

# MEMBERS' HANDBOOK



## McGill Community for Lifelong Learning



**McGill**

| School of Continuing Studies

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## **WELCOME TO THE MCGILL COMMUNITY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING**

Run by members for members, the McGill Community for Lifelong Learning (MCLL) provides a wonderful opportunity for you to experience the joys of intellectual discovery without the pressures of a formal academic environment. This handbook has a dual purpose:

- 1) To help you to feel at home in your own learning community by informing you about MCLL and answering many of the questions you may have, and
- 2) To suggest ways in which you might become involved in addition to becoming a member and signing up for a study group.

The McGill Community for Lifelong Learning is member led in all its aspects - educational, social and administrative – and your participation and commitment will help ensure its continued success.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Founded in 1989, the McGill Community for Lifelong Learning (MCLL) is a non-profit, volunteer-based community of seniors focused on peer learning. Part of the School of Continuing Studies at McGill University, it is led by volunteers and managed by a council elected from among its members.

MCLL is for people who want to continue learning for the joy of it, and who wish to share their knowledge, ideas, experience, and interests with others. No exams or grades to worry about, and no age limits! The result is a rich and dynamic learning environment.

While the primary purpose of MCLL is intellectual pursuit, we also provide a social environment for our members, and there are scheduled social events.

## **LINKS WITH MCGILL UNIVERSITY**

MCLL is a self-administered unit within the McGill School of Continuing Studies (SCS). MCLL continues to benefit from the University's advice and support, from its staff, academic resources, and physical facilities. The ongoing enthusiastic participation of seniors from Montreal and beyond shows how MCLL meets an important community need. Fortunately, the Community's links with the McGill School of Continuing Studies have allowed the physical facilities to keep pace with the growing enrolment. MCLL has its own premises, especially designed for its use, allowing for simultaneous online and in-class learning, and conveniently located at 680 Sherbrooke St. West.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

- Membership is open to any adult.
- Membership is renewed and new participants become members, when registering in a study group at the beginning of each term.
- Each term, members may register in one or two 10-week study group(s) when registration opens, and in as many as they wish in the week prior to the start of term, as availability permits. These membership rules apply equally to moderators.
- Current members have access to the McGill libraries, the McGill Information Technology services, the Microsoft Office software suite, including a McGill email address and a Zoom account.
- A participant who has been a member in at least one of the academic terms (Spring, Fall, Winter) of the fiscal year is eligible to vote in the Annual General Meeting in March and may also participate in the year's social events.

## **MCLL PEER LEARNING CONCEPT**

### **STUDY GROUPS**

When you register in MCLL, you register for a study group. In the study group structure members meet either online or in class to study a subject of common interest. The groups are led informally by peer moderators who are themselves members of MCLL. Most study groups meet for a term of ten weeks (two hours per week per subject) in the fall, winter and spring. There are a few study groups which meet for less than 10-week periods.

The two cornerstones of learning in MCLL are peer learning and active participation. It is these concepts which differentiate the study groups from traditional courses and classes.

In the pure peer-learning model, the study group is completely member-led, and all members participate fully and equally. In practice there are a great many variations, and the study group concept is flexible. There are some groups where the moderators see themselves more in the traditional teacher role and others where they see themselves as facilitators, organizers, or animators. But no matter what the style of moderator, passive learning is contrary to the spirit of the study group structure. You must be prepared for some form of active participation.

The expected form of participation may vary according to the subject matter and to the form of participatory involvement chosen by the moderator. Participation may range from presentations or papers based on research on the selected topic, to reports on cultural events, or the sharing of life experiences. There are a few study groups where only participation in discussion is expected. In the registration program the study groups are categorized according to what is expected from members. In most cases some form of group discussion provides the basis of the study group experience.

## **MEMBERS' ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

MCLL is dedicated to fostering a welcoming environment that facilitates peer group learning for all its members. This commitment is underpinned by a belief in the importance of creating an inclusive setting where every individual is esteemed and can grow and develop personally. MCLL places a high value on qualities such as integrity, mutual respect, trust, open communication, cooperation and teamwork.

In that spirit, here are a few suggestions to help you participate in discussions as a study group member:

- Listen carefully to others.
- Help keep the discussion on track.
- Speak your mind freely but don't monopolize the discussion.
- Help involve the more reticent people.
- Address your remarks to the group as a whole rather than to the moderator or other individuals.
- Don't be afraid to engage in friendly debate, but don't allow the discussion to become personal or acrimonious.
- The goal is always polite and reasoned discussion.

Please refer to the MCLL Code of Conduct, available on the website at: [Members Documents](#)

Your responsibilities as an active participant in a study group also include a commitment to regular attendance. If you find that you are unable to attend because of illness or an emergency, you must inform the moderator and/or host. This is particularly important if you have been scheduled to make a presentation. Similarly, should you wish to withdraw from a study, please inform the moderator and/or host, and the office. This is particularly important early in the term in case there is a waiting list.

