
Common Expectations Chapter 3

In order to complete a full Open Masters experience, we expect of each other that we will:

1. Be part of a social learning experience. That means:
 - a. Working with **co-mentors** and **study buddies**.
 - b. Joining a **team** and being a contributing member of it.
2. Develop and maintain a **system and a routine for self-directed learning**- including:
 - a. Creating and periodically updating a public **statement about your intentions**.
 - b. Creating and periodically updating a **learning plan**, including a list of possible **projects and experiences** you hope to complete- and are currently completing- such as:
 - i. Courses (online, offline, peer-led or instructor-led, etc.)
 - ii. Work / consulting projects
 - iii. Service projects
 - iv. Research projects
 - v. Creative / artistic projects
 - vi. Internships, apprenticeships, work-study, etc.
 - vii. Study tours
 - c. Maintaining a schedule of **regular check-ins** with your **study buddies** and **co-mentors**.
 - d. Creating and maintaining a **portfolio** of completed projects, including **evidence** of work completed and **letters or reflections** from yourself and others.
 - e. Maintaining a **system for recording reflections** on your journey through a journal, blog, or other methods and **sharing** some reflections either privately or publicly.
3. Complete and share a public **portfolio** convincingly demonstrating mastery within your chosen field(s) of study, including:
 - a. Evidence of a **set of completed projects and experiences**, including at least one that is a **final project**, evaluated by your peers and co-mentors.
 - b. Specific **evidence of mastery of each of a list of relevant strengths, skills, and knowledge** relevant to your chosen field(s), as evaluated by your peers and co-mentors.
4. Receive **Letters of Endorsement** from at least one study buddy and co-mentor. You may seek additional letters of endorsement to strengthen your portfolio, as you like.
5. Uphold the **spirit** of the Open Masters community.

There are **four phases** to any Open Masters experience:

I. Prepare

Objective: determine if and when you are ready to begin an Open Masters, culminating in writing and sharing your first personal statement about your intentions.

II. The Common Core Experience (for newly formed groups)

Objective: Refine your initial area of study. Develop a system and routine for self-directed learning, including each of the items listed in our common expectations here. Join a team. Choose study buddies and your first co-mentor(s). Develop a list of potential projects and experiences you hope to complete. Pick at least one to begin.

III. Study

Objective: over the course of as long as is needed, take on a variety of learning projects and experiences to help you develop relevant strengths, skills, knowledge, and relationships for your chosen field of study.

IV. Finale

Objective: declaring that you have begun your finale means that you are in the home stretch and signals to the community that during this time you will be completing a final project, asking for more thorough peer review, and offering a public presentation of your work. It also means cake is on the horizon.

Finally, your community, peers, and loved ones will join you in celebrating the completion of your Open Masters journey with a personal **graduation ceremony**.

After completing an Open Masters, participants are welcome to remain active in the community as peers and co-mentors. You may even want to take on another Open Masters in a different field.

How long will it take?

Completing all four phases of your Open masters experience should take as long as you, your peers, and your co-mentors determine is necessary. Remember, the Open Masters is more of a journey than a destination. For some guidance, think about typical institutional masters programs in the field(s) you are studying. Many of these range from one year- for full-time students- to a few years- for part-time students. We anticipate that the same will probably be true for a typical Open Masters journey.

Rhythm of the Open Masters

There is a certain **rhythm** to the Open Masters experience, as well, that will vary from community to community, but which will generally include:

- A recurring annual schedule of “semesters” (about 2-6 per year).¹

¹ In DC, we will plan at least two semesters of about 3 months in the first year: a Fall semester from

- Within each semester:
 - Group courses you are creating or completing together, and other shared projects and experiences.
 - Opportunities for interacting with the local Open Masters community regularly (weekly is recommended). In the first semester, that will include completing the “Common Core Experience” with a group of others beginning the experience at the same time.²
 - Regular co-mentor check-ins (once a month is a reasonable expectation)
 - Regular study buddy check-ins (every week or two is a reasonable expectation)
 - Opportunities for interacting with the global Open Masters community, annually at least.
 - Celebrations and other traditions, such as retreats and ceremonies.
 - Breaks, between semesters.
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In detail, each phase of the Open Masters program includes the following steps:

