



INSTRUCTOR HANDBOOK

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) Kent and Sussex Counties

INTRODUCTION

Teaching in the lifelong learning environment is an exciting experience. Members are vital and enthusiastic people who have chosen to enrich their lives with the learning experiences lifelong learning provides. This unique group of members presents special pleasures and special challenges that will be addressed in this booklet.

Instructors enjoy a good deal of academic freedom in that no one tells them what to teach or how to teach. Instructors (or groups of instructors) select their own subject, design the course and implement it subject to approval of the submitted course proposal by the Academic Affairs Committee.

Instructors are not required to have degrees, and a majority do not have prior teaching experience. Instruction at lifelong learning is highly varied.

The purpose of this handbook is twofold: (1) to provide instructors with some basic information about senior learners and (2) to provide suggestions for teaching that may be especially helpful to those who have never taught in this environment before.

The Senior Learner

What makes OLLI different from other kinds of schools is its students, the members. OLLI members are not only older than students in other types of educational institutions, but they are motivated by fundamentally different energies.

Motivations

Members attend classes for a wide variety of reasons. Many come for intellectual stimulation or to acquire new skills. Others come just to pass the time or to be part of a

social group. Many people are drawn for more than one, or perhaps all of these reasons.

Learning Patterns

Because of their motivations for attending classes, many senior learners do not feel compelled to spend a great deal of time on assigned readings or preparation for class sessions.

Many senior learners enjoy participating actively in class by contributing their own knowledge on a topic, sharing relevant experiences, and asking questions. They expect some time for discussion even in a lecture-oriented course.

Attendance

Patterns of attendance among members are highly variable. Too many things compete and occasional absences are the norm rather than the exception and should not necessarily be taken as an indication that the course has little appeal.

Education and Experience

There are usually no requirements or prerequisites for courses. The makeup of any class may represent a wide range of educational and experiential backgrounds. Individuals representing the entire range of the educational spectrum attend classes together.

Physical Limitations

Because of the age of the members, their hearing and/or vision may be impaired. The instructor should be certain that he or she can be heard by class members and that visual aids are clear and in sufficiently large type. Repeating questions asked by students in class can be very helpful. Providing a break during the class period is recommended.

Faculty

Like other members, instructors represent a broad range of formal education and life experience. The faculty includes individuals with no college degree and those with a Ph.D. It includes retired educators, skilled artists, and sophisticated enthusiasts.

Unlike the faculty at virtually all other types of educational institutions, many instructors are teaching subjects in which they have no academic credentials. Most of these individuals have had a long-standing, even life-long interest in the disciplines they are

teaching, but these are not the disciplines in which they were trained or in which they may have functioned during their working years.

Interestingly, in many instances, this lack of professional credentials tends to make for better instruction. People who are knowledgeable but not professional “experts” in a field can sometimes explain concepts in that field more clearly than professionals—especially to students who lack prerequisite knowledge or experience.

TEACHING TIPS

Teaching Suggestions

Class Format

Knowledge-based courses (e.g. literature or history) should follow a balanced format of lecture and discussion. The instructor provides a body of knowledge and allows opportunity for class discussion.

Skill-based courses (e.g. art techniques) usually start with a demonstration of the skill, followed by practice and application of the skill.

Course Outline

A reading list and/or a list of materials should be emailed to students prior to the first class, and a course outline should be provided at the first session. Because of the attendance pattern of senior learners, each lesson should be as freestanding as possible.

Meeting Student Expectations

Senior learners expect instructors to be well prepared, organized, and enthusiastic. Instructors should encourage discussion and creative efforts, vary lesson format, provide multimedia presentations, and offer field trips when appropriate. Most importantly, display a sense of humor. A dry, humorless presentation or reading a lecture will turn off members.

Communicating with Students

Prior to the first day of class you will receive a list of students registered for your class, including email and telephone number. On the first day of class you may want to identify the students' preferred method of communication. If you need to cancel a class, please communicate with the office and your students.

Classroom Management

The instructor manages the pace of the class and should not allow a member to

monopolize the discussion or ramble. Eye contact or redirection of the discussion is helpful.

The instructor should allow students to leave class as needed rather than having a formal break which can become too long.

The instructor should start and end class on time to maintain the day's schedule.

