Guidance for Course Applications to the Permaculture Association Online Learning Platform

1. Introduction

The Permaculture Association is creating an online learning platform to host a wide range of permaculture courses. We will be creating courses, however the main purpose of the platform is to provide support and a place for permaculture educators around the UK to host their own courses. We are aiming to create a learning ecosystem where new and seasoned permaculture enthusiasts can enrol, learn and engage in a wide range of subjects.

2. Why go online?

Although face to face learning will always be important, there are many benefits to incorporating online learning into your teaching portfolio. We have been planning this work for over a year, but the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent cancellation of events and isolation means that our need to integrate online learning has accelerated. Even before the outbreak, online learning enabled educators to reach more people, and develop passive income streams.

Passive income streams can run alongside active income generation, and can help a charity, organisation or individual tutor grow, and safeguard staff and contracts in difficult times. Passive income is income you gain from work that has already been done, for example through an e-book, or an online course.

If you are solely delivering face-to-face courses, you need to be physically present in order to earn any income. In contrast, if part of this course could be delivered online, then you only need to build the course once, and sell it multiple times. You can accompany this online offering with face-to-face training, webinars, an online forum and site visits to name a few. However the work to create the course or e-book has already been done. Therefore your income will increase without your need to be physically present to earn it every time. Having a diversified income strategy can be of great help in times such as these, when we're unable to deliver some of our services.

3. What should I consider when creating an online course, or bringing a classroom based course online?

When we think about online learning, we often think about an online course. The reality of online learning is that it can include many different elements; for example live video training, participation in a support group or assignments set in pairs and small groups. It can also include face-to-face training and visiting permaculture projects. It is this blend of learning that can transform something seemingly static into a completely interactive experience.

A blended and interactive learning experience could include:

- An online course (including a mix of learning content)
- An online course with comments and discussion
- An online forum or support group
- Webinars
- Live video training
- Live 'office hours' or drop in sessions
- Online assessments
- Work submission via email
- Live video tours of a site
- e-book/ playbook library
- And face to face teaching of groups or one to one sessions.

Most successful online learning organisations and enterprises do incorporate passive income streams at the centre of their offering. This is often a course, but could also be, for example a library of e-books.

Best Practices for remote educators: https://blog.permaculture.org.uk/articles/digital-learning-best-practices-educators

4. Why host your course on the Permaculture Association platform?

We are your online learning support team and cheerleaders. The UK is globally recognised for having a quality permaculture design curriculum and well respected certified teachers register - we bring together years of expertise in online learning, training, design, communications, video creation and more. We have already co-produced a successful MOOC on FutureLearn with GROW and are working with several organisations to deliver climate focused and transformative blended education online. We can support you in a range of areas including how to migrate face-to-face training online, how to structure your course, branding, graphic design and more. If you host your course with us, you do not need to pay for a platform and maintain it. We'll also take care of all the admin for you and transfer your earnings every month. As part of our ongoing communications strategy, we provide continual marketing and traffic to your course.

As a membership charity our goal is to support our networks and increase the reach of permaculture - we want to support all our members to grow their educational packages and deliver top quality education online. We think by integrating our efforts we can achieve our goals - using cooperation rather than competition.

Many people will be moving online in the next few months and we want to work together to produce quality online permaculture education. By integrating our efforts we can all ensure we don't replicate / saturate one topic. Connections build resilience. Creating a commons - creating more resources for everyone.

5. **What do we need from you?**

Please get in touch to discuss your idea by emailing Jemma education@permaculture.org.uk. We will then ask you to fill out a short application form. We need to ensure there are a range of courses on the platform, and that we don't have identical courses competing against each other. If someone has already covered the same topic and in the same way, we will suggest some alternatives.

After you have completed your application and we have accepted your course, we will ask you to complete the course content framework (stage 2).

6. **Stage 1 application:**

[Please follow this link](#) and fill out a quick application form. Details are below.

