



Instructor Handbook

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Chapter 1: Welcome & Orientation	6
Who You're Teaching: Understanding OLLI Members	6
What to Expect as a First-Time Instructor	6
Your Instructor Support Team and Key Contacts	7
Instructor Benefits and Resources	7
Instructor Timeline	7
Chapter 2: Designing Your Course.....	9
Start with Your Course Topic	9
Create Your Course Outcomes.....	9
How to Write Outcomes in 3 Steps:.....	9
Ready-to-Use Outcome Templates:	9
Turn Outcomes into a Course Description	9
How to Write a Description.....	9
Tips for an informative Description.....	10
Example of how outcomes and description fit together:	10
Turn Your Description into Multi Session Topics.....	10
How to Build a Session Plan	10
Example Course Description and Multi-session Outline	11
Check Alignment	11
Chapter 3: Preparing Your Materials.....	12
How outcomes and descripts influence material	12
Choosing and Designing Course Materials	12
PowerPoint Slides.....	12
Video Clips	13

Quotes & Excerpts.....	13
Handouts	14
Build Materials Session by Session	14
Designing Readable & Accessible Materials for Older Adult Learners	14
Using Mason Libraries & Resources	15
Chapter 4: Communication with Participants	17
Find your Course Registry	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Using Modern Campus	17
Chapter 5: Teaching in-person	18
Classroom Setup and AV Overview.....	18
Best Practices for Microphone Use	18
Working with your Site Assistants	19
Classroom Management.....	19
Accessibility in In-person Teaching	20
Chapter 6: Teaching Virtually.....	23
Contact Us	23
Equipment Requirements.....	23
Getting Started with Zoom	23
Preparing for Your Zoom Course.....	24
Running Your First Zoom Class.....	24
Troubleshooting Common Zoom Issues	24
Accessibility in Virtual Teaching.....	25
Chapter 7: Teaching in a Hybrid format	27

Classroom & Technology Setup	27
Virtual Technology (Zoom)	27
Preparing Your Materials.....	27
Microphone Use (Required for Hybrid Teaching)	27
Working with Your Site Assistant.....	28
Classroom Management in Hybrid Settings	28
Accessibility for Adults 50+	29
Running Your First Hybrid Class	30
Chapter 8: Best Practices in Teaching & Learning.....	31
1. Preparation Strategies	31
2. The First Class: Setting Expectations	31
3. Handling Questions	31
4. Teaching Strategies for Adult Learners	31
5. Facilitating Discussion & Managing Challenges	32
6. Course Feedback.....	32
Chapter 9: Code of Conduct and Other Policies	33
1. Code of Conduct	33
2. NonSolicitation Policy	33
3. Attendance & Registration	33
4. Emergencies	34
5. Course Cancellation & Schedule Changes.....	34
6. OffCampus Sites	34
Thank you.....	35

Chapter 1: Welcome and Orientation

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University (OLLI Mason) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit affiliated with George Mason University and is part of the national Osher Lifelong Learning Network. OLLI Mason serves more than 2,000 members aged 50+ and offers over 500 college level courses and activities each year, delivered in person at multiple Fairfax County sites and online.

While OLLI Mason offers a holistic program of educational, social, and wellness activities, classes are the core of the program and generally fall into the following categories:

Art and Music	Philosophy & Religious Studies
Economics and Finance	Humanities and Social Sciences
History	Current Events
Literature, Theater & Writing	Science, Technology, & Health
Languages	Other Topics

Who You're Teaching: Understanding OLLI Members

OLLI members are intellectually curious adults who value thoughtful learning and lively discussion. They appreciate:

- Clear expectations for what a course will cover.
- Classes that begin and end on time.
- Opportunities to contribute insights and ask challenging questions.

All members bring deep life experience some may be exploring a topic for the first time—while others have significant expertise. In either case, they will be engaged, curious, will and ask thoughtful questions. Please note however that some may have hearing, vision, or mobility challenges that need to be addressed. Please use a microphone and consult staff for accessibility support. Attendance may vary due to travel and other commitments; treat this as normal and not a reflection of course satisfaction.

What to Expect as a First Time Instructor

OLLI Mason aims to make teaching straightforward and enjoyable. You'll have support from program associates, the OLLI office, and your assigned site assistant (SA).

Key expectations for Instructors:

- Prepare engaging lectures or interactive learning experiences.
- Foster an inclusive, respectful learning environment.
- Provide a brief syllabus or course plan and share resources as needed.
- Encourage member interaction.
- Coordinate with your SA for technology, printing, and classroom support.

- Arrive 20 minutes early for in person classes; test your systems for online courses.

Your Instructor Support Team and Key Contacts

You will work closely with:

- Program Associates: Erika Koeniger or Susan Job
 - Erika Koeniger covers Fairfax(Tallwood), ekoenige@gmu.edu or 703-503-9540
 - Susan Job covers Reston,special events, and clubs; sjob2@gmu.edu or 703-503-7861
- Your Site Assistant
 - Will be assigned to you

Instructor Benefits and Resources

OLLI instructors generously volunteer their time and expertise. To show our appreciation:

- Instructors who are not OLLI members may attend two courses in appreciation for each course that they teach. This benefit is for a year from the term in which they teach on a space-available basis and a maximum of eight free courses per year.
- Instructors receive access to the George Mason University libraries beginning two months before the term in which they'll be teaching.
- All instructors are invited to volunteer appreciation events, including the annual teacher appreciation breakfast.

