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Decision brief · illustrative example

Open course materials

A one-semester pilot decision

DocDuet Lab

Fictional university scenario

Review draft 1.0

Decision brief: open course materials service

A bounded pilot and evidence-based expansion decision

DocDuet Lab

Abstract

This illustrative brief considers a university service for open course materials. It connects the need, alternatives, staffing estimate, risks, and a 16-week pilot to explicit measures for a later expansion decision. Names and quantities are planning assumptions, not field results.

Table of contents

The decision in one page 1

Scope of the approval 2

Assumptions and boundaries 2

Problem and reader journey 2

Student and instructor paths 2

Options and decision criteria 3

What could change the choice? 3

Pilot cost and ownership 4

Risks, measures, and gates 4

Risks and responses 5

Recommendation and next decision 5

The decision in one page

Faculty need a dependable way to publish course materials, identify the approved version, and collect corrections. This brief proposes a **limited 16-week pilot** in two courses. Expansion would follow only if access, editorial quality, rights, and maintenance meet the gates in Table 4. The options in Table 2 keep this a choice rather than an assumed purchase.

Recommended decision
Approve ten learning units across two courses, one maintained source for each unit, a Word review step, and a PDF release. Do not approve an institution-wide platform or a permanent staffing commitment at this stage.

Scope of the approval

The pilot covers a small publication process, not a new learning-management system. A course owner supplies text and rights information. An editor checks structure and accessibility. A reviewer comments in Word. The source owner accepts changes in the structured source, rebuilds, and records the release.

Assumptions and boundaries

The university, courses, and volumes are fictional. Staff hours below are planning estimates, not market prices. The brief assumes that the institution already has course pages and that it may publish the selected materials. If either condition fails, the option comparison must be revisited.[1]

Problem and reader journey

Materials currently move through email, course folders, and isolated documents. A student may find an outdated PDF while an instructor holds a corrected Word file. A diagram may be replaced without updating its text alternative. The service must make the approved version visible and keep corrections connected to the maintained source.

Student and instructor paths

A student opens a course page, sees the title, version, and approval date, and downloads the reading copy. An instructor starts from a structured source, hands a Word file to a reviewer, decides which comments to accept, and publishes a new PDF. The two paths share one version identifier.

Table 1: Reader needs and the pilot response.

Reader need	Current failure	Pilot response
Find the approved copy	Several files have similar names	Version and date on each release
Read on common devices	An editable draft becomes the reading copy	PDF as the primary published format

[1] Hours describe team effort for this example; they are not a financial quotation.

Reader need	Current failure	Pilot response
Correct a mistake	Change stays in a returned Word file	Reconcile it into the source
Reuse a figure	Image lacks a useful description	Store alt text beside the figure source

Options and decision criteria

The team compared three small approaches. Scores run from 1 (poor fit) to 5 (strong fit). The weights express this pilot's priorities; they are not a general verdict on the products involved.

Table 2: Illustrative option scores; each weight is multiplied by the 1–5 score and divided by five.

Criterion	Weight	Shared files	New portal	Structured source service
Approved version is clear	30	2	4	5
Human review is easy	25	4	3	5
Reuse across formats	20	2	4	5
Setup effort	15	5	2	3
Accessibility checks	10	2	4	4
Weighted score / 100	**100**	**59**	**69**	**92**

The structured-source approach leads under these weights because it retains the content and its evidence while still giving reviewers an editable Word document. A portal may become useful later for discovery and access control. The pilot does not need to decide that future architecture now.

What could change the choice?

If the university cannot support the publication workflow, setup effort may dominate the decision. If most materials are scans, remediation cost will rise before any tool helps. If access control is essential, the new portal option deserves another evaluation. These are explicit triggers for reassessment.

Pilot cost and ownership

The pilot asks for time from existing roles. The estimates in Table 3 are intentionally simple so a team can replace them with observed hours after the first four units.

Table 3: Planning effort for ten units; replace these estimates with measured hours.

Work	Owner	Estimated hours	Evidence at handoff
Source preparation	Course author	42	Draft source and rights notes
Editorial and access checks	Editor	24	Issues resolved or assigned
Academic review	Instructor reviewer	20	Commented Word files
Release and verification	Publisher	14	PDFs and release log
Total	**Team**	**100**	**Ten pilot units**

> **Rights gate**
>
> No unit is published until its author identifies ownership and the permitted reuse terms for text, tables, and images. A visually complete PDF is not proof that publication rights are clear.

Risks, measures, and gates

The team should record a baseline before changing the workflow. The pilot dashboard needs counts of requests, successful downloads, review turnaround, corrections after release, and staff hours. A measure is useful only when its definition and collection method remain stable.

Table 4: Acceptance gates for the 16-week pilot.

Gate	Minimum evidence	Owner	Decision if unmet
Access	90% of sampled students can open the reading copy	Course lead	Fix delivery before expansion
Review	Every unit has a named reviewer and disposition log	Editor	Return the unit for review

Gate	Minimum evidence	Owner	Decision if unmet
Rights	All reused material has a recorded permission basis	Publisher	Hold publication
Maintenance	A correction is rebuilt from source within two working days	Source owner	Revise staffing or process

Risks and responses

Table 5: Risks have observable signals and an immediate response.

Risk	Early signal	Response
Review happens only in a PDF	Comments cannot be reconciled	Send the editable Word review copy
Source and release diverge	A corrected figure appears only in Word	Block release until source is updated
Staff effort grows	More than ten hours per unit	Reduce scope and measure the cause
Rights are uncertain	Permission field is empty	Withhold the affected unit

Recommendation and next decision

Approve the 16-week pilot with ten units and named owners. Review the first four units after one month, then complete the remaining six only if the workflow is stable. At the end, report the gates, actual effort, unresolved risks, and a recommendation to expand, revise, or stop. Keep the approved source and the released PDF together in the record.



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About this document

A structured decision brief for Word review and PDF publication, with assumptions and criteria retained in its source file.

All organizations, costs, and quantities in this document are illustrative.