

15th Annual University of Waterloo Teaching and Learning Conference

May 1-2, 2024 | May 1 - Online, May 2 - In-person

Sparking and Sustaining Engagement

As educators we strive to ignite a passion for learning in our students and cultivate their curiosity. Instructors, along with academic support staff, team up to design interesting courses, varied assessments, and novel learning experiences so students remain engaged—both in their learning and with the university community—throughout their university years. Sparking student engagement during the first weeks of a semester is only a first step; sustaining it long term is the real challenge. Engagement is crucial for our students' success and acts as a feedback loop: instructor engagement encourages student engagement, which in turn motivates faculty to continue investing energy in designing stimulating learning activities and environments.

From flipped classrooms to experiential learning, engaged teaching not only develops students' discipline-specific knowledge, but also cultivates autonomy and hones critical thinking and goal-setting skills, all of which are life-long, transferable skills. Engaged students are committed to the learning process and to their personal growth: enthusiastic and curious, they contribute to class by asking questions and collaborating with their peers, leverage the resources available to support them, and want to be part of campus life. Student engagement extends beyond academics, to faculty and university life, and community involvement. Engaged students feel like they belong and have a greater sense of self-worth and purpose.

For our **15th annual University of Waterloo Teaching and Learning Conference**, we will explore engagement and its myriad facets, including student, staff, and faculty engagement. What constitutes engagement? How can we ensure that our student-centered approaches to engagement are equitable and inclusive? Which assessment strategies might best engage students with course materials? How can we use technology to stimulate engagement? How do programs create curricula that offer sufficient choices, flexibility, and diverse experiences to sustain student engagement through their degree? How do we engage with local and global communities to bridge academia and real-world challenges?

We invite you to submit proposals for presentations, panel discussions, workshops, and poster presentations. We also strongly encourage Learning Innovation and Teaching Enhancement (LITE) grant recipients to submit proposals. Returning this year is the online component of the conference; we invite proposals for online workshops to be offered on the first day of the conference.

Ideas and questions to consider:

Defining engagement

- What constitutes engagement for both instructors and for students?
- How do instructors and students experience engagement?
- Who is responsible for engagement in higher education? Does responsibility fall on instructors, students, or is engagement a shared responsibility?

Equitable engagement

- How can higher education institutions create inclusive environments that engage learners from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and ensure equitable access to quality education?
- What impact do inclusive approaches to teaching and learning (e.g., Universal Design for Learning, Universal Instructional Design) have on diverse learners and/or learners' levels of engagement?
- How can departments and faculties better engage first-generation students and help them navigate the hidden curriculum / the unwritten rules and expectations of academia?
- In what ways can we engage students about societal crises (e.g., the climate crisis, gendered violence) and controversial topics while also supporting their mental health?
- How do we amplify Indigenous ways of knowing and culturally sustaining pedagogies in courses and academic programs?

Using assessment strategies for engagement

- How do we embed sustainable assessment strategies in large classes?
- Which pedagogies or assessment practices (e.g., ungrading) foster engagement?
- To what extent are accreditation standards compatible with alternative methods of assessment?

Technology and engagement

- How do we leverage technology to create engaging learning experiences?
- How do certain educational technologies create learning experiences that facilitate engagement across diverse delivery modes (in-person, online, blended, and flipped courses)?
- How can AI tools be used effectively in the teaching and learning environment, while maintaining academic integrity, to facilitate authentic learning?
- What are some strategies to eliminate technological distractions in the classroom?

Student-centered approaches to engagement

- What engagement strategies can we use to tailor learning paths to meet individual needs and empower students as partners in the learning process?
- How can we foster engagement and reconnect with our students after disruptions in the teaching and learning environment?

- How can we encourage student-centric learning approaches in higher education (e.g., SLICCs)?
- How can interdisciplinary learning engage students?

Engaging communities

- How do we engage with different communities, on and off campus, to foster life-long learning?
- How do we foster a supportive and collaborative environment that fuels faculty enthusiasm for course teaching, research, supervision, and curriculum renewal?
- How do we create and nurture students, faculty and staff members' sense of belonging to their programs, faculties, and institutions?
- What role do faculty member, staff, and student collaborations with higher education institutions, local communities, industries, and non-governmental organizations play in maintaining engagement?