Instructor Timeline

- 1) About six months before term starts, course proposals are submitted for review.
- 2) About five months before term starts, subject group committees review and finalize course proposals.
- 3) About four months before term starts, instructors are asked via email to finalize their class time, class dates, and course description.
- 4) Two to three weeks before term starts, the Instructor Welcome Letter with A/V instructions are included
- 5) Three weeks before term starts, your site assistant will email to provide important information and arrange a trial if requested.
- 6) First day of class!



Chapter 2: Designing Your Course

Start with Your Course Topic

Your topic is the foundation for everything else—your outcomes, description, and plan.

Tip: If you can explain the topic in one sentence, you're ready to move on.

Create Your Course Outcomes

Course outcomes describe what participants will be able to do by the end of your course. They should be action based, measurable, and written from the learner's perspective. The course proposal asks for 2 -3 course outcomes.

How to Write Outcomes in 3 Steps:

1. Identify the big idea
 - a. What are the 2-3 most important things participants should gain?
 - b. What knowledge or skills should participants develop?
2. Pick verbs that match what you want participants to DO.
 - a. Focus on using action verbs, such as: analyze, apply, define, describe, compare, evaluate, etc.
3. Combined one big idea into a sentence using an action verb

For example: By the end of this course, participants will be able to + action verb + specific skill or knowledge.

Ready-to-Use Outcome Templates:

- Define major concepts related to ____.
- Describe how ____ developed over time.
- Identify relationships between ____ and ____.
- Explain key themes in ____.
- Compare differing interpretations of ____.
- Analyze how context shapes ____.
- Describe basic principles of ____.
- Analyze data or evidence related to ____.
- Identify major styles or techniques in ____.
- Analyze how artists use elements like ____ or ____.

Turn Outcomes into a Course Description

Your outcomes tell you what learners will do. Your description tells them what the course is about and why it matters.

How to Write a Description

1. Look for the "big ideas"
 - a. What themes appear across your outcomes?

- b. What is the overall purpose of the course?
2. Shift from action verbs to narrative language
 - a. Use verbs such as discover, explore, or examine
3. Add scope and approach
 - a. What content you as the instructor will cover.
 - b. What is the course format? Will you teach via lecture, panel, activities-base, etc.
 - c. Why is the topic important

Tips for an Informative Description

- Keep the description short
- Avoid overly technical language or jargon
- Keep the language welcoming and exciting

Example of how outcomes and description fit together:

Outcomes:

- Identify major turning points in the Cold War
- Analyze how leaders responded to global tensions
- Evaluate differing historical interpretations

Description:

This course explores the major turning points of the Cold War and the global tensions that shaped political decision making. Through lecture and guided discussion, we will examine how leaders responded to crises and how historians interpret these events today. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the era's lasting impact on international relations.

Turn Your Description into Multi Session Topics

If you plan on having more than one session in your course, you'll need to break up the big idea into manageable sessions.

How to Build a Session Plan

1. Identify the core themes or major subtopics within your course topic
2. Arrange the themes/subtopic in a logically sequential manner
 - a. Simple to complex
 - b. Background to analysis
 - c. Overview to specific, detailed case studies
3. Add activities for each theme/subtopic
 - a. Lecture + Q&A
 - b. Guided discussion
 - c. Small-group conversation
 - d. Hands-on activity
 - e. Video + analysis
4. Match the themes/subtopic to the number of classes needed
 - a. Typically 1 theme/subtopic per class
 - b. In some cases themes/subtopics can be combined into one class and in others the theme/subtopic can be expanded across sessions
5. Write a short outline for each class

- a. Topic title
- b. 1-2 sentences describing what members will explore
- c. What material they might need for that class

Course Description → List Big Ideas → Sequence Them → Add Activities → Write Session Titles

Example Course Description and Multi-session Outline

Course Description:

This course explores the major turning points of the Cold War and the global tensions that shaped political decision making. Through lecture and guided discussion, we will examine how leaders responded to crises and how historians interpret these events today.

Multi Session Outline

Session 1 — Setting the Stage Overview of post WWII geopolitics; introduction to Cold War themes and key players.

Session 2 — Early Crises and Escalation Berlin Blockade, NATO formation, and the emergence of competing worldviews.

Session 3 — Midcentury Flashpoints Korean War, Cuban Missile Crisis; analysis of leadership decisions.

Session 4 — Ideology, Culture, and Propaganda How media, culture, and public opinion shaped Cold War narratives.

Session 5 — Late Cold War Developments Détente, Reagan era, and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Session 6 — Historical Interpretations and Legacy How historians debate the Cold War's causes, turning points, and long-term impact.

Check Alignment

Before finalizing your course design, confirm:

- Every outcome connects to something mentioned in the description
- The description does not promise content you won't cover
- The tone matches the course format (lecture, discussion, workshop)

Chapter 3: Preparing Your Materials

As an OLLI Mason instructor, you will compile and share the materials that support your course—such as syllabi, bibliographies, handouts, slides, and other resources. All materials must follow George Mason University’s copyrighted materials guidelines, and whenever possible, we encourage distributing materials electronically so participants can choose whether to view them digitally or print their own copies. If you need hardcopy handouts, your iteassistant can help prepare them. When selecting resources, keep cost and accessibility in mind. MMembers do not expect required readings, and books or films should be available through libraries or other lowcost sources. Any fees, book titles, or required supplies (such as art materials) must be included in your course proposal and course description. Once your course outcomes and description are complete, your next step is to choose materials that directly support those goals—clear, readable, and accessible resources that help participants engage with the content and achieve the learning outcomes you’ve outlined.

