

Guidance on Proposing, Organizing, and Presenting a SETAC Digital Short Course: Best Practices and Things to Consider

Version 1: March 2015

Updated: July 2015

SETAC is planning to launch digitally recorded (hereafter, digital) short courses as a way to effectively share knowledge of well-defined topics at SETAC geographic unit, regional chapter, or branch meetings. Therefore, it seems sensible to develop a guidance document helping to plan and organize digital courses. *NOTE: Resources for capturing digital short courses are currently only available for SETAC North America annual meetings. As options for recording at other meetings become available, this document will be updated to reflect the changes.*

The Basics

Digital short courses are intended to mirror the short course and professional education and training course offerings provided at SETAC annual meetings. In some cases, they will be the recorded version of the actual course with a live audience, and in other cases, they will be recorded expressly for the purpose of presenting lecture and supporting materials online. The course should endeavor to represent the SETAC multi-sector structure and can vary in length, but it should be broken into short form recorded lectures using PowerPoint slides, or something comparable. Please consider your target audience when creating the short course. The slides will be vetted ahead of the recording so that a consistent look applies to SETAC digital short courses and to ensure all copyrights are secured.

The Process

Below are the steps for creating and presenting digital short courses:

1. Proposing a topic and getting accepted. The process for vetting topics will be identical to proposing a short course or professional education and training course. For now, digital short course recordings will be captured at SETAC North America annual meetings to take full advantage of our recording contract with MultiView.
2. Identifying instructors. Please make every effort to represent the SETAC multi-sector structure – government, academia, nonprofit and business.
3. Preparing slides and speaker notes. SETAC will provide a PowerPoint template. If PowerPoint is not your preferred format, please make note of that in the proposal. SETAC staff will work with you on the best way forward.
4. Coordinating presentation materials. This includes securing rights to reuse all materials in your presentation. Securing permissions to reuse copyrighted materials is critical. If you have any questions about what is acceptable reuse, please contact the SETAC office.
5. Creating an advertising plan and materials. SETAC staff will work to promote the materials to SETAC members and regional chapters. In the event we broaden the outreach efforts, SETAC staff will incorporate digital short courses into other marketing campaigns and enlist social media.

6. Practicing the presentation and timing with speakers.
7. Presenting and recording the digital short course.
8. Posting the digital short course and access instructions. This will be handled by SETAC staff.

The following guidance provides more specific details on what happens during each of the aforementioned steps and who is involved.

1. Digital Short Course Proposal and Acceptance

SETAC allows for a wide variety of proposals, and any SETAC member or group may propose a digital short course, though we strongly encourage introductory coursework from leading experts in the field. The development and presentation of a digital short course at a SETAC annual meeting begins with the submission of a professional training course proposal to the SETAC Europe Education Committee or the SETAC North America Training and Education Committee (hereafter “Committee”) through an online submission form. The proposal should describe the content and approach of the proposed course, the intended audience (backgrounds, level of experience), the proposed instructors and their qualifications, and any particular needs required to present the course material. The form can be found during the acceptance period on annual meeting websites.

2. Identifying Instructors

Having the appropriate instructors is essential to a successful digital short course. In fact, a regional chapter may choose to offer this course because of the expertise and knowledge of the instructors. The instructors must have demonstrable expertise in the discipline (qualifications to be included in the proposal). Each course should generally have two or three instructors with varied backgrounds, and instructor composition should reflect at least two of the following membership sectors: government, business, nonprofit and academia. Each instructor’s role in the course should be clearly defined and must disclose all relationships that could be viewed as potential conflicts of interest.

Submitters of proposals should pay particular attention to the role of the lead instructor. Digital short course lead instructors are responsible for all communications between SETAC, the Committee, and all other instructors involved with the course. When the lead instructor provides the names of co-instructors, it is recommended that they be contacted beforehand to ensure they are willing to participate. Given the typical duration of a SETAC digital short course, the maximum number of presenters is limited to three, and even two may be sufficient, depending on the circumstances. The setting for delivering an interesting and attention-grabbing talk in front of a computer screen is different than giving a classroom lecture, and special attention should be paid to creating slides and audio that are engaging for remote learners.

