

SUBJECT: Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning

MOTION:

That the Teaching and Learning Committee recommend that the General Faculties Council endorse the proposed eleven Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning as foundational principles to guide the assessment of student learning at UCalgary, in the form provided to the Committee.

PROPONENT(S)/PRESENTER(S)

Wendy Benoit, Interim Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning)
Natasha Kenny, Executive Director, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning
(Assessment Principles Group Co-chair)
Mark Bauer, Interim Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Science
(Assessment Principles Group Co-chair)
Adil Arshad, Educational Developer, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning
Robin Arseneault, Teaching and Learning Project Coordinator, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning

PURPOSE

The Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) is asked to recommend that the eleven **Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning** proceed to the General Faculties Council (GFC) for endorsement as foundational principles to guide the assessment of student learning at UCalgary. The principles are:

- a) Assessment meaningfully supports student learning and growth, is grounded in disciplinary context and highlights applicability and relevance.
- b) Assessment practices demonstrate alignment within the curriculum and modality of the course and program, progressively building upon and reflecting student learning, skills, and competencies throughout their academic journey.
- c) Assessment cultivates a shared and ethical space that respects written and oral traditions and honours diverse Indigenous cultural protocols, perspectives and knowledges.
- d) Assessments are designed to be fair, accessible, equitable and inclusive for diverse educators and learners, and provide multiple ways for students to engage with learning.
- e) Assessments actively engage students by offering multiple opportunities for practice; timely, clear, and meaningful feedback; and structured reflection on their learning to continuously improve and enhance future learning.
- f) Communications about assessments are transparent and designed to ensure clarity on the policies, purpose, tasks, grading standards, and criteria by which students will be assessed.
- g) Assessments consider the mental health and wellbeing of students and educators by recognizing the human and systemic contexts.
- h) Assessments uphold the values, principles, and practices of academic integrity.
- i) Educators and students use educational technologies ethically in assessment and feedback practices, and take proactive measures to mitigate barriers, adverse impacts, and biases.

- j) Assessments inform administrative and curricular processes, including quality assurance and alignment with professional accreditation standards, to continuously enhance educational quality and student success.
- k) The assessment ecosystem is sustainably supported by organizational policies, processes, resources, professional learning, and digital and physical infrastructure.

It is unlikely that any assessment practice, process, or policy will adhere to every one of the principles. These principles are meant to guide and influence meaningful reflection, dialogue and decision-making related to assessment practices across the university community, within the context of existing educational and governance processes. As the contexts of our teaching and learning environments become increasingly complex, these principles serve as a tool for continuous and incremental review, learning, growth, action, and transformation. They offer direction for the institution, faculties and individual educators to reflect upon and continuously improve assessment practices. Postsecondary teaching and learning landscapes are rapidly evolving and shifting. It will be important for the institution to commit to reviewing and adjusting these principles on a regular basis (e.g., every 3 years).

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- **Student engagement, success and well-being** are at the heart of the eleven principles.
- The eleven principles are meant to **guide and influence meaningful reflection, dialogue and decision-making** related to assessment practices across the university community, within the context of existing educational and governance processes.
- The eleven principles directly **align with the Ahead of Tomorrow, Academic Innovation Plan** (2.3 f): “Advance innovative and authentic approaches to the assessment of student learning...”
- The process to develop these principles, including our commitments to parallel processes and ethical space, **demonstrates UCalgary’s leadership** across and beyond the U15.
- Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning **provide a framework and foundation** to help guide assessment practices, policies, guidelines, procedures, discussions, and decision-making across multiple organization levels.
- The eleven principles will serve as a **tool for continuous and incremental review**, learning, growth, action, and transformation, and offer direction for the institution, faculties and individual educators to reflect upon and continuously improve assessment practices.

The Assessment Principles Group (APG) received feedback on the draft principles and report from the: TLC; the Calendar and Curriculum Subcommittee (CCS); the Graduate Academic Program Subcommittee (GAPS); *ii’ taa’poh’to’p* Working Circle 4 (Academic Programs) and Working Circle 6 (Policies, Procedures, and Practice). Feedback was also received from individuals (students, academic staff, leaders and support staff) who contributed to the draft report over the last six months of campus consultations. Elder Evelyn Good Striker (a Lakota Dakota from Standing Buffalo First Nation in Saskatchewan and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota), and Indigenous leaders and scholars, including Dr. Michael Hart, Dr. Shawna Cunningham and Dr. Christine Martineau, also provided ongoing leadership, wisdom, and guidance. A summary of this feedback is attached and has been incorporated into the assessment principles and report.

Some key changes to the report and principles include:

Feedback received	Resulted change
Include a glossary for words used to describe Indigenous perspectives and meaning	Glossary at the end of the report was added.
Add 'Accessibility' to Principle D.	"Assessments are designed to be fair, accessible , equitable and inclusive for diverse educators and learners, and provide multiple ways for students to engage with learning."
Add 'Modality' to Principle B.	"Assessment practices demonstrate alignment within the curriculum and modality of the course and program, progressively building upon and reflecting student learning, skills, and competencies throughout their academic journey."
Revision to Figure 2 to change 'Continuous Improvement' to 'Continuous Enhancement.'	Completed. See Figure 2 in attached report.
Revisions to Figure 1 adding the word 'Reciprocity'; adding 'Self-Actualization'; changing 'Holism' to 'Wholism'; revising 'Human (more than human)' to 'Humanity' and 'All our Relatives.'	Completed. See Figure 1 in attached report.
Several recommendations emerged that focused on the next stage – putting the principles into action.	Ongoing work. APG will actively develop recommendations to support implementation; partner with academic units and TI to pilot engagement with the principles.

