Frequently Asked Questions

Academic Topics
What are the most popular majors? English, Biology, History, Politics, Environmental Studies, Psychology, Chemistry, Religion, East Asian Studies, Creative Writing.

What is Winter Term? Winter Term is a time for students to focus their time on an independent or small-group project that can’t be done during the semester. Students must have a sponsor for their project who will work with the student to determine an appropriate final assignment. Students may do something related to a potential career (science internship, Capitol Hill internship, etc.), their major (directing a play or a choir on campus, for example), or something fun (learning Aikido, singing in a choir, or a cheese tour of Paris). There is scholarship money available for projects.

What is ExCo? ExCo (short for Experimental College) is a set of classes taught by Oberlin students, faculty, or townspeople that are not normally part of the college curriculum. Classes are proposed and, if accepted, taught for the student body. Classes cover a wide range of topics, from steel drumming to tap dancing, from self defense to scuba diving, from Stephen King to “The Simpsons”, from women’s health to Sign Language.

Is there a Core Curriculum? No. Every student must complete a few requirements, in addition to any requirements for a major, to graduate.
1. 9-9-9 – Students must take 9 credit hours (the equivalent of 3 classes) in each of the three divisions of the College: Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Science and Math.
2. Cultural Diversity – Students must take 9 credit hours in classes that expose students to cultures and ways of thinking that are not part of the traditional high school curriculum. Topics that fit this include, but are not limited to, African American literature, eastern religion, foreign languages, Latin American history, gender in the Middle East and Africa, and Yoruba dance.
3. Quantitative Proficiency and Writing Proficiency – Students are required to demonstrate basic mathematical and writing skills. These two requirements have be fulfilled through Oberlin classes or performance on AP exams.

What is the average class size? The average class size is 20. 70% of the classes have fewer than 20 students; 89% of the classes have fewer than 30 students.

What is the student-to-faculty ratio? 11:1 for the College of Arts and Sciences, 8:1 in the Conservatory of Music. It is 10:1, overall, at Oberlin.

What is Oberlin’s policy on transferring credits?
From college classes – If a student has taken a liberal arts class at a local college and has achieved a C or better in the class, it is quite likely that the credits for the class can transfer. The Registrar’s Office makes the
determination, in consultation with a faculty member from the appropriate department, in the summer before the student enrolls.

**From AP exams** – The guidelines for approval of AP credit vary from department to department. Some departments grant general credits towards graduation while other departments grant departmental credit and exempt students from specific classes. Generally speaking, a score of "5" on an AP exam will get the student credit. Specific information about each department’s policy is available online: www.oberlin.edu/admissions/college/contact/download.shtml or in the course catalog: catalog.oberlin.edu

**From IB exams** – Students achieving a 5, 6, or 7 on a Higher Level IB exam, credit towards graduation can be granted. Oberlin does not accept any score on a Standard Level IB exam.

**What music opportunities exist for non-Conservatory students?**
1. **Lessons** – Students in the College may audition for lessons, whether of the secondary nature (taken for credit) or of the private variety (for which payment is required—they run around $7.50 for a half-hour lesson).
2. **Classes** – College students may sign up for Conservatory classes. However, some of these classes, particularly Music Theory and Aural Skills classes, are difficult to get into.
3. **Ensembles** – All of the major ensembles are open for audition. The likelihood of a non-Conservatory student getting into one of these ensembles is slim. Therefore, there are some ensembles that are open to non-Conservatory students.
4. **Practice rooms** – Any student on campus is permitted to use the practice rooms in the Conservatory. They are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Admissions Information**

*What is looked at by the Admissions Committee?* When reviewing applications, the Admissions Committee looks at:
1. High school GPA and classes taken
2. Standardized test scores
3. Letters of recommendation
4. Essays
5. Extracurricular activities

No single piece of the application is the most important, but the high school GPA is extremely important. Students need to challenge themselves in high school by taking as many rigorous classes as they can during high school. It is also important for students to be actively involved in extracurricular activities.

*Can I send in supplemental material with my application?* Students may send in supplemental material, such as samples of creative writing, musical performances, or
artwork. However, these items will not be sent to departments for evaluation and these items will not make or break a student’s application for admission.

*When students apply to Oberlin, to what other schools do they apply?* Wesleyan, Carleton, Brown, Vassar, Kenyon, Northwestern, Swarthmore, Grinnell, Macalaster, and Reed are the most common cross-application schools.

**Campus Life**

*Where is Oberlin?* Oberlin is approximately 35 miles southwest of Cleveland and approximately 25 miles from the Cleveland Hopkins International Airport.

*How big is Oberlin?* There are approximately 2800 students at Oberlin: 2200 in the College, 400 in the Conservatory, and 200 enrolled in the Double Degree program. The town of Oberlin has approximately 6000 residents.

*What is diversity like on campus?* Oberlin students come from all 50 states and over 50 foreign countries. Approximately 19% of the entering class self-identified as a student of color (6% African-American, >1% Native American, 8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 5% Latino). Geographically, Oberlin students are from New England (10%), Mid-Atlantic (30%), Midwest (24%), West (16%), South (9%), Southwest (4%), and International (7%).