- *References*– course developers must include citations in the course and submit a page that cites any sources used to write the course. References and citations will follow the American Psychological Association's (APA) style http://www.apastyle.org .
- *Glossary* – this may be required if the course includes highly technical terms.
- *Additional Resources* – the course developer may want to include a list of reading material or website links with more information on the course subject for independent learning.
- *Course Developer Biography* – course developers are required to submit a brief biography stating their background information that is relevant to the courses written. This only needs to be a brief paragraph. ChildCareTraining.org links to the course developer biographies on the website.
- *Course Developer Resume* – The MT Early Childhood Project requires a resume as part of the course approval process. Developers must submit a current resume.
- *Professional Headshot* – The site includes a photo of course developers to help link students to the real people associated with CCT. Therefore, we need a head shot.

Photos, Media, and Usage

Media should be included in courses, with the requirement that the media supports student engagement and course material. Various media forms can be used, including but not limited to video, audio, and photography. However, due to licensing, and copyright law and regulation, please do not including media found on the Internet or on a software (e.g. Microsoft Word), including clip art. Such media will be excluded or replaced with one similar from our archive.

Course developers are encouraged to include links to other, reputable sites that include more information on the content.

Video or audio content must be less than 6 minutes long, preferably 2-3 minutes. Contemporary learners have short attention span for educational video/audio. The links below review the importance of short videos for educational purposes and provide some ideas about how to create effective videos and to break up content.

- http://www.xcelus.com/optimal-video-length-training-videos/
- https://www.learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/185/six-steps-to-creating-high-quality-video-training
- http://elearnmag.acm.org/featured.cfm?aid=2206721

CCT has access to a video library of short videos recorded in a lab child care program which may have appropriate materials. We'll be happy to search this resource for videos suitable for specific courses.

If the media requires high speed internet access, this must be stated in the introduction, if viewing it is essential to the course content. If the media is supplemental, course materials should state that it is supplemental to enhance the learning experience but is not required to complete the course.

Consider audio content with a photo of the speaker. For example, we could interview a parent or a childcare provider, or an expert could create an audio recording.

If you intend to add video instruction rather than text or power point, each module should be around 30 minutes in length.

Child Care Resources has stock photos available, so we prefer you to use these photos first. Browse through our photos and give us the names (e.g., Art 1, Babies 2, etc.) of the ones you want. We'll gather those photos and get them to you via email or any other means necessary. After the class outline has been approved, please request the link to our photo library.

You may use images found online, however, make sure they aren't copyrighted and licensed for commercial use. If you are not sure whether an image is copyrighted or not, assume that it is and not use it.

There are websites that offer copyright free images. It is usually safe to use images from these sites, however, we don't recommend using any images that can identify a person. Below are a few websties that offer free images.

- Unsplash
- Pixabay
- Gratisography

- StockSnap.io

free online stock photography sites like Unsplash, but please include the photo and a link to where you found it.

Please copy the photo into the class where you want it placed, and then also include the link to the photo so we can find it.

Release Forms

Any person depicted, or voice recorded in the media will need to sign a model release form. Additionally, any property (e.g. buildings, trademarks, brands, work of art, pets) depicted in the media will need to sign a property release form. These forms must be submitted to Child Care Resources with the finalized course.

A release form is not required for public property like a park, or government building, but don't assume that since it is a public property it is safe to photograph or video tape. Some public property is copyrighted like the Seattle Space Needle or Disney Studios and Theme Parks. A release form is also not required if the property or people are not recognizable.

Review & Editing

Child Care Resources reserves the right to edit the course content to assure it is grammatically correct, that current terminology is used and that the content is understandable. Child Care Resources' staff will work in conjunction with the course developer on edits.

Course developers should expect at least one round of edits. Child Care Resources will edit the document and track the changes. The course will be returned to the developer, who may need to expand upon certain areas where content was confusing, etc. Once the course developer has completed the edits, they should accept all the changes that were tracked in the document, so the final version is clean of editing marks. Multiple edits may be necessary.

CCR/CCT will complete the Montana Early Childhood Project Approval Application and Supplemental Distance Learning Application based on information provided by the course developer. We'll provide a questionnaire for this purpose in the Developer Packet. Please submit it with the course.

