

The Intricacies of Course Revisions



BY JANET WALKER, SR/WA, R/W-NAC

I am often asked why it takes so long to develop or revamp an IRWA course. The fact is, there are many steps involved in the process, and skipping any one of them is not an option. The International Professional Development Committee (IPDC) has a complex role, so to better to acquaint members with the committee's roles, responsibilities and processes, this is the first of three articles that will explain who we are and what we do.

The IPDC has a multi-tiered purpose: to oversee the development of course curriculum that trains right of way practitioners, while maintaining high standards of competency through a professional development program. This is a monumental task which entails an enormous amount of oversight. Here are just a few of our responsibilities:

- Monitor members' educational needs through market research
- Identify new professional development opportunities
- Recommend education and certification programs and policies
- Provide subject matter expertise in reviewing course content
- Select and manage individuals to develop and revise courses
- Administer certification and SR/WA designation programs
- Serve as liaisons with chapters, committees and regions

- Assist in developing instructor and participant manuals
- Monitor and approve courses proposed by outside sources for inclusion in IRWA's educational and professional development curricula

Managing the Variables

Most members believe a course revamping is a simple process, however, incorporating even minor revisions to course materials can be quite complex. It begins when a course instructor submits a change to IRWA headquarters. Staff at headquarters reviews the requested changes, and if revisions are required, passes the proposal along to the IPDC, which determines the level of change. If only minor changes are needed, the proposal is sent to an adult learning consultant, who incorporates the changes and sends the finished revisions back to the IPDC, which then either approves the changes or sends the proposal back to the consultant for further work. Once approved, graphics are added, the copy is edited thoroughly and a printed proof is created for final approval by the IPDC. Once the proof is accepted, IRWA headquarters officially activates the new content, which is then included when manuals are produced for the next time the course is presented.

Typically, this revision process takes six months or longer to complete. The schedule depends on many variables, such as the level of interest and response to a request for proposal, budget, availability of the developer and their ability to revise

course materials, quality of revisions, unexpected delays, project management and oversight. Another variable is the availability of the subject matter experts, often our international committee members, as well as the opportunity to pilot the revised course and integrate any necessary changes.

Our committee members are continuously assessing the quality and relevance of IRWA's courses based on feedback and formal requests from committees, instructors, participants and developers. This feedback helps us determine the need and level of urgency based on the nature and extent of the revisions.

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