

FAQ's about a Community of Practice

Why should I participate in a community of practice?

Communities of practice provide the space to share and connect with others who are similarly interested and passionate about a topic or idea. Participating in a CoP will introduce you to other people and ideas you may not encounter on your own. In addition to learning new knowledge or skills, you will connect with others and build a "community" dedicated to the topic you care about.

Who can participate in a community of practice?

Communities of practice are most often open to anyone who shares an interest in, or experience with, the topic. On occasion, membership is restricted to those working directly with that topic (e.g., instructors of first year classes). If membership is restricted, the description of the CoP will clearly state the restriction. If no restriction is listed, anyone--students, staff, instructors and Guelph community members--is welcomed and encouraged to participate.

Have an idea for a new community of practice?

It is easy to start a CoP. You'll receive support from the Office of Teaching and Learning in getting started and leadership of the CoP can be distributed.

What is involved in leading/participating in a CoP?

Group Member Responsibilities

- Attend and participate in scheduled meetings
- Contribute to developing and meeting the vision and goals of the community of practice
- Suggest ideas and topics for the community to explore

Chair Responsibilities

Each community of practice typically has two chairs. Chairs will serve for one or two years, allowing one new chair each year and one continuing chair. This process allows for both continuity and change in community leadership.

The responsibilities of chairs include:

- Identifying important issues, questions and ideas in the field of interest
- Planning and facilitating community events
- Creating and fostering informal connections among community members
- Coordinating with Educational Developers in OpenEd, when necessary
- Maintaining a list of members

- Calling and scheduling meetings, with at least one co-chair present
- Assessing the health of the community by tracking membership and activities, and communicating with members

How does the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) support communities of practice?

If you identify a topic that interests you and you want to start a CoP, an Educational Developer from OTL will work with you to establish and organize your event by:

- Advertising the CoP
- Booking space for meetings
- Facilitating the first meeting of the CoP
- Creating and sharing a CourseLink site for the CoP
- Providing ongoing support for co-chairs of the CoP

If you're interested in joining a community of practice or would like to start one on a topic not yet listed, please email the Office of Teaching and Learning ([teaching @uoguelph.ca](mailto:teaching@uoguelph.ca))