Final Draft Submission

To submit the final draft of the course to Child Care Resources, the course developer must break the course into the following folder structure. You will want to copy and paste from the original course document and create the following files to be saved in the appropriate folder. This is necessary for loading the course to ChildCareTraining.org. Here is the folder structure (the names of the folders should be related to the module's title, and not include "Folder:" – this is simply to demonstrate the structure):
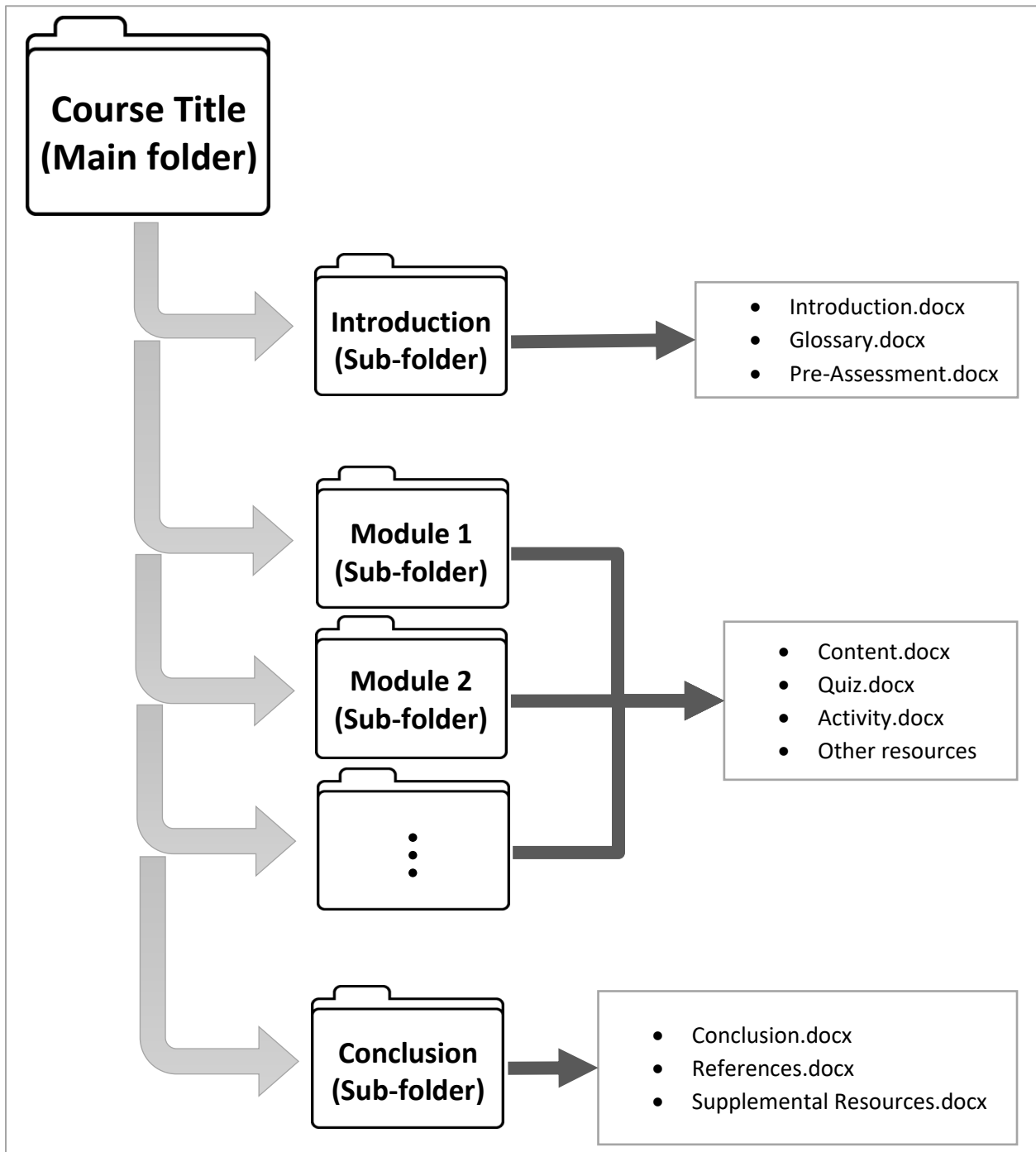
Agreement

Once accepted by Child Care Resources, the content is then the property of Child Care Resources and the State of Montana. The State of Montana DPHHS ECSB retains ownership of all courses written with Child Care Development Funds (CCDF) Course developers may not use this content for other distance learning endeavors without the consent of Child Care Resources or, in the case of content developed with State funds, Montana DPHHS ECSB. Content developed for CCT may be used in classroom training sessions or for newsletter and journal articles.

Course Updates

CCT may update courses at any time. This may be necessary because a question or activity is not working as anticipated, or because additional information is needed. CCT encourages these updates to assure the courses are as effective as possible.

A comprehensive review and update of each course will occur minimally every three years. It may be necessary to update more frequently as new research is published and new strategies show great promise. Child Care Resources will attempt to work with original course developers to update courses. However, this may not be practical or possible. If less than 30% of the course content is changed, the original course developer will remain as the sole developer of record. If more than 30% of the content is changed, both names will be included as course developers.

Revised on March 4, 2021.