

VIULearn (D2L): Automatic and Manual Course Creation and Maintenance Guidelines

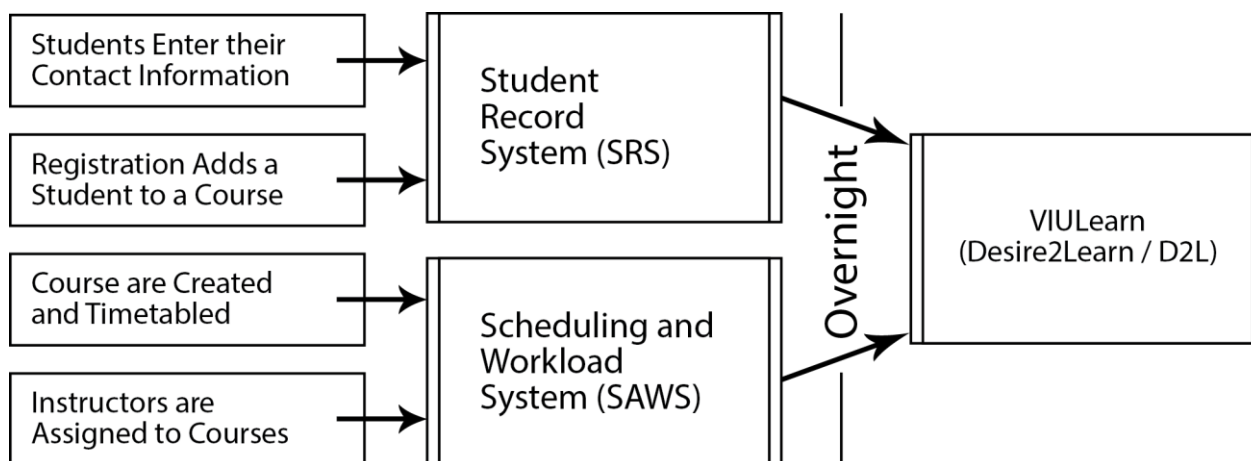
A guide to procedures for requesting, maintain and removing “Hub” and “Manual” courses within VIULearn (D2L) at Vancouver Island University



How VIULearn Works: A Brief Overview

As of June 2012, VIU engaged D2L to provide their integrated learning platform as VIU's learning system for web-enhanced, blended and fully online courses and course components. This guide begins with an explanation about how VIULearn draws information about students, instructors, and courses from our internal information systems.

This guide also explains how the Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning manages "Hub" and "Manual" courses that fall outside of the automatic creation of course shells for all VIU course offerings. This guide will assist faculty, program assistants and others involved with VIULearn to understand the processes and procedures governing the creation, maintenance and deletion of courses using VIULearn.



A. Automatically-Created Courses

Each night, the Student Record System (SRS) and the Scheduling and Workload System (SAWS) send information to VIULearn letting it know what all the courses at VIU are currently open for registration, who is teaching them, which students are registered in those courses, and details about students' contact information. In order for a change in any of those bits of information to get to VIULearn, they first have to be changed in SRS or SAWS, which will then send the changes to VIULearn overnight. In this way, the vast majority of the courses in VIULearn are created and maintained automatically by our internal information systems.

B. Manually-Created Courses

In some cases, staff in the Center for Innovation and Excellence in Learning may create courses manually in VIULearn. As these courses are not linked to SRS or SAWS, the courses, instructors, and student enrolments have to be created and maintained manually by a representative from the requesting department. As these courses require more work and attention, the Centre has internal procedures governing the creation and maintenance of manually created courses.

C. Removing Courses from VIULearn

Courses are never automatically removed from VIULearn, no matter how they are created. All courses and the information they contain will remain available until the instructor of record follows the Centre's procedure for permanently deleting courses. Courses for which grades were assigned to students must be kept in the system for a minimum of two years.

A. Automatically-Created Courses in VIULearn

Each night, the Student Record System (SRS) and the Scheduling and Workload System (SAWS) send information to VIULearn letting it know what all the courses at VIU are, who is teaching them, which students are registered in those courses, and details about student's contact information. In order for a change in any of those bits of information to get to VIULearn, they first have to be changed in SRS or SAWS, which will then send the changes to VIULearn overnight. In this way, the vast majority of the courses in VIULearn are created and maintained automatically by our internal information systems.