*What should I do if I sign up for a study group and then find I don't like it?*

Don't just give up. Your first step should be to talk to the moderator and discuss the difficulties you are having. If that doesn't help, speak to the Administrative Coordinator in the MCLL office to see if you can still be fitted into an alternative study group. A good way to avoid this situation is to find out more about the study group by contacting the moderator before you register.

## **PRESENTERS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

As a class participant, moderator or lecturer, you may decide to create your own presentation support material, typically an electronic slide show. In doing so, you are encouraged to consult and adhere to MCLL's copyright guidelines, available on the website at: [Members Documents](#)

Our separate [Members Help Site](#) also includes useful tips for creating engaging presentation material.

## **MODERATORS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The moderator's role is key to the character and quality of MCLL learning experiences. This role is illuminated by using the term moderator rather than teacher. If you are thinking of becoming a moderator, you should understand that it is the policy of MCLL to encourage active learning through member participation. The moderator acts as guide and resource person.

- In most cases the moderators determine the subject, objectives, and scope of the study group. They suggest the texts or activities. They help the group remain on target, clarify areas of confusion, and fill important gaps.
- Some study groups formats require or encourage participant presentations. In these cases, moderators are responsible for scheduling participant presentations, proposing time limitations and making sure that the presentations deal with issues of substance. They should also help group members define their topics and find suitable resource material
- Moderators are encouraged to look for innovative ways of engaging participants with subject matter through new technologies, debates, simulations and role- playing activities.

More information can be found in the Moderators' Handbook, at: [Moderators' Handbook](#)

*If moderators don't get paid and don't receive any special privileges, why would anyone wish to become a moderator?*

Fortunately, there are always people who want to do more. To be a moderator is to participate in the learning experience more deeply. Also being a moderator brings its own rewards, the most important of which is the fun of leading a group of interested, appreciative people, and sharing with them topics of particular interest.

*What kind of special qualifications should I have in order to become a moderator? Is it necessary to be an expert or a teacher?*

Some teachers become moderators when they retire in order to help them make the transition, but they don't necessarily make the best moderators. The peer learning concept obviates the need for teachers and experts. All you need in order to become a moderator is enthusiasm and interest together with the willingness to become a leader in the learning experience.

*I'm interested in becoming a moderator, but I'm nervous – I've never done this before. Would I receive any help and support?*

The Curriculum Committee arranges special workshops for new and potential moderators. Also, you can have a special mentor assigned to you, someone who is familiar with your subject area. A new moderator should have participated in at least one MCLL study group before taking on the moderating role.

*I have a great idea for a study group and I'd like to become a moderator. How do I go about it?*

All proposals for study groups should be submitted to the Curriculum Committee, so make yourself known to a member of this committee. Their names are usually posted on one of the notice boards in the hallway, or you can ask the office for the name of the Chairperson.

The Curriculum Committee welcomes new moderators and is always willing to help with study group proposals. Proposal forms are distributed to all members by e-mail in preparation for the upcoming term.

## **LECTURES AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

In addition to study groups, MCLL offers a growing and popular program of extracurricular and other social activities throughout the year. Amongst the most popular events are Friday lectures, outings and workshops and in the summer, Wednesday lectures, outings and workshops.

## **MEMBER-LED ADMINISTRATION COUNCIL, COMMITTEES AND OFFICE**

MCLL is member-led by volunteers in its governance as in its educational activities. In partnership with the McGill School of Continuing Studies, it is self administered by an elected Council whose members include the Chairs of the various committees.

### **COUNCIL**

As the governing body of MCLL, the Council manages the operations and finances of MCLL and ratifies policy decisions. It is responsible to the membership to which it must report once a year at the Annual General Meeting. The list of the current members of council can be found here: [Council and Committees](#)

The Council consists of the following members: the president, vice-president, treasurer and the chairs of the committees listed below. The representative of the School of Continuing Studies, the secretary of Council and the immediate past president also sit on Council. The Council normally meets once a month. Members may attend Council meetings. The president and vice-president are each elected for a one-year term. Other councillors are elected for two-year terms. The term of office for councillors begins on June 1st.

Most of the organizational work ensuring the smooth running of MCLL takes place behind the scenes and is accomplished through the various committees to which many members contribute their talents. There are usually between three and five members on each of the committees, but there is no limit to how many members there may be. The committees are briefly described below so that you can see where you might contribute your own talents.

## **COMMITTEES**

### **Communications**

Is responsible for all aspects of internal and external communications, acting both as an originator of communications content and as a facilitator of content creation and publication for other MCLL committees. It also has the task of maintaining the content of all MCLL electronic communications platforms including the website and a Facebook page.

