



University Students' Council Standing Policy

TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT POLICY PAPER

1). Prove $\lim_{x \rightarrow 3} \frac{1}{x} = \frac{1}{3}$ is true via δ - ϵ

Assume $\epsilon > 0, \exists \delta > 0$ s.t. $|\frac{1}{x} - \frac{1}{3}| < \epsilon$
Whenever $0 < |x - 3| < \delta$

Sketch:

$$|\frac{1}{x} - \frac{1}{3}| < \epsilon \text{ when } \frac{1}{3} - \epsilon < \frac{1}{x} < \frac{1}{3} + \epsilon$$

$$\frac{3}{1+3\epsilon} < x < \frac{3}{1-3\epsilon}$$

$$\frac{-9\epsilon}{1+3\epsilon} < x-3 < \frac{9\epsilon}{1-3\epsilon}$$

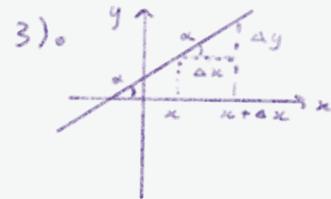
So, choose $\delta_1 = \frac{9\epsilon}{1+3\epsilon}, \delta_2 = \frac{9\epsilon}{1-3\epsilon}$

Let $\delta = \min\{\delta_1, \delta_2\} = \delta_1$

\therefore It's true that $|\frac{1}{x} - \frac{1}{3}| < \epsilon$

Whenever $|x-3| < \delta = \frac{9\epsilon}{1+3\epsilon}$

Thus $\lim_{x \rightarrow 3} \frac{1}{x} = \frac{1}{3}$ is true



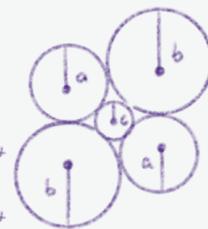
2).



3). Suppose $c \in \mathbb{Z} > 0$

Define $f(c)$ to be the number of pairs (a, b) of $\mathbb{Z} > 0$ for which we can draw circles s.t.:

- Each circle of radius a is tangent to each circle of radius b & c
- Each circle of radius b is tangent to each circle of radius a & c



Determine all $\mathbb{Z} > 0, c$ for which $f(c)$ is even



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Legislative History
Approved by Council May 4, 2022
To be reviewed by Council in its 2024-2025 sitting

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The University of Western Ontario is located on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples, who have long-standing relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western University values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).

To learn more about these Indigenous communities and how you can best be an ally, please refer to the London & Middlesex Indigenous Culture Card. For more information about land acknowledgements, please refer to the article “Rethinking the Practice and Performance of Indigenous Land Acknowledgment” by Robinson et al. A land acknowledgement is an important step in recognizing colonial history but should by no means be the full extent to which we acknowledge and support indigenous communities.



KEY TERMS

Draft My Schedule: Draft my Schedule is a digital timetabling tool for Western and Affiliate students to plan their courses for the upcoming academic year.¹

High Impact Practices (HIPs): Teaching practices that have a higher impact than others when employed, which includes²:

- First-Year Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses and Projects
- ePortfolios

Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP): The IQAP is Western’s protocol for reviewing its academic programmes.³

Learning Outcomes: Learning outcomes are statements that describe the knowledge or skills students should acquire by the end of a particular assignment, class, course, or program, and help students understand why that knowledge and those skills will be useful to them. They focus on the context and potential applications of

1 Brescia University, “Draft My Schedule,” Brescia University, 2022, https://brescia.uwo.ca/enrolment_services/academics/courses_enrolment/registration_guide/draft_my_schedule.php.

2 University of Waterloo, “High Impact Practices (HIPs) or Engaged Learning Practices,” Centre for Teaching Excellence - University of Waterloo, 2022, <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/support/integrative-learning/high-impact-practices-hips-or-engaged-learning-practices>.

3 Western University, “Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP),” Western University, 2022, <https://www.uwo.ca/pvp/vpacademic/iqap/index.html>.



knowledge and skills, help students connect learning in various contexts, and help guide assessment and evaluation.⁴

Linear vs. Non-Linear Exams: A linear exam is formatted so students are unable to move backward in the exam to change prior answers, whereas a non-linear exam gives students this opportunity.

Open Educational Resources (OERs): Open educational resources are openly licensed teaching and learning materials. OER are freely available and created with the intent to use and reuse. These materials come in a wide range of formats including textbooks, streaming media, course materials such as syllabi, tests, modules, digital content, and more.⁵

Peer Tutoring (PT): PT is a broad term that encompasses many forms of student-to-student academic support, including individualized tutoring or student-led group review sessions, typically characterized by the tutor being holding a slightly more advanced academic standing than the tutee (e.g. an upper-year student tutor and a first-year student tutee).⁶

SQCT (Student Questionnaires on Course and Teaching): SQCTs are formal questionnaires that are optional for students to complete nearing the end of each academic term. These questionnaires require students to rank professors on teaching attributes which includes enthusiasm, organization, and effectiveness as an instructor.⁷

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that helps give all students an equal

4 University of Toronto, “Developing Learning Outcomes,” Teaching - University of Toronto, 2022, <https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/course-design/developing-learning-outcomes/what-are-learning-outcomes/>.

5 Western University, “Open Educational Resources,” Western University, 2022, <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/scholarship/oer.html>.

6 University Students’ Council, “Teaching Quality Policy Paper,” University Students’ Council, 2015, <http://westernusc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/USC-Teaching-Quality-Policy-Paper.pdf>.

7 Western University, “Student Questionnaires on Courses and Teaching,” Western University, 2022, <https://sqct.uwo.ca/>.



opportunity to succeed. This approach offers flexibility in the ways students access material, engage with it and show what they know.⁸

Virtual Proctoring Software: Virtual proctoring platforms use a combination of software and a student’s webcam to monitor a student as they complete an assessment. These platforms can also involve browser lockdown software that prevents a student from opening additional applications and windows while they are taking an exam.⁹

Western Degree Outcomes (WDOs): Western Degree Outcomes(WDOs) are seven learning competencies that all Western students should have upon graduation¹⁰:

- Knowledge
- Literacies and interdisciplinarity
- Communication
- Resilience and life-long learning
- Global and community engagement
- Critical inquiry + adaptive thinking
- Professionalism and ethical conduct

8 North Vancouver School District, “Universal Design for Learning,” North Vancouver School District - Inclusive Education, 2022, <https://www.sd44.ca/sites/inclusiveed/EducationalPlanning/Programming/universaldesign-forlearning/Pages/default.aspx#/=>.

9 Ryerson University, “Virtual Proctoring,” Centre for Learning and Teaching - Ryerson University, 2022, <https://www.ryerson.ca/centre-for-excellence-in-learning-and-teaching/remote-teaching/virtual-proctoring/>.

10 Western University, “Western Degree Outcomes,” Western University, 2022, <https://teaching.uwo.ca/curriculum/wdo.html>.



INTRODUCTION

Western University prides itself on the high quality of its student experience. While extracurriculars are a key part of that experience, it is the quality of the learning experience that is at the heart of every students' interaction with the university. Students want to be active participants in their own learning process, but need support from instructors and the institution more broadly to do so effectively.

Clear expectations in the classroom, clarity around expected learning outcomes, and accessible lectures, educational resources, and assessments will all go a long way to prepare students for their life after Western. Students want to understand the connections between their education and their future careers, and additional clarity will help both alleviate stress in the present, and allow them to better articulate the value of their Western degree in the future.

Instructors are at the heart of students' learning experience, and yet there is little focus on pedagogical training for instructors. Improving this part of the hiring process, as well as requiring faculty to demonstrate a commitment to ongoing professional development in this area, would ensure that students are receiving the most up to date teaching methods and improve their experience in the area of their student life that has the biggest impact. Beyond the instructors themselves, the Institutional Quality Assurance Process has a significant impact on the trajectory of a students' academic career, and is a vital part of ensuring that the quality of education at Western and the value of a Western degree remains high. As key stakeholders in the university, students should be an integral part of the process and consulted on a broad scale throughout the review.

Finally, equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization are important parts of Western's strategic plan, and are key to ensuring that students have a supportive environment in which to learn. All students can benefit from an education that



challenges dominant narratives and encourages them to think critically about their field of study. Moving beyond Eurocentric approaches to learning, knowing, and being will expand the quality of education for both instructors and students.

The recommendations in this paper outline a number of ways to ensure that students receive a strong educational experience from professors. We believe that if Western values teaching, learning, and assessment practices as much as it values research, the university will truly be able to offer the very best student experience.



RECOMMENDATIONS

TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY:

General Recommendations:

Principle: In-person classes and learning opportunities provide opportunities for students to engage in active learning with their instructors and peers.

Principle: Online classes or in-person classes that are available for students to review asynchronously allow students more flexibility to balance other priorities, such as work or extracurriculars.

Principle: Focusing for long periods of time is tiring and reduces our ability to retain and comprehend information..

Principle: Flexibility in assignment submissions allows students to manage their schoolwork in accordance with other priorities, including mental health and wellbeing.

Concern: While synchronous learning is the preferred learning method for students, it does not provide the space for students to manage competing priorities in their lives.

Concern: Asynchronous learning can be isolating and provide a less holistic learning experience.

Concern: The current approach to teaching and learning is inflexible and makes it difficult for students to effectively engage with classroom content and can result in burnout.



Concern: Students often do not have opportunities to engage one on one with instructors or teaching assessments.

Concern: A lack of accountability in group work assessments students are variable and can create distress.

Concern: There are many faculty- and department-specific peer academic support resources that exist on campus. are underutilized due to student's being unaware of these programs.

Recommendation: Professors should review the syllabus at the beginning of the semester in class and include exact dates when assignments and tests are to take place.

Recommendation: Lectures should be recorded for students to view after class, or in the case that a student needed to miss class for personal reasons.