Content	Guidance	
Course title	< 10 words, describes content clearly	
Brief description/summary	<250 words including: What is the course about What will be learned? - what will you be able to do as a result of taking the course? How will learning be validated or assessed?	
Keywords	Choose 3-5 words that best describe your course (think about results from search engines)	
Number of days/weeks	How long does the course run for?	
Hours per day/week	How much effort is required from participants?	
Learning outcomes	What will people who take this course gain? <specific guidance on setting level appropriate learning objectives e.g. for introductory, intermediate, advanced courses> Please see Bloom's taxonomy here.	
Assessment	How will the course be assessed e.g. Automatic: • Completion of x% of steps • Pass (score of x or more) in y tests	

	Peer or tutor assessment: • Assignments <various types>	
Level	e.g. introductory, intermediate, advanced <needs definitions, common framework>	
Accreditation	Is there a link to certification body, number and level of credits, open badge etc.	
Max/min number of learners	Are there limits for the course to run successfully?	
Cost to participants	E.g. fixed fee, pay as you can, free, do you need discount codes to be set up?	
We are able to offer extra support to help you create your course, such as graphic design and video editing. This will be charged on top of the basic course fees, and may take time depending on demand.		
Do you require support to translate a face-to-face course to an online blended course?		
Do you require graphic design support (e.g. the creation of hand-outs and course branding?)		
Do you require video creation or editing support?		

7. Stage 2, the course content framework

After your application has been submitted, we will then need your course content. We are responsible for uploading your course to the platform, and we need your content to be supplied in the following format. We are also able to support content creation; please see the different support packages in section 8.

Basic Course Structure

Introduction section:

Here you outline the broad overall theme and intended learning outcomes

- ○ Theme/title
- ○ Brief description of content
- ○ Learning outcomes (3+ key outcomes per course)
- ○ Equipment or resources needed by participants

Also outline any special instructions for the course, or activities to complete before starting.

Sections or modules

Your sections or modules will follow a theme and have particular learning objectives and outcomes.

Map out your course into its main themes or sections, and then think about how these can be broken down further into lessons.

Lessons

Lessons are short learning pieces of various kinds. In general, lessons should be short with a single focus. This gives learners a sense of satisfaction and achievement. It also favours those who find e.g. a long article difficult to absorb. You can combine content in a lesson, for example; a video and an exercise. Lesson types are outlined in the table below, and then in more detail.

Lesson type	Standard content
Article	200-500 hundred words with 1-2 images to break up the text and add interest.
Extended article	A limited number per course. Ideally, break these down into shorter steps. 1000 words with four images.
Video	Max 15 minutes. Ideally 5-10 mins or less. Each video should have the transcript below and images to break up the text if it is above 200 words.
Activity/exercise	Max 15 mins to complete.

Long activity	A limited number per course. Ideally, break these down into shorter steps. 1 hour to complete.
Discussion	A problem or question for learners to discuss together
Quiz	A multiple choice quiz to test the learners understanding of a section

Articles:

Article lessons are any plain text, typically 500-800 words with a reading time of 5-10 minutes. These might be case studies, literary extracts, instructions from educators or short essays. Articles can include images (photographs, diagrams, slides etc).

Why it works

Text provides a compact way to express the deep meaning of a topic. A learner can skim, read, re-read and summarise the text.

Tips to make a great lesson

Design for learners with English as their second language: eg, simplified vocabulary, active voice. Design instructional text: clear text structure, summary of key points.

- Description: describe a topic
- Sequence: use numerical or chronological order to list items or events
- Compare/contrast: two or more similar events, topics, or objects
- Cause/effect: give one or more causes and then describe the effects
- Problem/solution: pose a problem or question and then give the answer

Use images alongside the text to illustrate or enhance the meaning. Mark the text structure with paragraphs and emphasis.

Video and Audio

Videos are uploaded in .mov or .mp4 format. Each video lesson has a title and short description (up to 150 characters). A longer description can be added if required.

When creating video, you also need to supply the transcript to place below the video. This should include images if longer than 200 words. Videos might be straight-to-camera pieces by educators, interviews, panel discussions, slideshows, clips of existing media or a combination of all of the above. Similarly sound recordings can be uploaded as MP3 files.