How outcomes and descriptions influence material

Your outcomes tell you exactly what participants should be able to do. Use each outcome to determine the materials needed.

Examples:

- Define key concepts → glossary handout, simple slides
- Analyze historical events → timeline, primary source quotes, video clips
- Compare viewpoints → paired readings, contrasting images
- Apply ideas to real cases → case studies, examples, short activities

Your course description tells participants what the course covers and how you’ll teach it. Use it to decide:

- How much detail your materials should include
- Whether your course needs more visuals, more narrative, or more discussion prompts
- Whether you should emphasize lecture, discussion, or hands-on activities

Choosing and Designing Course Materials

PowerPoint Slides

PowerPoints help structure your lecture and keep participants oriented.

Use slides when you want to:

- Introduce key concepts
- Show images, maps, charts, or diagrams
- Provide structure for a lecture
- Highlight quotes or short excerpts
- Keep participants focused on the main ideas

Tips for Effective Slides

- Use large fonts (minimum 24 pt).
- Keep 3–5 bullet points per slide.
- Use high contrast (dark text on light background).
- Avoid dense paragraphs—slides should guide, not overwhelm.
- Include images that reinforce your point, not distract from it.
- Face the audience when speaking; don't talk into the screen.

Slide Structure Template

- Slide title
- Key point
- Example or image

Video Clips

Short video clips can bring your topic to life and break up long stretches of lecture.

Use video clips when you want to:

- Show historical footage
- Demonstrate a process or technique
- Provide expert commentary
- Illustrate a concept visually

Tips for Using Video:

- Keep clips short (2–6 minutes).
- Always preview the clip to ensure audio and captions work.
- Provide context before playing the video.
- Follow with a question or reflection to connect the clip to your outcomes.
 - What stood out to you?
 - How does this clip illustrate today's topic?
 - What perspective does the video add?
- Share links with your site assistant ahead of time as backup.

Quotes & Excerpts

Short quotes or excerpts can spark discussion, illustrate viewpoints, or provide primary source evidence.

Use quotes when you want to:

- Highlight a key idea
- Show contrasting perspectives
- Introduce a historical voice
- Support analysis or interpretation

Tips for Using Quotes:

- Keep quotes short (1–3 sentences).
 - Avoid long blocks of text—break them into smaller pieces if needed.
- Use large font on slides or handouts.

- Provide context: who said it, when, and why it matters.
- Ask participants to react or interpret the quote.

Handouts

Handouts give participants something concrete to take home and help reinforce learning.

Use handouts when you want to:

- Provide summaries or definitions
- Share timelines, charts, or maps
- Offer optional readings
- Give instructions for activities
- Provide a list of resources for further exploration

Tips for Effective Handouts:

- Use 12–14 pt font minimum.
- Keep layout simple with clear headings.
- Use bullet points instead of long paragraphs.
- Provide white space to reduce visual strain.
- Offer large-print versions if possible.

Handout Types:

- Summary sheet
- Glossary
- Timeline
- Discussion questions
- Optional reading list

Build Materials Session by Session

Use your session outline to create materials in manageable pieces. For each session:

- Identify the outcome(s) you're addressing.
- Choose materials that support those outcomes.
- Keep materials readable and accessible.
- Add discussion questions or examples to reinforce learning.

Designing Readable & Accessible Materials for Older Adult Learners

Clear, accessible materials help all participants engage fully, especially those who may experience changes in vision, hearing, or processing speed. The goal is to make your slides, handouts, and visuals easy to read, easy to follow, and welcoming.

1. Use Large, High Contrast Text
 - a. Aim for minimum 18–24 pt font on slides; 12–14 pt for printed handouts.
 - b. Choose high contrast color combinations (e.g., black text on white, dark blue on pale yellow).
 - c. Avoid low contrast combinations like light gray, pale blue, or yellow text.

2. Choose Clear, Simple Fonts
 - a. Use sanserif fonts such as Arial, Calibri, Verdana, or Helvetica.
 - b. Avoid decorative or script fonts, which are harder to read.
 - c. Use bold for emphasis rather than italics or ALL CAPS.
3. Limit Text and Reduce Clutter
 - a. Keep slides to 3–5 key points.
 - b. Break long paragraphs into short, digestible chunks.
 - c. Leave plenty of white space to reduce visual strain.
4. Use Visuals Thoughtfully
 - a. Include images, charts, or diagrams that reinforce your message.
 - b. Make sure visuals are large enough to see from the back of the room.
 - c. Avoid overly complex charts or dense tables.
5. Support Hearing Needs
 - a. Always use a microphone—even if you have a strong voice.
 - b. Face the audience when speaking; avoid talking while turned toward the screen.
 - c. If showing videos, enable captions whenever possible.
6. Make Materials Easy to Navigate
 - a. Use clear headings and subheadings.
 - b. Number pages and slides.
7. Offer Materials in Multiple Formats
 - a. Provide handouts in PDF format for easy viewing on different devices.
 - b. Consider offering optional large print versions (simply increase font size).
8. Share materials before class so participants can preview at their own pace.
9. Use Plain, Direct Language
 - a. Avoid jargon unless you define it.
 - b. Use familiar words and concrete examples.
 - c. Explain acronyms the first time they appear.
10. Support Cognitive Accessibility
 - a. Slow your pace slightly; allow time for notetaking.
 - b. Pause every 15–20 minutes for questions or reflection.
 - c. Reinforce learning with summaries, examples, and repetition of key ideas.
11. Check for Accessibility Before Finalizing
 - a. Can someone with mild vision loss read this comfortably?
 - b. Is the layout simple and uncluttered?
 - c. Does the material support the outcomes I promised?
 - d. Would this be easy to follow for someone new to the topic?