Recommendation: Instructors should prioritize engagement with students and classroom interaction into teaching strategies.

Recommendation: For each hour that a lecture exceeds, instructors must give students a break of at least 10 minutes.

Recommendation: Instructors are highly encouraged to implement built-in extensions into their courses and include these extensions in course syllabi.

Recommendation: Instructors are encouraged to monitor group progress via checkpoints (i.e., quarterly check-ins with TAs) and shareable documents where there are clear outlines of who did what.

Recommendation: Instructors should make a portion of group work grading based on contributions to the final outcome.



At Western, the ultimate goal of a student is to receive a high-quality education in that their academic wellness is prioritized. Therefore, student perspectives are key to ensuring teaching, learning, and assessment practices are well-designed.

A syllabus is often the first document a student is provided with once joining a class as it provides an organized roadmap of the upcoming semester, for students and professors to reference throughout the term. Broadly, syllabi serve three main purposes: a document outlining the responsibilities of the student and professor, a permanent record, and a learning tool.¹¹ A well-crafted syllabus should outline key dates for assessments in order to fulfill its function as a permanent record, serving accountability. Cemented dates will allow students to plan in advance for completing assessments at a high-quality, without being surprised. Importantly, by thoroughly reviewing a syllabus, students have the opportunity to clarify what is expected to happen during the semester whilst delineating the responsibilities of the student and instructor.¹² The syllabus also provides valuable insight with respect to course delivery style for the upcoming semester, whether it is offered in-person, online, or through a hybrid format.

In a survey released during the 2021-2022 school year by the USC on “Student Perspectives on Teaching and Learning,” students were given the opportunity to rank methods of course delivery on a scale of 1-5, translating into the most preferred being 1 and the least preferred being 5. The highest-ranked method of course delivery was real-time, in-person instructor-led learning. Other choices included live video conferencing, self-directed learning, online class discussions, and tutorials.¹³ In-person classes and learning opportunities provide opportunities for students to engage in active learning with their instructors and peers. Furthermore, in-person learning supports students in forming stronger connections with their professors and peers, allowing professors to lead enriching discussions that foster stronger

11 Parkes J & Harris MB, “The Purposes of a Syllabus,” *College Teaching*, 2010.

12 Ibid.

13 University Students’ Council, “Student Perspectives on Teaching and Learning Practices Survey Summary Report,” 2022.



academic experiences for students.¹⁴ With this being said, respondents of the “Student Perspectives on Teaching and Learning” survey found it beneficial to have live lectures be recorded for a later time, with a mean rating of 4.46 (scaled 1 to 5). Recordings provide students with the flexibility to view or review the content at their own pace whilst being able to complete other assignments or address personal commitments.¹⁵

Recorded lectures also allow students to digest lectures at their own speed and take breaks as they see fit when reviewing lectures. Through the transition back to fully in-person lectures, the benefit of breaks during in-person classes should be taken seriously. In a series of recent studies, short physical activity breaks in the classroom improved students’ behavior, increasing the effort they put into their activities as well as their ability to stay on task.¹⁶ According to the Ontario Employee Standards Act (ESA), an employee must not work for more than five hours in a row without getting a 30-minute eating period (meal break) free from work.¹⁷ If interpolation is used, an approximate 10-minute break would be suitable for an hour of class time. Briefly stepping away from a lecture has been proven to improve engagement and focus and will allow everyone, including teaching faculty, to return more energized.¹⁸

In line with the idea of student engagement, a key component of each course is interaction with the instructor. Many students have provided feedback to the USC that their instructors are only communicating with them once a week, sometimes even less.¹⁹ Student-instructor engagement can drive class participation and overall course satisfaction as a result of students feeling more connected to the material

14 Kipp Texas Public Schools, “4 Benefits of In Person Learning,” Kipp Texas Public Schools, 2022, <https://kipptexas.org/4-benefits-of-in-person-learning/>.

15 Hussain A, Tabrez E, Basu A, D’Silva CSM, “Medical Students’ Perception of the Usage of Lecture Recording Software,” Cureus, 2018.

16 Broad A et al., “Classroom Activity Breaks Improve On-Task Behavior and Physical Activity Levels Regardless of Time of Day,” Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 2021.

17 Government of Ontario, “Employment Standards Act,” Government of Ontario, 2022, <https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/hours-work>.

18 Online Schools, “The Science of Taking a Break,” Online Schools, 2022, <https://www.onlineschools.org/science-of-study-breaks/>.

19 University Students’ Council, “COVID Recommended Course Adaptations,” 2021.



and delivery of the course.²⁰ Thus, it is recommended that instructors should prioritize engagement with students into teaching strategies. This could be via discussion forums on OWL or alternative learning management systems. Additionally, hosting Q&A sessions to tackle student concerns may be an effective way to clarify student concerns.²¹ This allows students to refer back to instructions when in doubt and saves instructors the time of clarifying repetitive questions throughout the term. Finally, wherever possible it is encouraged that instructors provide detailed feedback - written or recorded - on assessments.²² With so much learning reliant on self-direction, it is critical that students receive constructive feedback that identifies areas for measurable improvement.

As alluded to previously, the counterpart of teaching and learning is assessment, where students are often evaluated formally in the form of an assessment that counts towards their final grade. Many classes at Western involve the submission of frequent assessments throughout the term, whether it be essays, quizzes, or short forum posts. While this is a good way to help students stay on track and up to date on material, having multiple assessments for multiple courses each week has resulted in an overall increase in workload and faster burnout of students.²³ Many students report high levels of daily hassles, workload, and manageability throughout their university years.²⁴ This stress is further perpetuated by the pressure to perform well and meet numerous deadlines while balancing other aspects of their lives. In programs such as Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences (IMS), professors have implemented an automatic extension on major assessments in the form of a two-day grace period for students to manage their workload with slightly less pressure. Grace periods encourage better time management, fair accommodation, reduce stress levels, and reduce emails from students asking for extensions via increasing their autonomy. If this is not feasible for a class, students should understand the options they have to request an extension or accommodation if needed.

20 Solis OJ & Turner WD. "Building Positive Student-Instructor Interactions: Engaging Students through Caring Leadership in the Classroom," *Journal on Empowering Teaching Excellence*, 2017.

21 University Students' Council, "COVID Recommended Course Adaptations," 2021.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Shalkland R et al., "Burnout in university students: the mediating role of sense of coherence on the relationship between daily hassles and burnout," *Higher Education*, 2019.



Assessments can also be framed around the idea of working in groups to complete a task. Group work can be an effective method to motivate students, encourage active learning, and develop key critical thinking, communication, and decision-making skills.²⁵ However, without careful planning and facilitation, group work can frustrate students and instructors and feel like a waste of time. This frustration may stem from a variety of reasons, which often centre on unfair divisions of work and unclear timelines, leading to certain individuals taking on a disproportionate amount of responsibility.²⁶ Providing a clearly defined project timeline and checkpoints create a space for accountability, where group members are encouraged to work early and often to complete the group project satisfactorily. Professors should think about designing group tasks that encourage a fair division of labour. All group members should feel a sense of personal responsibility for the success of their teammates and realize that their individual success depends on the group's success. This type of cooperative learning tends to result in learners promoting each other's success.²⁷ In terms of group assessment, instructors should make a portion of group work grading based on contributions to the final outcome. This allows for an objective way of determining individual participation, as well as providing additional motivation for individuals to contribute in a meaningful way. The only caveat is that the project should be divisible into tasks of the same complexity.²⁸

25 University of Waterloo, "Implementing Group Work in the Classroom," Centre for Teaching Excellence - University of Waterloo, 2022, <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/alternatives-lecturing/group-work/implementing-group-work-classroom>.

26 Ibid.

27 Johnson DW, Johnson RT., & Smith KA , " Cooperative Learning: Improving University Instruction by Basing Practice on Validated Theory," Journal on Excellence in College Teaching, 2014.

28 Ibid.



Evaluations of Teaching:

Principle: Student evaluations of teaching provide important feedback for improving instructors' approaches to teaching and assessment.

Principle: Student Questionnaires on Courses and Teaching (SQCT) provide useful information for students with respect to modular progression, including course selection and intent to register (ITR).

Principle: Information about professor teaching quality should be easily accessible and public to students.

Concern: The current design of the SQCT does not adequately reflect EDI-D principles, and includes metrics that are easily influenced by students' unconscious bias.

Concern: There are SQCTs that are not currently publicly available or otherwise accessible to students.

Concern: Other than SQCTs, there are no other formal mechanisms of peer feedback that students can refer to.

Concern: Outside of student evaluations of teaching, feedback mechanisms are limited.

Concern: Student evaluations of teaching do not always provide a balanced perspective due to the nature of certain courses.

Recommendation: All SQCTs, past and future, should be made available for students to view, with the exception of the 2020 Fall/Winter term.

Recommendation: The Office of the AVP EDI should work with the Centre for Teaching and Learning to review the content and design of the SQCTs.



Recommendation: The university should investigate and promote best practices in the design and implementation of evaluation tools for faculty to receive ongoing feedback.

Recommendation: The university should work with the Centre for Teaching and Learning to develop a framework that combines self-evaluation, peer review and student evaluation of teaching as a uniform way of quantifying teaching quality.

Recommendation: Evaluations of teaching should be implemented throughout the duration of a course, and not just at completion.

