

## *Original Paper*

# Developing an IMC Course Using Open Educational Resources

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### **Abstract**

*The cost of college tuition continues to climb each year, and textbook prices are following suit. Many students cannot afford to buy required textbooks until they receive financial aid, which often takes several weeks. This delay can hinder academic performance as students may be forced to take exams and complete assignments without having read the necessary material. Even for students without financial concerns, textbook cost is often considered to be incredibly high. Today there are many resources that professors can access to create courses with free content such as free online texts, OER sites, videos, and LinkedIn Learning. Pros and Cons of using OER materials will be addressed and resources for various topics in IMC will be provided. Finally, a brief discussion on the use of Artificial Intelligence in an IMC class will be considered.*

### **Keywords**

*Open Educational Resources, LinkedIn Learning, Artificial Intelligence*

### **1. Introduction**

The exorbitant cost of traditional textbooks has become a significant financial burden for students, prompting a growing interest in open educational resources as a potential solution (Anderson, 2024; Bouchrika, 2024; Hanson, 2024; Shin, 2024; Welding, 2024). Some students express uncertainty about how to adequately prepare for assessments when they are unable to purchase course materials due to financial constraints. Reliance on financial aid for textbook acquisition can hinder student preparedness for class discussions, assignments, and evaluations. This financial barrier not only jeopardizes academic success but may also prolong students' time to degree completion.

Access to textbooks and educational resources significantly impacts student performance and grades (Bouchrika, 2024; Harris et al., 2023). Students without essential classroom materials, such as textbooks, may encounter difficulties in comprehending course content. This challenge is particularly pronounced among first-generation students. Lacking familial experience with higher education, these students may be less equipped to navigate academic resources such as accessing textbooks through the university library (Startz, 2022).

One potential solution to this problem is highlighted in a University of Georgia study where a professor transformed a \$100 textbook course into one using open educational resources. Final grades were compared over a 6-year period and over 8 courses (Mackenzie, 2018; Patterson, 2018). “A total of 21,822 students were included in the study, 11,681 of whom used commercial textbooks and 10,141 of whom used free digital textbooks” (Mackenzie, 2018, para. 4). “Among students who used the open educational resources (OER), about 12% more received A grades and the number of students dropping out was about 3% less” (Patterson, 2018, para. 3). The study additionally found that open educational resources lowered the number of D, F and W grades (“Achieving the Dream”, 2018; Mackenzie, 2018; Paterson, 2018).

Open educational resources (OER) make use of free materials related to course content. These materials can be in the form of video, lecture notes, textbooks, articles, discussion questions, examples of course concepts, assessments and mini-courses. A benefit of using OER materials is that not only do students have free access to class resources from day 1, but also that the instructor can customize a course and up-date content more easily (Josephs, 2024). A further advantage of using OER materials is illustrated by a study conducted by the Open Education Group which “shows that most students perform as well or better using OER course materials compared with students using traditional textbooks” (Colvard et al., 2018, p. 263).

Many universities are making it a priority to support open educational resources. The Minnesota State System has even developed Z-degrees in which students can complete their education for certain majors without having to pay for a textbook (Anderson, 2024). The American Association of Colleges and University (AAC&U) strongly advocates for OER, emphasizing their critical role in addressing the declining public confidence in higher education's value. By making education more affordable and accessible, OER can significantly improve equity and inclusivity, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic (Watson & Rush-Marlow, 2023). Ultimately, the widespread adoption of OER has the potential to transform higher education by reducing costs, enhancing student success, and promoting a more equitable learning environment.

A 2023 report by the AAC&U (“48 Institutions”, 2023) underscores the significance of Open Educational Resources (OER) as a cornerstone for student success initiatives in higher education. The report further emphasizes that OER can mitigate performance disparities, decrease student attrition rates, and substantially reduce costs for both students and institutions. By providing free course materials from the outset, universities can create a more equitable learning environment for all students. In response, 48 universities participated in AAC&U’s Institute on OER resources to learn about tools and strategies for enhancing OER at their universities.

Given these advantages, providing students with an exceptional education is vital. Enhancing their learning experiences through free educational resources is essential. Furthermore, granting students immediate access to all course materials will significantly improve their digital literacy.