If yes, your materials are accessible and ready for OLLI's diverse community of learners.

Using Mason Libraries & Resources

All OLLI instructors are authorized two months before and during term to:

- check out up to ten books at once (for a three-week period with one renewal);
- request books from other Mason campuses (except the Arlington Law Library);
- borrow audiovisual materials (videos, DVDs) from the Johnson Center Media library for one week.

Other materials and supplies

Instructors may add the cost of materials to their proposal and get reimbursed or provide students with a list of materials to purchase.

Contact program@gmu.edu for more information about using the George Mason libraries, if you would like to supplement your course materials.

Chapter 4: Communication with Participants

Using Modern Campus

OLLI Mason uses an online registration system called Modern Campus which we refer to as the Member Portal. Instructors are strongly encouraged to view their class roster and email course materials in Modern Campus. Visit the member portal (olligmu.augusoft.net) and sign in using your instructor username and password. If you need your password or username, please email program@gmu.edu. On the left-hand toolbar, click “future classes” to see a list of your upcoming classes; they will be listed under “current classes” once class starts. To email your class, choose “email roster” from the drop-down menu found to the left of the class name. 20MB is the biggest attachment that can be sent through the OLLI Mason member portal. Please send all attachments in PDF format, as PDF files are easier for most to open.

Modern Campus only allows one way communication from you to your class. Students will not be able to send you messages through the system.

Chapter 5: Teaching in-person

Classroom Setup and AV Overview

Most classrooms are arranged in theater style seating facing the display screen. If you prefer a different layout (e.g., discussion circle, small groups), contact your site assistant beforehand.

Additionally, every OLLI Mason classroom includes:

- A Windows based computer
- A large display screen
- A digital projector
- A DVD/CD player
- Microsoft Office 2024
- Wired internet and WiFi
- Easels and whiteboards (available by request)

These tools support PowerPoint presentations, videos, documents, and other instructional materials.

To ensure compatibility and smooth setup:

Download your presentation ahead of time from any file sharing service (e.g., Google Drive) or on a USB flash drive. We recommend avoiding tablets, as they may not connect properly to OLLI's equipment.

We also recommend downloading and saving online materials in advance—especially videos, articles, or slides hosted on external websites, because internet connections can vary.

Microphone Use (Required)

Many OLLI participants have hearing challenges, and ADA regulations require amplified audio in the classroom. All instructors must use a microphone, even if you believe you speak loudly enough.

Each classroom includes:

- A head worn wireless microphone
- A handheld microphone
- A lavalier (lapel) microphone
- Choose the option that feels most comfortable.

Best Practices for Microphone Use

- Wear clothing with a belt, waistband, or pocket to secure the wireless transmitter.
- Face the audience when speaking—avoid talking into the screen.
- Repeat audience questions into the microphone before answering.
- Your site assistant or a volunteer will bring a handheld microphone to participants who wish to ask a question.

These practices ensure that everyone—including those with hearing aids—can fully participate.

Working with your Site Assistants

For in-person classes, your Site Assistant will be there at the start of class to help you get settled. The site assistant may not stay for the entire class, but they will always be on campus and available for additional support. Your Site Assistant can help with classroom deconstruction after a course, but they are not janitors and should not be cleaning up after the class. Email your assigned site assistant if you would like to schedule a site visit to test your audiovisual materials.

Classroom Management

1. Promote Active Learning
 - a. Engagement increases when learners participate directly in the learning process. Instructors can:
 - i. Use short activities that require thinking, discussing, or applying ideas.
 - ii. Incorporate small group or paired conversations.
 - iii. Break up long lectures with questions or reflection moments.
2. Encourage Collaborative Learning
 - a. Structured collaboration helps build community and deepen understanding. Effective approaches include:
 - i. Group problem solving
 - ii. Peer discussion
 - iii. Shared analysis of texts, images, or cases
 - b. Clear instructions and defined roles help groups stay focused and productive.
3. Create an Inclusive Classroom
 - a. Inclusive teaching supports learners with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and experiences. Instructors should:
 - i. Use welcoming language
 - ii. Offer multiple ways to participate (speaking, writing, small groups)
 - iii. Be mindful of accessibility needs
 - iv. Set norms that encourage respect and curiosity
 - b. Inclusivity reduces barriers and increases comfort for all participants.
4. Address Difficult Situations Proactively
 - a. Classroom challenges—such as dominant participants, conflict, or disengagement—are best handled with calm, clear strategies:
 - i. Set expectations early
 - ii. Redirect off topic or overly long comments
 - iii. Acknowledge differing viewpoints respectfully
 - iv. Intervene when behavior disrupts learning
 - b. The goal is to maintain a productive environment while preserving dignity for everyone involved.
5. Support Meaningful Discussion
 - a. Good discussions require structure. Instructors can:
 - i. Pose open-ended questions
 - ii. Give participants time to think
 - iii. Encourage multiple perspectives

- iv. Summarize key points to maintain clarity
 - b. This helps learners stay engaged and ensures discussions remain focused.
- 6. Use Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs)
 - a. CATs are quick, low stakes tools that help instructors gauge understanding and adjust teaching. Examples include:
 - i. One minute reflections
 - ii. Muddiest point (what was unclear?)
 - iii. Quick polls or check-ins
 - b. These techniques help instructors respond to learners' needs in real time.