Teaching evaluations allow students to provide feedback about the quality of their classroom learning experience and give instructors an opportunity to adjust their approach. Undergraduate students are the largest stakeholder group for a university; therefore, student evaluations of teaching should be highly valued. Students' financial contributions combined with their commitment to engaging in post-secondary studies make these perspectives vital in assessing teaching quality.²⁹

As of April 2022, the University of Western Faculty Association (UWOFA) and Western University have negotiated a letter of understanding (LOU) regarding the administration and use of Student Questionnaires on Courses and Teaching (SQCT) in the upcoming academic year.³⁰ This LOU provides UWOFA faculty members with the choice to include data from SQCTs for evaluation processes, including applications for limited duties appointments, teaching dossiers for standing appointment consideration, annual reports for annual performance evaluation, and promotion, tenure, and continuing status files.³¹ While faculty have the option to include SQCT data in these processes, students do not have the option to access this data,

29 OUSA, "Teaching and Assessment Policy Paper," OUSA, 2018, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/33/attachments/original/1542989064/Teaching_and_Assessment_document.pdf?1542989064.

30 UWOFA, "UWOFA and the employer sign Letter of Understanding on Student Questionnaires on Courses and Teaching," UWOFA, 2022, <https://www.uwofa.ca/campaigns-issues/covid-19/uwofa-and-the-employer-sign-letter-of-understanding-on-student-questionnaires-on-courses-and-teaching/>.

31 Ibid.



specifically for courses taught in the winter term of 2019-20 and 2020-21. This places constraints on students' ability to make informed choices about their course selection and program design.

Understandably, the results of the winter term of 2019-20 may have been skewed with respect to the sudden onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the 2020-21 results should be made available to students as professors were given ample time and resources from the university to prepare for the 2020-21 school year. The USC recognizes that there were plenty of added burdens placed on instructors' professional and personal lives during the pandemic. To mitigate the stresses of revamping courses to fit an online structure, instructors were well-supported by the university through the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) to transition online. The SQCT provides valuable information that students can use in terms of course selection as well as allowing students to exercise the skill of using peer feedback to guide decision-making. Thus, it is recommended that going forward, the SQCT results are made available publicly due to the value it provides for improving teaching quality at Western.

Additionally, there are also concerns with respect to relying on student evaluations alone. Some faculty may be assessed more sternly than others based on personal attributes, course content, or program-specific issues.³² There are often gendered and racial biases in SQCTs and this places an unfair burden on non-male and racialized instructors with respect to their evaluation by students. Therefore, the content and design of SQCTs should be reviewed by the Office of the AVP EDI to make students aware of existing biases. Alternatively, the university may wish to revamp the SQCT so that questions with inherent biases are developed to reduce bias in responses from students. Hence, the university should investigate and promote best practices in the design and implementation of evaluation tools for faculty to receive ongoing feedback. By doing so, the benefits of feedback such as continued

32 Michelle Falkof. "Why We Must Stop Relying on Student Ratings of Teaching". *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2018.



pedagogical growth will be retained but reworked practices will hopefully mitigate concerns about facets outside of the instructors' control such as personal attributes, course content, or program-specific issues.

Multiple perspectives are beneficial in assessing teaching quality – to yield more accurate, consistent, and well-rounded assessments.³³ Student feedback, combined with self-evaluation and peer evaluation metrics, allow for a more holistic teaching evaluation. Specifically, including multiple perspectives in assessing teaching quality increases the likelihood of determining whether student concerns are influenced by bias, although it is not completely foolproof to prejudices, stereotypes, and biases.³⁴ Furthermore, there is also merit in multiple iterations of feedback. Implementing a system of continuous feedback facilitates regular conversations around employee growth and development.³⁵ Actionable suggestions regularly occurring may help address issues which can become more impactful later on in the term. Currently, the SQCT is administered at the end of each course. Student evaluations of teaching should be performed more frequently – both informally (e.g., verbalized in the classroom) or formally (e.g., through SQCTs) – to allow for instructors to address any pertinent issues prior to the semester ending. Not only does this foster effective student growth but it provides instructors with the opportunity to engage in continuous improvement.

To conclude, the re-introduction of SQCT results being made accessible to students as well as a commitment to EDI-D in feedback practices will allow students the opportunity to make better-informed choices with respect to their learning, as well as ensure that existing biases are removed in evaluation. This will encourage instructors to create meaningful change or maintain current practices in their classrooms, which ultimately creates a better learning environment for students.

33 OUSA, “Teaching and Assessment Policy Paper,” OUSA, 2018, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/33/attachments/original/1542989064/Teaching_and_Assessment_document.pdf?1542989064.

34 Ibid.

35 Catherine Tansey, “What Is Continuous Feedback and What Are Its Benefits?,” Lattice, 2021, <https://lattice.com/library/what-is-continuous-feedback-and-what-are-its-benefits>.



Learning and Degree Outcomes:

Principle: Receiving clear communication related to the learning outcomes of a class can support a student's understanding of how to engage with the course content.

Principle: Graduates from Western should have built broad, transferable skills over the course of their degrees that can be applied in a variety of professional and academic contexts.

Concern: Students do not always receive clear communication about course outcomes for their classes.

Concern: Employers are increasingly hiring on the basis of skill set rather than just a degree. Students may not realize that their course experience is connected to certain professional competencies.

Recommendation: Instructors should develop and clearly communicate specific academic learning outcomes at the beginning of the semester for each class they teach.

Recommendation: The Western Degree Outcomes* of a course should be highlighted to students through the syllabus, verbally by the professor, and/or through online course and departmental resources.

Recommendation: WDOs should be reviewed by a panel of students, instructors, and alumni every eight years to see if students have accomplished these outcomes by the time they graduate from the university.

Recommendation: Western should develop a new WDO such that students develop EDI-D competencies over the course of their degree.

Recommendation: Western should develop a WDO such that students develop an understanding of environmental sustainability over the course of their degree.



Learning outcomes describe the knowledge or skills that students should acquire by the end of a particular assignment, class, course, or program. Effective learning outcomes will not solely focus on rote memory, but emphasize the application and integration of knowledge.³⁶ Without direction as to the outcomes of the course, it can be difficult for students to navigate lectures and assess how well they are learning the content. It is difficult for students to begin orienting themselves with the entire content of a course, without having some direction as to the main take-aways of a lecture.

Although critical, the presentation of the syllabus has been virtually ignored in research. Much of the current literature addresses what to include and exclude in the document, what students attend to in the syllabus, and the purpose of the syllabus.³⁷ However, current studies outline the presentational aspects of the syllabus can create a better understanding of the role this document plays in the classroom, as well as encouraging its effective use by students. Thus, it is important that instructors develop and clearly communicate specific academic learning outcomes at the beginning of the semester for each class they teach.

Importantly, learning outcomes provide students with clear context regarding why a particular concept is useful to master.³⁸ For example, fundamental employability skills including communication, information management, quantitative analysis, and problem solving are often covered in courses, yet not explicitly stated by instructors.³⁹ By informing students of the professional skills developed by their degrees, university educators better empower students to navigate the competitive labor market.

36 University of Toronto, “Developing Learning Outcomes,” Teaching - University of Toronto, 2022, <https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/course-design/developing-learning-outcomes/what-are-learning-outcomes/>.

37 Blair Thompson, “The Syllabus as a Communication Document: Constructing and Presenting the Syllabus”. Communication Education, 2006.

38 University of Toronto, “Developing Learning Outcomes,” Teaching - University of Toronto, 2022, <https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/course-design/developing-learning-outcomes/what-are-learning-outcomes/>.

39 The Conference Board of Canada, “Employability Skills,” The Conference Board of Canada, 2022, <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/edu/employability-skills.aspx>.



Recognizing the importance of professional skills development, in May 2016 Western Senate released a list of “Western Degree Outcomes (WDOs),” learning competencies that all Western students should have upon graduation.⁴⁰ These competencies are based upon the University Undergraduate Degree-Level Expectations framework proposed by the Council of Ontario Universities⁴¹ and include:

- Knowledge
- Literacies and interdisciplinarity
- Communication
- Resilience and life-long learning
- Global and community engagement
- Critical inquiry + adaptive thinking
- Professionalism and ethical conduct

The WDOs align closely with recent research on the values desired by Canadian employers with traits such as speaking, critical thinking, and reading comprehension all being highly sought.⁴²

To the extent reasonably possible, students should be informed of the connections between their courses and these fundamental skills. Course syllabi should list the main Western Degree Outcomes targeted by a course. For instance, the Medical Sciences Honors Thesis course syllabus could explicitly note that participating in research builds resilience, lifelong learning, and often requires interdisciplinarity since one project can span multiple scientific disciplines.⁴³ Additionally, departments could encourage professors to orally elaborate on the broad professional skills

40 Western University, “Western Degree Outcomes,” Western University, 2022, <https://teaching.uwo.ca/curriculum/wdo.html>.

41 Ryerson University, “Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV) Guidelines for University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations,” Ryerson University, 2007, <https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/curriculumquality/University-Undergraduate-Degree-Level-Expectations.pdf>.

42 Royal Bank of Canada, “Humans Wanted: How Canadian youth can thrive in the age of disruption,” Royal Bank of Canada, 2018, <https://www.rbc.com/dms/enterprise/futurelaunch/humans-wanted-how-canadian-youth-can-thrive-in-the-age-of-disruption.html>.

43 Western University, “Western Degree Outcomes,” Western University, 2022, <https://teaching.uwo.ca/curriculum/wdo.html>.



developed by course material and assignments.⁴⁴ Wherever possible, these verbal articulations of competencies should link specific components of the course to specific competencies (e.g. a group presentation fosters communication skills) rather than generally outlining traits honed by the course.⁴⁵ Specificity allows students to better understand how these competencies are developed by the course, and empowers students to more tangibly convey how their education developed professional skills to prospective employers.⁴⁶ Finally, professors could encourage students to reflect on and document the learning outcomes they develop during a course.⁴⁷ Research has indicated that student-documented evidence of competencies is most convincing to potential employers, indicating that this method of competency articulation may be the “gold standard” to strive for.⁴⁸

As mentioned above, the WDOs have been in effect since 2016; however, the outcomes have not since undergone a review. Although these outcomes cover fundamental skills conducive to a successful skill set in the workplace, the labour landscape is always changing. Therefore, it is important to review WDOs to see if students have accomplished these outcomes by the time they graduate from university and if they can effectively employ them in the workplace. A cyclical program review takes place every eight years; thus, it makes sense to commit to the same level of quality assurance for the WDOs in order to ensure that they remain appropriate and relevant. It is also worth noting that both EDI-D and sustainability principles are of utmost importance to Western; as outlined in “Towards Western at 150: Western University Strategic Plan,” Western is committed to creating and funding an EDI-D Strategic Plan for Western and creating more opportunities for the university to engage in sustainability practices.⁴⁹ With supervision and input from the Associate

44 University Students’ Council, “Teaching Quality Policy Paper,” University Students’ Council, 2015, <http://westernusc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/USC-Teaching-Quality-Policy-Paper.pdf>.