### 1.1 Defining OER

“Creative Commons defines OER as “teaching, learning, and research materials that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others” (Josephs, 2024, para. 6). This definition will be used throughout this paper.

### 1.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of OER

A quick search online will find that OER texts are often available for introductory topics, but are more difficult to find for upper-level courses. Other challenges in using OER textbooks are that there often are no ancillary materials and the professor will need to create their own quizzes, exams, lecture notes, power points as well as make the materials accessible (Table 1). The benefits of using OER materials are numerous including being able to completely customize a course with up-to-date content, free resources for students, and digital access to course materials from anywhere at any time. Furthermore, instructors can use OER and AI to create course content, write discussion and exam questions, and create course assessments.

**Table 1. Advantages and Disadvantages of OER**

<i>Advantages of OER</i>	<i>Disadvantages of OER</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up-to-date information of content</li> <li>• Students have access to course content immediately</li> <li>• Expanded access to learning from anywhere (“Pros and Cons”, 2024)</li> <li>• No financial cost to students</li> <li>• Customizable content (Josephs, 2024)</li> <li>• Opportunity to use AI to create content, exams, discussions (Josephs, 2024)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding quality content (“Pros and Cons”, 2024)</li> <li>• Extra time and effort on part of the instructor (“Pros and Cons”, 2024)</li> <li>• Technological problems (“Pros and Cons”, 2024)</li> <li>• Intellectual property ad copyright concerns (“Pros and Cons”, 2024)</li> <li>• No exams or ancillary documents for many resources</li> </ul>

## 2. Course Design Methodology

### 2.1 Course Planning

Course planning began with determining the learning objectives for the course and finding material to meet the goals of the course. As there was only one free online text on Advertising and one text on IMC at the time of course development a search began for more resources. Online search through Bing and Google was conducted to find material that is commonly contained in an IMC textbook. OER Commons and Lumen Learning were the most frequently used OER sites as they had the most information relevant to the class. Other reputable sources such as BrandMaster Academy, Coursera, eLearning Industry, Forbes, LinkedIn, HubSpot, Indeed.com, Investopedia (helpful for terms), Small

Business Chronicle, Smart Insights, Sprout Social, Teachfloor and Zabanga Marketing were accessed for relevant material. Content modules and PowerPoints were then developed of information obtained through Internet searches. The instructor then developed a glossary of all key concepts from the course and indicated which module each concept could be found.

YouTube was the main source utilized to find videos to explain course concepts as the closed captioning was most accurate for the topics viewed. TedTalks and Vimeo were also occasionally used. Course activities and discussions were developed to help students apply IMC concepts and to develop an IMC Plan. Exams were created by the professor through review of materials.

The instructor used a modular method of course development which allows one to continuously improve and adapt courses. As the instructor finds new and relevant material, it will be easier to update the course content. While theories are more static, some components of my courses (specifically social and digital media) are constantly changing. Textbooks do not provide up to date information, but online resources will allow the professor to keep the courses current.

### 3. Integrated Marketing Communications OER

The first step in creating a course using free resources for students started with a search for a free text. At the time of developing the course, only two free texts on advertising were available.

Solomon, N., Duke Cornell, L., & Nizan, A. (2009). *Launch! Advertising and Promotion in Real Time*, Saylor Foundation, <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/23>

While this text provided good information on advertising, it was more limited in scope than the professor wanted for a comprehensive IMC course and it was outdated. The second book provided a broad spectrum of information on the creative aspect of IMC, but it lacked the breadth of coverage of all IMC tools.

Niossi, A. (2020). *An Open Guide to Integrated marketing Communications (IMC)*, <https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/openimc/>

After deciding not to use either text as the main content for the course, the next task was to explore the major OER sites. While many sites provided some helpful content for the course, the professor found that Lumen Learning and OER Commons had the most relevant information of an IMC course. Table 2 lists some of the major OER sites.

