Original Approval Date: July 1, 2022
Most Recent Approval: July 1, 2022
Editorial Amendments: November 6, 2024

Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Policy

Office of Administrative Responsibility:	Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Office of Accountability:	Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Approving Authority:	The Governors of the University of Alberta General Faculties Council

Purpose

A university has at its heart two goals: the creation of knowledge and the dissemination and preservation of knowledge. **Researchers** who create knowledge through exploration and discovery represent, in its broadest sense, the learning component of university life. The dissemination, and preservation of that knowledge is the teaching component. Within a university, what is taught and how it is taught depends upon researchers, and the impact of their research depends upon its communication by **instructors**. This interdependence and integration of research and teaching is what distinguishes a university from other educational institutions. Although the balance between these activities may vary, all members of the university, whether researchers or **students**, are learners who extend the range of their knowledge through exploration and discovery.

As a research-intensive institution, the University of Alberta emphasizes the seamless relationship of research and teaching. More than simply recognizing that what we teach flows from the work of researchers, we are convinced that undergraduate and graduate curriculum development and delivery are best accomplished by dedicated instructors engaged in both teaching and research. We are committed to providing the best and most appropriate environments for student-instructor and student-student interactions.

Within this context, graduate students serve a multifaceted role during their studies: as students, instructors, researchers, mentors, and grant or scholarship holders. The need to strike an appropriate balance among their responsibilities gives graduate students a unique perspective in the university community, especially with respect to teaching.

At the University of Alberta, a wide range of disciplines is professed, various research models followed, and numerous types of teaching are required across its campuses. There is no one teaching model and

no one answer to serve all disciplines. Development of new teaching models should emphasize appropriate use, should be derived from within the discipline concerned, and the final arbiter should always be academic excellence.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the overarching principles that will apply to teaching and learning and to the evaluation of teaching and learning at the University.

Definitions

A definitions table is included in a subsequent section of this document.

Scope/Application

Compliance with this University policy extends to all Academic Staff and Colleagues and Support Staff as outlined and defined in the Recruitment Policy (Appendix A and Appendix B: Definitions and Categories) in addition to visiting speakers, professor emeriti, and undergraduate and graduate students.

Policy

1. FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING

    a. Expertise, Content and Outcomes - what students are expected to learn as well as the expertise that instructors require to facilitate this learning:

        i. the rigour, breadth and depth of content, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students are expected to learn during a **course** or learning situation; and,

        ii. the breadth and depth of an instructor's discipline and/or field of knowledge as well as pedagogical knowledge relevant to the subject matter.

    b. Course Design - constructive organization of course objectives, resources, assignments, and assessments:

        i. coherent design of instruction demonstrated through course objectives, syllabus, appropriate pace, and organization;

        ii. constructive assessment strategies demonstrated through the alignment of assessments with course objectives; and,

        iii. meaningful learning resources and materials that support learning relevant to course goals and are as cost-effective as possible.

    c. Instructional Practices - teaching preparation, methods, and approaches to facilitate learning:

        i. facilitation of course delivery demonstrated through instructor preparation, communication of expectations, and provision of feedback;

        ii. student-centered instruction and learning activities through the facilitation of instructor-student and student-student interactions;

iii. feedback, mentorship, and supervision practices demonstrated through the suitability and timeliness of feedback, helpful mentorship practices, and constructive student interactions; and,

iv. approaches to facilitating a productive and supportive climate for learning through the use of intentional strategies to create a respectful, equitable, diverse, and inclusive learning environment.

d. Learning Environment - physical and virtual support systems:

i. suitability of physical and virtual environments and use of education technology;

ii. availability of teaching assistants, accessibility accommodations, and other supports; and,

iii. scheduling of course meeting times and/or online module availability.

e. Reflection, Growth and Leadership:

i. the extent to which instructors reflect on and improve their own teaching;

ii. seeking of opportunities for development; and,

iii. contributing to the growth of the broader teaching community.

2. STUDENTS' CONTRIBUTIONS AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

a. To fully participate in and benefit from the teaching programs at the University, entering students are expected to arrive with a set of attitudes and skills that prepares them for academic study. These will expand and grow through participation in the University community. These attributes/skills include:

i. motivation to participate in an active learning community that challenges and stimulates intellectual, scholarly, personal, and interpersonal growth;

ii. a willingness to take a major responsibility for one's own learning;

iii. curiosity about the discipline of specialization and the integration of specialized knowledge with other disciplines and in society;

iv. tolerance and appreciation for diversity and multiple viewpoints;

v. a sense of responsibility and respect for self and other members of the University community;

vi. oral and written competency in English or French, mathematical and reasoning skills, competent use of appropriate information, and communication technologies; and,

vii. respect and adherence to the ethical standards of scholarship including abhorrence of plagiarism, false representation, and cheating.