Review and Coordination Procedure

The chair of the Committee will designate a committee member as the coordinator for each course. The coordinator will recruit reviewers and communicate with the lead instructor regarding any questions or necessary modifications to the proposal. The

coordinator will make a final recommendation to the chair. Once a course has been accepted for inclusion in an annual meeting program, the coordinator for each course will communicate regularly with the lead instructor about the development of the course. The coordinator will facilitate inquiries and logistical questions and problems, provide oversight of the quality and appropriateness of course materials as they are developed, ensure that course preparations proceed in a timely manner, and serve as conduit for communication between the Committee and the lead instructor. Timelines and deadlines are presented below.

Digital Short Course Format

Digital short courses will be conducted as half-day courses, which are no more than 4 hours in length and, if recorded during a live presentation, can be scheduled for the morning (8 a.m.–noon) or the afternoon (1 p.m.–4 p.m.). Course contents and supporting materials will be available to attendees online and must adhere to the same standards as the presented materials (e.g., permissions to reuse materials in a course setting must be secured.) A typical format follows:

Introduction and overview: 15–20 minutes

First half of the presentation: 6 15-minute segments for a total of 90 minutes OR 20-minute segments for a total of 1–1.5 hour(s)

Coffee break: 15–20 minutes (when presenting live, in addition to recording breaks)

Second half of the presentation: 6 15-minute segments for a total of 90 minutes OR 20-minute segments for a total of 1–1.5 hour(s)

Review and questions: 20–30 minutes (The review can be a 15-minute summation, and questions can be FAQs at the annual meeting or submitted ahead of time and presented as a supporting document or recorded. Live Q&A may be edited or eliminated from the online offering.)

Course evaluations will be made available online and submitted electronically.

These are general format strategies that fit lecture courses well. Courses involving hands-on activities or interactive work may require varied formats and additional IT support. It is very important that the type of course be specifically referred to in the abstract describing the course so that the Committee, annual meeting program committee, and SETAC staff can evaluate each course in the context of the entire program.

Handouts and Teaching Aids

Digital short course instructors will be provided with audio-visual equipment such as screens and computer projectors, and SETAC or their designated contractor will be responsible for the digital capture of the course. However, instructors should bring their own computer with the approved PowerPoint presentation to minimize the cost to SETAC for computer rental and to ensure program compatibility. To support the remote learning format, courses should not require any specialized equipment (e.g., microscopes, aquaria, etc.).

SETAC will provide a PowerPoint template for the course presentation and will work with the Committee to vet the slides for clarity, scientific accuracy and copyright. A word about copyright: Digital short course instructors should err on the side of caution and obtain the right to reuse materials in commercial products. If this is not possible, materials with restrictions on use need to be flagged immediately to SETAC staff.

An important deliverable is the course manual. The manual should be well thought out and of high quality. It should be in an accessible format and include all visuals and references used in the course. In addition, materials that summarize and supplement the course prove to be most useful to the participants. Course instructors are responsible for preparation and reproduction of course materials, unless prior approval is received from the Committee and SETAC staff. SETAC will similarly format these materials with the official SETAC logo and consistent style prior to the meeting.

Presentations should closely follow the outline for the course included in the course manual. The cohesiveness of the outline is an important criterion for the success of the course and should be reviewed by all instructors and the Committee.

Conflict of Interest Considerations

The subject matter of digital short courses should be based on application and not on specific operations or utilization of specific technology, software, etc. If a specific instrument or technology is emphasized, all similar products must be mentioned. There may be no endorsement of specific instruments, software, etc. as part of the course material or in subsequent literature relating to the presentation of the course. A SETAC endorsement disclaimer will be included for all courses that make reference to specific instruments or technologies. SETAC appeals to the instructors' good judgment in presenting balanced, unbiased information. The purpose of SETAC professional training courses is to educate and promote good science, not to sell products or services.