45 Ibid.

46 American Council on Education, “Communicating the Value of Competencies,” American Council on Education, 2016, <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Communicating-the-Value-of-Competencies.pdf>.

47 University Students’ Council, “Teaching Quality Policy Paper,” University Students’ Council, 2015, <http://westernusc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/USC-Teaching-Quality-Policy-Paper.pdf>.

48 The Conference Board of Canada, “Employability Skills,” The Conference Board of Canada, 2022, <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/edu/employability-skills.aspx>.

49 Western University, “Towards Western at 150 – Western University Strategic Plan,” Western University Strategic Planning 2020-2021, 2021, <https://president.uwo.ca/strategicplan2021/pdf/Western-Strategic-Report.pdf>.



Vice-President EDI, Western should develop a new WDO such that students develop EDI-D competencies over the course of their degree – allowing students to gain an appreciation and understanding of EDI practices and lenses. Additionally, a WDO dedicated to environmental sustainability should be implemented, helping foster Western’s goal of embracing its responsibility to create global and local stewards of the natural environment.

A strong understanding of the WDOs associated with their course work would allow students to identify and articulate the outcomes of their education, both in employment settings and in terms of framing their learning over the course of their program. Further, WDOs are a compelling option for embedding EDI-D work and sustainability across campus, and for demonstrating applicability to students in a variety of settings.



Inclusive Practices:

Principle: Instructors should be equipped with the tools and training to ensure inclusive and safe learning spaces.

Principle: The Centre for Teaching and Learning at Western University should facilitate accessible training for faculty to enhance their teaching style and practices.

Principle: Students should be equipped with the knowledge and skills to create a more just and equitable society.

Concern: Students are currently provided with a highly Eurocentric curriculum, which limits their ability to make informed and meaningful decisions about how to engage with their community.

Concern: Though the Centre for Teaching and Learning does offer professional development related to EDI-D principles, these modules and opportunities are difficult to find on the CTL website.

Concern: Instructors in post-secondary education are not required to complete equity, diversity and inclusion training.

Concern: Instructors may lack accurate information on how to effectively support equity-deserving students.

Recommendation: Western University should work with the Office of the AVP EDI to enhance existing training modules and develop EDI-D training for faculty and staff.

Recommendation: The Centre for Teaching and Learning should re-organize their website such that EDI-D training modules are easier to navigate.



Recommendation: The Centre for Teaching and Learning should introduce a Scholar’s Grant Program for EDI-D.

Recommendation: Western should ensure that a variety of ways of knowing and being are taught throughout each program, and avoid reliance on historical Eurocentric paradigms and knowledge dissemination.

For students to fully prosper in their learning environment, inclusive learning practices must be employed by instructors. Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy defines inclusive education as education that strives to ensure that all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted.⁵⁰ This is fostered not only through positive professor-student interactions in the classroom, but in areas such as curricular development, the physical spaces in which students learn, and the broader learning environment.⁵¹ Although Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy is aimed specifically at K-12 education, the recommendations in this paper with respect to inclusive education are a natural extension of this work that builds on students’ existing knowledge and experiences. It is important for post-secondary institutions to address and take action to mitigate barriers related to inclusive learning environments. Currently, instructors in post-secondary education are not required to complete equity, diversity and inclusion training. As a result, instructors may lack accurate information on how to effectively support equity-deserving students via inclusive education strategies.

Western’s Human Rights office offers 9 EDI-D online training modules which are not mandatory but can be accessed by all staff. Although there is merit in EDI-D training modules, current modules are not the most effective in disseminating pertinent information for the wellness of the Western community. These training modules are not specific to the campus culture at Western and do not address the unique needs of Western students. For an enduring impact, training must be clear to

50 Government of Ontario, “Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy,” 2022, <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equityquickfacts.pdf>.

51 Ibid.



communicate desired learning outcomes, how outcomes are in alignment with the mission or core values of the organization, and how learned skills are expected to be demonstrated in the organization.⁵² Therefore, Western University should work with the Office of the AVP EDI to enhance existing training modules and develop EDI-D training for faculty and staff.

Additionally, the CTL at Western does offer some opportunities for EDI-D improvement, however after a quick search on the website, USC representatives were only able to locate one offered synchronously online which may be difficult to attend for instructors with a busy schedule.⁵³ Instructors should be easily able to locate these modules and opportunities on the CTL website which may warrant reorganization of their website such that EDI-D training modules are easier to navigate.

Decolonization is an important part of building a more equitable campus that better supports students and creating a nurturing space for Indigenous students.⁵⁴ Decolonizing academics is described as “the process in which we rethink, reframe and reconstruct the curricula and research that preserve the Europe-centred, colonial lens.”⁵⁵ Curriculum documents outline the plan for study for a course throughout the academic year; however, they also perpetuate the knowledge, education styles and values of white settlers through the “hidden curriculum.”⁵⁶ The “hidden curriculum” is the unwritten and implicit lessons of the course that can be intrinsically biased that work to convey messages that embody western values. These implicit biases reinforce and perpetuate negative stereotypes, practices, and processes of knowledge production.⁵⁷ This creates an unwelcome and alienating space for

52 EDI Mindfulness Consulting, “Why Diversity and Inclusion Training is Limited at Best Without a Strategic Equity Plan,” EDI Mindfulness Consulting, 2022, <https://www.edimindfulness.com/why-diversity-and-inclusion-training-is-limited-at-best-without-a-strategic-equity-plan/>

53 Western University, “Teaching, Western University, 2022, <https://teaching.uwo.ca/>

54 University Students’ Council, “Racial and Religious Students’ Policy Paper,” University Students’ Council, 2021, <http://westernusc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/USC-Racial-and-Religious-Students-Policy-Paper.pdf>.

55 Ibid.

56 University Students’ Council, “Racial and Religious Students’ Policy Paper,” University Students’ Council, 2021, <http://westernusc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/USC-Racial-and-Religious-Students-Policy-Paper.pdf>.

57 Ibid.



Indigenous students, and leaves non-Indigenous students with at best an incomplete understanding of their field of study and at worst a perspective that upholds systemic inequity.

In order to do this work, Western should work with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the Office of the AVP EDI-D to ensure curricula reflect principles of EDI-D in the classroom.⁵⁸ At the University of British Columbia, the Equity Enhancement Fund was created as a scholarly grant for faculty and staff to provide financial support to create more community-based initiatives that prioritize the values of EDI-D.⁵⁹ Faculty and staff at UBC can apply for funds to help create more diverse curricula and dialogue within the education setting.⁶⁰ A similar program at Western would similarly incentivize faculty and staff to integrate EDI-D principles into classroom spaces and diversify curricula. This would help Western to ensure that a variety of ways of knowing and being are taught, and avoid reliance on historical Eurocentric paradigms and knowledge dissemination. In addition, to help encourage faculty to make these changes.⁶¹ Western should hire a staff member in the Office of the AVP EDI-D to support departments in this work.⁶²

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.



Pedagogy:

Principle: Instructors and teaching assistants should have the opportunity to be engaged in ongoing pedagogical development.

Principle: Teaching excellence should be evaluated, framed, and recognized in a similar style to research excellence in post-secondary environments.

Concern: Not all faculty and graduate TAs are provided with formal teaching training, leading to difficulties in developing effective teaching methods.

Concern: There are currently incentives for faculty to further achieve research excellence in their fields, but there is no equivalent method to incentivize the pedagogical side of post-secondary education in Ontario.

Concern: Current post-secondary academic structures favor traditional, lecture-style learning environments that do not provide as effective opportunities for deep learning and experiential learning within a student's academic community.

Concern: Sessional instructors often work in precarious conditions, are underpaid, and are under-recognized for their contributions.

Recommendation: Teaching quality should be more heavily weighed as part of instructors' tenure applications.

Recommendation: Demonstrated commitment to ongoing pedagogical development should be assessed as part of tenure applications.

Recommendation: Western should reduce its reliance on sessional instructors by increasing available tenure track positions.

Recommendation: Western should support ongoing learning opportunities for faculty through increasing funding to the Center for Teaching and Learning, with an emphasis on innovation in pedagogy.

Recommendation: Centre for Teaching and Learning awards for teaching excellence should be recognized in Draft My Schedule so that students are aware of opportunities to study with instructors who have demonstrated a commitment to pedagogy.

Current post-secondary academic structures favor traditional, lecture-style learning environments that do not provide as effective opportunities for deep learning and experiential learning within a student’s academic community.⁶³ The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) defines deep learning as “a motivation to seek meaning, understand underlying principles and identify relationships between ideas or concepts”.⁶⁴ Engaging in active participation allows for deep learning to take place, which helps students apply concepts in a way that should result in a greater likelihood of success in the workforce.

Pedagogy in post-secondary institutions shapes the way that students learn about the world. What instructors do and how they do it is critically important and has a profound impact on the quality of the educational experience for students.⁶⁵ Many tenured instructors have remained in education for a number of years, and their philosophies and views may not evolve as quickly as the overall changing academic climate.⁶⁶ Not all faculty and graduate TAs are provided with formal teaching training, leading to difficulties in developing effective teaching methods. In order to

63 Aleszu Bajak, “Lectures aren’t just boring, they’re ineffective too, study finds,” Science, 2014, <https://www.science.org/content/article/lectures-arent-just-boring-theyre-ineffective-too-study-finds>.

