

Pennsylvania Online Course Catalog – Provider and Participation Process FAQ

1. What is the Online Course Catalog in Pennsylvania?

The Pennsylvania Online Course Catalog (OCC) offers a list of online courses that meet quality standards for school entities considering offering online courses. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) developed a framework and process, including an application for providers, as well as the adoption of the iNACOL (International Association for K-12 Online Learning, a leading organization for online education) rubric, to ensure consistent standards for reviewing online courses. iNACOL developed a rubric to provide SEAs, LEAs, online programs, and other organizations with a set of quality guidelines for online course content, instructional design, technology, student assessment, and course management. The rubric examines five different components including: a) content; b) instructional design; c) student assessment; d) technology; and e) course evaluation and support. This rubric was selected by PDE for its robust qualities that allow for a comprehensive examination of online courses. Meeting these standards supports the reasonable confidence that providers have the capacity to deliver high quality courses in an effort to help Pennsylvania’s students become college and career ready.

2. What is the application process?

The application process requires material submission and review. Providers must complete the “Application for Online Course Inclusion in the Pennsylvania Online Course Catalog”: http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/online_course_catalog/21402 and submit evidence demonstrating how the course meets the criteria in the iNACOL rubric.

Application steps are outlined below:

- Step 1: Applicants download the application and rubric from the PDE website.
- Step 2: Applicants complete and submit application and rubric, including the requested supporting evidence to PDE.
- Step 3: PDE evaluates submission materials.
- Step 4: PDE determines if the course meets standards and notifies applicant of status.
- Step 6: If standards are met, the online course name and link are posted on the PDE website as a viable choice for students, parents, and school entities.
- Step 7: Interested school entities and parents/students (via the school entity) may contact the course provider to enroll.

3. What is the basis for determining if a course meets PDE’s standards?

The completed application, the evidence aligned to the iNACOL rubric, and the course content itself are the basis for determining if a course meets PDE’s standards.

4. Where do providers submit their materials?

Online providers presenting courses for consideration must submit the completed application and all required documentation on a (non-returnable) CD or flash drive via postal or parcel service to:

Pennsylvania Department of Education
Bureau of Teaching and Learning
333 Market Street, 5th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
Attention: PA Online Course Catalog

For more information, please contact ra-occ@pa.gov or visit:
http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/online_course_catalog/21402

5. Where will courses be posted?

The Course Catalog will be accessible through the PDE website, which links to the Standards-Aligned System (SAS) Portal. The SAS portal will provide a catalog of online course choices consisting of a series of links that guide interested entities to the various providers who offer online courses that meet the quality standards established by PDE.

6. Once a course is determined to meet standards and has been listed, how long will the course remain on the website?

A course that meets PDE's standards will be listed on the online course catalog for four years or until the program is discontinued. PDE maintains the authority to remove a course for any reasonable cause.

7. How do we ensure a course can meet the standards outlined in the review process?

Applications must be filled out completely and evidence demonstrating how the course meets the standards for each criterion of the iNACOL rubric must be submitted.

8. When will courses be made available on the Online Course Catalog?

August 2013

9. What courses will be listed?

Algebra I and Biology will be listed initially; additional STEM courses will be offered in the next phase; the third phase will include Advanced Placement (AP) courses and other elective options.

10. Why is STEM prioritized?

The Online Course Catalog, with a focus on Algebra I and Biology, is supported through Pennsylvania’s Race to the Top Grant, which prioritizes STEM education as a critical component to the Commonwealth’s economic growth.

11. What is the timeline for the application process?

June 6, 2013 – Online course provider application form and rubric available on the PDE website

June 28, 2013 – Deadline for providers to submit materials for review

June 28-July 12, 2013 – PDE examines applications. Applicants notified of status.

Start of 2013-14 School Year – Online course catalog posted

As illustrated below, courses meeting the standards will be available on the catalog for four subsequent and consecutive school years.

Review Cycle	Effective For	Available Through	Renew No Later Than
Fall 2013	2014-15	2017-18	Spring 2018
Fall 2014	2015-16	2018-19	Spring 2019
Fall 2015	2016-17	2019-20	Spring 2020
Fall 2016	2017-18	2020-21	Spring 2021

12. Who owns the online course?

The online course providers own, secure, and/or maintain licensure and copyright for all courses offered in the PA Online Course Catalog.

13. What if a course that has been approved is revised during its four-years of eligibility for the PA Online Course Catalog?

Providers must give prior notice and receive approval from PDE for courses that have been significantly modified. Providers shall notify PDE via written notice of any planned modification in sufficient detail for the PA review team to determine whether the course continues to satisfy all requirements of the program. Failure to obtain written approval shall result in removal of the course from the PA Online Course Catalog. Providers are required to maintain each course throughout the duration that the course is offered to ensure that the course meets PA standards.