**Table 2. Major OER Sites**

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#### OER Site & URL

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Academic Earth <https://academicearth.org/>

Coursera [https://www.coursera.org/\\*](https://www.coursera.org/*)

Edx [https://www.edx.org/\\*](https://www.edx.org/*)

Creative Commons <https://creativecommons.org/>

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Educause <https://library.educause.edu/topics/teaching-and-learning/open-educational-resources-oer>

Edutopia <https://www.edutopia.org/open-educational-resources-guide>

Merlot <https://merlot.org/merlot/>

Khan Academy <https://www.khanacademy.org/>

Lumen Learning <https://lumenlearning.com/>

Marketing OER <https://researchguides.austincc.edu/marketing/oer>

Oasis <https://oasis.geneseo.edu/>

OER Commons <https://oercommons.org/>

OpenStax <https://openstax.org/>

Open Textbook Network Library <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/>

Saylor <https://www.saylor.org/>

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\*Some courses are free, some are paid.

Multiple tables of contents of previous IMC texts (both hard copy and online) were reviewed to ensure the content validity of the course being developed. Lumen Learning and OER Commons provide a good overview of multiple IMC concepts such as defining IMC, discussing segmentation and positioning, outlining the communication process and developing IMC objectives. The resources for the foundations of IMC can be found in Table 3.

**Table 3. Lumen Learning & OER Common Sites for IMC Topics**

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***Determining IMC Objectives and Approach***

<https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/93469/overview>

***Elements of the Communication Process***

<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/publicspeakingprinciples/chapter/elements-of-the-communication-process/>

***Defining the Message OER Commons*** <https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/93468/overview>

***Marketing Communication Methods - Advertising, PR, Sales Promotions and Personal Selling***

<https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/93470/overview>

***Positioning***

<https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/91204/overview> and

<https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/91203/overview>

***Targeting strategies and the Marketing Mix***

<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-marketing-spring2016/chapter/reading-targeting-and-the-marketing-mix/#:~:text=A%20differentiated%20marketing%20strategy%20is,unique%20benefits%20to%20different%20segments>

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### 3.1 Digital Media

OER Commons has a good overview of Digital Media information (Table 4), but the information can quickly become outdated so the instructor will have to ensure that students are aware of new apps. Hubspot, LinkedIn Learning and Sprout Social are three sources that can be searched frequently for updated information on the ever-changing world of digital and social media.

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#### Table 4. Digital Media

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Gomez, R. (2024, March 20). Top 43 best marketing resources we recommend in 2024. Sprout Social, <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/marketing-resources/>

*Marketing Communication Methods* <https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/93470/overview>

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### 3.2 Direct Marketing

While the OER site *Marketing Communication Methods* did have some information on direct marketing, students need to be provided with more content to understand direct marketing better. A Coursera article on direct marketing was found to be a helpful (Table 5). Coursera does offer students a free 7-day trial for learning from their courses, but it also has many helpful free articles on marketing topics.

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#### Table 5. Direct Marketing

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Coursera (2023, June 16). Direct Marketing: What is it and How to Get Started, <https://www.coursera.org/articles/direct-marketing>

*Marketing Communication Methods* (2023). OER Commons, Retrieved September 13, 2023, from <https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/93470/overview>

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### 3.2 Metrics

Measuring the effectiveness of the various promotional tools is an essential part of teaching IMC. OER Commons has a good starting point for a discussion on measurement in IMC, but it can be supplemented with content from Niosi (2020) who presents detailed information on key performance indicators in IMC (Table 6).

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#### Table 6. Measurement Resources

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*Measuring Marketing Communication Effectiveness* (2023). OER Commons, Retrieved September 13, 2023 from <https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/93473/overview>

Niosi, A. (2020). Metrics – An Open Guide to Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) (pressbooks.pub). <https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/openimc/chapter/metrics/>

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#### 4. YouTube, Vimeo and Tedtalks

Students learning styles differ and many students enjoy learning not just verbally, but visually. While we can create our own videos, it is also helpful for students to learn from a variety of individuals who may be more similar to them based on age, ethnicity, cultural background, etc. Including videos that can be found on the web is one way to achieve the goal of diversity in learning. Table 7 provides a sample of YouTube links to a variety of topics covered in IMC.