64 Lenton, R. et al., “Community Service Learning and Community-Based Learning as Approaches to Enhancing University Service Learning,” Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2014.

65 Entz S, “Why Pedagogy Matters: The Importance of Teaching In A Standards-Based Environment,” Forum on Public Policy, 2006.

66 Diamond R, “Why Colleges Are So Hard to Change,” Inside Higher Ed, 2006, <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2006/09/08/why-colleges-are-so-hard-change>.



better support faculty and graduate teaching assistants with the support required to make evidence based decisions regarding pedagogy and assessment.

Sessional instructors are contributing members to the education system at any post-secondary institution where they are employed. They provide evidence-based, relevant education material to institutions; however, they often work in precarious conditions and are underpaid for their workloads.⁶⁷ It is likely that sessional instructors may not be able to dedicate a significant amount of time to participate in professional development opportunities, such as attending workshops. Thus, any existing barriers faced by sessional instructors should be investigated, to allow for institutions to provide additional, flexible, and accessible training opportunities for sessional instructors. In addition to this, there are many literature-informed disadvantages to employing part-time faculty. Arguments are made regarding the notion that part-time faculty roles are unclear, thus adjunct faculty experience considerable role ambiguity.⁶⁸ This role ambiguity makes these individuals vulnerable to exploitation, as their listed duties are not as clear-cut as tenure track positions.⁶⁹ Sessional instructors also have no guarantee of continuity employment which may lead to frustration. Furthermore, pedagogical development, like any development, improves with time, thus limited term appointments do not foster ongoing commitment to growth at Western, contributing to its academic landscape. Therefore, Western should reduce its reliance on sessional instructors by increasing available tenure track positions.

However, it is not just sessional instructors who should demonstrate a career-long commitment to advancing pedagogy in their respective fields, this principle should apply to all postsecondary faculty and graduate teaching assistants. Students believe that the provincial government should support ongoing learning opportunities for all postsecondary faculty and graduate teaching assistants through envelope

67 CAUT, “Experiences of the Contract Academic Staff,” CAUT, 2018, https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/cas_report.pdf.

68 Grace Banachowski, “Advantages and Disadvantages of Employing Part-Time Faculty in Community Colleges,” ERIC Digest, 1997.

69 Ibid.



funding for university Teaching Centres with an emphasis on innovation in pedagogy.⁷⁰ Thus, Western itself should support ongoing a continuous commitment to pedagogical excellence and innovation through increasing funding to the Center for Teaching and Learning.

At Western, there are few standards set for teaching excellence, as well as little incentive to achieve this. Teaching excellence should be framed and adapted in a similar way to research excellence among postsecondary faculty, where Canada Research Chair holders receive grants to further achieve research excellence in their respective fields.⁷¹ Currently, the criteria used to decide promotion tenure and continuing status is a sufficiently strong record of performance in teaching, research, and service with a breakdown of 40/40/20 being the norm.⁷² Research identifies teaching quality as the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement.⁷³ In fact, several studies argue that teacher quality is so important that it can explain away the achievement gap that disfavors minority and low-income students.⁷⁴ Therefore, it is well supported that teaching quality is valuable in academic achievement. This, and the fact that Western is ranked among the top 1% of higher education institutions worldwide displays the importance of academic excellence at the institution.⁷⁵ Therefore, teaching quality should be more heavily what is considered for deciding promotion tenure and continuing status to exemplify its importance.

Since the removal of USC teaching awards on Draft my Schedule, students have been unable to see which professors are highly acclaimed at the University, with

70 OUSA, “Teaching and Assessment Policy Paper,” OUSA, 2018, https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/33/attachments/original/1542989064/Teaching_and_Assessment_document.pdf?1542989064.

71 Ibid.

72 Western University, “Promotion Tenure and Continuing Status Information Session,” Western University, 2020, <https://www.uwo.ca/facultyrelations/pdf/promotion/December-2020-Promotion-Tenure-and-Continuing-Status-information-session.pdf>

73 Jennifer King Rice, “Teacher Quality,” Economic Policy Institute, 2003.

74 McGill University, “Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A Multilevel Analysis of Teacher Credentialization and Student Test Scores in California High Schools,” McGill Sociological Review, 2015.

75 Western University, “Who We Are,” Western University, 2022, <https://www.uwo.ca/about/whoweare/facts.html>.



respect to their pedagogy. To fill this gap, the Centre for Teaching and Learning awards for teaching excellence should be recognized in Draft My Schedule so that students are aware of opportunities to study with instructors who have demonstrated a commitment to pedagogy. This will not only provide students with valuable information on classes that they wish to enroll in, but provide instructors with an incentive to get recognized for their achievements in teaching – accomplishing the overall goal of innovation in pedagogy at Western.

While current post-secondary academic structures favor traditional, lecture-style learning environments that do not provide as effective opportunities for deep learning and experiential learning within a student’s academic community, implementing the above recommendations could go a long way to achieving the kind of deep, applied learning that students are seeking Western should support ongoing learning opportunities for faculty through increasing funding to the Center for Teaching and Learning, with an emphasis on innovation in pedagogy. These opportunities would ensure that members of instructional teams are formally trained and effective and up-to-date in their teaching methods.



OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES:

Principle: Access to educational materials for classes should be affordable and accessible to students.

Principle: Open educational resources are effective alternatives to traditional, costly learning materials, providing high-quality educational content without financial burden.

Concern: Textbook and learning material costs can present substantial barriers for students and hinder the accessibility of education.

Concern: Though Western’s Task Force on Open Educational Resources developed a report of recommendation in 2018, Western has not substantially engaged with them.

Concern: Limitations in the funding and scope of existing campus services with expertise in open educational resources impede the incorporation of these free resources into course curricula.

Concern: Lack of awareness with respect to the scope of OERs hinders instructors’ abilities to incorporate OERs within their courses.

Recommendation: Through a partnership with the eLearning Technology Team, Instructional Technology Resource Center, and Western Libraries, Western should provide the financial and personnel resources to inform faculty of open educational resource opportunities and connect interested faculty with relevant resources and programming,

Recommendation: The Vice-Provost Academic Programs at Western University should prioritize the implementation of the recommendations in the June 2018 “Open Education at Western University Recommendations Report.”



Recommendation: Western University should deliver messaging to instructors communicating the availability of the Instructor Open Educational Resources Grant and Support program and encourage instructors to apply to this fund.

As textbook costs drastically outpace the rate of inflation, students and faculty are seeking affordable and accessible alternatives to traditional course materials.⁷⁶ Textbook costs can seem like an unavoidable barrier for student excellence in learning, as these are usually mandatory for learning and assessment. In a 2017 survey, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance found that Western University students spent an average of \$628 on textbooks and course packs per year.⁷⁷ Students may find themselves avoiding certain courses as a result of the financial burden that comes with purchasing textbooks or other course materials.⁷⁸ Research conducted on post-secondary education in British Columbia found that while more than four out of five students with textbook expenses below \$200 per semester bought all recommended and required learning material, less than half of students with textbook expenses of greater than \$800 per semester bought all learning materials.⁷⁹

Open Educational Resources (OERs) are learning materials that have been open-sourced through creative commons licensing and can be freely distributed to students.⁸⁰ OERs have the potential to shift universities towards a more equitable approach to higher education. For example, OERs reduce student costs, democratize access to course materials, improve accessibility for those with perceptual disabilities, allow for the customization of course content, and facilitate open teaching

76 Western University, “Open Educational Resources,” Western University, 2022, <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/scholarship/oer.html>.

77 University Students’ Council, “Teaching Quality Policy Paper,” University Students’ Council, 2015, <http://westernusc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/USC-Teaching-Quality-Policy-Paper.pdf>.

78 Jhangiani R & Jhangiana S, “Investigating the Perceptions, Use, and Impact of Open Textbooks: A survey of Post-Secondary Students in British Columbia,” *International Review of Research*, 2017.

79 Jhangiani R & Jhangiana S, “Investigating the Perceptions, Use, and Impact of Open Textbooks: A survey of Post-Secondary Students in British Columbia,” *International Review of Research*, 2017.

80 eCampus Ontario, “Tap into a World of Open Knowledge: Open Textbook Library,” eCampus Ontario, 2022, <https://www.ecampusontario.ca/open-education-resources/>.



and improved learning outcomes.⁸¹ Western has already taken productive steps to connect students to OERs. Western’s eLearning Technology team (ETC) and Instructional Technology Resource Centre (ITRC) provide information on open textbooks and support technologically-integrated, accessible learning.⁸² The ITRC has produced digital course resources such as ‘Atlas of Nerves,’ an online module covering anatomy relevant for anesthesiology courses, and a digital SlideBox, a repertoire of course-related images for a histology course.⁸³

Western has existing research in the realm of open education, and findings were disseminated in the “Open Education at Western University Recommendations Report” from June 2018. Through community consultation, interviews, focus groups, and surveys, the Western University Open Education Working Group composed of faculty, stakeholders, and students has attempted to capture campus activity and attitudes towards Open Education.⁸⁴ There are a number of recommendations made in this report, and the Vice-Provost Academic Programs should prioritize implementing these as soon as possible. In prioritizing implementation, the focus should be on ensuring that “the University institute OER Course Markings in the course calendar to indicate courses which are using open or no-cost resources, as well as courses using low-cost resources, such as custom course packs, in order to highlight the range of courses offered on campus, and allow students to exercise choice by opting for courses that make provision for accessible and affordable course materials.”⁸⁵ Transparency related to the cost of learning materials has been shown to be linked to a positive impact on waitlist size and mean GPA.⁸⁶ In addition to communicating these options to students, Western University should deliver messaging

81 Western University, “Open Educational Resources,” Western University, 2022, <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/scholarship/oer.html>.

