



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

General Faculties Council
Teaching and Learning Committee
Briefing Note: For Discussion

SUBJECT: Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning

PROPONENT(S)/PRESENTER(S)

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PURPOSE

The Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) is asked to provide feedback on the draft set of **Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning (Assessment Principles)** based on the following guiding questions:

- What is unclear or needs revision?
- What gaps do you notice? Is there anything missing that would make a difference?
- How could the Assessment Principles Group (APG) better reflect UCalgary's commitment to parallel processes as we move forward with this work?

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

APG is seeking feedback on a *draft* set of **Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning**. Below are draft Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning at the University of Calgary based on our environmental scan, literature review, and campus consultations. These Principles are presented in no particular order. The intent will be to ensure that each principle is accompanied by a description and illustrative examples of teaching and learning strategies, and associated research-informed resources. These additional resources will help provide additional context for how to put these principles into practice.

We recognize to align with the commitments in the *ii' taa'poh'to'p* Indigenous Strategy, we must now engage in a parallel process that is grounded in oral traditions. We continue to have conversations with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers, scholars and groups to create an ethical space for a parallel process.

Draft Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning at UCalgary

- 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 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, 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) Organizational policies, processes, supports, professional learning, and digital and physical infrastructure sustainably support the assessment ecosystem.

These Principles have been created after extensive consultation and iteration over the last 6 months, and with reference to an extensive environmental scan and literature review (see attached Report). Consultations with the UCalgary campus community began in the fall of 2024. Elder Evelyn Good Striker provided grounding, wisdom and guidance for our processes to help the team move forward in a good way. Elder Evelyn Good Striker is a Lakota Dakota from Standing Buffalo First Nation in Saskatchewan and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota. Dr. Michael Hart (Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement) also provided ongoing wisdom and guidance as the process evolved.

- Over **450 people** engaged in campus conversations.
- A total of **876 comments emerged from and were coded from these conversations.**
- Consultation process began with a **community conversation** where representatives from all academic units and relevant non-academic units were invited to a world-cafe style discussion.
- APG facilitated additional 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;
 - 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 Staff that included access advisors and neurodiversity

- support advisors; Student Success Centre Staff;
- faculty-specific consultations with the Werklund School of Education and the Cumming School of Medicine;
- the ii' taa'poh'to'p, Working Circle 4 (Academic Programs)
- the ii' taa'poh'to'p, Working Circle 6 (Policies, Procedures, and Practice)
- and the General Faculty's Council Teaching and Learning Committee.
- 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 community conversations focused on the current **strengths** and **challenges**, as well as **future possibilities** for student assessment at UCalgary. Comments and thoughts that did not fall within these three categories were also recorded in a fourth section of '**what else.**' Eleven themes emerged from coding this data alongside the environmental scan and literature review (Figure 1).