**Table 7. IMC YouTube Links**

Introduction to IMC	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPTRzfi11gg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPTRzfi11gg</a>
IMC Campaigns	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPTRzfi11gg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPTRzfi11gg</a>
Segmentation & Target markets	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCLQkgcjMjY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCLQkgcjMjY</a>
SMART objectives	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVeCepyFfAg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVeCepyFfAg</a>
Storyboards	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YXBPBNhMBk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YXBPBNhMBk</a>
The Big Idea	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3poYnF0Wp3k">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3poYnF0Wp3k</a>
Creative Brief	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bp8nK5eqG_k">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bp8nK5eqG_k</a>
Advertising Appeals	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpwYsGUWIT8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpwYsGUWIT8</a>
Media Planning	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbI_BOuyyIg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbI_BOuyyIg</a> and <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bed4LTD9XMs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bed4LTD9XMs</a>
Budgeting	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wput6fN2ptU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wput6fN2ptU</a>
Hootsuite	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtDe5lkKP5E">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtDe5lkKP5E</a>
Instagram	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhfX21jz17c">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhfX21jz17c</a>

#### 5. LinkedIn Articles and LinkedIn Learning

LinkedIn has a plethora of free articles that can be used in many types of courses discussing content related to different fields. LinkedIn Learning is also a valuable resource as it provides video courses taught by industry experts. Students do not need to have a LinkedIn account, but it is helpful as they can display certificates from LinkedIn courses that they have completed which will help recruiters to find them (Table 8). LinkedIn also has mini courses called NanoTips that take 5 to 15 minutes. The LinkedIn courses used for this course were approximately an hour in length and students could earn certificates. To earn a certificate, students need to watch the videos and take quizzes. Students are given the opportunity to repeat quizzes if they do not pass the quiz the first time.

**Table 8. LinkedIn Learning**

##### IMC Certificate

<https://www.linkedin.com/learning/integrated-marketing-communications-strategies/transform-swot-int-o-opportunity-analysis?autoSkip=true&resume=false&u=58636153>

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**Social CRM Certificate**

<https://www.linkedin.com/learning/social-media-marketing-social-crm-16834779/social-customer-relationship-management-in-marketing?u=58636153>

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Students are provided with instructions (Table 9) in the course syllabus on how to complete LinkedIn learning courses and upload a certificate to the course dropbox.

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**Table 9. LinkedIn Learning Instructions**

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In this class we will be developing skills through some LinkedIn learning courses. These courses take approximately 1 hour and you can display certificates on your LinkedIn Profile and list them on your resume. If you do not have a LinkedIn profile yet, please set one up and feel free to connect with me as it is a great way to network and can be used to showcase your skills. While a profile is not a requirement to use LinkedIn learning (nor a requirement for the course), it is very beneficial for networking and finding jobs. Feel free to connect with me on LinkedIn and your classmates to help build your network. The LinkedIn Learning links can be found at the end of the syllabus in the schedule. The mini-courses will allow you to download a certificate that you will upload to a D2L dropbox for points. There are instructions on how to download the certificate on D2L. If you have any problems downloading, take a screenshot of the certificate and submit it to the appropriate dropbox.

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**6. Artificial Intelligence**

With the rise of many applications in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the growing use of AI in the field of marketing (Delegge, 2024) the instructor decided to incorporate AI into the course (Bowen & Watson, 2024). By using and documenting AI in the class through writing, research and creative development, students will have experience that they can put on their resumes to demonstrated how they have used AI Table 10 is an example of instructions provided to students on how to document their use of AI in the class.

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**Table 10. AI Report**

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You may use artificial intelligence tools such as Bing AI or ChatGPT or any other AI tool in this class for your discussions and class project. Please keep in mind that some AI tools produce false information, so make sure to verify the information. Each person will submit an AI report indicating how you used AI (on IMC campaign and discussions or anything else). In this report, please list the AI tools you used and how you used them. Please also comment on how easy or difficult it was to learn and use the tool. Keep a running document of your use of AI throughout the semester. I recommend you enter information into the document each time you use AI for this course. You want to keep documentation of how you use AI so you can demonstrate to potential employers that you are incorporating AI in your work.