b. The generic outcomes that should be expected from a program of study at the University are:

   i. critical thinking skills;

   ii. communication skills including oral, written, and group work skills;

   iii. the ability to learn independently;

   iv. an appreciation of potential biases and an understanding of stereotypes about particular identities and groups of people;

   v. the motivation and ability to use personal, creative, and entrepreneurial talents; and,

   vi. an informed understanding of, and a desire to participate in, the intellectual, cultural, social, and political life of local, national, and global communities.

c. Specialized outcomes that should be expected from a program of study at the University include:

   i. the ability to synthesize the core content in a disciplinary or professional field of study;

   ii. knowledge of some of the "big questions" in the field;

   iii. the skills to effectively find, synthesize and apply information in the relevant literature;

   iv. knowledge of and the ability to use the investigative and observational methods of the field;

   v. interest in and an excitement for some aspect of the specialized field of study; and,

   vi. understanding of the relevance and application of the specialized field of study to everyday life.

3. PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSE FOR THE EVALUATION OF TEACHING

a. The evaluation of teaching at the University will:

   i. reflect institutional priorities around teaching and learning;

   ii. be multifaceted and diverse;

   iii. be flexible enough to apply to diverse teaching contexts;

   iv. be fair, equitable, and transparent in the collection, use, and interpretation of data;

   v. allow for both summative and formative feedback on teaching; and,

   vi. provide meaningful data across disciplines to instructors, students, and administrators.

b. At the University, evaluation of teaching may serve several purposes:

   i. to provide formative data used by instructors to identify teaching strengths and weaknesses and, in doing so, giving guidance for the improvement or refinement of teaching skills and to improve the students' learning experience;

ii. to provide summative evaluation as a review and overview of an instructor's teaching that is an essential element in merit, promotion, and tenure decisions;

iii. to provide information on courses and teaching to students; and,

iv. to provide information for review of programs and curricula.

4. MULTIFACETED EVALUATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

a. Evidence to support a multifaceted approach to the evaluation of teaching will include feedback from students about their perspectives on their experience of teaching through surveys and commentary;

b. The evaluation of teaching will take into account factors such as:

i. size, scheduling and delivery mode of the class;

ii. the Faculty and program in which the course is developed;

iii. whether the course is within a program with accreditation requirements;

iv. whether the course is required versus optional in relation to the student's program;

v. whether the course is academically demanding; i.e. difficult and/or heavy content;

vi. whether the course includes laboratory, practicum and/or clinical contexts; and

vii. student GPA and grade expectations.

c. Factors, which are outside of an instructor's control and will not be considered in the evaluation of teaching include, but are not limited to:

i. age of both students and instructors; and,

ii. perceived race, gender, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and/or ethnicity of the instructor.

d. Further evidence to support a multi-faceted approach to the evaluation of teaching and learning may include, but is not limited to:

i. instructor self assessment, captured in a teaching dossier or portfolio;

ii. the use of available survey tools including, but not limited to, instructors assessing students, instructors assessing peers, instructors assessing themselves, and/or students assessing themselves;

iii. instructor development through courses/conferences, and scholarly and service activities;

iv. trained peer or expert assessment; and,

v. teaching awards and honours.

Definitions

Any definitions listed here apply to this policy document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use. For clarity, defined terms listed here include grammatical variations thereof.	
Course	Includes undergraduate and graduate courses, laboratory courses, non-degree courses, seminars, clinical supervision courses, and reading or directed study courses.
Instructors	Includes Academic Faculty, Faculty Service Officers, Librarians, Academic Teaching Staff and Excluded Academic Administrators. When their responsibilities include teaching, Instructors also include Academic Colleagues, Postdoctoral Fellows and Graduate Students.
Researchers	Includes all members of the University who are involved, directly or indirectly, to any extent whatsoever, in research and other scholarly and creative activities.
Students	All learners, including undergraduate and graduate students in full-time and part-time degree programs; students in open studies, fresh start program, transition year; international visiting and exchange and study abroad students; postgraduate medical/dental education students; and postdoctoral fellow (PDF) trainees.

Related Policy Documents (UAPPOL)

- Student Input to the Evaluation of Teaching and Learning Procedure
- Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Policy Appendix A: Student Perspectives of Teaching (SPOT) Survey
- Teaching Learning and Evaluation Policy Appendix B: Multifaceted Evaluation of Teaching and Learning

Related Links

- FGSR Adjunct Academic Appointment and Graduate Student Supervision Policy

For questions surrounding policy document interpretation or implementation, please contact the Office of Administrative Responsibility.

For the most recent version of this document.\please visit https://www.ualberta.ca/policies-procedures/index.html