Your VIULearn course shell is the best place for all course related information. The more relevant and useful it is for you, the more engaging it will be for your students. Your course shell is a great place to:

- Create discussion boards for assignments, course related information, or as collaborative space for students
- Create online rooms for virtual office hours or meeting with student groups
- Email students
- Post news items to get the attention of students
- Share course related documents and resources that need to be kept relatively private
- Survey students
- Post course content in a manner that makes sense for the material and discipline
- Enrol another instructor in your course or enrol waitlisted VIU students

Both SAWS and SRS update your course shell every night. If a student withdraws from the class or enrolls in the class it will be processed overnight. If they change their contact information, it will be processed overnight. In this way, we avoid the considerable effort it would take to manually process registrations, withdrawals, and information changes.

Course Mapping

The connection between VIULearn and SAWS means that every course section will have its own course shell in VIULearn. Instructors will often be teaching multiple sections of the same course so they will have two or more course shells to update.

Instructors can send a request to learnsupport@viu.ca to have these course sections "mapped" or combined together, so that they will only have to update one course shell for multiple course sections. The automatically generated course shells will disappear overnight and be replaced with the mapped course shell. The process of mapping a course will maintain the connection between the course shell and the SRS and SAWS systems, so the course will continue to update nightly like any other automatically created course.

Courses are best mapped before any content is put into the course or there will be loss of information.

The Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning requires the explicit written permission of all individuals listed as instructors in the VIULearn class list before a mapping request will be processed. The process of mapping courses is permanent, and grants all instructors and students enrolled in the automatically generated courses to access the single course shell.

B. Manually-Created Courses in VIULearn

In some cases the staff in the Center for Innovation and Excellence in Learning may create courses manually in VIULearn. As these courses are not linked to SRS or SAWS, the courses, instructors, and student enrolments have to be created and maintained manually by a representative from a particular department or a member of the Centre. As these courses require more work and attention, the Centre has internal procedures governing the creation and maintenance of manually created courses.

There are **two main types** of manually created courses, Hub Courses and Manual Courses.

Hub Courses

A Hub course is a place in VIULearn where a program can store information and resources that students need that are not part of a specific course and that the program does not want publically accessible.

Common uses of a Hub course include a combination of some or all of the following:

- Create discussion boards for program related information that is not specific to a course
- Email students within a program about non-course related activities
- Share many program related documents and resources that need to be behind a password
- Survey students regarding opinions or events related to the program as a whole
- Post job or employment related information

Hub courses are active places that need to be supervised and maintained on a daily or weekly basis if they are to be useful and relevant for students. Supervision and maintenance of Hub courses is best carried out by people who know the program and are current on its daily activities. The Centre is not in touch with the day to day operations in a program and, therefore, is not able to effectively monitor Hub courses on behalf of a department. Before a Hub course will be created, a department must fill out a **Hub Course Request + Renewal Form** and nominate a central person who will be responsible for:

- Enrolling current students and instructors
- Un-enrolling past students
- Posting information and resources
- Monitoring discussion boards
- Assisting department members with requests and questions related to the Hub course

A **Hub course is not always the best solution** for communicating and engaging with students, particularly if you don't plan on using the features and functions of VIULearn. Please consider the following:

- If your content does not need to be password protected, or is better shared with the community as well as students, a VIU Website or WordPress site may be an easier solution
- If the content within the Hub doesn't require the features and functions of VIULearn and is more related to sharing content, aggregating information in one spot (and it doesn't need password protection) a VIU website or WordPress site is a preferable solution
- If you only have a small number of documents to share with students, consider placing them in each course, rather than creating a dedicated space for them (a specific spot in each course could be dedicated to a collection of common documents)
- If you are needing to store/share files with a few people it would be much easier to use a cloud storage tool such as Dropbox or OneDrive (as long as the content doesn't contain personal identifiable info)
- If you are not engaging with students, a Hub course is not an efficient choice
- If there is an existing hub course that could be repurposed or redesigned to work better for your request, as the fewer courses students have to access the easier for everyone

Process to Request a Hub Course

1. Discuss your request with a Learning Technologies Support Specialist (LTSS) from the Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning (email: learnsupport@viu.ca)
2. Complete a “VIU Learn Hub Course Request + Renewal Form” and submit to the LTSS (see page 8).
3. LTSS will bring forth the request to a weekly meeting of the staff to discuss.
4. If request is approved, it will be processed within a week.
5. Every year (in July) all Hub Courses will be reviewed and the contact person will be asked to provide an update (to continue with the Hub Course, to modify or to delete).