82 eLearning Technology Team, “About Us,” eLearning Technology Team, 2018; TeachOnline, “Supporting Technology Integration – The Instructional Technology Resource Centre at Western University,” TeachOnline, 2013.

83 University Students’ Council, “Teaching Quality Policy Paper,” University Students’ Council, 2015, <http://westernusc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/USC-Teaching-Quality-Policy-Paper.pdf>.

84 Western University Open Education Working Group, “Open Education at Western University,” Western University, 2018.

85 Ibid.

86 University Students’ Council, “Teaching Quality Policy Paper,” University Students’ Council, 2015, <http://westernusc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/USC-Teaching-Quality-Policy-Paper.pdf>.



to instructors communicating the availability of the Instructor Open Educational Resources Grant and Support program and encourage instructors to apply to this fund. This fund offers instructor funding and in-kind support to integrate OERs into teaching, with \$25 000 available across three categories: creation, adaptation, or adoption.⁸⁷

These recommendations, compounded with the support from the ITRC, ETC, and Western Libraries, displays the enthusiasm and potential that Western has to take action on these recommendations. Students have not seen this come to fruition at a volume where the majority of professors are engaging in open access practices. Through a partnership with the ETC , ITRC, and Western Libraries, Western should provide the financial and personnel resources to inform faculty of open educational resource opportunities and connect interested faculty with relevant resources and programming. This would allow for textbook and in-course material fees to stay low, so students need not worry about the financial burden of purchasing resources to fully engage in class. It also provides instructors with an opportunity to innovate within their own courses, as well as personalize materials that could lead to better pedagogical outcomes.

87 Western University, “Open Educational Resources Grant and Support Program,” Western University, 2022, <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/scholarship/oersupport.html#:~:text=The%20OER%20Grant%20and%20Support,-Knowledge%20Exchange%20and%20Impact%20Team>.



HIGH-IMPACT TEACHING PRACTICES:

General Recommendations:

Principle: Western University should provide high quality, creative online and blended learning opportunities to students.

Principle: Students should have reasonably convenient access to academic support resources that help them understand course content.

Principle: High impact learning strategies create opportunities for students to learn in a variety of ways, including experiential learning.

Concern: Only an environmental scan, rather than the collection of data or consultation with the Western community, was conducted to identify best practices for technological infrastructure and resources as per the Provost's Task Force for On-line Education Final Report.

Concern: Students are more focused on memorization and than on learning and applying key content with respect to assessment.

Recommendation: Western University should support faculty by creating a set of best practices for teaching in online settings.

Recommendation: The new Office of the Vice Provost Students should develop a strategy to communicate the resources available to students within that portfolio.

Recommendation: The university is encouraged to train student leaders in effective teaching, thus fostering personal development for the leader and better outcomes for the students being taught.



Recommendation: Professors are encouraged to incorporate service-learning, learning communities, research, internships, study abroad, or capstone projects into their courses.

Recommendation: Assessments should be developed with instructor and student feedback in mind gathered via Western-wide surveys, with respect to type of assessment.

Currently, there is no documented set of best practices for online education within the University. Only an environmental scan, rather than the collection of data or consultation with the Western community, was conducted to identify best practices for technological infrastructure and resources as per the Provost’s Task Force for Online Education Final Report.⁸⁸ Notably, Western identified that support and effective course design within the online classroom are significant influencers on student engagement, and online learners require a variety of structures that mirror the services and programs available to on-campus students such as academic and learning support.⁸⁹ Students should have reasonably convenient access to academic support resources that help them understand course content. Western proposes that one option, specific to an online setting, is to centralize support within an online learner support team that is responsible only for online learners.⁹⁰ Also, the 2013 Provost’s Task Force on eLearning stated that “eLearning at Western must be known for its student-centered pedagogical practices, its focus on deep and active learning and its commitment to quality and outstanding academic standards.”⁹¹ This approach to learning not only provides engaging experiences for online learning, it will attract students that want to have more autonomy in their learning, noting that the jobs foster a higher level of thinking, rather than regurgitation and memory which is often tested in post-secondary courses.⁹² With the amount of data readily

88 Western University, “Report of the Provost’s Task Force for Online Education,” Western University, 2013.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.

91 Western University, “E-Learning Task Force Report to the Provost,” Western University, 2013, https://provost.uwo.ca/pdf/INSIDE_E-Learning_REPORT-may2013-v4.pdf.

92 Pisarik CT, Rowell PC, & Thompson LK, “A phenomenological study of career anxiety among college stu-



available and a realized understanding of the importance of online education, Western should support faculty by creating a set of best practices for teaching in online settings.

Additionally, centralized support, if generalized to all learners, will benefit students in providing one space for students to access academic resources. An organized toolkit of resources such as this will likely make it easier to disseminate information to students in a streamlined manner. With that in mind, the new Office of the Vice Provost Students should develop a strategy to communicate the resources available to students within that portfolio. This will avoid the confusion and time associated with looking for resources that are pertinent to specific academic situations, thus ensuring that the appropriate existing resources are being used effectively

HIPs are specific teaching practices that tend to have a higher impact than others, allowing students to learn in a variety of ways. HIPs help students engage in meaningful learning, with approaches that foster retention, integration, and knowledge translation at higher rates, thus leading to students earning higher grades.⁹³ There are a total of eleven HIPs that have been identified by scholars in the field that are recognized by Western, stated below⁹⁴:

- First-Year Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

dents,” The Career Development Quarterly, 2017.

93 University of Waterloo, “High Impact Practices (HIPs) or Engaged Learning Practices,” Centre for Teaching Excellence - University of Waterloo, 2022, <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/support/integrative-learning/high-impact-practices-hips-or-engaged-learning-practices>.

94 Ibid.



- Internships
- Capstone Courses and Projects
- ePortfolios

An example of a HIP often used is a learning community.⁹⁵ Learning communities are “linked courses or educational cohorts that promote personal connection through shared intellectual experiences, engagement and knowledge integration through collaborative learning, and student-faculty interaction inside and outside the classroom”.⁹⁶ An effective method of conceptualizing learning communities is via using them as a strategy for leadership education practice is peer tutoring.⁹⁷ Peer tutoring (PT) is also an effective mechanism that fosters student success. Students commonly require academic support to properly understand course content.⁹⁸ Traditional mechanisms of offering support such as holding professor office hours or informal answering of student questions after class are beneficial, but in some cases may be insufficient by themselves to adequately support students.⁹⁹ PT is generally well-received by students, with one study finding that tutees agreed that tutoring improved their understanding of course material, helped them do better on assignments, and increased their confidence.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, research has found that receiving peer-tutoring is associated with substantial course grade improvement and viewed positively by faculty.¹⁰¹ As Western already has a plethora of PT services, such as the Peer Academic Learning Centre, there is no need for an increase in quantity, however possibly quality. Not only can peer tutoring foster a more personalized learning experience which students are not likely to receive from attending regular

95 Ibid.

96 Priest KL & Paula AL, “Peer-led Learning Communities: Exploring Integrative High-Impact Educational Practices for Leadership Education,” *Journal of Leadership Education*, 2016.

97 Ibid.

98 University Students’ Council, “Teaching Quality Policy Paper,” University Students’ Council, 2015, <http://westernusc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/USC-Teaching-Quality-Policy-Paper.pdf>.

99 Ibid.

100 Colver M & Fry T, “Evidence to Support Peer Tutoring Programs at the Undergraduate Level,” *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 2015.

101 University Students’ Council, “Teaching Quality Policy Paper,” University Students’ Council, 2015, <http://westernusc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/USC-Teaching-Quality-Policy-Paper.pdf>.



class, yet it helps peer teachers gain confidence and sharpen their skills.¹⁰² Hence, the university is encouraged to train student leaders in effective teaching, thus fostering personal development for the leader and better outcomes for the students being taught.

Another example of a HIP is experiential learning, which encompasses service-learning, learning communities, research, internships, study abroad, or capstone projects.¹⁰³ Experiential learning gives students the opportunity to gain real work experience in a sector associated with the field they are studying. The value of experiential learning is recognized as being an aspect of the post-secondary experience that provides valuable skills development, career readiness, and career opportunities for students after they graduate.¹⁰⁴ This type of education gives students flexible and adaptable skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, teamwork and creativity, to help them thrive throughout their careers.¹⁰⁵ However, there continue to be limited opportunities for experiential learning, especially for activities like capstone projects, independent studies, and research.¹⁰⁶ Western's Strategic Plan commits to "offer every undergraduate intensive experiential learning opportunities".¹⁰⁷ In line with this, professors are encouraged to incorporate service-learning, learning communities, research, internships, study abroad, or capstone projects into their courses, following Western's commitment and positively impacting students' learning.

102 Fink S, "Benefits of Peer Teaching," SummerTech, 2020, <https://www.summertech.net/benefits-of-peer-teaching/>

103 University of Waterloo, "High Impact Practices (HIPs) or Engaged Learning Practices," Centre for Teaching Excellence - University of Waterloo, 2022, <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/support/integrative-learning/high-impact-practices-hips-or-engaged-learning-practices>.

104 Abington Friends School, "The Importance of Experiential Learning," Abington Friends School, 2021, "<https://www.abingtonfriends.net/blog/news/the-importance-of-experiential-learning/#:~:text=Experiential%20education%20teaches%20students%20to,and%20address%20their%20emotional%20needs>."

105 OUSA, "Teaching and Assessment Policy Paper," OUSA, 2018, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/33/attachments/original/1542989064/Teaching_and_Assessment_document.pdf?1542989064.

106 OUSA, "Teaching and Assessment Policy Paper," OUSA, 2018, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/33/attachments/original/1542989064/Teaching_and_Assessment_document.pdf?1542989064.

