

Policy Title: The Use of Digital Learning Resources for Instructional and Assessment Purposesⁱ

Established: April 22, 2016

Approved by: The Office of the Provost

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Office Responsible for Maintaining and Administering the Policy: Office of the Provost

Policy Statement: This policy outlines the conditions under which instructors can require students to purchase digital learning resources for instructional purposes, including assessment of learning.

Purpose: The Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities revised its guidelines regarding digital learning resources in 2013, establishing categories and conditions to allow instructors to require their purchase. The revised guidelines state that universities can require students to purchase third-party digital learning resources for instructional and assessment purposes. The Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities requires that where courses or programs rely “substantially on assessments that are included within a learning resource such as an online textbook,” universities must have a policy with respect to students’ interests in these situations (MTCU, 2013).

Scope: This policy applies to the use of digital learning resources in credit courses and programs at the University.

Exceptions to Policy: None, except as identified within the policy itself.

Cross References: Senate Bylaw 51; Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Tuition Fee Framework and Ancillary Fee Guidelines for Publicly-Assisted Universities 2013-14 to 2016-17.

Definitions: For the purpose of this policy, **digital learning resources** include learning materials (e.g., software, online learning tools) that enhance, aid, or facilitate learning and assessment of learning.

Policy

1. The University of Windsor recognizes the value of technology-enabled teaching and learning resources in enhancing learning and student engagement and in achieving learning outcomes and their evaluation. Technology-enabled approaches -- such as online and blended courses, the creation and incorporation of digital content in courses, online assessment tools, academic integrity aids, and a variety of communication tools -- can significantly improve student learning. However, the cost of required digital learning resources can financially burden students. These costs need to be balanced with the learning opportunities they provide. Digital learning resources requiring additional costs to students should demonstrate clear and otherwise unavailable advantages for students and instructors. As with all learning resources, the University encourages instructors to consider low- or no-cost alternatives to fee-carrying resources wherever possible.
2. Instructors may require students to purchase individual access to digital learning resources (such as online homework tools, simulations, case studies, quizzes, and other interactive learning tools) for assessment purposes, provided that the following three conditions are met:
 - a. The cost before taxes is no greater than 10% of the lowest domestic tuition cost for a single-term 3-credit course in the faculty offering the course (See chart (hotlink)). The Dean of the Faculty may approve the assignment of digital learning resources up to a maximum of 20% of that domestic course fee.
 - b. The assessment constitutes 20% or less of the course grade. The Dean of the Faculty may approve assignment of digital learning resources that will be used for a maximum of 35% of the final grade.
 - c. Digital learning resources are often bundled with text books. Students must have the option to purchase the bundled components separately if their purchase is mandatory. Costs identified in 2(a) refer to the cost of the stand-alone digital learning resource only, not the textbook.

If **any** of these conditions is **not** met, the instructor must provide no-fee alternative assessments. Additional exceptions to the conditions outlined in (2) may be approved by Deans for:

- a. Digital learning resources that are the basis for a course (e.g., GIS software in a GIS Programming Course, or Final Cut Pro in a course on professional video editing), provided that there is no lower-cost equivalent, and that the student can keep the software beyond the completion of the course.
- b. A digital learning resource whose cost can be shared across several courses, as long as the cost per course falls within the allowable maximum. Please see the *Use of Digital Learning Resources for Instructional and Assessment Purposes Frequently Asked Questions pages* [[hotlink](#)] [the FAQ] for further detail.

In all cases, the Dean of the Faculty should seek to ensure, as far as possible, that student interests are respected, course learning outcomes are met, and instructors provide rich learning environments for students. **Exceptions should be granted only where an equivalent no-cost or low-cost alternative is not available.**

3. All courses using digital learning resources must also include the following template in the course syllabus:

The digital resource [name] will be used in this course. It is a [required/optional] resource, which will be used for assessment purposes. The assessments that will rely on this resource constitute [xx]% of the grade for this course. This resource can be purchased from [website, bookstore, etc.].

The assignment of digital learning resources at the University of Windsor is governed by a policy entitled The Use of Digital Learning Resources for Instructional and Assessment Purposes, which can be reviewed at <http://www1.uwindsor.ca/provost/sites/uwindsor.ca.provost/files/Digital%20Learning%20Resource%20Policy%20FINAL.pdf>.

Should you have any concerns about the assignment of digital learning resources for this course, please let the Associate Dean responsible for [graduate/undergraduate] programs in your Faculty know in writing, as the University regularly reviews this policy based on campus community feedback.

Instructors are encouraged to make this information available in multiple ways -- for example, through the course website, the Learning Management System, or other communications as appropriate.

4. Students may also be required to purchase physical learning resources, as long as those resources become the property of the student. The cost of purchasing such materials is not included in the calculation of the 10% of the domestic course fee allowable for a single-term 3-credit course for digital learning resources (see 2(a)). Please see the FAQ for examples of allowable physical learning resources.
5. This policy is subject to annual review and may be modified by the Provost's Office in response to changes in the requirements of the MTCU guidelines or on the basis of feedback from faculty, staff, and students. Offices of Deans will record all exceptions to the standard limits approved by Deans in accordance with this policy, and reports of instructor and student concerns regarding assignment of digital learning resources, and submit a report to the Office of the Provost on April 30 of each year. This information will be incorporated into the review process.

Questions

Please direct questions about the MTCU Guidelines or the use of digital learning resources to the Office of the Provost.

ⁱ This policy reflects input from University of Windsor faculty and staff and a review of policies at other Ontario institutions including the University of Guelph, McMaster University, the University of Toronto and the University of Waterloo. Passages from their policies have been adapted for use in this document with their permission.