I. Prepare

Objective: *determine if and when you are ready to begin an Open Masters, culminating in writing and sharing your first personal statement about your intentions.*

1. **Talk** with someone involved with the Open Masters

Objective: *there is no agenda for this conversation. The objective is simply for you to have an opportunity to get to know the process from someone else who is involved with it, to ask questions of each other, and to start to wrap your mind around what an Open Masters experience could look like for you. This is a part of how we pass on the spirit of the Open Masters through the community.*

2. (Optional) Complete a **self-assessment** of your Open Masters readiness

Objective: *there is no GPA, minimum GMAT score, or other type of requirement for beginning the Open Masters process. In Lieu of that, this tool is provided to help you determine if you are at the right stage to be exploring an Open Masters, and if you have the necessary foundation to have a successful Open Masters experience.*

3. (Optional) Some possible experiences leading up to the Open Masters:

- Travel** - including exploratory wandering, a study tour, a gap year, work / study / volunteer abroad, and many other possibilities.
- A **solo wilderness experience**.
- An **immersion** in a new context or group of people.
- A **challenging work experience, apprenticeship, internship**, or other.

Objective: *you should begin your Open Masters journey when you feel drawn to it by something inside you: a purpose or mission that feels authentic to you. If you are not there yet, that's perfectly fine. To help get you there- or even if just you want some extra time or space to explore before you begin- we have provided some ideas and resources*

September to December, and a Spring semester from February to May.

² In DC for the first year, these common experiences will be called the Open Masters “[Study Hall](#).”

to help you continue to explore yourself and your world until you feel the calling to begin an Open Masters. These are just starting points; a few ideas to get you started. It is perfectly fine to do these for many years before you decide that you are ready to begin your Open Masters experience.

4. (Optional) **Run it by your friends.** Gather some friends for an informal dinner, go for hike, or do anything else together you enjoy doing, to talk about your interests and passion, a possible field of study, and whether you are crazy to do this or not. Discuss your **interests and passions** with them, as well as some ideas about how you could best explore and deepen those through an Open Masters or any other means.

***Objective:** This step is mostly about hearing yourself say- out loud- that you are thinking about starting the Open Masters process and getting some ideas and feedback about that decision from people who know you well. You should be paying as much attention to how all of that sounds to you- coming out of your own mouth- at least as much as whatever else your friends have to say in response.*

5. Write a **public statement** about some intentions you have for your Open Masters experience. Upload it to a public profile online and share it with your peers and others.

***Objective:** This statement is an articulation of you and what is driving you to further your education in this way. This is an opportunity for you to talk about your passions and the calling that is drawing you to begin this experience. You do not need to know exactly what you want to study at this stage, but you should share something about some aspirations for yourself and the world around you so that your potential teammates can get to know you and support your decision to start this journey.*

6. **Sign up** to begin the common core experience with a group of your peers, according to that group's own timelines, processes, and expectations.

II. The Common Core Experience (for newly formed groups)

***Objective:** Refine your initial area of study. Develop a system and routine for self-directed learning, including each of the items listed in our common expectations here. Join a team. Choose study buddies and your first co-mentor(s). Develop a list of potential projects and experiences you hope to complete. Pick at least one to begin.*

1. Form or join a **team** and **set some expectations** with each other.
 - a. Have a group experience with other members of a group of other peers starting this process together- such as a **retreat** away from your everyday lives- to establish a foundation for your community and your journey together.
 - b. As part of that experience discuss the **Open Masters expectations and process** to make sure you understand what you are beginning. Set any other expectations that you like.
 - c. While together, complete as many of the below expectations as possible.
2. Practice your **skills for teaching and learning as peers**.
 - a. **Teach** your peers something twice. Share and receive feedback from your peers on the *process* of planning, facilitating, and teaching a group of your peers.
 - b. (Optional) complete learning challenges on the following skills:
 - i. **Coaching** peers through learning experiences and projects