Accessibility in In-person Teaching

OLLI Mason's in person courses bring together adults age 50 and older who may experience changes in vision, hearing, mobility, or processing speed. Thoughtful planning ensures that every participant can fully engage with your class. The following best practices support accessibility, comfort, and clarity in the physical classroom.

Visual Accessibility

Many OLLI members benefit from larger text, clear visuals, and uncluttered materials.

Make Visuals Easy to See:

- Use large, high contrast slides (minimum 24 pt font).
- Choose dark text on a light background for maximum readability.
- Avoid busy backgrounds, decorative fonts, and dense text.
- Ensure images, charts, and maps are large enough to be seen from the back of the room.
- If writing on a whiteboard or flip chart, write larger than you think you need to.
- Support participants with vision challenges
- Read aloud key points from slides.
- Provide printed handouts with 12–14 pt font or optional large print versions.
- Offer materials electronically so participants can enlarge them on personal devices.

Hearing Accessibility

Clear audio is essential for in-person learning:

- Use a Microphone. Even if you have a strong voice, always use the classroom microphone. Some participants rely on hearing aids that connect to the audio system.
- Speak clearly and face the audience
- Avoid speaking while facing the screen or whiteboard.
- Reduce background noise when possible.
- Repeat questions before answering so everyone can hear them.
- Support participants with hearing needs
- Encourage participants to sit closer to the front if needed.
- Provide written summaries of key points.
- Share slides or handouts in advance so participants can follow along.

Mobility & Physical Comfort

Classrooms may include participants with mobility limitations or physical discomfort.

- Make movement easy
- Keep pathways clear of bags, chairs, and equipment.
- Avoid activities that require rapid movement or standing for long periods.
- Allow participants to remain seated during discussions or activities.
- Be mindful of seating
- Encourage participants to choose seats that meet their comfort needs.
- If using small group activities, avoid rearranging furniture in ways that create obstacles.

Cognitive Accessibility

Adults may process information at different speeds or prefer structured learning.

- Use clear, predictable structure
- Begin each class with an agenda or outline.
- Break content into short segments.
- Pause every 15–20 minutes for questions or reflection.
- Summarize key points at the end of each section.
- Use plain, direct Language
- Avoid jargon unless you define it.
- Provide concrete examples.
- Slow your pace slightly to allow time for notetaking.

Accessible Materials

Provide materials that are easy to read, handle, and reference.

- Use 12–14 pt font for printed handouts.
- Keep layouts simple with clear headings and plenty of white space.
- Offer materials electronically for participants who prefer digital access.
- Avoid glossy paper, which can create glare.

Classroom Environment

Small adjustments make the physical space more accessible.

- Ensure the room is well lit.
- Avoid dimming lights too much during slide presentations.
- Reduce echo by closing doors.
- Avoid playing background music during instruction.

Supporting Participants During Class

A welcoming, patient approach helps everyone feel comfortable.

- Check in at the start: “Can everyone hear and see me clearly?”
- Allow extra time for transitions between activities.
- Be patient with questions—some participants may need more time to formulate them.
- Encourage participants to let you know if they need accommodations.

Troubleshooting Common Accessibility Issues

- “I can’t see the slide.” Increase font size, adjust lighting, or read the slide aloud.
- “I can’t hear you.” Turn up the microphone volume; face the audience; reduce background noise.

- “I’m lost.” Reorient with a quick summary or restatement of the topic.
- “The room setup is difficult.” Ask your Site Assistant to adjust seating or clear pathways.

Chapter 6: Teaching Virtually

OLLI Mason offers a significant percentage of online and hybrid courses which remain popular with members. Zoom is the online conferencing software used by OLLI Mason. Zoom may be used on laptops, desktops, tablets, and smartphones, giving members many ways to access online offerings.

Contact Us

- Your primary AV Contact will be your assigned site assistant. Your site assistant will reach out to you ahead of your first class.
- For classroom assistance or to report issues, contact OLLI at 703-503-3384 or email olli@gmu.edu.
- For Zoom or computer-related technical support, contact the OLLI Help Desk at ollizoomhelp@olligmu.org or your SA.

Equipment Requirements

You'll need:

- A laptop or desktop computer (Windows or Mac): If your computer is over 4 years old, check the Zoom system requirements to make sure that it can run a
- Reliable internet (wired preferred)
- A camera and microphone (built-in or external)
- Optional headset/earbuds for improved audio
- If your computer is older than four years, check Zoom's system requirements. Close unused apps and browser tabs to improve performance.

Class Recordings

If you opted in to recording:

- Recordings are posted on the OLLI Mason website for members only.
- All content is OLLI Mason property.

For permission to use any content on the website, or to request removal of a recording, please contact olli@gmu.edu.

Getting Started with Zoom

Before each term, you will receive your course zoom link. We also recommend:

- Updating Zoom regularly.
- Test your audio and video.
- Join a test meeting and familiarize yourself with Zoom.

Zoom Features for Teaching

Here are some features that can enrich your course:

- Share your screen to show slides, video clips, research, or other illustrative materials.
- Use breakout rooms to split your class into small groups for discussions or projects.

- Use in-meeting chat to answer questions, share learning resources, or communicate privately with an individual participant or the entire class.
- Use polling to ask questions to engage participants and/or determine personal relevance or understanding of the topic.

Preparing for Your Zoom Course

Learn about screen sharing a PowerPoint presentation and practice sharing your screen. Launch your PowerPoint file, documents, videos, etc. prior to class so you have easy access while you are actively teaching.