107 Western University, "Towards Western at 150 – Western University Strategic Plan," Western University Strategic Planning 2020-2021, 2021, <https://president.uwo.ca/strategicplan2021/pdf/Western-Strategic-Report.pdf>.



A notable characteristic of a high quality, high impact practice is providing frequent, timely, and constructive feedback to students.¹⁰⁸ Participatory learning is an example of this strategy in action, allowing students and instructors to provide feedback with respect to assessment. “Participatory assessment includes multiple levels of assessment; this approach aligns communal discourse to maximize individual understanding in order to indirectly increase aggregated achievement.”¹⁰⁹ In turn, this allows the curriculum to be “spreadable” so that students can adjust their knowledge to specific scenarios, allowing for knowledge translation across a plethora of fields.¹¹⁰ With literature supporting the perks of participatory assessment, Western should conduct a deep dive into student and instructor opinions with respect to what type of assessment allows students to exercise what they have learned at a high level. Therefore, the incorporation of HIPs into current pedagogy at Western will not only assist students in learning information, being positively associated with higher student engagement overall, increases in critical thinking, greater appreciation for diversity of experiences, and “deep approaches to learning”.¹¹¹

108 University of Waterloo, “High Impact Practices (HIPs) or Engaged Learning Practices,” Centre for Teaching Excellence - University of Waterloo, 2022, <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/support/integrative-learning/high-impact-practices-hips-or-engaged-learning-practices>.

109 Indiana University Learning Sciences, “What is the Participatory Learning and Assessment Network?,” Indiana University Learning Sciences, 2011, https://thecurrent.educatorinnovator.org/resource_section/what-is-the-participatory-learning-and-assessment-network

110 Ibid.

111 Jodi Tandet, “What High-Impact Practices Are and Why They Matter for Student Success,” Modern Campus, 2021, <https://sapro.moderncampus.com/blog/what-high-impact-practices-are-and-why-they-matter-for-student-success>



Tech Infrastructure and Resources:

Principle: Universal design for learning (UDL) takes into consideration the needs of students with different learning styles, exceptionalities, abilities, and neurodivergency in order to optimize teaching and learning practices that support all students.

Concern: Although many students have access to a laptop for school, there are cases in which students do not have access to all of the tech infrastructure needed to be successful in the course.

Concern: Western University has not effectively implemented universal design for learning.

Recommendation: Instructors should explicitly identify and incorporate principles of universal design into their courses.

Recommendation: Faculties should support instructors in incorporating elements of universal design for learning into their classrooms, courses, and teaching styles.

Recommendation: Instructors must caption any videos or recorded lecture content.

Recommendation: Instructors are encouraged to include all necessary personal technology devices necessary for the course in the syllabus, as well as support students who are unable to obtain such devices.

Recommendation: Faculties should budget for a grant program that students can apply to in order to support their access to personal technology needed to effectively engage with course material.

Universal design for learning (UDL) takes into consideration the needs of students with different learning styles, exceptionalities, abilities, and neurodivergency in



order to optimize teaching and learning practices that support all students.¹¹² The approach to teaching and learning outlined in theories of UDL provides flexibility in the ways that students interact with course material.

The three main principles of UDL are engagement, representation, and action. At present, representation is an area in which faculty could have the greatest impact on the quality of student learning.¹¹³ Audio descriptions, captions, subtitles, and transcripts align with the UDL guideline of providing multiple means of representation.¹¹⁴ Captions and transcripts benefit all users, including non-native speakers; viewers watching videos on low bandwidth or in noisy/quiet environments; and, students learning new terminology who can use the captions and transcripts to improve comprehension, information processing, and retention.¹¹⁵ In addition, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) states that by January 1, 2021, all internet websites and web content must conform with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 at Level AA, with success criteria including captions (live), and audio descriptions (pre-recorded).¹¹⁶ Therefore, the USC recommends that instructors caption any videos or recorded lecture content in order to be in accordance with the AODA principles.

Access to technology is a barrier for some students, and an important one to address, in order for students to be successful in a 21st-century education landscape. Although many students have access to a laptop for school, there are cases in which students do not have access to all of the tech infrastructure needed to be successful in the course, such as webcams and microphones. To help students make informed

112 Morin A, “What is Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?,” Understood, 2022, <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/universal-design-for-learning-what-it-is-and-how-it-works>.

113 Morin A, “What is Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?,” Understood, 2022, <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/universal-design-for-learning-what-it-is-and-how-it-works>.

114 University of Toronto, “Captions and Transcripts,” University of Toronto - Teaching Assistants’ Training Program, 2022, <https://tstp.utoronto.ca/teaching-toolkit/teaching-with-technology-teaching-online/captions-transcripts/>.

115 Ibid, 101.

116 Government of Ontario, “Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act,” Government of Ontario, 2005, <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r11191#BK15>.



decisions about course selection and budgets, instructors should include all personal technology devices necessary for the course in the syllabus, as well as support students who are unable to obtain such devices. This way, students could make arrangements in advance to obtain the technology, so as not to be missing out on certain components of the course once it begins. At the University of Regina, students are able to request a laptop to complete their courses for the semester.¹¹⁷ An arrangement like this or grant programs to help students in need purchase required technology will remove the socio-economic barriers associated with buying technology.

117 University of Regina, “Student Laptop Loan,” University of Regina, 2022, <https://www.uregina.ca/is/student/laptop-loan.html>.



ASSESSMENT

Principle: There should be a commonly accepted set of best practices for assessment at Western University.

Principle: Clear communication related to the assessment format of exams and midterms of a class at the beginning of the semester can support a student's understanding of how to engage with the course content.

Principle: Peer review is an important skill in academia and the workplace.

Principle: Remote proctoring poses equity, diversity, and inclusion concerns for students.

Principle: There are options for remote proctoring that mitigate harm to students while still providing reassurance to the administration and uphold the value of a Western degree.

Concern: Tests, quizzes, exams, and other assessments are often delivered in a linear manner.

Concern: Oftentimes, narrow assessment types do not fully gauge a student's knowledge of core concepts in the course.

Concern: Without guidance for how a student is being assessed, it can be difficult to approach writing an assessment.

Concern: Students have expressed concerns regarding proctoring software, such as Proctortrack.

Concern: Peer feedback is often not implemented into courses or students are graded based on peer feedback (mark calculation).

Concern: Peer feedback is variable and is not reliable as a means of summative assessment.

Recommendation: While useful, peer feedback should be used to inform students' idea generation and project development as formative assessment practices, rather than being used as summative assessment to determine a students' grade.

Recommendation: Instructors should deliver non-linear, rather than linear exams and assessments.

Recommendation: Instructors should use features that encourage academic integrity on multiple-choice tests, such as question pools, changing numbers in mathematical questions, and randomizing the order of questions.

Recommendation: Instructors should design exams and quizzes to be open-web and or open-book.

Recommendation: Instructors should offer more than one type of assessment during the school year; for example, a combination of essays, participation grades, forum posts, assignments, quizzes, tests, labs, and exams.

Recommendation: For each assessment students are expected to take, instructors should provide marking rubrics and clearly outline expectations in order to provide students with the context they need to approach the assessment.

Recommendation: Instructors should provide detailed feedback on assignments and tests to allow students to improve.



Differentiated evaluations and assessment styles allow students to demonstrate their knowledge of course content in a way which best suits them.¹¹⁸ Different assessment types vary from traditional multiple choice and short answer questions to research projects and presentations, with each evaluation being preferred by different students with different strengths.¹¹⁹ An over-reliance on traditional assessment types does not effectively prepare and measure the skills and knowledge students need to succeed after graduation.¹²⁰ Universal design philosophies work to eliminate educational barriers and reinforce inclusive, accessible teaching practices.¹²¹ Universal design concepts should be used to help faculty develop and implement assessment styles that benefit all students. Students require opportunities to stray away from traditional pencil and paper tests, as it limits them in the application of knowledge. The USC recommends that instructors offer more than one type of assessment during the school year; for example, a combination of essays, participation grades, forum posts, assignments, quizzes, tests, labs, and exams. If structures are put in place that allow students to articulate their knowledge in ways that suit them, it creates a culture of knowledge being more valuable, and actual testing methods being less important.¹²²

Furthermore, students should be assessed fairly and effective assessments should be communicated to students clearly. Clear communication related to the assessment format of exams and midterms of a class at the beginning of the semester can support a student's understanding of how to engage with the course content.¹²³ Without guidance for how a student is being assessed, it can be difficult to approach writing an assessment. Therefore, for each assessment students are expected to take, instructors should provide marking rubrics and clearly outline expectations in order to provide students with the context they need to approach the assessment.

118 University Students' Council, "COVID Recommended Course Adaptations," 2021.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.

121 Ibid.

122 Ibid.

123 Pronto, "Communication: A Key Element of Success in Higher Education," Pronto, 2022, <https://pronto.io/communication-key-element-student-success/>.



Providing constructive feedback to individual students and encouraging them to engage in and reflect upon the learning process, leads to positive learning outcomes and achieves great results.¹²⁴ How the feedback is given matters more than how much feedback is given. Peer feedback is an important skill in academia and the workplace. Individuals benefit from peer feedback in that they are able to teach others about the tasks and provide feedback that they would consider relevant, as well as providing an additional lens.¹²⁵ It helps students develop lifelong skills in assessing and providing feedback to others, and also equips them with skills to self-assess and improve their own work.¹²⁶ However, peer feedback is often not implemented into courses, or if it is, students are graded based on peer feedback (mark calculation). However, peer feedback is variable and is not reliable as a means of summative assessment. While unique lenses on work can be of merit, no two individuals will likely have the exact same thoughts about a piece of work, especially one that completely reflects that of the instructor. Thus, instructors should also provide detailed, formative feedback on assignments and tests to allow students to improve. Combined, this peer and instructor feedback can have a positive impact on student learning and growth.