The instructor should ask students to silence cell phones at the start of class.

Avoidance of Bias

OLLI endorses academic freedom but expects instructors to demonstrate a lack of bias with regards to politics, religion, ethnicity, etc.

Avoidance of Promoting Specific Services or Products

Instructors should not promote specific services or products for personal benefit. We do not share member information with the public and do not allow instructors to do so for commercial purposes.

Teaching Resources

Audiovisual Equipment

There is a wide variety of audiovisual devices available for classroom presentations. These include computers with internet access and PowerPoint, DVD and CD players, wireless microphones, and projectors for book and magazine pages.

Course proposal forms allow instructors to indicate what equipment is needed. Please notify staff at least a week ahead of time. You can arrange for a hands-on demonstration of the equipment you will use. On site assistance is available if the need arises during class.

University of Delaware Library

Printed materials, videotapes, and DVDs are available from the University of Delaware Library in Newark. A database of library holdings is available via the University website. The administrative assistant will assist you with locating and obtaining materials. You must allow sufficient turn-around time from submission of your request to receipt of materials.

Handouts/Class Materials

Handouts are a valuable teaching tool. Please email attached documents to your students and ask them to make their own copies. The office cannot make sets of class copies due to the expense of toner and paper. One or two copies can be requested if a student arrives without handouts for that session.

Copyright Guidelines

It is important for instructors to follow copyright laws when copying printed material.

The University has published a document, Policy for Copyright and Fair Use in Instruction, to provide, in one document, basic information about copyright, the expectations and policy of the University of Delaware, and guidelines to assist faculty, staff and students in making sound decisions when handling copyrighted materials in an instructional setting. This document is available on the University's web site, <http://guides.lib.udel.edu/c.php?g=85318&p=1104578>.

POLICIES

Internal Communication

There are frequently times when information (e.g., announcements for members) must reach instructors. Our system for internal communication is to place such information in faculty mailboxes. Please get in the habit of checking your mailbox prior to each one of your classes.

Member Attendance

At the start of each semester, you are provided with an attendance record form. Please indicate on the form the number of members attending each one of your classes, and then turn it in to the office at the close of the semester. This attendance information is helpful in assessing overall attendance patterns.

It is not a requirement that you keep a record of attendance for each individual class member. However, we do ask you to check attendance in the first class for a five-week course, and for the first two classes of a 10-week course. In the case of limited-enrollment classes, please inform the office of absentees so members on a waiting list can be invited to fill open slots.

Wait Lists

When more students register for a class than can be accommodated, the excess are placed on a wait list. The office staff administers the wait lists. Kindly inform the office if you see an opportunity to add wait listed students to your class. If unregistered or wait

listed students ask you if they may join your class, please refer them to the office for approval.

Open Seat Policy

If you have open seats available in your course feel free to offer them to non-registered students on a week to week basis.

Instructor Absence

On occasion, instructors are unable to teach one of their class sessions. In such an event, please find a suitable substitute to be in charge, reschedule the class or, depending on the situation, cancel the class altogether. In any instance, it is imperative that the instructor notify the administrative assistant or the program coordinator. In the event a class must be canceled at the last minute, please ensure that all class members are notified by either telephone or email. To facilitate this process, it is recommended you establish a communication chain early in the semester (See section on Communicating with Students). Please note that students with the email address llsSussex@gmail.com or llldover@gmail.com will need to be contacted by phone. This is not a valid email address.

Inclement Weather Policy

Please refer to your OLLI location website for weather related closings - <http://www.oli.udel.edu/>

Member Feedback Forms

During the next to last session of each course (either 4th or 9th week), members are asked to complete a feedback form regarding their reaction to the course and their recommendations for improvement. Because this type of feedback is helpful when planning for future offerings of the course, the completed forms are made available to the instructors soon after the close of the semester. Please inform your members of the value of their feedback and encourage them to give serious thought to their responses. Electronic feedback requests are distributed via email. Paper forms are available in the office.

Instructor Feedback Forms

Upon completion of your course, each instructor is asked to complete an Instructor Feedback form. This type of feedback is helpful to the council and staff for future planning. All instructors are encouraged to complete the form. Electronic feedback requests are distributed via email.

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