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### 6.1 AI Policy

If AI is being utilized in a class, it is important to develop a clear AI policy to delineate to students what they can and can not do. A helpful document for determining what policies should be can be found at [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RMVwzjc1o0Mi8B1w\\_-JUTcXv02b2WRH86vw7mi16W3U/edit?pli=1#heading=h.1cykjn2vg2wx](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RMVwzjc1o0Mi8B1w_-JUTcXv02b2WRH86vw7mi16W3U/edit?pli=1#heading=h.1cykjn2vg2wx). This 123-page document is created by Lance Eaton (instructional designer) and lists AI policies for different professors and many institutions. Professors can then use these examples to create their own AI Policy. Table 11 presents an abbreviated example of an AI policy.

**Table 11. Example of an AI Policy**

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“This course encourages and embraces the ethical use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Throughout the course you may use various AI tools. AI is a new and valuable skill to master. Students who use AI correctly can become more productive, efficient, and skilled scholars. AI should not be viewed as a way to avoid learning the material, but rather as an assistant that can help you master content and produce better results.

AI Acknowledgement: To promote transparency, every assignment must include an "AI Acknowledgement" section. This section should clearly explain how AI was employed in the preparation and composition of the assignment. This acknowledgement allows us to acknowledge the role of AI in the learning process and understand its impact on the work produced.

1. You may use any AI tool in this course for your discussions and IMC campaign.
  2. AI should be used to enhance and supplement academic work, not replace it”.
  3. Any time you use AI for the course you will need to document how you used AI Keep a running document of how you are using AI in the IMC campaign (for instance to generate idea, in developing a creative brief or example of promotional tools).
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\* Example AI policy information from Eaton, 2024.

### 6.2 LinkedIn Learning AI Certificates

To facilitate learning, students need to completing one of the following LinkedIn Learning AI courses. The first course is focused on creating good prompts in order to have improved AI results (Table 12). The second course discusses prompts for AI, but also teaches students how to use AI effectively for research and writing.

**Table 12. LinkedIn Learning AI Certificates**

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Generative AI for Digital Marketers (1 hour)

<https://www.linkedin.com/learning/generative-ai-for-digital-marketers/digital-marketing-meets-generative-ai?u=58636153>

OR this course

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How to Research and Write Using Generative AI Tools (1 hour 15 min)

[https://www.linkedin.com/learning/how-to-research-and-write-using-generative-ai-tools/meet-your-ai-creative-collaborator?anchor=SOCIAL\\_PANEL&u=58636153](https://www.linkedin.com/learning/how-to-research-and-write-using-generative-ai-tools/meet-your-ai-creative-collaborator?anchor=SOCIAL_PANEL&u=58636153)

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### *6.3 Using AI to Develop Content*

“The advent of generative artificial intelligence provides instructors with new, more efficient ways to develop and update OER so that these materials stay aligned with evolving trends and course objectives” (Josephs, 2024, para. 2). While the instructor did not use AI to create the content of this course, future updates to the course may include AI written content. AI can help instructors to proofread content, generate descriptive text for images, find examples, create discussion questions, develop exam questions, and create assessments (Bowen & Watson, 2024; Josephs, 2024).

## **7. Marketing Profs**

Marketing Profs <https://www.marketingprofs.com/> is a resource students can join for free and enjoy various webinars and read articles on subjects such as use of artificial intelligence in advertising, content marketing strategies, storytelling, virtual event tactics and more. There is also a paid membership level which enables the user to even more access to marketing conferences and specialized marketing webinars.

## **8. Conclusions**

This paper has identified multiple free resources that can be used to develop an IMC course. OER sites such as OER Commons and Lumen Learning provided a solid foundation for developing content in an IMC course. Other resources included using LinkedIn for articles by professionals in the field of marketing and using LinkedIn Learning Courses related to the content of IMC. Video resources for content areas of IMC were also provided. Finally, allowing students to use AI in an IMC class was discussed. The use of AI in class allows students to work in a manner similar to those out in the field (Bowen & Watson, 2024).

## **9. Limitations and Future Research**

As this paper only dealt with an IMC class, future work could examine developing OER materials for other marketing courses such as consumer behavior, marketing research or marketing management. LinkedIn Learning and Coursera courses are continuously being developed, so they should be reviewed frequently to look for other possible inclusions in an IMC course. Finally, while this professor did not use AI to develop course content, updates to the course can be made through AI content creation.

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