

## ENV Teaching Fellow Update (2020-21)

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[University Teaching Fellows](#) share best practices and innovative teaching approaches to enhance teaching quality and student learning, as well as pursuing projects appropriate to their individual Faculties. Tasks include, (a) raising the profile of teaching and learning at UW, (b) establishing communities of practice pertaining to teaching and learning, (c) providing or coordinating assistance and mentoring to any instructor, and (d) working as a liaison with academic support units, such as the Centre for Extended Learning (CEL) and the Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE). This document provides a summary of key activities that the Teaching Fellow (Su-Yin Tan) has been engaged in during 2020-2021.

### **1) ENV Keeps Teaching Newsletters**

The requirements of pivoting to emergency online learning required during the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging for all instructors. The Teaching Fellow supported by graduate assistants published three “[ENV Keeps Teaching Newsletters](#)” during April, August, and November 2020 to assist instructors with transitioning to remote learning. The newsletters began as a “Quick Tips” document summarizing online teaching resources and supports available to instructors, including highlighting key [Keep Learning](#) resources and summarizing remote teaching guidelines for both synchronous and asynchronous online learning. Later newsletters focused on themes and feature articles, such as student wellbeing and mental health, transforming experiential learning activities into the remote teaching environment, MAD computing teaching support, and student reflections of remote learning. CEL was also consulted to develop a “Beginning of Term Checklist” of 10 points tailored towards Environment instructors.

### **2) ENV Keeps Teaching Tip Sheets**

[Brief teaching tip sheets](#) were released in addition to newsletters focusing on specific themes or questions that required timely attention. This included an ENV Keeps Teaching Tip Sheet on “Mid-Course Evaluations during COVID Times” published in October 2020, which advised instructors to conduct mid-course evaluations as a means of gauging how the student experience in their courses could be improved and to understand the main barriers to student learning. The second ENV Keeps Teaching Tip Sheet focused on “Final Exams in Remote Learning” published in December 2020, summarizing best practices for timed and untimed exams and assessments.

### **3) ENV Instructor and Student Survey Summaries**

The Teaching Fellow assisted Brendon Larson (Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies) with analyzing, summarizing, and communicating Faculty-level summaries of the [UW Instructor and Student Surveys](#) that were conducted in Spring 2020. The detailed 7-8 page [ENV Instructor and Student Survey Summary Reports](#) provide insights into Spring 2020 teaching experiences, including what synchronous and asynchronous teaching approaches and what technologies were utilized the most. Instructors were also asked about their Fall 2020 teaching preparations, challenges they encountered, and resources/supports that were most requested. For the Spring 2020 Student Survey Report, student experiences with remote learning were detailed, as well as their preferences for synchronous and asynchronous modes of learning, barriers to learning, and suggestions for improving the overall quality of remote or online courses.

#### **4) Remote Teaching Drop-In Sessions**

To further support instructors in the migration to online learning, the ENV Teaching Fellow, ENV CTE Liaison (Scott Anderson), and ENV CEL Liaison (Julia Burke) hosted monthly “Remote Teaching Drop-in Sessions” for ENV instructors during Fall 2020, Winter 2021, and Spring 2021 terms. All drop-in sessions were held online via Teams each month and varied from 1 hour to 1.5 hours with variable attendance depending on the time of the term. The open sessions were available for ENV instructors to drop-in to ask questions about anything related to remote teaching, technologies, and course set-up.

#### **5) Blended Learning Initiative**

An important Teaching Fellow project is the “Blended Learning Initiative” (<https://uwaterloo.ca/associate-vice-president-academic/teaching-fellows-blended-learning-initiative>), which was conceived as an institution-wide (but faculty-specific) project. This was in response to the need to prepare for a return to face-to-face teaching by turning new remote courses into blended courses, which would incorporate the best of both worlds (remote delivery and in-person teaching). Blended learning refers to the integration of online and face-to-face components in a meaningful way to achieve learning outcomes within a course.

The Blended Learning Initiative began with regular Teaching Fellow meetings during Fall 2020, supported by CTE and CEL, to define the goals and terms of the initiative. The ENV Teaching Fellow, Su-Yin Tan, undertook a leadership role amongst the Teaching Fellows to partner with the Associate Vice-President, Academic (David DeVidi) and CTE Director (Donna Ellis) to present the initiative to the Senate Undergraduate Council on January 12, 2021. Su-Yin Tan and Donna Ellis subsequently presented the initiative to higher university administration at Senate on February 22, 2021, which was received highly positively. Su-Yin Tan was featured in a UW News article about the Blended Learning Initiative, [“Moving from remote teaching to blended learning”](#).