Training for Care and Feeding of a Hub Course

Hub Courses will only be relevant for students if someone takes care of them to keep them active and well maintained throughout their lifespan. This requires a key contact person to have good understandings of how VIULearn operates and ensure they are following best practices for uploading content and engaging with students.

The Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning provides self-paced training modules for anyone to enrol in and learn more about the system and its functions. Within the self-paced training modules are videos, handouts and explanations of how to best manage your hub course. It is the Centre’s expectation that the hub course contact person engage in appropriate levels of training to feel comfortable managing the course.

Managing a course entails:

1. Ensuring the class list (who has access to the hub course) is current and reflective of the group who should have access (including students and faculty) – thereby removing and adding participants on a frequent basis.
2. Ensuring content is current and reflective of the term/year or program components (e.g., remove all old documents, keep content current).
3. Upload content that has the broadest range of accessibility for students of all abilities and disabilities (e.g., PDFs rather than Word documents when they are only to be read, descriptions of videos, use of style sheets in documents to make headings and table of contents etc.)
4. Organize and display content in a format that is readable and easily accessible by all participants.
5. Backing up the course every now and then locally to a computer.
6. Contacting the Centre (learnsupport@viu.ca) if there is a question or concern with the functionality of the course.

Many “Hub Courses” start with great intentions and often fail or become unusable because no one looks after the course. The Centre would be happy to work with contact people and others associated with the “Hub Courses” to ensure they are successful endeavours. If you feel a “Hub Course” is no longer useful, please contact the Centre with your request and we’ll discuss this with you!

Manual Courses

Manual courses are created for a variety of reasons when the broad engagement of a Hub Course is not appropriate. Following are some examples of the use of manual courses.

Example 1: *The current courses for a cohort-type program are set up in SAWS in such a way that they present challenges for student access/use when synchronized to VIULearn.*

A collection of short courses throughout a program (e.g., 2 weeks, 6 weeks) create a long listing of courses that appear/disappear for students due to the short time periods of course listing. Students are often enrolled in all of the shorter courses and require a singular course to do their work over a longer period of time.

Example 2: *Courses that are offered for credit/non-credit that are not formally part of SAWS/SRS system.*

There may be courses that students are required to take that do not appear in the Student Registration System (SRS) such as coaching courses, or electives.

Example 3: *An instructor wishes to start developing an online, blended or web-enhanced course that hasn't been entered into SAWS, or a master course for a whole department to use.*

There may be a need for an instructor to create a manual course for pre-development opportunities before the official course shell appears in VIULearn tied to the SRS.

Example 4: *Internal VIU Courses*

A department at VIU may want to use VIULearn to provide an internal training course, or a special course for the broader student body. Examples include WHMIS for staff and students and VIU's Student Onboarding Course.

Example 5: *Interviewing instructors who will be teaching and/or developing online.*

Sometimes a program wishes to test out the skills and knowledge of instructor applicants (especially those applying to teach fully online courses) and requires a manual course to allow an outside applicant to develop a sample course

Process to Request a "Manual Course"

1. Discuss your request with a Learning Technologies Support Specialist (LTSS) from the Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning (email: learnsupport@viu.ca)
2. Complete a "VIULearn Manual Course Request + Renewal Form" and submit to the LTSS (see page 9)
3. LTSS will bring forth the request to a weekly meeting of the staff to discuss.
4. If request is approved, it will be processed within a week.

Training for the Maintenance of a Manual Course

Our VIU instructors will already be familiar with the management of courses in VIULearn, but for instructors from outside the institution or those not as familiar with the system, the Centre provides self-paced training modules for anyone to enrol in and learn more about the system and its functions. Within the self-paced training modules are videos, handouts and explanations of how to best manage your manual course.

Expectations for Manually Created Courses

The Centre of Innovation and Excellence in Learning will,

1. Create the course shell and assign the course owner as the instructor.
2. Set up and configure self-registration, if applicable.
3. Conduct up to two bulk enrolments per year for courses that do not have self-registration.

The owner of the course will,

1. Create and maintain the content and answer all questions related to the course from users.
2. Activate the course and set start and end dates.
3. Enrol users into the shell with the exceptions noted above. Monitor the class list and conduct un-enrolments as necessary.
4. Back up course content and maintain records of assessment carried out within the course, as appropriate.
5. Monitor and follow-up on student interaction within the course.

