

University of Waterloo Teaching and Learning Conference 2019: Teaching and Designing for Diverse Learners

Conference Theme and Call for Proposals

Our students and instructors are diverse: we come from a wide range of backgrounds, possess different life experiences, and approach learning and teaching differently. Hence, it is important to design our teaching strategies, assessments, and curricula so students can access the material through multiple pathways and engage meaningfully in their learning. Further, as instructors, we must consider how we can meet our diverse students' needs in a way that complements our own approaches to teaching.

This process requires building respectful and inclusive learning environments that recognize the needs of both learners and instructors. For example, incorporating flexible assessments in our courses allows students to demonstrate their knowledge in different ways. Yet, at the same time, there are significant challenges in implementing such practices. How do we meet diverse and conflicting student needs? How do we assess what really matters in a way that is rigorous, and importantly, fair to all?

For our 11th annual Teaching and Learning Conference, we invite you to submit proposals for presentations, panel discussions, workshops, and poster presentations that share your practices and research related to inclusive education. We also strongly encourage [Learning Innovation and Teaching Enhancement \(LITE\) grant](#) recipients to submit proposals: these sessions will be highlighted in the conference program.

Questions and ideas to consider:

- How can we recognize the diversity of learners in our classroom?
- What teaching and assessment practices can we use to meet the diverse needs of our students?
- What teaching and community-building strategies can increase students' sense of belonging? How can we support underrepresented and marginalized groups in our classes?
- How can we include multiple ways for students to demonstrate what they know? How can we build flexibility into our assessments, while still ensuring they are rigorous and fair?
- How can we design our assessments to create optimal challenge? How can we work with stress that is optimal for learning while reducing unnecessary stress for our students and instructors?
- How do we create an environment that balances the needs, time pressures, and workloads of students and instructors?
- What classroom, department, faculty, and institution-level policies help or hinder our efforts to create an inclusive teaching and learning environment?
- How can we proactively modify our teaching practices to reduce barriers to student learning?

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 **Wednesday, January 23, 2019**. There will be no extensions to this deadline.
- Proposals must be between **200-300 words**.
- Proposals may be research-based, practice-based, or both. For example:
 - Individuals engaged in conducting research on teaching and learning (including recipients of [LITE grants](#))
 - Instructors who are looking to share practices, strategies, and examples from their classroom experiences
- Individuals may *present* in a maximum of one session. Individuals may be *authors* in more than one session, however. If you are submitting a poster, you may present at up to two sessions.
- Please remove any names from your proposal, as the review process is blind.
- Ensure that your session will be relevant to people from a variety of disciplines.
- If participants were to leave with just one idea from your session that they could integrate into their work, what would it be?

Proposal review criteria

Proposals will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

- Relevance of proposal to the conference theme or funded Learning Innovation and Teaching Enhancement (LITE) grant project*
- Deepens understanding/awareness of issues related to teaching and learning
- Proposal ideas are situated within the relevant literature or best practices
- Relevance to people 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.

Session formats

- **Presentation:** 20 minutes (15-minute presentation, plus 5-minute discussion period). Share an approach (practice-based), present empirical findings, or examine theoretical or methodological issues (research-based).
- **Panel Discussion:** 55 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 to 20 minutes.
- **Workshop:** 55 minutes. Take participants through the process of designing and implementing a strategy that you have used, and the insights gained from using that strategy and/or the research and literature behind those strategies. Workshops should include participant activities and provide opportunities for participants to consider application to their own teaching.

- **Alternative session format:** 55 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 how it relates to 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 interact with the conference participants.

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

Lawrie et al. (2017). [Moving towards inclusive learning and teaching: A synthesis of recent literature](#). *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, 5(1).

Vanderbilt University Centre for Teaching. [Increasing Inclusivity in the Classroom](#).

Columbia Center for Teaching and Learning. [Guide for Inclusive Teaching at Columbia](#).

University of Michigan Center for Research on Teaching and Learning. [Inclusive Teaching Resources and Strategies](#).

Council of Ontario Universities. [Educator's Accessibility Toolkit](#).

University of Waterloo Centre for Teaching Excellence. [Accessibility in Teaching](#).