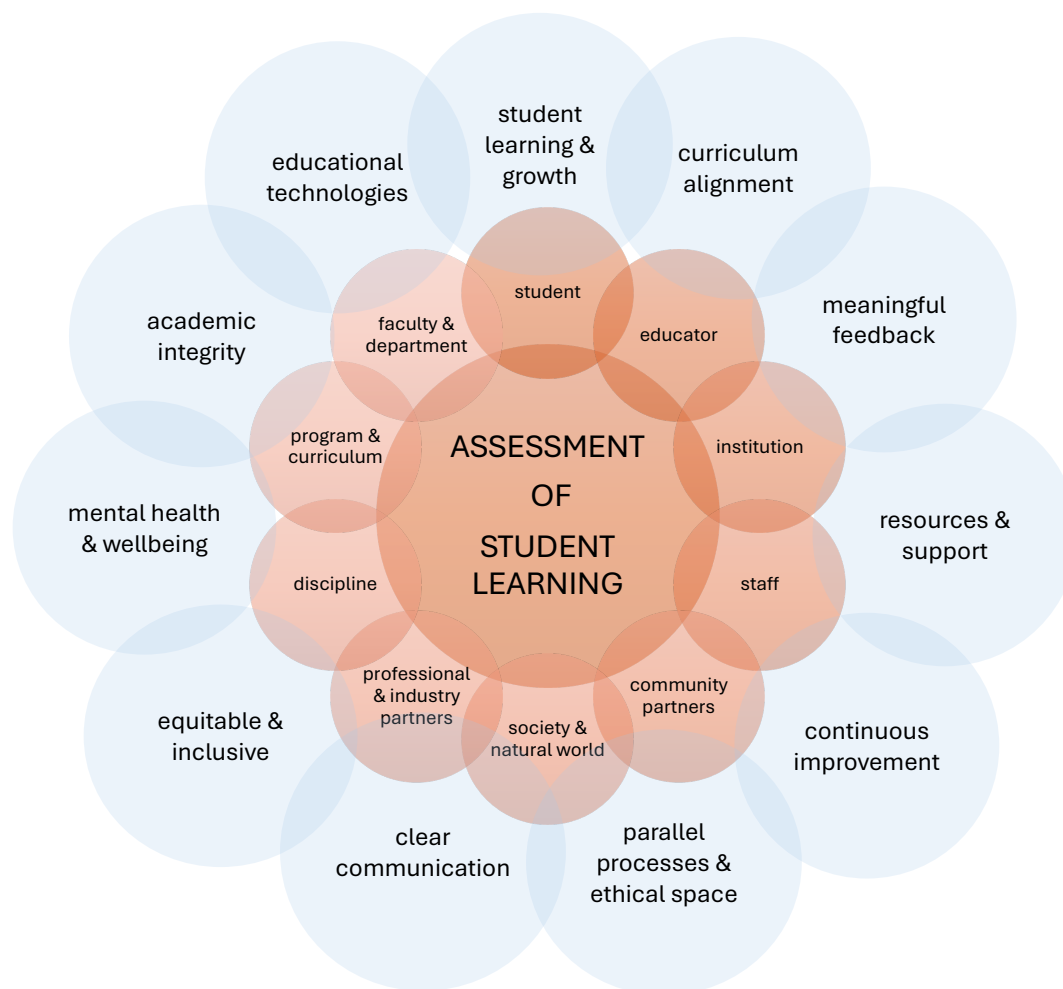


Figure 1: Key themes (outer layer) related to the development of Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning at UCalgary visualized with multiple interrelated factors (middle layer) that influence assessment, and emerged through our environmental scan, literature review, and campus consultations.

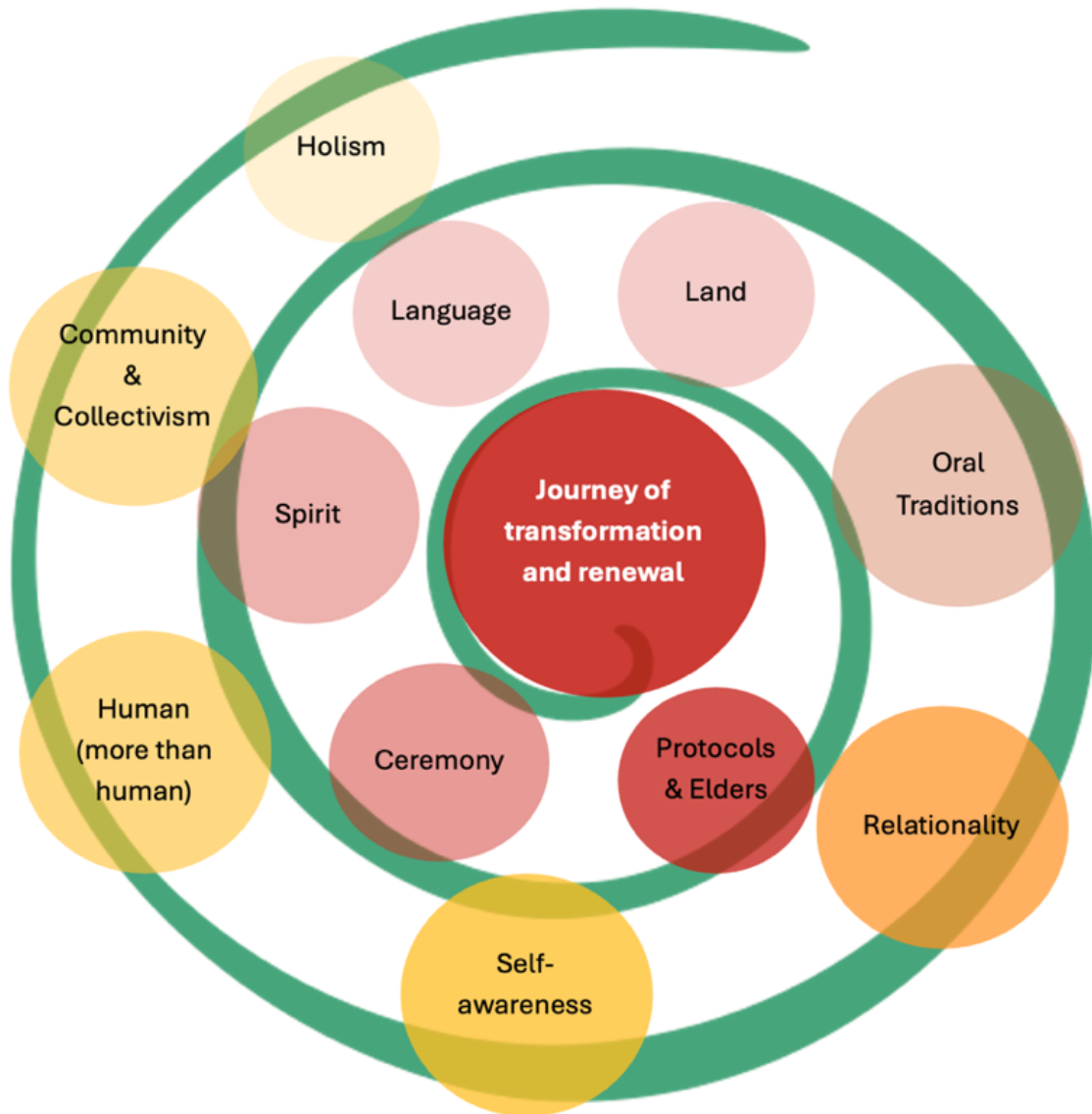


Figure 2: Essential elements for engaging in a continuous journey of transformation and renewal in teaching, learning and assessment that emerged during our conversations with UCalgary Indigenous Scholars and Groups.