C. Removing Courses From VIULearn

Courses are never automatically removed from VIULearn, no matter how they are created. All courses and the information they contain will remain available until the instructor of record follows the Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning's procedure for permanently deleting courses. Courses for which grades were assigned to students must be kept in the system for a minimum of two years.

Process to Remove a Course from VIULearn

1. Discuss your request with a Learning Technologies Support Specialist (LTSS) from the Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning (email: learnsupport@viu.ca)
2. Complete a "VIULearn Course Removal Request Form" form and submit to the LTSS (see page 10)
3. LTSS will bring forth the request to a weekly meeting of the staff to discuss.
4. If no concerns are raised, it will be processed shortly.

VIULearn Hub Course Request + Renewal Form

Instructions: Please access the MS Word version of this form. Insert all the required information and print a copy. Obtain the signatures of the contact person and the program chair.

Rationale for a Hub Course Request

<insert a short paragraph outlining the situation and how this request meets the criteria as outlined in this document, please ensure you have discussed with a Learning Technologies Support Specialist in the Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning before completing this form>

Contact Person

(this will be the name of the key person responsible for the course, design and development, uploading and managing content, adding/deleting participants, ensuring the course is current and useful to all etc.)

Full Name: <insert name here>

Position: <insert position title here>

Faculty: <insert Faculty name here>

Program: <insert program name here>

Phone Number: <insert phone number here>

Hub Course Name

(this will be the name that appears to students and faculty in their listing of courses, found under the semester "Ongoing", ensure the title is representative of the intent of the hub and that is isn't too generic as students may have 'hub courses' from other departments)

<insert suggested name here for your Hub Course>

Conditions for Hub Course Creation

This "Hub Course" is set up on the condition that the Contact Person (listed above) will take sole responsibility for the content, design, development and functionality components, as well as adding/deleting students/faculty as needed. The Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning is available through emailing learnsupport@viu.ca to obtain assistance accessing training materials, answering questions about functionality and operations of the site and any related support requests. The Centre does not add content, students or faculty and does not manage the site at all. Each year (in July) all of the Hub Courses are reassessed and in August each year the contact person will get an email requesting details on the continuance or decommissioning of the Hub Course depending on needs.

Signatures of Support

Program Chair Name (print)

Program Chair Signature

Contact Person Name (print)

Contact Person Signature

VIULearn Manual Course Request + Renewal Form

Instructions: Please access the MS Word version of this form. Insert all the required information. Obtain the signatures of the contact person and program chair.

Rationale for a Manual Course Request

<insert a short paragraph outlining the situation and how this request meets the criteria as outlined in this document, please ensure you have discussed with a Learning Technologies Support Specialist in the Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning before completing this form>

Contact Person

(this will be the name of the key person responsible for the course, design and development, uploading and managing content, adding/deleting participants, ensuring the course is current and useful to all etc.)

Full Name: <insert name here>

Position: <insert position title here>

Faculty: <insert Faculty name here>

Program: <insert program name here>

Phone Number: <insert phone number here>

Manual Course Name

(this will be the name that appears to students and faculty in their listing of courses, found under the semester “Ongoing”, ensure the title is representative of the intent of the course)

<insert suggested name here for your Manual Course>

Conditions for Manual Course Creation

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Signatures of Support

Program Chair Name (print)

Program Chair Signature

Contact Person Name (print)

Contact Person Signature

VIULearn Course Removal Request Form

Instructions: Please access the MS Word version of this form. Insert all the contact information and print a copy. Obtain the signature of the contact person for the hub or manual course(s) that are needed to be deleted.

Contact Person

Full Name: <insert name here>

Position: <insert position title here>

Faculty: <insert Faculty name here>

Program: <insert program name here>

Phone Number: <insert phone number here>

Courses to be Permanently Deleted (full name/code)

1. <insert course name and code here>
2. <insert course name and code here>
3. <insert course name and code here>
4. <insert course name and code here>
5. <insert course name and code here>

Statement of Understanding

1. I understand that course deletion is irrevocable and that no back up exists in the system.
2. I have personally backed-up any course components that I wish to keep.
3. I am not deleting any student data that is less than two years old.
4. I have talked to a Learning Technology Support Specialist (LTSS) to make sure that I have backed-up my courses or course components correctly prior to requesting this deletion.

Signature

Contact Person Name (print)

Contact Person Signature