

*Use of Digital Learning Resources for Instructional and Assessment Purposes policy*  
**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q1. Why did the University establish this policy?**

In December 2013, MTCU issued a new *Tuition Fee Framework and Ancillary Fee Guidelines for Publically-Assisted Universities, 2013-2017*. One change in the Framework was that the Ministry has formally recognized that digital learning resources make a significant “*contribution...to the quality of teaching and learning, including support for adaptive learning.*” They therefore established categories and conditions to allow instructors to require their purchase. The MTCU’s new protocol states that universities can require students to purchase third-party digital learning resources for instructional and assessment purposes. Universities must establish guidelines for their adoption:

*Where a course or program relies substantially on assessments that are included with a learning resource, such as an online textbook, the Ministry expects the university to have a policy with respect to their students’ interests in these situations.*

According to the *Ancillary Fee Guidelines*, university policies must take into account situations where such tools will be used for a “substantial portion” of the mark in the course, and notes that institutions must be “proactive in monitoring the conditions attached to the use of learning resources” to ensure their consistency with institutional policies and values.”

**Q2. What is the university doing to provide cost-effective solutions for digital learning resources?**

Professors should do their best to identify low- and no-cost alternatives whenever possible, and to require the use of fee-carrying digital learning resources only when they are absolutely necessary to the quality of student learning or to student success. Instructors can consult with the Library and the Office of Open Learning to explore possible alternatives to commercial online resources, including the use of open access resources as a no-cost option for facilitating student learning and assessment. Instructors and AAUs are also strongly encouraged to seek cost efficiencies by establishing common tools to be used across courses whenever possible. The University continues to investigate the use of open-source assessment tools and to engage in discussions with publishers to obtain the best options for students.

**Q3. What do “bundled” and “stand-alone digital assessment tool” mean?**

“Bundled” learning materials may include a group of products such as a textbook with a code to access digital learning materials. A “stand-alone” digital assessment tool, using the example of a text book and code, would refer to the code portion only.

**Q4. Why can’t an instructor assign a digital learning resource that’s bundled with a textbook?**

The University recognizes that a cost-effective method of obtaining learning material is through the purchase of used textbooks. Therefore a stand-alone version of the digital learning materials must be made available. Instructors should be aware that publishers may agree to unbundle resources upon request. Instructors can contact the Office of Open Learning to further explore possible solutions to this challenge.

**Q5. How do I determine what 10% of the lowest domestic tuition for a single-term 3-credit course for my course is?**

**In 2020-21 the allowable resource cost for each faculty is:**

<b>Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences</b>	<b>\$58.00</b>
<b>Business</b>	<b>\$86.00</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>\$68.00</b>
<b>Engineering</b>	<b>\$93.00</b>
<b>Human Kinetics</b>	<b>\$60.00</b>
<b>Law</b>	<b>\$159.00</b>
<b>Nursing</b>	<b>\$58.00</b>
<b>Science</b>	<b>\$60.00</b>

**Q6. What if my course is not a three-credit course?**

The allowable cost of the digital learning resource can be pro-rated based on the cost for a three-credit course. In other words, if the allowable cost for a digital learning resource in the home program is \$75, then the allowable cost for a one-credit course is \$25, while the allowable cost for a six-credit course is \$150.

**Q7. Can an instructor require students to purchase a digital textbook?**

Instructors can assign digital textbooks. The University encourages instructors to find ways to minimize the costs for students when assigning textbooks. It is understood that students need to arrange access to required learning resources to succeed in a course. When a text is required, it is the content of the text that is required, and it is up to students to determine how to access that content, while respecting the intellectual property rights of authors, publishers, and content developers. The *Use of Digital Learning Resources for Instructional and Assessment Purposes* policy explains the University's regulations related to the required purchase of resources to be used for assessment purposes.

**Q8. Can the university act as a broker for a third party, to provide access to a resource or service?**

Yes. According to the Ministry Guidelines, the University can provide access to a resource or service (such as a bulk software license, or BVirtual online proctoring service) on this basis, as long as the University doesn't receive any net revenue from the agreement with the vendor, is not the manufacturer or supplier of the material or service, and seeks to ensure that the lowest possible price is paid on behalf of students. Students can then be charged the reasonable cost of the resource or service on an individual basis. Resources provided on this basis remain subject to the limits outlined in the policy.

**Q9. How were the cost and assignment-weight limits determined?**

The University reviewed policies established by a number of other Ontario universities to ensure a policy consistent with allowable limits across the Province.

**Q10. What types of no-fee alternative assessments can be provided?**

Alternative methods of assessment may, for example, include providing an option for students to access the learning resource in a classroom or lab, or providing accessible physical copies of similar assessment tools. Please see Senate Bylaw 51 for further explanation of the University's regulations regarding equivalency in alternative assignments and grading schemes.

**Q11. What exactly has to be included in the syllabus in a course using a digital learning resource?**

Please use the following text as a template:

*The following 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%20with%20link.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.*

**Q12. What if a student says he or she can't afford the assessment tool?**

Instructors are strongly encouraged to provide students with alternative no-cost or more affordable learning resources whenever possible. Best practice is to keep a written record of the accommodation reached. Any such agreements must conform with the requirements of Bylaw 51: alternative assignments must be equivalent in terms of type, format, and level of difficulty and may be online if provided at no cost to the student. Instructors may also provide an alternative but comparable and fair grading scheme.

**Q13. Can the cost of a digital learning resource be divided across more than one course?**

Yes, if all students in the courses must take all of the courses involved. For example, a resource cost of 30% of the overall course tuition fee would exceed the maximum for a single course. However, if the resource will be required in three courses and all of the students taking the course must take all three courses, then its cost per course would still be only 10% of the overall course tuition fee per course, and then would fall within the allowable maximum.

**Q14. Can an instructor require the purchase of clickers or require students to have access to a device that can run a specific digital learning resource?**

Yes. Instructors can require that students purchase physical learning resources such as clickers, so long as the resources become the property of the student. Examples of such resources include:

- a. Hardware-based audience response system devices ('clickers') and other electronic devices required for learning
- b. Learning kits, such as home chemistry sets, electronics/circuits sets, etc.
- c. Learning resources such as art supplies, dissection kits, and lab equipment such as lab coats and goggles
- d. Other learning resources that become the property of the student at the completion of the course.

Instructors are strongly encouraged to use no-cost alternatives wherever possible, and to adopt tools that enable students to use their own existing devices unless purchase of specific device is absolutely necessary.

**Q15. Does the cost limit of 10% of course tuition (or 20% with the Dean's approval) include the cost of the clicker or device to run the digital learning resource?**

No, it does not.

**Q16. I have a concern or question about this policy. Who can I talk to?**

Please contact the Associate Dean responsible for undergraduate or graduate studies in your faculty, as appropriate.

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Passages from the University of Toronto's *Frequently Asked Questions* regarding digital learning resource use have been adapted in this document with permission, and we gratefully acknowledge this assistance.