

Application Guidelines

Hello! Welcome to the ExCo Application Guidelines information sheet. If you are thinking about teaching an ExCo, this is a good place to get started. We've included info on who can teach an ExCo, what application materials are required, and what some of the general requirements and expectations are for our instructors. If you have any questions after reading through this sheet, please contact us at exco@oberlin.edu.

Best,
The ExCo Committee
(Emily, Alex, Marah, and Kate)

For a concise list of application links click [here](#).

What types of courses can be taught?

ExCo instructors teach 1-2 credit courses through the ExCo Department at Oberlin College. Courses are categorized as either “practicum” or “academic.”

All courses offered in the 2020-2021 academic year must follow [ObieSafe guidelines](#)

Practicum Courses

Practicum courses include dance, theater, sports, martial arts, games, etc. (Courses on music, arts, crafts, and DIY can sometimes fall into either category.)

Minimum requirement for a 1 credit practicum course:

- 12 week class schedule
- 2 hours of meetings per week
- 1 hour out of class work (practicing, attending events, etc) per week
- 2 forms of evaluation

Practicum courses very rarely are offered for 2 credits, but you may discuss the matter with the ExCo Committee if you think your course could qualify as such.

Course enrollment is limited to a maximum of 15 students per instructor.

Academic Courses

Academic courses are lecture and/or discussion based courses that explore topics of academic relevance. These often include courses on society, culture, language, religion, math, science, media, literature, etc. (Courses on music, arts, crafts, and DIY can sometimes fall into either category.)

Minimum requirements for a 1 credit academic course:

- 12 week class schedule
- 1-2 hour of meetings per week
- 1-2 hours of reading / assignment work per week
- 2 forms of evaluation

Minimum requirements for a 2 credit academic course:

- 12 week class schedule
- 2 hours of meetings per week
- 2-3 hours of reading / assignment work per week
- 3-4 forms of evaluation (3 is acceptable only if one of them is particularly large)

Course enrollment for academic courses is limited to a maximum of 15 students per instructor.

Who can teach an ExCo?

Almost anyone! We accept applications from Oberlin College and Conservatory students, faculty and staff of Oberlin College, and community members from the greater Oberlin area. While we are unable to accept instructor applications from high school students, we do encourage Oberlin high schoolers to get involved with the ExCo community by taking a course or two.

Due to the ObieSafe guidelines, members of the Oberlin community who are not directly associated with the College must engage with ExCo remotely for this academic year. This also applies for students who are on campus but not enrolled for the given semester.

What is involved in the instructor application process?

We have specific application forms that we require you fill out and submit to us by the **application deadline (October 31st for Spring 2021 applications)**. What forms you have to submit depends on whether you have taught an ExCo before, whether this particular class has been offered through the ExCo program in recent years, and a

number of other variables. Below you will find a detailed list of all required materials for each application scenario, as well as links to all forms.

After the ExCo Committee has received all application materials, we hold 15 minute interviews with each applicant (instructors renewing a course they have taught within the past 2 semesters do not need to interview). Interviews are generally held in our office, with one to two Committee members present. **For Fall 2020 interviews will take place via Zoom.** Co-instructors for a course must each interview individually.

The Committee holds weekly meetings to review all interviews from that week. We often email applicants to ask clarifying questions, request certain information be added to the syllabus, and discuss any concerns with the course. We send out approval notices on a rolling basis, generally about one week after all instructors for a course have completed their interviews and any concerns have been addressed.

Required application materials for a variety of scenarios -

First, a note on letters of recommendation. We require two recommendations for all new instructors, all instructors who have not taught an ExCo in the past 4 semesters, and all instructors who have failed to pass their ExCo in a previous semester (with some exceptions). We require one **General Recommendation** and one **Faculty Recommendation**. For the General Recommendation, consider asking a friend or coworker who knows you well and is aware of the extent of your knowledge in the course material. For the Faculty Recommendation, we accept letters from professors, coaches, coworkers, bosses, or anyone else who can speak to your professionalism and interpersonal skills. We are looking for letters from people you have recently interacted with, but first year students are welcome to have high school teachers/coaches write their letter. We do not accept letters of recommendation from family members.

Second, a note on the ExCo Fair Application. We encourage, but do not require, applicants to submit an ExCo Fair Application with their other application materials. To clarify, this is the application that you are going to send to students who are interested in joining your course. We highly recommend that you use Google Forms or an equivalent online form system, since this allows you to email the application to students unable to attend the ExCo Fair, and gives your students time to think about their responses (rather than writing down whatever comes to mind during the ExCo Fair). We encourage you to submit a copy of this form to us because it makes you start thinking about the criteria upon which you plan to accept students into your course. When you are reviewing applications, we ask that you remove the names on the applications so

everybody can have a fair chance to take your ExCo. For ExCo courses that do not use an application system, we require that you admit students into your course via a random lottery system.