Tips to make a great video lesson:

- Keep the video short - under ten minutes, and under five if possible.
- Structure the material, and provide an introduction and summary.
- Organise the video so that the learner can pause and reflect, for example when presenting a diagram suggest that the learner pause the video to read and understand it.
- Make sure the audio quality is excellent, and the video is high resolution, clear, in focus and without any camera shake.

Please reference [our content creation guide if you are unsure](#) - there are more pages of guidance there.

Discussion

Learners can add their comments to the bottom of any lesson. Discussion steps differ in that educators actively encourage learners to respond to specific questions prompted by previous lessons.

Tips to make a great lesson

Keep the discussion topic short, eg three sentences: Background, issue, question.

Set a topic that requires the learner to demonstrate understanding of the immediately previous steps, preferably also drawing on personal experience.

End with an open-ended question that elicits a range of answers.

Experiment with other formats, eg debate "Argue for or against the proposition that …. Give evidence to back up your argument."

Multiple Choice Quiz

Multiple choice quizzes are a great way for learners to test their understanding. These are automated, so the platform marks the test for the learner.

Tips to make a great lesson

Each question in the quiz should be at a similar level of difficulty. Limit your quiz to a maximum of 12 questions to keep learner interest and attention.

Activities and Exercises

Activities and exercises can be set throughout the course, outcomes can be shared in the comments section for peer review, or can be submitted for review and feedback by you as the tutor. If an activity is submitted to you via email, this makes for a more interactive course. However, be aware of the amount of work involved for you, and make sure you are pricing the course accordingly.

Tips to make a great lesson

Learners can share screenshots of their exercises in the comments box below, or even in an online forum or support group. You can link an activity and a discussion to increase interaction.
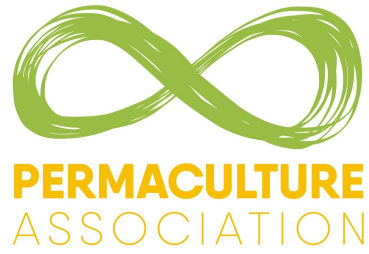
Planning your course content

Your existing classroom course may transfer easily to an online course, or may require some creative thinking as how to keep interaction. Remember you have many online tools available to you (see section 3). Map out your course structure using the basic framework below. Then please fill in a detailed content form for **each section**. You can find the forms here, please fill out one form per section and link to each section from your course outline document.

When submitting your content, please reference our content creation handbook to ensure videos and images are high quality.

Sample basic framework document

View the template here:

Section name	Lesson name
Getting started	About this course
	An introduction to permaculture
	What makes permaculture design different
SADIMET and OBREDIMET	An introduction to SADIMET and OBREDIMET

	Survey
	Analyse
	Design and Implement
	Maintain, Evaluate and Tweak
	Worksheets
The Double Diamond and The Design Web	The Double Diamond
	The Design Web
	Worksheets
Next Steps	Practical examples
	Visiting the LAND network
	Choosing a framework for your project

Sample detailed section document:

[View the template here](#):

Section	Lesson Name	Lesson Content Type	Content
E.g. SADIMET	**Survey**	**Video and script**	**Insert the video file name here** Add your script here **[identify where we should insert images to break up the text and give the image name]** Add more script in below
	Analyse	**Article**	Add your text here **[identify where we should insert images to break up the text and give the image name]** Add more text here
	Design	**Video and Activity**	**Insert the video file name here** Add your script here **[identify where we should insert images to break up the text and give the image name]** Add more script in below

			Add activity details - make sure this is referenced in the video

Cost structure

We are able to offer differing levels of support, depending on the amount of time you have, your budget and what you would like help with.

Our basic package includes a consultation about how best to structure your content and support filling in the content submission forms. It also includes:

- All content uploads
- Administration
- Marketing
- Digital space on our platform

Initially, we are working with an assumption of 10% of course fees, on top of an additional fair fee to get the course live.

We are also able to offer graphic design, video and content creation support. Prices depend on the amount of time needed, please contact alexandra@permaculture.org.uk.