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Climate Institute

Information Letter about the Study “Assessment of Climate Change Education in Canadian Professional Degree Programs” and Invitation to Participate

Research Team:

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This letter explains what the study is about, the possible risks and benefits, and your rights as a research participant. If you do not understand something in the letter, please ask one of the investigators before agreeing to participate in the study. You may wish to save a copy of this letter for your records.

Purpose of the study

As part of a Federal Government funded project to accelerate the integration of climate change education in professional degree programs, the Waterloo Climate Institute is undertaking a research study of current practices, gaps and opportunities for the integration of climate change competencies into existing Engineering, Planning, Architecture and Accounting programs in Canadian universities and colleges, recognizing that many programs do this through a sustainability-focused approach. The aim of the study is to assess current practices and identify needs and future directions for curriculum planning and pedagogy. Our research questions are:

1. What is the current status of climate change education in professional degree programs across Canada?
2. What are the barriers and opportunities for climate change education in professional degree programs across Canada?
3. What supports are needed to accelerate the integration of climate change education into these programs?

For reference, background information about climate change and Canada’s plans for capacity building and training can be found [here](#), and the survey also refers to the [Canadian Climate Action Competency Framework](#) (CACF V2).

What does participation involve?

Participation in the study will consist of completing an online survey about climate change in professional degree programs at Canadian universities and colleges. The survey should be

completed by one person (the lead program director or a designated person) from each of the following professional degree programs at your institution (or any closely related disciplines): Civil, Environmental and Systems Engineering, Accounting, Planning, and Architecture.

In order to allow for comparison between professional degree programs, a separate copy of the survey should be completed for each program. The survey should take about 30 minutes to complete. The survey focuses on climate change education strategies, opportunities and barriers.

The findings will be compiled into a report to be shared publicly and presented at a national online forum on climate change education in professional degree programs to be hosted by the Waterloo Climate Institute in March 2025. Findings may also be published in peer-reviewed journals.

In the future, this survey might be repeated to assess how professional degree program curricula have changed over time. The data from this study will be kept for seven years and may be used in future studies as a comparison.

Is participation in the study voluntary?

- Participation in this study is voluntary
- Participants may choose to decline responding to any survey question(s) they prefer not to answer.
- Participants may decide to withdraw from the study at any time.
- To withdraw while completing the survey: Participants may choose to leave the survey without submitting their responses.
- To withdraw after completing the survey: Since participants' names are not attached to the survey responses, to withdraw, participants will need to contact the Principal Investigator with their institution, program, and position to allow us to identify and remove their data.
- Withdrawal from the study after the study session: Participants can request their data be removed from the study up until **December 1, 2024**.

What are the possible benefits of the study?

The study may benefit the academic community/society in the following way(s):

- Provide insights into climate change concepts and competencies currently being taught as part of professional degree programs
- Provide insights into gaps, opportunities and barriers to the integration of climate change education into professional degree programs
- Provide guidance for support needed by higher education institutions and instructors to incorporate climate change teaching/learning into their courses and programs.
- Lead to the establishment of a community of practice and a collection of resources for climate change education in professional degree programs at post-secondary education institutions (to be hosted by the Waterloo Climate Institute).

Will my information be kept confidential?

- There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participation in this study.
- Survey responses will be confidential but not anonymous.
- We will ask respondents for information about their institution, department, program and occupation, and respondents will have the option to provide their contact information to be contacted for additional information following the survey
- We may list the institutions that responded to the survey in any publications (such as reports and/or articles), but we will not directly identify/name any individual or institution in connection with their responses.
- Data collected and analyzed during this study will be retained for at least seven years, and only researchers associated with this project will have access to them. You will be participating in a study that uses Qualtrics. This platform has implemented technical, administrative, and physical safeguards to protect the information from loss, misuse, and unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration, or destruction. However, no internet transmission is ever fully secure or error free.

Other information

- This study is funded/sponsored by Natural Resources Canada's Climate Change Adaptation Program.
- This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB 46776). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics, toll-free at 1-833-643-2379 (Canada and USA), 1-519-888-4440, or reb@uwaterloo.ca.

We thank you for considering being part of this research project and will invite you to indicate your consent to use your data in the first part of the survey. If you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact Dr. Michele Martin at 226-792-8115 or by email at michelep.martin@uwaterloo.ca.

Yours sincerely,

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