New Course with Instructor who has Never Taught an ExCo

Congrats! You have designed a course that hasn't been taught as an ExCo in at least four semesters. You are also new to the ExCo program, and have never taught with us before. Here's what we'll need from you:

- Syllabus - The most important part of your application. See our "How to Write a Syllabus" document for instructions.
- New Course Application
- Instructor Application - One for each instructor, done individually.
- Two Recommendations (One **General** and One **Faculty**)*see above*
- An Interview

New Course with Instructor who has Taught a Different ExCo

Also congrats! You have taught an ExCo in the past, but now want to try teach a new course that you designed yourself. Or you are taking an old ExCo course that hasn't been taught in the past four semesters, and you are updating it to bring it back to life.

Here's what we'll need from you:

- Syllabus - The most important part of your application. See our "How to Write a Syllabus" document for instructions.
- New Course Application
- Instructor Application - One for each instructor, done individually.
- An Interview

Established Course with Instructor who has Never Taught an ExCo

Still congrats! You are new to the ExCo process, and are planning to help an established course reach new students. This course has been taught within the past four semesters, so hopefully you can get a copy of the syllabus from the previous instructors.

Here's what we'll need from you:

- Syllabus - Has to be updated to reflect changes in date/deadlines, instructor contact information, any changes you made to the readings, assignments, expectations, etc.
- Course Renewal
- Instructor Application - One for each instructor, done individually.
- Two Recommendations (One **General** and One **Faculty**) *see above*
- An Interview

Established Course with Instructor who has Taught a Different ExCo

More congrats! You've taught with us before, and now you're helping another established ExCo stay alive. This course has been taught within the past four semesters, so hopefully you can get a copy of the old syllabus from the previous instructors. Here's what we'll need from you:

- Syllabus - Has to be updated to reflect changes in date/deadlines, instructor contact information, any changes you made to the readings, assignments, expectations, etc.
- Course Renewal
- Instructor Application - One for each instructor, done individually.
- An Interview - Generally closer to 5-10 minutes, rather than the 15 minute standard interview.

Established Course with Instructor who has Taught This ExCo

The most congrats! You are keeping your course alive, and your experiences teaching this ExCo can help you provide guidance and support for newer and less experienced ExCo instructors.

Here's what we'll need from you:

- Syllabus - Has to be updated to reflect changes in date/deadlines, instructor contact information, any changes you made to the readings, assignments, expectations, etc.
- Course Renewal

Links to Application Forms

Use the Application Guidelines (listed above) to determine what forms you need to submit, then click on the links below to fill them out. Refer to the What Should Be Included in a Syllabus (below) for help organizing your syllabus and ensuring that no important information is omitted. The Upload Syllabus link will take you to a Google Forms page that accepts .pdf file uploads.

We no longer accept application materials in hard copy or via email, with the exception of syllabi, which can be slid under our office door (Wilder 302), or emailed to exco@oberlin.edu as a .pdf form.

- [Course Application, Course Renewal, and Syllabus Upload](#)
- [Instructor Application and Letters of Recommendation](#)

What Should Be Included in a Syllabus?

The course syllabus is the main form of communication between teachers and students about objectives, content, and requirements. Because of ExCo's more liberal definition of education, ExCo syllabi must be even more clear and thorough in their explanation of classes. A good syllabus keeps you and your students on track, and can alleviate problems of hazy goals and lack of direction. It also helps students to make informed and quick decisions about whether to enroll. **Note: Any changes made to the syllabus after the course is approved must be reported to the ExCo Committee.** You can find all application materials, our course guidelines, example syllabi, and committee member office hours on the ExCo website:

<http://oberlinexco.org/>

Your syllabus is the most important part of your application. In order to get your class approved, your syllabus (usually) must:

- Cover the 12-week semester, listed week by week
- State topics/activities for each class meeting
- State assignments and readings with page numbers and when they are due
- Provide at least one discussion question for each class meeting (if the course is discussion based)
- State and describe the methods of evaluation and when they are due
- **Clearly state the attendance policy (ExCo attendance policy is that in order to pass, a student cannot miss 25% or more of classes, which means a student could miss at most 2 classes in a weekly ExCo)**
- ExCos that require some kind of physical activity must have a statement clearly and specifically describing what the physical requirements expected of their students will be (i.e. Students must be able to be on their feet for 1 hour and lift loads of up to 15 lbs)

The following are suggested sections for your syllabus and what they might include

- **Basic Information**
 - Course title, course number, and number of credits
 - Instructor's full name, pronouns
 - Instructor's email address, office hours (if applicable)
 - Class meeting time and place
 - Materials needed and course fee (if applicable)
- **Course Purpose, Goals, and Objectives**
 - Course rationale
 - General and specific objectives
 - Relationship of course to student academic development
- **Class Dynamics**
 - Describe the instructor's planned relationship to and interaction with the students, and explain their approach to facilitating the class
- **General Requirements**
 - Clearly state up front all requirements for passing the course, so that nothing comes as a surprise. This includes attendance policy, number and type of assignments, methods of evaluation, field trips, and outside events. Remember that all ExCo courses are graded on a Pass/No Pass basis, not with letter grades
- **Content Outline**
 - This should include a 12-week outline of topics being covered, objectives, assignments, and methods of evaluation, all with appropriate dates and due dates. These should demonstrate a reasoned progression of topics. If your class is discussion-based, you must include your discussion questions.

Please contact the ExCo Committee at exco@oberlin.edu with any additional questions.