COMMS 3
New Features and Changes

What's new / What's changed

This page outlines some of the new features of COMMS 3 and some of the key differences between this and the previous version.

Updated user interface

The interface for COMMS has been redesigned to be more streamlined and easier to use. Responsive pages can accommodate most devices and screen sizes.

Web based Course Outlines

Course Outlines are now essentially web pages, making them more accessible and easier to update. Web based outlines do not need to be generated before they can be viewed. The new design follows guidelines for accessibility compliance. Outlines may still be downloaded as PDFs using the "Save as PDF" or "Print to PDF" functionality in most major browsers.

In-place Course Outline editing

Instead of going back and forth between the outline editor and the generated outline, users can now edit the outline in-place.

Improved search

The course outline search is now faster and easier to use.

Data

COMMS 3 connects to the same database as COMMS 2 therefore the same live data can be accessed in either system. For example, a Course Outline approved in COMMS 3 will be approved in COMMS 2 as well. This means both COMMS 3 and COMMS 2 may be used interchangeably until COMMS 2 is retired on May 14, 2025.

Reports

Reports are now accessible in two ways:

1. On the new 'detail' pages relating to different Org Units (Academic Year, Department, Program).
2. Using the Search function. For example, to access the Course Outline overview report for the current year, search for '2024-2025' and select the 'Academic Year' result. The detail page will have various reports as well as management functions that are visible depending on your user role.

Support

You can now request technical support by clicking the "Get Support" link in the help menu. It will open a new email addressed to commssupport@northern.on.ca which is monitored by a Northern College COMMS team.

Custom roles.

Administrators can now create custom application roles appropriate to different business requirements.

COMMS 3 * NEW	Usual staff	Permissions
Administrator	IT, QA Manager, Senior Academic Support Coordinator	Full Access
Everyone	Everyone	Limited Access
Dean	Deans, Chairs	Varied Access
Program Assistant	Program Assistants	Varied Access
Coordinator	Coordinators, Course developers	Varied Access
LEID Support	LEID	Varied Access

Role name changes

Outline Approval Workflow roles have been standardized to disassociate them from specific job titles. They are now referenced as "Course Owner", " Course Contributors", "Program Owners", "Department Owners" and "Delegate Department Owners". See the chart below for additional information regarding role name changes.

Outline Approval Workflow / Access Authorization

COMMS 3	COMMS 2 equivalent	Usual staff	Flow of activities
Course Owner	Course Outline Writer	Faculty	Update and submit course outlines.
Course Contributors	N/A	Faculty	Additional faculty assigned to make changes. NOTE: Only Course Owners can submit.
Program Owners	Program Coordinator	Program Assistants /Coordinators	Review submissions and forward for department approval.
Department Owners	Department Chair	Deans/Chairs	Review – Return/Approve department course outlines.
Department Owner Delegates	N/A	Deans/Chairs	Delegate to Review – Return/Approve specific shared course outlines.

No change

There is no impact to the COMMS annual rollover or rollover dates at this time.

Roll over timeline remains approximately 1 ½ - 2 weeks into the summer semester. Actual set date can be found on the Yearly Academic Critical Path.

COMMS 2 – Home Page

COMMS 3 – Home Page / Dashboard