The introduction of remote proctoring software as a result of the pandemic has forced students to download invasive software to complete major assessments in which many modules rely on for degree progression. The USC has engaged with many students on this issue and, like many faculty members, strives to uphold the integrity of a Western degree through fair and honest assessments. In the “Student Perspectives on Teaching and Learning Practices” survey, respondents identified that they were uncomfortable using proctoring software.¹²⁷ Reasons for this included glitching, invasion of privacy, data breaches, wrongful accusations of cheating, and

124 University of South Carolina, “Importance of Providing Meaningful Student Feedback,” University of South Carolina, 2022, https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/cte/teaching_resources/grading_assessment_toolbox/providing_meaningful_student_feedback/index.php.

125 Alrubail R, “The Power of Peer Feedback.” Edutopia, 2015, <https://www.edutopia.org/discussion/power-peer-feedback>.

126 Cornell University, “Peer Assessment,” Cornell University, 2022, <https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/assessment-evaluation/peer-assessment>.

127 University Students’ Council, “Student Perspectives on Teaching and Learning Practices Survey Summary Report,” 2022.



the slowing down of computers.¹²⁸ Following the data breach and subsequent shut-down of ProctorTrack in the Fall 2021 term, instructors had to pivot to alternative assessments, demonstrating that these alternatives were not only possible, but a way for students to demonstrate their knowledge in a more meaningful way. The USC encourages professors to continue to shift in this direction- creating alternative assessments such as assignments, projects and reflections that allow students to apply their knowledge rather than an anxiety-inducing environment that involves the use of an invasive software. Instructors should use features that encourage academic integrity on multiple-choice tests, such as question pools, changing numbers in mathematical questions, and randomizing the order of questions.¹²⁹ This allows instructors the opportunity to design exams and quizzes to be open-web and or open-book, avoiding or mitigating the concerns that students have with proctoring softwares.

Finally, tests, quizzes, exams, and other assessments are often delivered in a linear manner, in order to reduce collaboration on exams. In the case of linear exams, the exam format has been chosen in order to help maintain test integrity and discourage cheating through unauthorized collaboration.¹³⁰ However, linear exams can be stressful because students have less control over how they navigate the exams, which can perpetuate testing anxiety, and violate principles of the universal design of assessment. The universal design of assessment emphasizes flexible approaches to instruction and content presentation, which make it easier for students to customize and adjust content to suit their individual learning needs.¹³¹ Specifically, individuals with ADHD often have difficulty with many aspects of executive functioning¹³², thus would benefit from the ability to go back and forth between questions.

128 Ibid.

129 University of Calgary, "Online Assessment in Higher Education," University of Calgary, 2019, <https://tayloringstitute.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/TI%20Guides/Online%20Assessment%20Guide-2019-10-24.pdf>.

130 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, "Linear Exams, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2022, <https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/linear-exams/>.

131 Judy Ableser & Christina Moore, "Universal Design for Learning and Digital Accessibility: Compatible Partners or a Conflicted Marriage," *Educause Review*, 2018, <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2018/9/universal-design-for-learning-and-digital-accessibility-compatible-partners-or-a-conflicted-marriage>.

132 Elizabeth Hayward, "The Relationship Between Executive Function and ADHD in Children," *Beyond Booksmart*, 2016, <https://www.beyondbooksmart.com/executive-functioning-strategies-blog/the-relationship-between-executive-function-and-adhd-in-children>.



In the “Student Perspectives on Teaching and Learning Practices” survey, 95% of respondents preferred linear to non-linear exams.¹³³ Therefore, in order to adhere to accessible learning principles, including a universal design of assessment, instructors should deliver non-linear, rather than linear exams and assessments. Creating more open-ended exams with little room for collaboration can achieve this, whilst keeping student anxiety under control and fostering a test-taking environment which is more conducive to student success.

133 University Students’ Council, “Student Perspectives on Teaching and Learning Practices Survey Summary Report,” 2022.



INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS (IQAP):

Principle: Academic programs should be regularly reviewed in order to ensure they are high quality.

Principle: Academic program reviews should be structured in such a way as to take into account the perspectives of students, staff, faculty, and alumni as part of the review process.

Concern: Students are not effectively engaged in the cyclical review process, and are thus unable to meaningfully impact the reviews.

Concern: the review process only occurs every seven years, which does not allow for sufficient responsiveness to changes in the external environment.

Concern: Typically the students who are engaged in cyclical review processes originate from a small group of student leaders.

Recommendation: Templates for reviewers to fill out should include a section for assessing student perspectives on a program.

Recommendation: As part of the requirements for what should be included in a self-study, departments should incorporate a survey of current students.

Recommendation: The program review process should include consultation with a minimum percentage of students enrolled in the program, and these consultations facilitate discussion.

Recommendation: The university should post the student reviewer opportunity on a centralized website so a variety of interested students have access to the opportunity. The program review cycle should include a variety of students who are engaged in diverse ways on campus so that diverse experiences of the program are represented throughout the process.



Recommendation: Western should continue the quality assurance academy, compensation for student reviewers, and the listing of the position on the co-curricular record.

Quality assurance of university academic programs has been adopted around the world and is widely recognized as a vital component of every viable educational system.¹³⁴ Currently, undergraduate and graduate programs at Western undergo curriculum review every seven years under the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP).¹³⁵

In Europe, students, including past student alumni have increasingly become involved in the improvement and enhancement of their own learning experiences and this is beneficial for multiple reasons.¹³⁶ Firstly, students are the ones who have the ability to see the situation from the perspective of a learner. Secondly, students are the largest stakeholder in higher education, putting both large amounts of time and money into attending university. Students should be seen as partners in the academic community, because they often have a balanced view of the aim of the academic institution; on the cultural, political and historical aspects of the academic community; on the institutions' role in society and on the future of the academic tradition. This insight combined with factors such as the influence of their age, their peer group, and the time they live in, means that students may bring a valuable perspective into the panel's work. Finally, it should be stressed that students need to be acknowledged as full committee members, as their unique perspective will trickle down for cohorts to come and is imperative in ensuring the success of a program from a student facing lens. Therefore, templates for reviewers to fill out with respect to quality assurance for a program should include a section for assessing student perspectives on a program.

134 Western University, "Cyclical Program Reviews," IQAP - Western University, 2022, https://www.uwo.ca/pvp/vpacademic/iqap/undergraduate_program/cyclical_program_reviews/review_committee.html.

135 Ibid.

136 ENQA, "Student involvement in the processes of quality assurance agencies," ENQA, 2006, <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/Student-involvement.pdf>.



The self-study is a reflective, analytical, self-critical, and evaluative internal review of a program's offerings, achievements, resources, and weaknesses.¹³⁷ Effective self-studies are: aimed at quality improvement and self-appraisal, an analysis of strengths and weaknesses, outlining how improvements can be made, and express degree level expectations and learning outcomes that drive admission requirements, curriculum content, modes of delivery, bases of evaluations of student performance and commitment of resources.¹³⁸ As mentioned previously, students should be seen as partners in the academic community, as a result of their unique perspectives from actively participating in the programs being audited. Therefore, the program review process should include consultation with a minimum percentage of students enrolled in the program, and these consultations should facilitate discussion.

According to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (OUCQA), student involvement is identified as a best practice for creating an effective self-study.¹³⁹ OUCQA encourages the use of data from a student survey, focus groups, or other mechanisms in the self-analysis.¹⁴⁰ The self-study should also include data from a number of graduated cohorts as well as current students.¹⁴¹ Therefore, as part of the requirements for what should be included in a self-study, departments should incorporate a survey of current students.

With respect to the recruitment process, it is important to include varied perspectives in the program review cycle. Currently the review committee for undergraduate program reviews is made up of two internal reviewers, two external consultants, and a student representative.¹⁴² The on-site review does take into consideration more parties such as librarians, more undergraduate students, Deans, Chairs, and

137 University of Windsor, "Quality Assurance Self Study," University of Windsor, 2022, <https://www.uwindsor.ca/qualityassurance/801/self-study>

138 Ibid.

139 OUCQA, "Creating an Effective Self Study," OUCQA, 2022, <https://oucqa.ca/guide/creating-an-effective-self-study/>

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid.

142 Western University, "Cyclical Program Reviews," IQAP - Western University, 2022, https://www.uwo.ca/pvp/vpacademic/iqap/undergraduate_program/cyclical_program_reviews/review_committee.html.



faculty members.¹⁴³ However, the incorporation of a few students during the on-site review does not adequately encompass the views of perhaps thousands of students who graduated from a specific program. Diversity reveals more of the whole system, so it increases the likelihood that actions will have desirable effects.¹⁴⁴ In order to obtain diverse perspectives, whole systems leaders need to encourage contributions from everyone and give voice to individuals and constituencies not in the room.¹⁴⁵ By pushing for several student perspectives, the feedback provided will likely be more beneficial for a wider cohort of upcoming students Western should post the student reviewer opportunity on a centralized website such as OWL or Western Connect so a variety of interested students have access to the opportunity. The program review cycle should include a variety of students who are engaged in diverse ways on campus so that diverse experiences of the program are represented throughout the process. Finally, for students to benefit directly from the participation in the IQAP process, Western should continue the quality assurance academy, provide compensation for student reviewers, and list the position on the co-curricular record. By incentivizing participation in this process, students will be more inclined to take part. This is vital because institutional quality assurance cannot function properly without honest consideration of student perspectives.¹⁴⁶

143 Ibid.

144 University of Minnesota, “Seeking Diverse Perspectives,” University of Minnesota, 2022, <https://www.csh.umn.edu/education/focus-areas/whole-systems-healing/leadership/seeking-diverse-perspectives>.

145 Ibid.

146 PEQAB. “Opportunities for Student Participation in Quality Assurance,” Government of Ontario, 2017, http://www.peqab.ca/Publications/MACS_StudentParticipationInQA_Oct27.pdf.





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