TOC Community Elections Charter - Draft

The [Open edX Technical Oversight Committee (TOC) Charter](#) specifies how the members are selected:

> **3. a.** *The TOC will have nine (9) members, distributed as follows:*
> i.   *three (3) members appointed by the NP Board of Trustees;*
> ii.   *three (3) members appointed by 2U, Inc. ("2U"); and*
> iii.   *three (3) representatives from the Open edX Platform community.*

The current page describes the process for electing the three representatives from the Open edX Platform community, as prescribed by the charter:

> **5.d.** *Representation from the Open edX Platform community will be elected annually by the community of contributors to the Open edX Platform and individuals who manage or operate an active Open edX instance. The TOC will organize and administer the annual election so that community members are confirmed by November 1 of the year prior to the January 1 of the term to be served. Election processes should promote the goal of having diverse representation of types of Open edX Platform community participants, i.e., for-profit firms, universities, nations, and not-for-profit organizations. Community members will recuse themselves from any vote related to their own future participation on the TOC. The initial slate of TOC community members will be selected promptly by unanimous decision of the then-serving TOC members designated by the NP and 2U.*

Preface

The [goals specified for the election process](#) of the three TOC community representatives are to:

- Emphasize the "[do-ocractic](#)" nature of the project – which is *"an organizational structure in which individuals choose roles and tasks for themselves and execute them. Responsibilities attach to people who do the work"*
- Ensure TOC members have demonstrated commitment and contribution to the project.
- Incorporate ways to promote the core contributor & maintainer program through the election, encouraging more community members and organizations to commit time to it

As a result, the election process defines criteria for candidates and voters, meant to ensure these criteria are matched, while applying democratic pressure on representatives that reflects the diversity of the community at large:

- Candidates must be active core contributors or maintainers designated by the Open edX project, and be approved by the TOC.

- Voting is open to the larger community, with different constituents each electing a dedicated representative (instance operators / core community, educators, learners) – incentivizing community board members to push for changes desired by their respective constituents.

This is still an experimental process, which the TOC might adjust based on the experience gained running the elections.

Voter eligibility

We differentiate between three categories of TOC community representatives seats, each with their own set of voters:

- **Operators & core community representative**: represents all active core contributors, who are all eligible to vote
- **Instructors representative**: represents all instructors using Open edX to publish a course; any individual producing or running a currently active course on Open edX can vote, including Teaching Assistants (TAs) and course content authors.
- **Learners representative**: represents everyone using Open edX to learn; any individual enrolled in a currently active course on Open edX can vote

Amendment proposal 1

Replace the previous bullet point for "Learner representative" with the following:
- **Learners representative**: represents everyone using Open edX to learn; any individual eligible to vote for the "instructors representative" can vote. The learners representative is responsible for reaching out on behalf of the project to the Open edX learners, and helping to involve learners in the project & its elections.

Candidates eligibility

Candidates must:
- Be active core contributors or maintainers designated by the Open edX Project ([OEP-54](#) & [OEP-55](#)).
- Have their candidature individually approved by the TOC

Additionally, the candidates must match the general eligibility criteria common to all TOC representatives:

> **3. b.** Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 3.a, no more than three (3) members can be affiliated with the same organization.

> **3. c.** In order to serve as a member, a representative must:
> i.   have the technical expertise necessary to carry out the TOC responsibilities;

ii. *have expertise with the Open edX Platform or similar learning technologies, for example (but not limited to) individuals who have contributed code or documentation that has been merged into the codebase in the past 12 months or who are responsible for the technical direction of an Open edX Platform instance (e.g., CTO or lead developer of a site powered by the Open edX Platform);*

iii. *comply with this Charter and applicable NP and TOC policies and procedures as updated from time to time (e.g., Code of Conduct, antitrust policy, etc.), and*

iv. *be willing to serve a 1-year term.*

Non-technical candidates

Functions of the TOC board and of core contributors [aren't only technical](). Any core contributor would qualify, including non-technical roles: there are roles related to product and project management, marketing, documentation, UX/UI, etc. The goal of the program is to recognize any sustained contribution that is useful to the community, technical or not.

Candidates nomination

To ensure a "do-cracy", candidates are nominated by currently active core contributors or maintainers, including nominating themselves. Anyone can suggest a nomination, but it needs to be posted or endorsed by at least one core contributor who isn't the nominee.

Additionally:
- Nominations must include a description of the candidate's goals for growing and improving the Open edX platform during their term
- Nominations are collected publicly on a forum thread
- Each candidate is nominated only once, and can be elected for any seat
- A candidate can be re-nominated if they did not get elected the previous year
- A candidate can be re-nominated if they are currently on the TOC
- The elected candidates' mission is to serve the Open edX community as a whole first, above the constituencies. We assign specific members to specific constituencies (assigning tasks to a single person helps avoiding the "tragedy of the commons" effect), but the primary mission of all the TOC community members is to care for the project's community as a whole, above all. The additional responsibilities TOC community members get, like the core/teachers/learners come in addition to that as a focus area, not as a replacement.

Voting process

- Voting registrations are collected in a form
  - Active core contributors and maintainers are automatically registered, registration is only required for teachers & learners.

- A single voter can register for multiple categories of seats as long as they satisfy the criteria
- The voter registration form can request details to help verify the voter, including:
    - Full name & email address
    - Public profile URL
    - Address of instance/course used, along with a URL showing a proof of the role held (teacher, operator, etc.)
    - Accepting a Code of conduct
    - Accepting the publication of the information provided in the form in the public list of voters (Full name, address of the instance of the course published, etc.)
- Open edX sites are encouraged to relay the availability of voting registration to their users, to maximize participation and community involvement
- The list of eligible voters is specified publicly
- Voting is done using [ranked voting](#) via [CIVS](#)
    - A separate vote is conducted for each of the 3 representatives being elected.
    - All voters can vote for any of the candidates, regardless of the categories the voters belong to – candidates don't have to pick only a specific category.
    - To address cases where a candidate is elected by multiple constituencies, elections for each of the seats are confirmed serially, in the order "Operator/core -> Teacher -> Learner". The top ranked candidate for the constituency is elected, and is removed from the ranked lists from the other constituencies. Eg:
        - Operators/cores rank candidates A B C D
        - Teachers rank candidates A C B D
        - Learners rank candidates A C D B
        - => Operators/cores elect A, teachers elect C, learners elect D
    - To prevent fraud, some additional anti-spam measures can be put in place, such as restricting to 1 vote per IP, as long as they are described publicly.
    - People who qualify for voting for multiple voters categories can vote multiple times (once per voter category)
    - Employees of 2U, tCRIL and the TOC can vote, as long as they satisfy the voting eligibility criteria.

Schedule

The times can be adjusted to avoid weekends and holidays, but it's essential that the final schedule be published in advance and adhered to:

- September 1: Nominations & voting registration opens
- September 30: Nominations & voting registration closes, nominated candidates are announced with a link to their program
- October 7: Voting opens, ballots are sent to eligible voters
- October 25: Voting closes
- November : Announcement of the results

- January 1: Terms begin

Vacancies

In case of a vacancy (resignation or removal of a community representative), the position is offered to the next candidate in the ranked list resulting from the elections. If no more candidate remains on the ranked list, the seat remains vacant and a new election is organized to elect the new representative, in the corresponding seat category. If a new election is already in progress, completed, or scheduled to start within 3 months, the results of this election for the vacant seat are used to designate the missing board member.