Help

Have a question or need some help? You're in the right place!

Here you can find more information about how to create and edit your account and (for faculty) how to create and edit your course.

Not what you're looking for? More documentation is coming soon. In the meantime, please feel free to contact us with any questions at openlab@citytech.cuny.edu.

Especially For Students
Getting Started with the OpenLab and Joining Your Courses
Participating in Your Course Site
Participating in Discussions
Creating and Using Docs

Creating an Account

- Go to http://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu. Scroll down to the turquoise "Log-In" box and click on the link to "Sign Up."
- On the "Create an Account" page, choose a username and password, and enter your first and last names and a City Tech email address. Under "Account Type," select "Faculty" from the drop-down menu. Enter any additional information you wish to provide about yourself (e.g. Academic Interests, preferred email address, Website link, etc.) in the remaining fields. Once registered, you can change or edit this profile information at any time.
- At the bottom of the page, indicate if you would like to "create a new blog" by checking the box. If you check yes, enter a URL and Title for your blog, and choose a privacy setting. If you decline, you can still create a blog at a later time. Click on the button that says "Complete Sign Up."
- You now have the option of uploading an image to use as your avatar. The site will provide you with a default avatar, but if you'd prefer to select your own, click on the button that says "Browse" to choose an image from your computer. You can upload PNG, GIF, or JPG files (other types of file are not supported on OpenLab). However, if you have a file in another format, open it and click on "Save As," then select an eligible file type from the drop down menu. Once you have chosen a file, click on "Upload Image." You will receive a message when your avatar has successfully uploaded.
- Your registration is not complete until you have activated your account via the email that was automatically sent to the City Tech address you provided. Check your inbox: you should have received a message asking you to activate your account. Click on the link provided.
- Your account is now active! To log in, simply return to the home page or click on the Log-In link in the top navigation bar to enter your username and password.

Creating a Course

- Go to http://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu and enter your username and password to log in to OpenLab.
- Hover your mouse over "My Courses" in the top navigation bar. Select "Create a New Course" from the menu that appears.
- You are now ready to create your course. Enter the course name and description in the appropriate fields (required for every course). You may also elect to enter additional information in the fields provided: the school and department in which the course is listed, its course and section code, semester and year, and additional description or a Web site. Once you have entered all the information you'd like, click on the "Create a Course and Continue" button.

- The next page is where you will establish discussion, privacy, and email settings for your course. First, choose whether you would like to enable "discussion" in your course (that is, allow your students to comment on posts). Next, decide whether you would like to make your course public, private or hidden; descriptions of each setting is included on the page. Because one of the goals of the OpenLab is the exchange of ideas and information, the default setting is "public." Finally, select a default email setting for new users: this will determine how often your members receive emails about course activity. Once you have made your choices, click "Next Step."
- You now have the option of uploading an avatar for your course. The site will provide you with a default avatar; however, if you you'd like to select your own, click on the button that says "Browse" to choose an image from your computer. You may upload PNG, GIF, or JPG files (other types of file are not supported on OpenLab). Click on "Upload Image." Once you have decided on an avatar, click "Next Step."
- Invite members to join your course. You may either select OpenLab members listed in the directory, or search for members (simply start typing a member's first name in the search field, and his or her profile should pop up.) Once you have selected your members, click on "next step."
- On the next page, check the box if you would like to enable BuddyPress docs, a collaborating writing and editing tool, for your course. (For a more detailed overview, see http://codex.commons.gc.cuny.edu/blogs/plug-ins/buddypress-docs/.) If you elect to use BuddyPress docs, select the minimum role a user must hold in order to be able to write or edit a document: member, moderator, or administrator.
- Click "Finish." You now have a course on OpenLab!

Customizing a Course

To change the group avatar:

- on the group home page under 'dig a little deeper' click 'admin'
- click 'group avatar'
- upload an image
- click 'save changes' and you're done!

To change privacy and email settings:

- on the group home page under 'dig a little deeper' click 'admin'
- click 'group settings'
- make your changes, click 'save changes' and you're done!

To email everyone in the course:

- on the group home page under 'dig a little deeper' click 'admin'
- click 'email options'
- type your email and send!

To add a topic to the forum/start a discussion:

- on the group home page under 'dig a little deeper' click 'forum'
- title your topic
- describe the content
- add tags (if you like)
- click save and you're done!
- to add to the discussion, simply reply to the thread!

To create a Doc:

- on the group home page under 'dig a little deeper' click 'docs
- title your doc
- add the content either by typing directly into the field or pasting from word (to do this select the icon in the menu bar above the field with the 'w')
- change the settings to decide who can edit your document
- add tags or a parent if you like
- be sure to save the document!

Pages and Posts on a Course Site

Pages are a set of fixed, prominently displayed entries that serve as a table of contents for your site. Pages are a good place to share general information and introductory details, and a way to direct people to different topics on the site.

Below your Pages toolbar, your **Posts** will be displayed in chronological order, starting with the most recent. These entries are used as a running log that you may use to share up-to-the minute information

To Create a Page:

- From the OpenLab homepage, select "My Sites" from the toolbar options. In the dropdown window, that appears, hover over the name of your site, and then select "Dashboard." On the Dashboard, look for the "Right Now" menu and select "Pages" (a number next to the link tells you how many pages your site already has).
- You can also get to the Dashboard from your site's homepage by selecting "Site Admin."

On "Pages" you can choose to edit and format your existing pages, or click "Add New" to create a new one. Once you have finished creating a title and content for your new page, click "Publish." It will instantly appear on your site alongside your other pages.

To Create a Post:

- From the OpenLab home page, select "My Sites" from the toolbar options. In the dropdown window, that appears, hover over the name of your site, and then select "New Post." This shortcut circumvents the Dashboard and automatically opens a new post.
- Or from your site's homepage, select "Site Admin." This will take you directly to the Dashboard. On the Dashboard, select "Posts" (either from the lefthand sidebar or the "Right Now" menu). You can choose to edit and format your existing posts, or click "Add New" to create a new one.

Once you have finished creating a title and content for your new post, click "Publish." It will instantly appear on your site above your other posts.

Widgets on a Course Site

A widget is a tool that performs a specific function on a blog. WordPress features a number of ready-made widgets that can accomplish a variety of useful tasks, including, but not limited to:

- **Archives**, which allow you to readily access all of your blog's posts, by date of publication.
- **Links**, or a Blogroll, a list of links to other relevant websites or blogs.
- A compliation of your blog's most **Recent Comments**, collected from throughout your site.

Most WordPress themes have a few widgets already installed by default, but you can add and remove widgets as you like, and many of them can be customized.

Adding or removing a widget from your sidebar

To add a widget to your blog's sidebar:

1. Go to your Dashboard, and find the Widgets link, under Appearance.

2. Locate the widget you'd like to include, then drag it over to the appropriate Widget Area. Depending on the theme, the location of the primary or secondary widget areas might vary; in the Twenty Ten theme, widgets will appear in the right sidebar. Depending on the widget, you may have the option to customize some settings.