Proposal Guidelines

Please consider the following when developing your proposal:

- We welcome proposals from faculty, staff, and students (undergraduate and graduate) from the University of Waterloo and beyond.
- The deadline to submit a proposal is **Monday, January 22, 2024**. There will be no extensions.
- Proposals must be between **200-300 words**.
- Proposals may be research-based, practice-based, or both:
 - **Research-based:** Individuals engaged in conducting research on teaching and learning (including recipients of [LITE grants](#))
 - **Practice-based:** Instructors who seek to share practices, strategies, and examples from their own teaching experiences
- Individuals may be a first author in a maximum of one session but may be co-authors in more than one session. If you are submitting a poster, you may be the first author in up to two sessions.
- Please remove any names from your proposal, as the review process is anonymous.
- Ensure that your session will be relevant to people from a variety of disciplines.
- Please include two to three key takeaways from your session (if someone were unable to attend your session, what key research findings/practical experiences would you want them to know?)

Proposal review criteria

Proposals will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

- Relevance of proposal to the conference theme or previously funded Learning Innovation and Teaching Enhancement (LITE) grant project*

- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to teaching and learning
- Extent to which proposal ideas are situated within the relevant literature or best practices
- Relevance across disciplines
- Clarity of intended session objectives/learning outcomes
- Appropriate engagement of conference participants (for workshops and panels)
- Overall clarity of proposal

***Note:** [Learning Innovation and Teaching Enhancement \(LITE\)](#) grants demonstrate the range of pedagogical research across the institution. Hence, we strongly encourage LITE grant recipients to submit proposals; these submissions will be evaluated on all criteria except their relevance to the conference theme.

First day session formats (held online via Zoom)

- **Workshop:** 60 minutes. Pre-conference workshops should relate to the conference theme of “**Sparking and Sustaining Engagement**”. These workshops should take participants through the process of designing and implementing a strategy or approach that you have used, and the insights gained and/or the research and literature behind those strategies or approaches. Workshops should include participant activities and provide opportunities for participants to consider application to their own teaching or student learning.

Second day session formats (held in-person at the University of Waterloo)

- **Presentation:** 20 minutes (15-minute presentation, plus 5-minute discussion period). Share an approach, present empirical findings, or examine theoretical or methodological issues.
- **Panel discussion:** 60 minutes. With a panel of colleagues, address different topics related to the conference theme and/or its sub-questions. Topics may raise issues and include insights from practice, research, or both. Panels may relate to one discipline, several disciplines, or integrate insights gained from working in an interdisciplinary/multi-disciplinary way. Panels should involve three to five panelists and a moderator and should include a discussion period of 15 – 20 minutes.
- **Workshop:** 60 minutes. Take participants through the process of designing and implementing a strategy or approach that you have used, and the insights gained and/or the research and literature behind those strategies or approaches. Workshops should include participant activities and provide opportunities for participants to consider application to their own teaching or student learning.
- **Alternative session format:** 60 minutes. We invite you to propose a format for your session that may better suit your outcomes than the session formats suggested above. When submitting your proposal, please describe the session format and why it better supports your session outcomes.
- **Poster:** Share an approach (practice-based) or present empirical findings (research-based). While the poster should be self-contained and informative, we expect the author(s) to be present during our poster session to engage with the conference

participants. We would like our poster presentations to provide a 30-second synopsis to conference attendees during the poster session.

Further Information

For more information, including submission guidelines with detailed instructions on how to submit proposals, please visit the [University of Waterloo Teaching and Learning Conference](#) website.

Further Reading

Buckley, A. (2017). The ideology of student engagement research. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 23(6), 718–732. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2017.1414789>

Bryson, C. (2014). *Understanding and Developing Student Engagement*. Routledge.

Claus Nygaard, Brand, S., Bartholomew, P., Millard, L., Liam Burns, & Mahoney, C. (2013). *Student engagement : identity, motivation and community*. Libri Publishing.

Korhonen, V., Mattsson, M., Inkinen, M., & Toom, A. (2019). Understanding the Multidimensional Nature of Student Engagement During the First Year of Higher Education. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01056>

Lowe, T., & El Hakim, Y. (2020). *A handbook for student engagement in higher education : theory into practice*. Routledge.

Sengupta, E. (Ed.). (2020). *International Perspectives on improving student engagement: Advances in library practices in Higher Education*. Emerald Publishing Limited.