

Academically Based Community Service (ABCS) Course Development Step-by-Step Guide

Academically Based Community Service (ABCS) courses integrate learning, teaching, and research with local, real-world, problem-solving in collaboration with a community partner. ABCS courses are a form of [community-engaged scholarship](#). ABCS courses can be designed from scratch, existing courses can be adapted into ABCS, and some courses may already be conducting ABCS activities and want to add the ABCS designation. If you are interested in discussing any of these possibilities, please contact abcscoordinator@sas.upenn.edu.

Note: ABCS courses are offered by departments/schools, and the ABCS course designation is agreed upon by the course faculty, the course department, and the Netter Center. Please check with your department/school about rostering new courses.

Step 1. Meet with the Netter Center for an initial conversation about ABCS possibilities. The conversation may include:

- a. Integrating collaborative, real world problem solving into the curriculum
- b. Options for community partners
- c. Timeline for course preparation and development
- d. Resources from other ABCS courses
 - i. Examples of projects
 - ii. Course syllabi
 - iii. Relevant readings: bit.ly/abcsbibliography
 - iv. Connections to course instructors and Netter Center staff engaged in similar activities
- e. Review of resources offered by the Netter Center for all ABCS courses:
<https://www.nettercenter.upenn.edu/what-we-do/abcs-courses/faculty-and-student-abcs-resources>

Step 2: Connect with possible or confirmed partner organization(s) to discuss project ideas. Netter Center staff can facilitate. Discussion may include:

- f. Identifying shared project goals and the role of Penn students (developing the desired process and product)
- g. Scheduling and communication logistics for the semester
- h. If not moving forward with a community partner, we recommend Penn faculty follow up with the partner to close the loop directly as a courtesy

Step 3: Develop and finalize course structure and content. This will likely require additional conversations with the community partner and/or Netter Center staff.

- i. Netter Center can also fund a federal work-study Teaching Assistant (TA) to help in the course development process

Step 4: Confirm with your department/school that the course is rostered. The Netter Center will tag the course as ABCS.

Step 5: The Netter Center will begin advertising the course as ABCS and offer its ABCS resources throughout the course.

The following are key components to consider and refine throughout the course development process. The Netter Center can support you with identifying answers to all of these questions throughout the process.

In the integration of collaborative, real world problem solving into the curriculum, consider:

- What real-world problem(s) are Penn students helping to solve?
- In what ways will this partnership be participatory and democratic? In what ways will it be mutually beneficial? What role(s) will Penn students play and what role(s) will the partner organization play?
- How regularly will Penn students be working with the partner organization throughout the semester? Will this be during or outside of class time?
- How is reflection integrated into the experience?
- What might be the final outcomes of this partnership? In one semester and/or across multiple semesters?

In the identification of a community partner, consider:

- Are there opportunities to integrate with existing Netter Center or other institutional activities, for the sake of sustainability, aggregating impact, and building on existing relationships?
 - Netter Center has long-standing relationships with many West Philadelphia public schools, communities of faith, nonprofits, and other local organizations as well as with various University departments, centers, and programs. In particular, many Netter Center programs occur in [university-assisted community schools](#) in West Philadelphia.
 - Instructors may also have their own existing local partners
- What is the capacity of the partner to engage in a collaborative process?
- What is the distance from Penn's campus and what are the transportation options to reach them?
 - Most ABCS courses engage with partners in West Philadelphia. A good rule of thumb is to have under 30 minutes of travel for the Penn students in each direction, preferably by public transportation.
- How does the partner's schedules align with the Penn students' schedules?

Note: If you require additional funds beyond the resources provided to all ABCS courses, you are strongly encouraged to apply for an [ABCS Course Development Grant](#). ABCS Course Development grants offer up to \$10,000 to design new ABCS courses or significantly restructure existing courses into ABCS.

TIPS FOR UTILIZING RESOURCES ONCE THE COURSE IS DEVELOPED:

Netter Center staff are available to support the course throughout the semester. It's highly recommended that new ABCS courses utilize as many resources as possible! In order to request these resources:

Questions? Contact abcscoordinator@sas.upenn.edu.

- To request an ABCS TA, email abcscoordinator@sas.upenn.edu with their name and email. The best time for this is a few weeks before the start of the semester, or at the latest a week or two into the semester. However, an ABCS TA can be hired for you at any point in the semester.
 - The TA can manage the logistics of the partnership (e.g. scheduling, transportation, clearances, communication) with support from Netter staff. See an extended list of possible ABCS TA responsibilities [here](#).
- To request a class visit from Netter Center staff, email abcscoordinator@sas.upenn.edu with possible times for the class visit. We'll identify the best staff to speak to the course and confirm a time. The presentation can be modified to be anywhere from 15 minutes to a full course, depending on what you want covered. The average presentation is 30-45 minutes.
- Information on requesting [transportation](#) and completing [clearances](#) is sent to all instructors throughout the beginning of the semester.
- To request support with promoting the course, connecting with community partners, purchasing materials, finding readings, or any other needs, email abcscoordinator@sas.upenn.edu at any time.