- Tip: Quit other applications and close browsers and tabs that are not in use.
- Tip: How to hide “gray” boxes from your shared screen
- Keep your device charged to ensure uninterrupted teaching
- Make sure you can be seen and heard
- Locate a quiet space in your home to avoid household noise; keep your background clear of distractions.
- Check lighting in your space: it should come from in front of or the side of you, not behind.
- Set your camera at eye level or higher; adjust chair height and distance from the camera.
- Look at the camera, not at the screen, in order to make eye contact with your participants.

Running Your First Zoom Class

First Day:

- Log in 20 minutes early to test settings and confirm logistics with your Site Assistant. They will admit participants at the start time.

During class:

- Welcome participants and confirm audio/video.
- Review etiquette: muting, video use, display names, and question procedures.
- Share your syllabus and expectations.
- Maintain a steady pace and encourage participation.
- Use chat or raised hand tools; your SA can help manage questions.

Troubleshooting Common Zoom Issues

Here are some common problems encountered using Zoom and how to resolve them:

- No audio: Test Your Audio
- No video: Test Your Video
- Echo/feedback: “Solutions for Audio Echo”
- Lost connection: rejoin using the reminder email link.
- Lost Zoom link: email olli@gmu.edu or your SA by 8:00 a.m. on class day.
- Share slides and video links with your SA in advance as back-up.

Accessibility in Virtual Teaching

OLLI Mason's online courses attract many members who appreciate the convenience of virtual learning but who may also experience age-related changes in vision, hearing, mobility, or processing speed. Thoughtful planning helps ensure that every participant can fully engage with your Zoom class. The following best practices support accessibility, comfort, and clarity for adults 50 and older.

Visual Accessibility

Clear visuals make online learning easier for participants who may have reduced vision or prefer larger, simpler displays.

- Use large, high contrast slides
- Minimum 24 pt font for slides; avoid small text.
- High contrast colors (dark text on light background).
- Simple, clean layouts with plenty of white space.
- Avoid decorative fonts and busy backgrounds.
- Make on screen content easy to follow
- Limit slides to 3–5 key points.
- Use images, diagrams, or charts only when they directly support learning.
- Zoom in on documents or images before screensharing.
- Pause to let participants read what's on the screen.

Hearing Accessibility

Many OLLI members benefit from clear audio and supportive listening practices.

- Optimize your audio
- Use a headset or external microphone if possible.
- Teach in a quiet space with minimal background noise.
- Speak at a steady pace and avoid talking while turning away from the camera.
- Support participants' hearing needs
- Enable captions on videos whenever possible.
- Repeat questions before answering them.
- Encourage participants to use Zoom's "Raise Hand" feature rather than interrupting verbally.

Cognitive Accessibility

Virtual learning can be cognitively demanding. These strategies help participants stay oriented and engaged.

- Structure your class clearly
- Begin with an agenda or outline.
- Break content into short segments.
- Pause every 15–20 minutes for questions or reflection.
- Summarize key points at the end of each section.
- Use plain, direct language
- Avoid jargon unless you define it.
- Provide concrete examples.

- Slow your pace slightly to allow time for notetaking.

Zoom Features That Support Accessibility

Zoom includes built in tools that make learning easier for older adults.

- Chat: Allows participants to ask questions without interrupting.
- Raise Hand: Helps manage turn taking.
- Screen Share Zoom Tool: Lets you enlarge shared content.
- Closed Captioning (if available): Supports participants with hearing challenges.
- Pin/Spotlight Video: Helps participants focus on the speaker.
- Encourage participants to practice using these tools during the first class.

Accessible Materials

Provide materials in formats that are easy to read and download.

- Share handouts in PDF format.
- Use 12–14 pt font minimum for documents.
- Offer optional large print versions.
- Send materials before class so participants can preview them.
- Keep file sizes small for easier downloading.

Supporting Participants During Class

Small adjustments make a big difference in comfort and accessibility.

- Check in at the start: “Can everyone hear and see me clearly?”
- Encourage participants to adjust their Zoom view (Speaker View vs. Gallery View).
- Allow time for slower speakers or those who need extra processing time.
- Be patient with technology questions—your Site Assistant is there for technology support.

Troubleshooting Common Accessibility Issues

- “I can’t hear you.” Ask participants to check their audio settings; speak louder; reduce background noise.
- “The text is too small.” Zoom in on shared content; increase slide font size; send materials in advance.
- “I’m lost.” Reorient participants with a quick summary or restatement of the current topic.
- “The video is choppy.” Turn off your own video temporarily; close unused apps; share the link afterward.

Chapter 7: Teaching in a Hybrid format

Hybrid teaching at OLLI Mason combines in person and Zoom based instruction, allowing members to participate in the format that best suits their needs. Successful hybrid teaching requires thoughtful planning, clear communication, and effective use of classroom and virtual technologies. This chapter outlines best practices for managing hybrid classrooms, supporting accessibility for adults 50+, and working smoothly with OLLI staff and Site Assistants.

Classroom & Technology Setup

In Person Classroom Equipment

Each OLLI classroom includes:

- Windows based computer
- Large display screen
- Digital projector
- DVD/CD player
- Microsoft Office 2024
- Wired internet and WiFi
- Easels and whiteboards (available by request)

Classrooms are typically arranged in theater style seating facing the display. If you prefer a different layout (e.g., discussion circle, small groups), contact your Site Assistant ahead of time.

Virtual Technology (Zoom)

Zoom is used for all online and hybrid courses. You will receive a Zoom link from your site assistant before each term.