Example Timeline of Digital Short Course Development

The timeline below uses the timeframe preceding a SETAC North America annual meeting; actual months may vary.

Jan—May: Digital short course proposal request announced

May 1: Initial proposals due

May 1-15: Coordinators review proposals, communicate with lead instructors about possible questions, changes, etc.

May 15: Courses selected are presented to the program committee

May 19: Course program submitted for meeting program, lead instructors notified of selection

June 16: Detailed outline of course due to coordinators for review and posting on website. SETAC PowerPoint template will be provided to the course instructors.

Aug 15: First draft of course materials due to coordinators for review

Sept 30: Final draft of course materials due to coordinators for review

Nov: SETAC annual meeting

Nov–Dec: Editing as required and posting of the short course online

Requirements for Digital Short Course Proposals

- **Course Title:** The title of the proposed course should be as specific as possible and accurately reflect the content of the course. Use 12 or fewer words.
- **Lead Instructor:** Identify one person as lead instructor. Future correspondence will be conducted through the lead instructor, who will be responsible for informing all other instructors.
- **Course Level:** State the level of experience or prerequisite knowledge participants need in order to properly understand the presented materials.
- **Registration Cap (if recording in front of a live audience):** Please determine the minimum and maximum number of participants to whom you can provide high-quality instruction. Course attendance will be limited to the maximum number and may be cancelled (in consultation with SETAC and the lead instructor) if the minimum enrollment is not achieved.
- **Objectives:** State the objectives of the course in a few sentences.
- **Description:** The description, 200 words maximum, must cover the purpose of the course and the topics to be discussed. If the proposal is accepted, this abstract will be used to advertise the course.
- **Topics:** Include a concise listing of topics to be discussed. A more detailed outline of the course content will be developed in preparation of the course and will be posted on the web. The cohesiveness of the outline is an important criterion for the success of the course and therefore is an essential component of the proposal review.
- **Instructors:** Evidence of qualifications (bio or resume) for each instructor should be submitted with the proposal. Each instructor's role in the proposed course should be clearly defined.
- **Course Materials:** List the course materials and their format required for the course, including any software packages. These will live with the digital short course online and should be high-quality reference materials. Products that summarize and supplement the course prove to be most useful to the participants. The right to reuse all materials must be obtained by the course instructor!
- **Cost Estimate:** Please list any costs for which you expect reimbursement. Itemize by category and provide accurate estimates. Acceptance of professional training course does not obligate SETAC to financially support anything but direct expenses. Note: Honoraria will not be provided and should not be included among costs. Costs should be kept low (i.e., below the expected income for the course) to ensure course acceptance. SETAC will endeavor to work with the lead instructor to keep costs low.
- **Other/Special Needs:** Indicate here that the course should be considered for the digital short course series and whether you intend to present in front of a live audience or not.

Practice

We encourage instructors to practice ahead of the short course recording. Once slides are approved and noted as "final," no major changes to the material will be permitted.

Presenting

At the SETAC North America annual meeting, MultiView will set up the equipment and record the short course.

In the case of a live audience, participants will be notified well ahead of time that the course is being recorded. There will be no interruptions allowed during the 15-20 minute presentations, but Q&A can be accommodated in-between each segment.

In the case of a studio setting, a room will be closed off and the recording will proceed as though you are presenting to an audience.

Follow-up

Within a month following the recording of the short course, the slides and audio recording will be archived on the SETAC website and available to SETAC geographic units, branches, and regional chapters.

Any additional follow-up is at the discretion of the instructors. For example, instructors may want to make themselves available for live Q&A via Skype or instant messaging if the course is being offered to a bigger group, for example at a regional chapter meeting.