- ii. **Documenting, reporting and reflecting (“harvesting”)** your learnings
 - iii. **Curating content and planning** peer learning experiences
- 3. Discuss your **interests and passions**.
 - a. Pick **one burning question** in the field of study you want to begin to explore.
 - b. Update your personal statement online, if necessary.
- 4. Create **a system and a routine for self-directed learning**, including:
 - a. Starting a **journal or blog** about your interests and passions.
 - b. Creating an initial list of **strengths, skills, and knowledge** you hope to cultivate during your Open Masters experience. This list may be as long as it needs to be, and it may change or grow in the future, but you need a starting point.
 - i. To give yourself a baseline, complete an **assessment of your strengths and skills** with your peers.
 - ii. (optional) Scan the world for inspiration:
 - 1. **Research competency rubrics** of similar educational programs
 - 2. Scan **job descriptions** of jobs that excite you, and look for keywords that indicate skills, strengths, or knowledge they expect of applicants.
 - 3. **Interview people** who inspire you in fields that interest you. Ask them about the most important strengths, skills, and knowledge that are important to the work they do today, and how they cultivated them.
 - 4. Anything else that could help you identify relevant items for your list.
 - iii. Add some ideas to your list for different types of **evidence** you could produce to demonstrate your mastery of each of these. Try to think of two for each.
 - c. Create an initial **learning plan**.
 - i. **Create an initial list.** Discuss some possible experiences and projects you could complete to help you develop important strengths, skills, knowledge, and relationships. This list may be as long as it needs to be, and it may change as many times as it needs to in the future. Each of these experiences and projects should be tied in some way to the list of strengths, skills, and knowledge which you will be working on. Some possible experiences include:
 - 1. Participate in a peer-led course (Citizen Circles, P2PU courses, etc.)
 - 2. Complete a study tour
 - 3. Complete an apprenticeship, internship, or work-study
 - 4. Join a community of practice
 - 5. Conduct an independent research project
 - 6. Complete a service project
 - 7. Complete a creative / artistic project
 - 8. Complete a work / consulting project
 - 9. Finish a reading list
 - 10. Create or attend a flash seminar, skillshare, or other short course
 - 11. Create or attend a training workshop, retreat, conference
 - 12. Attending a public presentation or lecture
 - ii. (optional) Scan the world for inspiration:
 - 1. **Review the requirements of masters programs and courses** that

interest you, or any other educational program.

2. **Interview people** who inspire you in fields that interest you and ask them what experiences led them to where they are.
3. Make a list of things you would do **with unlimited money and time, and if failure was not possible**.
4. Anything else that could help you identify relevant items for your list.
- iii. Add some ideas to your list about types of **evidence** you could produce to demonstrate your completion of each of these. Try to think of two for each.
- iv. **Pick at least one** experience or project to **begin immediately**.
- d. Choose at least one **co-mentor**, to start.
 - i. **Invite potential co-mentors to meet** with you. Don't limit yourself. Think about who you would ask if they could not reject you, and then ask them.
 - ii. Discuss **the Open Masters process** with your co-mentor and answer their questions.
 - iii. Share and discuss **your initial learning plan** and **your initial list of strengths, skills, and knowledge** with them. Ask for feedback and ideas.
 - iv. Ask if the co-mentor is willing to work with you. If at all possible, discuss a **project** you can work on together that would be beneficial to both of you. Your relationship may be focused entirely on only one project at first.
 - v. If so, **agree clearly**:
 1. **What you both expect** from this relationship.
 2. **How often** you will meet.
 3. **How your co-mentor will evaluate and reflect** on your work together.
 - vi. **Schedule your second meeting** with each other before leaving your first meeting. Before you leave make sure it is clear to your co-mentor what you will be working on between now and then.
5. **Write and publish a letter** reflecting on your experience thus far, including how you have contributed to the broader Open Masters community.