### **Community Outreach**

The Community Outreach Committee pursues activities designed to make MCLL accessible and inclusive and promotes activities that allow members to learn about issues related to groups that are under-represented at MCLL. The Outreach Committee builds partnerships with units at McGill, with organizations serving senior groups in Montreal, Quebec and Canada and also with international organizations involved in later-life learning.

### **Curriculum**

The Curriculum Committee establishes the study group and lecture programs offered by MCLL. It receives or initiates new study group and lecture proposals. It also recruits new moderators and lecturers, provides guidelines, and maintains liaison with and between moderators. The Curriculum Committee is largely responsible for maintaining a balanced, challenging, and enjoyable program.

### **Development**

The Development Committee works closely with SCS Administration and the Council to solicit financial support for MCLL activities and assists with setting fundraising targets and support of fundraising events.

### **Information Technology**

The IT Committee oversees the administration of computer related activities and makes recommendations to Council with respect to the use and purchase of computer equipment. This is an area of rapid change, and we have been active in using new technology to enhance our learning experience. Registration is done online, and classrooms are equipped for hybrid attendance, i.e., in class and remote simultaneously. Our website and our Facebook page are good sources of information for potential members.

### **Planning and Membership**

The Planning and Membership Committee reviews and evaluates the activities, organization, and financing of MCLL. Acting as the research arm of Council, it concerns itself with the broad picture. The Committee looks in depth at issues determined by Council for the purpose of identifying possible problems and developing a plan of action. This committee also suggests measures to Council designed to promote membership.



## **Special Events**

The Special Events Committee organizes the social, cultural, and educational events for the whole membership. There is usually one of these events per term, for example the holiday party in December and the Spring Fling.

## **Volunteer Coordinator**

The Volunteer Coordinator identifies, recruits and trains volunteers to serve on standing committees, to help with ad hoc activities such as special events, and to serve in the office to support the Program Administrator and Administrative Coordinator.

*I have some free time, some experience and would like to serve on one of these committees, but I don't know quite where to place my energies. Is there someone I can talk to?*

The best person would be the Administrative Coordinator or the Volunteer Coordinator who would know where the need is greatest and where you would best fit in. You could also speak to the Chairperson of the committee which most interests you.

## **MCLL OFFICE**

### **PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR**

The program administrator coordinates MCLL activities, maintaining communication between committees and advising on administrative issues. He/she acts as a link to the School of Continuing Studies and ensures that the interests of the University are represented and that MCLL receives appropriate support.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR**

The administrative coordinator works with the office volunteers to appropriately handle enquiries from MCLL members and the public. She/he works with the Curriculum Committee to produce the academic programs, updates the registration system and website, processes all manual registrations, runs reports and produces required documents.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Calendar/ Registration Procedures**

There are three 10-week terms. The fall term begins mid- September, the winter term mid-January, and the spring term in mid-April. Study groups meet for two hours once a week. Some study groups run for less than 10 weeks. As study groups have limited spaces and some fill up very quickly, it is important to apply as early as possible.

The membership fee entitles you to attend study groups. Normally members take either one or two groups in any given semester. If a study group is full, you have the option of being put on the wait list, when you register online.

## **Fees**

The fee per term for full members, and the fees for Friday lectures, and Wonderful Wednesdays are set by the MCLL Council. It is the policy of MCLL that no one be denied access to membership for financial reasons. There is a scholarship fund for this purpose. Confidential applications may be made at the office. The fee waiver request form is also available on our website: [Fee Waiver Form](#)

## **Library Privileges**

McGill Library membership is included in the MCLL fee. You may obtain your library card without further charge by presenting your MCLL membership card at the Circulation Desk in the main foyer of the McLennan Library. Membership cards are available upon request at the MCLL office. In addition, all MCLL members are given a McGill e-mail address which provides access to the McGill Library's electronic resources.

## **Newsletter**

The MCLL Newsletter, which includes full-fledged articles and news items, is published two or three times during the academic year by and for MCLL members. The Newsletter editor is responsible for much of the content, but you are invited to submit contributions.

## **eBulletin**

The MCLL eBulletin is for current news and updates and is published monthly. Again, please feel free to submit contributions to the eBulletin editor. Past issues of the Newsletter and the eBulletin can be found here: [Articles and Newsletters](#)

## **Physical Facilities and Contact Information**

MCLL has its own quarters on the 2nd floor at:

680 Sherbrooke St. West, Suite 229  
Montreal, QC, H3A 2M7

Telephone: 514-398-8234

E-mail: [mcll.scs@mcgill.ca](mailto:mcll.scs@mcgill.ca)

Website: [www.mcgill.ca/mcll](http://www.mcgill.ca/mcll)

The space is comprised of four classrooms, a lounge, an office, and a kitchenette. Escalators and elevators are available to go to the second floor. The premises are wheelchair accessible.

MCLL is easily accessed by public transport. The 24 bus on Sherbrooke Street stops at the door and metro access is close by from the McGill station.

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