BACKGROUND

In March 2023, a group of leaders from academic units, the student experience portfolio, Registrar's office, Taylor Institute, Secretariat's office and Legal/Student Appeals met to identify pressing issues related to assessment of student learning, and potential actions to be taken. One of the key recommendations from the group was to develop a set of Principles to guide practices for the assessment of student learning at the University of Calgary, that would help inform future decision-making processes for educators, academic units and the institution. The APG was formed shortly after and under the direction of the Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning).

The APG serves as an advisory group to the GFC (Teaching and Learning) with the mandate to draft institutional Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning.

The APG conducted an [environmental scan of U15 institutions and a comprehensive literature review](#). This data, together with the consultation data from UCalgary, resulted in eleven themes to help student assessment: student learning and growth; curriculum alignment; parallel processes and ethical space; equitable and inclusive; meaningful feedback; clear communication, mental health and wellbeing; academic integrity; educational technologies; continuous enhancement; and resources and support. The eleven principles were developed based on these themes. Further information related to the development of the principles for the assessment of student learning is provided in the attached report.

RISKS

For over two years, the APG has consulted the campus community with a mandate to deliver principles for student assessment. The principles, as written, are a result of those consultations and a thorough literature review and environmental scan. They represent innovative, community and research-informed assessment practices and align with future-focused program delivery.

These principles form the foundation of the key strategies in the Academic Innovation Plan to advance innovative and authentic approaches to student assessment that are research-informed. If these principles are not endorsed, we risk not achieving this key initiative.

Students and academic staff are asking for change within our assessment practices and require support for that change. GFC endorsement provides a foundation for our community to impact student engagement, be innovative, impact change, and provide necessary supports.

The endorsement of these eleven principles shows a commitment to students-as-partners and supports the institutional goal to “educate transformative leaders.”

ROUTING AND PERSONS CONSULTED

Over 450 people (staff, students and faculty) engaged in campus conversations, and nearly 900 comments emerged from and were coded from these consultations to inform the principles. Elder Evelyn Good Striker has provided ongoing wisdom, leadership and grounding. Dr. Michael Hart and Dr. Shawna Cunningham from the Office of Indigenous Engagement have also provided guidance and wisdom as the process has evolved.

The APG facilitated sessions throughout November 2024 – April 2025 with the following groups: the Student Legislative Council; the Graduate Student Association; Graduate Representative Council; Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) Roundtable multiple times; the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning; students from the Scholars Academy, Academic Turnaround Program (ATP), Neurodiversity Immersive Campus Experience (NICE), Peer Assisted Study Session (PASS) student leaders and First-Generation Student Mentors; staff from Student Accessibility Services that included access advisors and neurodiversity support advisors; Student Success Centre Staff; faculty-specific consultations were held with the Werklund School of Education and the Cumming School of Medicine. Individual conversations were also held with 13 Indigenous academic staff members from the Werklund School of Education, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Nursing, Faculty of Arts and Cumming School of Medicine.

The APG also presented to the *ii’ taa’poh’to’p*, Working Circle 4 (Academic Programs) and the *ii’ taa’poh’to’p*, Working Circle 6 (Policies, Procedures, and Practice) in addition to the governance committees listed below.

In the coming month, the principles and report will be shared further at Dean’s Council.

Progress	Body	Date	Approval	Recommendation	Discussion	Information
	Teaching and Learning Committee	2024-11-19				X
	Teaching and Learning Committee	2025-04-15			X	
	Calendar and Curriculum Subcommittee	2025-05-15			X	

	Graduate Academic Program Subcommittee	2025-05-28			X	
X	Teaching and Learning Committee	2025-10-14		X		
	General Faculties Council	2025-11-06	X			

NEXT STEPS

To align with the commitments in the *ii' taa'poh'to'p* Indigenous Strategy, we are engaging in a parallel process that is grounded in oral traditions. There will be a community conversation, planned for Spring 2026, with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers, scholars, and community groups to create an ethical space for a parallel process around student assessment.

The APG will develop recommendations for engagement with the Assessment Principles across all levels of the institution (e.g., individual educators, Faculties/departments, institution).

The APG and the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning are partnering with academic units to develop and pilot resources and initiatives to inspire engagement with the principles for the assessment of student learning and highlight examples of where these principles are already being used throughout the institution.

The Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning will live on the [Teaching and Learning website](#), and resources that support engagement with the principles will live on the [Taylor Institute website](#). Upon endorsement from GFC, the principles and final full report will be made available on the website, by the end of November 2025.

Pedagogical resources aligned with the assessment principles are currently in development and will be shared on a landing page dedicated to student assessment on the TI website immediately upon endorsement from GFC. The APG members will be engaging with academic units to co-create discipline-specific assessment strategies based on the principles throughout this academic year.

The TI and VPTL are currently developing a communications plan based on the principles. For example, upon endorsement from GFC, we will publish a UToday article to share the principles broadly.

APG will develop recommendations to oversee, steward and review the principles for the assessment of student learning over time.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. Assessment Principles Website (including environmental scan and literature review) - <https://teaching-learning.ucalgary.ca/resources-educators/assessment-principles>
2. Assessment Principles Report (attached)
3. APG Feedback Summary (attached)