You'll need:

- A laptop or desktop computer
- Reliable internet (wired preferred)
- Camera and microphone
- Optional headset/earbuds
- Close unused apps and browser tabs to improve performance.

Preparing Your Materials

To ensure compatibility:

- Download your presentation ahead of time from a file sharing service (e.g., Google Drive).
- Or bring materials on a USB flash drive.
- Avoid using personal laptops or tablets in OLLI classrooms due to compatibility issues.
- Always download online materials (videos, articles, slides) in advance—internet connections vary.

Microphone Use (Required for Hybrid Teaching)

Clear audio is essential for both in person and Zoom participants. ADA regulations require amplified audio in the classroom.

Each classroom includes:

- Head worn wireless microphone
- Handheld microphone
- Lavalier (lapel) microphone
- Best practices
- Wear clothing with a belt, waistband, or pocket to secure the transmitter.
- Face the audience and camera when speaking.
- Repeat audience questions into the microphone.
- Site Assistants or volunteers will bring a handheld mic to participants asking questions.

Working with Your Site Assistant

Your Site Assistant will:

- Help you set up AV equipment
- Assist with Zoom logistics
- Support participants with technology questions
- Rearrange classroom seating upon request
- Provide backup access to slides or videos

Classroom Management in Hybrid Settings

Hybrid teaching requires balancing engagement between in person and online participants.

1. Promote Active Learning
 - a. Use short activities that require thinking, discussing, or applying ideas.
 - b. Break up long lectures with questions or reflection moments.
 - c. Invite contributions from both in person and Zoom participants.
2. Encourage Collaborative Learning
 - a. Use small groups in the room and breakout rooms online.
 - b. Provide clear instructions and roles for group tasks.
 - c. Share analysis of texts, images, or cases across both formats.
3. Create an Inclusive Classroom
 - a. Use welcoming language.
 - b. Offer multiple ways to participate (speaking, chat, writing, small groups).
 - c. Be mindful of accessibility needs for both audiences.
 - d. Set norms that encourage respect and curiosity.
4. Address Difficult Situations Proactively
 - a. Set expectations early.
 - b. Redirect off topic or overly long comments.
 - c. Acknowledge differing viewpoints respectfully.
 - d. Intervene when behavior disrupts learning.
5. Support Meaningful Discussion
 - a. Pose open ended questions.
 - b. Give participants time to think.
 - c. Encourage multiple perspectives.

- d. Summarize key points to maintain clarity.
- 6. Use Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs)
 - a. Quick, low stakes tools:
 - i. One minute reflections
 - ii. Muddiest point
 - iii. Quick polls or check ins
 - b. These help you gauge understanding across both audiences.
- 7. Address both audiences when speaking. Don't forget about your virtual students!

Accessibility for Adults 50+

Hybrid teaching must support participants with varying vision, hearing, mobility, and cognitive needs.

Visual Accessibility

- Use large, high contrast slides (minimum 24 pt font).
- Avoid decorative fonts and busy backgrounds.
- Ensure images and charts are large enough for inperson and Zoom viewing.
- Zoom in on documents when screensharing.
- Provide handouts in 12–14 pt font or optional largeprint versions.

Hearing Accessibility

- Always use a microphone.
- Speak clearly and face both the audience and camera.
- Reduce background noise.
- Repeat questions before answering.
- Enable captions on videos when possible.

Mobility & Physical Comfort

- Keep pathways clear.
- Allow participants to remain seated during activities.
- Avoid rearranging furniture in ways that create obstacles.

Cognitive Accessibility

- Begin with an agenda or outline.
- Break content into short segments.
- Pause every 15–20 minutes for questions or reflection.
- Summarize key points frequently.
- Use plain, direct language.

Accessible Materials

- Provide materials electronically and in print.
- Use simple layouts with clear headings.
- Avoid glossy paper.
- Keep file sizes small for easy downloading.

Running Your First Hybrid Class

Before Class

- Log in 20 minutes early to test audio/video.
- Confirm AV setup with your Site Assistant.
- Launch your slides, documents, and videos ahead of time.
- Close unused apps and browsers.
- Check lighting and camera angle.

During Class

- Welcome participants and confirm audio/video.
- Review etiquette for both audiences (muting, raising hands, chat use).
- Share your syllabus and expectations.
- Maintain a steady pace and encourage participation.
- Use chat, raised hands, and inperson cues.
- Your Site Assistant can help manage questions.

Troubleshooting

- No audio: Test your audio settings.
- No video: Test your video settings.
- Echo: Follow Zoom's echoreduction steps.
- Lost connection: Rejoin using the reminder email link.
- Participants can't see slides: Increase font size, zoom in, or read aloud.
- Participants can't hear: Adjust microphone volume; face the audience.

Chapter 8: Best Practices in Teaching & Learning

OLLI participants bring a lifetime of experience, curiosity, and enthusiasm to the classroom. They ask questions, share perspectives, and engage deeply with course content. The following best practices will help you create a positive, inclusive, and wellstructured learning experience.

1. Preparation Strategies

- Create a simple course outline or syllabus and list optional references for further reading.
- Foster a welcoming atmosphere where questions and participation are encouraged—but always optional.
- Use inclusive language and model respect for diverse viewpoints.
- Reflect on accessibility: Am I unintentionally excluding anyone? How can I be more inclusive?
- If teaching in person, visit your classroom ahead of time to test AV equipment and get comfortable with the space.

2. The First Class: Setting Expectations

Your first class sets the tone for the entire course.

