

Academic Programs Committee: Guide for Members

The mission of Encore Learning's Academic Programs Committee (APC) is to identify and organize courses and instructors for the fall and spring semesters and to provide guidance and support to instructors in preparing Course Proposal Forms (CPFs).

The planning cycle for each semester is:

Spring – initial planning meeting, September; outreach to instructors, late September - October; final CPFs submitted, mid-November.

Fall -- initial planning meeting, late February/early March; outreach to instructors, March-April; final CPFs submitted, mid-May.

The goal for each semester is 35-40 classes. Each APC member should try to handle development of 3-5 courses per semester.

Course ideas:

We brainstorm potential courses at the planning meeting. Many of the courses are based on input from APC members, ideas from other Encore Learning members, and well-received courses from previous semesters.

Instructors:

We rely heavily on instructors who have previously taught for Encore Learning, and whose courses have been evaluated positively. However, we are always looking for new instructors and APC members are often able to identify potential instructors from their contacts within the community.

Working with instructors, developing courses:

The work is mainly done by email (or phone calls) between the APC member and the instructor. The APC member provides the instructor with 3 documents: Fast Facts about Encore Learning; Instructor Benefits; and a Course Proposal Form (CPF). CPFs are the final products for the APC. The committee co-chairs can provide a sample introductory email for APC members working with new instructors.

It is also a good idea to go over the basic expectations for teaching a course with Encore Learning:

- Instructors can choose the number of sessions per class, with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 10.
- Classes are usually 90 minutes, but can be 2 hours, and can be in person, virtual, or both (hybrid).
- The instructor can pick his/her own preferred day and time, generally within the established course start times (weekdays, 10:00; 12:00, 2:00).
- The instructor can also pick when he/she wants to start and end the course, within the semester beginning and ending dates.

- The instructor will be supported by 2 Class Aides for all classes, whether in person or virtual.
- There are often recommended readings, but none required; no tests, and no homework.

The CPF:

Spring 2025 marks the third semester with our new web-based Course Proposal Form. While the instructor is asked to complete the form, there are a few who may feel challenged by the process. In such cases, the APC member is encouraged to help in any way possible, even completing the form for the instructor, based on his/her input. APC members are responsible for ensuring that the CPF is complete, with a course description that will generate interest in the course.

The text in the CPF becomes the description of the course in Encore Learning's online catalog. It is often helpful to direct new instructors to look at the PDF files of course catalogs from previous semesters (available at encorelearning.net) to see how classes are typically described.

Note on Courses with Multiple Instructors:

If a course features multiple instructors or speakers, it should have a single individual who will be the anchor for the course. This might be the APC member who is developing the course or a nominal instructor who serves as emcee for the course, or an Encore Learning member recruited in advance to serve as class aide. The anchor person needs to assure continuity from one week to the next. This may require confirming speakers several days ahead of each speaker's scheduled presentation. It also may entail briefing speakers on topics covered and questions entertained by prior speakers for a course.

What Happens After the CPF:

After the CPF is completed and reviewed by the APC member, he or she sends it to one of the co-chairs of the APC, Deb or Jeanne, who will complete the review. Once finalized, the CPF is forwarded to the Academic Course Coordinator, Kerry Fraatz. Every instructor will hear back from Kerry within a month; she will make sure the logistics of the course are clear and answer any questions the instructor may have and work with each instructor to nail down dates and location for each course.

In the months leading up to the start of the semester, Encore Learning staff will work with each instructor to develop a brief video where the instructor promotes the course to prospective students. The videos are aired during the Virtual Course Preview before class registration begins. The videos are also available online, at encorelearning.net.

Course Evaluations

APC members' final role in the process is to review course evaluations, which are completed and summarized at the conclusion of each course. Kerry Fraatz, Encore Learning's course coordinator, posts the evaluations in a shared drive folder and the APC co-chairs review them and forward each evaluation report to the APC member who worked with the instructor. APC members, in turn, send the evaluations to each instructor, along with Encore Learning's deep appreciation for the time and expertise the instructor has donated to Encore Learning.

Deb Spero and Jeanne LaBella, the co-chairs of the Academic Programs Committee, are always happy to help you with any challenges you encounter in your efforts to develop courses for Encore Learning. The academic courses offered each term are the heart of Encore Learning's mission. We—and all Encore Learning members—appreciate all the energy, imagination and contributions you bring to our committee's mission.

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