III. Study

Objective: *over the course of as long as is needed, take on a variety of learning projects and experiences to help you develop relevant strengths, skills, knowledge, and relationships for your chosen field of study.*

1. Each semester of the Open Masters, **choose a set of experiences and projects to complete** and **complete them**.
 - a. Work with your peers and co-mentors at least once a semester to **determine your priorities**.
 - b. Be sure to define **in advance** what expectations you, your peers, and your co-mentors have for documenting, evaluating, and reflecting on your work.
 - c. Record **evidence of completed work, notes** of your experiences along the way, and any **reflections** from yourself and your peers and co-mentors on your **portfolio**.
 - d. Typically, you should ask for **letters, comments on your blog, or other reflections** from

peers and co-mentors who worked on any project or experience with you.

2. **Maintain your system and routine for self-directed learning**, including:
 - a. Updating your **personal statement** as often as needed. Review it **at least once a year**.
 - b. Maintaining your personal **journal, blog, or other medium** documenting your experience and learnings.
 - c. Maintaining your **plan** and **portfolio** online.
 - d. Meeting with your study buddy **at least once a month** to review your work with each other and to revise your personal statement and plan as needed.
 - e. Meeting with your co-mentor(s) **at least twice per year** to review your work and to revise your personal statement and plan as needed.
 - f. Recruiting **new co-mentors** as needed.
 - g. Complete another **assessment of your strengths and skills** at least once a year.
3. Uphold your commitments to and expectations of your coursemates, teams, study buddies, and co-mentors. Set clear expectations and uphold them- for example, for **attending** common meals, study halls, or parties your community organizes. In particular:
 - a. **Comment** on your peers' work and provide prompt feedback to study buddies.
 - b. **Be a study buddy or coach** to at least one other member of your community.
 - c. In general, **do your part** to support the community as best as you can.
4. **Write a public letter** reflecting on your experience **at least twice a year**, including how you have contributed to the Open Masters community.³

IV. Finale

Objective: *declaring that you have begun your finale means that you are in the home stretch and signals to the community that during this time you will be completing a final project, asking for more thorough peer review, and offering a public presentation of your work. It also means cake is on the horizon.*

2. Complete a Final Project
 - a. A final project demonstrates all of the strengths, skills, and knowledge you have developed throughout your journey and makes a significant contribution to the world. It could include:
 - i. An independent research project
 - ii. A service project
 - iii. A practical project
 - iv. A creative project
 - v. Other types of projects
 - b. Develop a plan and have it reviewed by your study buddy and your co-mentor(s).
 - c. Document and share your work through any medium of your choosing (e.g. an art portfolio, a thesis, a film, a book, etc.).
3. **Choose a final title** for your Open Masters (e.g. my "Open Masters in Cooperative Community

³ Each year, you should be able to talk in your letter about at least two concrete things you have done to support the Open Masters community, and to help create learning experiences for others.

Building"). You may revise your **topic of study** as often as you like throughout the process until you pick your final title.

4. Receive **letters of endorsement** from at least one study buddy and one co-mentor, endorsing your mastery in your chosen field(s).
 - a. In order to do so, first complete **final interviews** with **your study budd(ies)** and with your **co-mentor(s)**, from throughout this process.
 - b. If you are combining different fields of expertise (e.g. writing and graphic design), you should ask for co-mentor letters of endorsement in each of these fields.
 - c. (Optional) Receive additional letters of endorsement from any other people or organizations that strengthen your portfolio.
5. At least one month before your public presentation, put out a call to the global Open Masters community to “speak now or forever hold your peace.”
6. Having successfully completed all of the above, give a **public presentation** of your work with at least your study buddies, co-mentors, and **at least two outside peer observers present**.
7. Hold a **graduation ceremony!**