- Introduce yourself
- Share your background, your interest in the topic, and your approach to teaching. If you have a syllabus, email it ahead of time.
- Set clear expectations

You may wish to explain:

- How and when participants should ask questions
- Whether you prefer questions during the lecture or at the end
- What “participation” means in your course
- Any sensitive or controversial aspects of the topic and the importance of respectful dialogue
- If you’re new to OLLI, it’s perfectly fine to say so—participants appreciate openness.

3. Handling Questions

- Respond positively (“Thank you—that’s a great question”).
- Restate the question so everyone can hear it and you can confirm understanding.
- Answer honestly; if you don’t know, offer to follow up next week.
- Ask your Site Assistant to help monitor or manage questions in larger classes.

4. Teaching Strategies for Adult Learners

OLLI classes run 85 minutes, so pacing matters.

- Include at least one short break.
- Pause every 15–20 minutes for questions or discussion.
- Use multisensory materials (slides, images, audio, video).
- Keep slides simple, highcontrast, and easy to read.
- Break videos into short segments followed by discussion.
- Define technical terms and avoid jargon.
- Face the audience when speaking—don't talk into the screen.

5. Facilitating Discussion & Managing Challenges

OLLI participants love to talk—and sometimes talk too much. These strategies help keep discussions balanced and on track.

- Encouraging Balanced Participation
 - “Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet.”
 - “Thank you—let's move on to the next idea.”
 - “Let's return to our main topic.”
- Redirecting Off-Topic or Lengthy Comments
 - “Please talk with me after class—I want to keep us moving.”
 - “I see your hand, but I'll take questions later.”
- If needed, speak privately after class: thank them for their enthusiasm and ask them to limit comments so others can participate.

6. Course Feedback

Feedback helps you refine future courses.

- Two Options
 - OLLI Course Feedback Form
 - Available upon request from the OLLI office
 - You distribute and collect it
 - Staff does not evaluate instructors
 - Your Own Short Feedback Form
 - Ask questions such as:
 - What was the most important learning for you?
 - What worked best?
 - What didn't work well—and why?

Chapter 9: Code of Conduct and Other Policies

OLLI Mason is committed to creating a welcoming, respectful, and intellectually engaging learning community. Instructors play a key role in maintaining this environment. The following policies outline expectations for conduct, classroom management, and essential procedures that support a positive experience for all participants.

1. Code of Conduct

OLLI Mason strives to foster learning, curiosity, and social connection in an affirming environment. Members, instructors, and staff are expected to demonstrate:

- Mutual respect
- Personal and academic integrity
- Kindness and courtesy
- Commitment to civil, reasoned discourse
- Lively discussion and contrasting viewpoints are welcome, but all interactions—whether in person, online, or at special events—must remain respectful.

Unacceptable Behaviors:

- If you observe behavior that violates the Code of Conduct, contact the Executive Director at ollied@gmu.edu. Examples include:
- Denigrating others' views
- Bullying, threatening, or aggressive behavior
- Offensive or abusive language
- Disruptive classroom conduct
- Sexual harassment or discrimination
- Monopolizing discussions or repeatedly interrupting

The Executive Director will review concerns and determine appropriate actions, which may include removal from classes or OLLI activities.

2. Non Solicitation Policy

OLLI courses are educational—not commercial—spaces. Instructors may not use their course to:

- Recruit clients
- Promote paid services
- Market business opportunities

Instructors may sell books, CDs, DVDs, or any other of their own publications directly to their students. Instructors are welcome to sign and sell their books before or after class, but not during instructional time.

3. Attendance & Registration

- Registration closes the day before the course begins (unless the class reaches maximum enrollment earlier).

- Rosters may change daily before the first session.
- Occasionally, members may attend without registering. If this happens, the instructor or Site Assistant should ask the individual to step out and call the OLLI office to confirm whether they can be added.
- If a course has a waitlist, staff will contact those on the list to be added to the course.

4. Emergencies

In case of emergency: Call 911 immediately.

Contact OLLI staff for assistance.

As soon as possible, notify the OLLI Office at 703-503-3384.

5. Course Cancellation & Schedule Changes

- If you are unable to teach:
 - Notify OLLI staff immediately at 703-503-3384 and ollied@gmu.edu.
- OLLI reserves the week after each term for makeup classes when possible.
 - Any schedule changes must be approved by the Operations Manager (ollied@gmu.edu or 703-503-3384).
 - The Operations Manager will notify participants of any approved changes.
- OLLI follows Fairfax County Public Schools for weather-related closures.

6. Off Campus Sites

- OLLI courses may be held at community centers, senior living communities, churches, libraries, and other partner locations.
- Some classes include both OLLI members and site specific guests.
- All participants should be welcomed and encouraged to engage fully.

These policies ensure that OLLI Mason remains a respectful, safe, and enriching learning community. As an instructor, your leadership sets the tone for productive discussion, intellectual honesty, and inclusive participation. Thank you for helping uphold these standards and supporting the success of our members.

Thank you

Thank you for being an OLLI Mason instructor. We couldn't do the important work we do without the commitment of our talented and dedicated instructors! Teaching for OLLI is rewarding, and we are committed to helping make this experience a positive one for you. We are here to help troubleshoot, and to help you find what you need.

To this end, we are committed to

- providing a welcoming environment for you,
- helping you connect with resources, and
- answer any questions that come up for you.

Please let us know if you need anything!

OLLI Staff

Main office: 703-503-3384

Executive Director, Lisa Mariam, ollied@gmu.edu

Operations Manager, Lissette Sanchez olli@gmu.edu

Program Associate, Erika Koeniger ekoenige@gmu.edu

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