KEY POINTS

- 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 APG is currently seeking feedback on these draft Principles.
- The APG will continue to ensure that UCalgary's commitment to parallel processes is reflected in these principles.
- Addition groups will be consulted for feedback on these draft principles over the next several months, with the intent to start governance conversations through to the General Faculties Council (GFC) in the Fall of 2025.

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.

On November 21, 2023, the terms of reference for the Assessment Principles Group (APG) were shared at the TLC under the direction of the VPTL. 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. Assessment practices are influenced by individual educators, and a myriad of policies, procedures, networks, and supports across the academic community.

The focus of the Assessment Principles Group (APG) is to develop a set of Principles to guide practices for the assessment of student learning. To inform drafting these principles, the APG gathered input from across the academic community on current strengths and challenges, as well as the possibilities for the future of student assessment at the UCalgary.

To learn how principles and practices for assessing student learning were conceptualized, developed and shared in higher education settings, the APG conducted an [environmental scan of U15 institutions and a comprehensive literature review](#). We discovered that **the purpose and role of assessment have expanded in higher education**. For example, assessment:

- supports, motivates and engages students in learning;
- provides opportunities for various forms of feedback on teaching and learning (e.g., self-reflection, educator to student, student to student, student to educator), helping students learn from and adjust their learning, and educators learn from and adjust their teaching;
- assists in measuring student performance, generating grades and awarding credentials and certifications;
- helps students and educators gauge and monitor progress and attainment of learning goals in an academic course or program; and,
- informs administrative and curricular processes, including quality assurance and professional accreditation standards (Boud, 2020; Hooda et al., 2022; Ibarra-Saiz et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2021; Memarian & Doleck, 2023; Winestone & Boud, 2022).

Through the environmental scan and literature review, we also noted a need to ensure that the development of Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning at UCalgary addressed: assessment as a learning practice; learning technologies and generative artificial intelligence (AI); student, staff and educator well-being and mental health; meaningful feedback processes; authentic assessment; students as partners in assessment; systemic and multi-level processes for supporting and building capacity in assessment; Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing and connecting; equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA); graduate and undergraduate student assessment practices, and multiple instructional modalities (e.g., online/blended learning).

SUMMARY

Moving towards transformation in student assessment practices at UCalgary will be an iterative and continuous journey, and these *draft* research and community-informed Principles provide an important foundation for that work. During our consultations, a group of participants noted, "No assessment is perfect." Assessment practices, policies, and processes across the academic community are nuanced and contextual. They are influenced by interrelating factors such as individual educators, disciplinary approaches, student learning experiences, departmental and faculty curriculum conversations and processes, institutional governance, infrastructure,

supports and resources, professional accreditation standards, and societal change.

These draft 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. They 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. We look forward to continuing to strengthen these principles based on feedback and input from across the academic community.

ROUTING AND PERSONS CONSULTED

Over 400 people across and beyond the academic community have been consulted. Elder Evelyn GoodStriker has provided wisdom, leadership and grounding. Dr. Michael Hart has also provided guidance and wisdom as the process has evolved. APG facilitated additional 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; 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 Staff that included access advisors and neurodiversity support advisors; Student Success Centre Staff; faculty-specific consultations with the Werklund School of Education and the Cumming School of Medicine; the ii' taa'poh'to'p, Working Circle 4 (Academic Programs); the ii' taa'poh'to'p, Working Circle 6 (Policies, Procedures, and Practice) and the GFC Teaching and Learning Committee. 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.

Progress	Body	Date	Approval	Recommendation	Discussion	Information
	Teaching and Learning Committee	2024-11-19				X
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	

NEXT STEPS

- Revise and better reflect parallel processes for the Assessment Principles.
- Follow up with all groups initially consulted for further input and revisions.
- Consult with CCS, GAPS and other governance committees as necessary.
- Revise draft Principles based on feedback.
- Route Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning through governance in Fall 2025 for discussion and approval.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. Assessment Principles Website (including environmental scan and literature review) - <https://teaching-learning.ucalgary.ca/resources-educators/assessment-principles>
2. Draft Assessment Principles Report (attached)
3. Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning slides (attached)

References

- Boud, D. (2020). Challenges in reforming higher education assessment: a perspective from afar. *Revista Electrónica de Investigación y Evaluación Educativa*, 26(1). <https://doi.org/10.7203/relieve.26.1.17088>
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