At the faculty level, the ENV Teaching Fellow prepared and distributed a faculty-level Expression of Interest (EOI) of the Blended Learning Initiative, accompanied by a 1-hour information session hosted on May 20, 2021. EOI applicants were reviewed by the Teaching Fellow, who selected candidates for the first offering of the Blended Learning Workshops and coordinated with instructors about workshop registration and attendance, as well as communicating with their department chairs as required. The Teaching Fellow continued to select and facilitate ENV instructor candidates for the Blended Learning Workshops throughout Spring 2021 (one workshop) and Fall 2021 (two workshops). Su-Yin Tan also attended the 2-day workshop on Blended Learning held on October 12 and 19, 2021, which enabled direct experience with the workshop content and provision of feedback to CTE/CEL on how the workshop could be improved.

#### **6) UW Student Course Perceptions (SCP) Project**

The Course Evaluation Project Team (CEPT) [now referred to as the Student Course Perceptions (SCP) Project] is a long-running project that began in 2014 and is committed to updating the course evaluation instrument used at UW. The current ENV Teaching Fellow is playing a key role in Phase III (CEPT3) of the project, which focuses on creating a set of Faculty-level course evaluation questions. This work is supported by Sonya Buffone (Director, Teaching Assessment Processes, AVPA) and Gordon Stublely (Professor Emeritus, Mechanical and Mechatronics Engineering).

Environment is the first pilot Faculty (followed by Engineering) to develop Tier 2 faculty-level course evaluation items for the new SCP instrument. This work began in October 2020 with Su-Yin Tan assembling a working group comprised of 9 members, including faculty, staff, and student representatives. Phase 1 involved 3 consultations, while Phase 2 included 3 consultations in addition to work completed by smaller groups outside of the consultation meetings. Phase 1 included drawing from Environment's Strategic Plan and identifying Faculty-level teaching and learning goals and considering how priorities might align with institutional priorities. The aim of Phase 2 was to use the conceptual framework created in Phase 1 to create potential Tier 2 survey items for the new SCP instrument. Phase 2 was completed by three smaller working groups.

Up to date, the working group has developed 5 potential Tier 2 SCP survey items. We have engaged in an iterative peer review process to provide feedback on the potential Tier 2 survey items. Next steps are to assess and endorse the items at the broader Faculty level and to engage in a validation process of the potential survey items. A Summary Report of the Tier 2 items has been developed and the Teaching Fellow will meet with the Faculty's leadership team to discuss next steps for conducting Faculty-wide consultations for the project. The Teaching Fellow wishes to thank Sonya Buffone, Gordon Stublely, and the ENV SCP Working Group (Sandra Biskupovic, Ashley Gellatly, Anne Grant, Dan Murray, James Nugent, Katie Plaisance, Mark Seasons, and Wesley Van Wychen) for their support of this project.

## **7) Complementary Teaching Assessment Project (CTAPT)**

The Complementary Teaching Assessment Project Team (CTAPT) was formed in Winter 2018 to research and develop methods of assessing teaching and learning, and to provide recommendations based on empirical evidence and feedback consultations with the UW community.

Su-Yin Tan was invited to join CTAPT Phase 3 as an ENV representative on November 2020 and started attending regular CTAPT meetings in Winter 2021 term. Since March 10, 2021, the CTAPT group has scheduled biweekly meetings and produced a status report (<https://uwaterloo.ca/complementary-teaching-assessment-project/ctapt-phase-3-consultations-july-2021>). Su-Yin Tan and Ian Vanderburgh (CTAPT Chair) organized and hosted a CTAPT Consultation Meeting for the Faculty of Environment on July 20, 2021 with a preliminary CTAPT update shared beforehand.

During Fall 2021, CTAPT was divided into two separate groups working on, (a) Teaching Dossiers (TD) and (b) Peer Review of Teaching (PRT). Su-Yin Tan joined the PRT working group, which provided recommendations on both formative and summative forms of PRT to be implemented as complementary methods of teaching assessment. The work involved an environmental scan of PRT procedures and templates at other universities and institutions. PRT recommendations were brought back to the main CTAPT group in October 2021 to inform an update to the AVPA and then to Senate. CTAPT is still continuing its work in Phase 3 with further biweekly meetings scheduled in 2022.

## **8) ENV Co-op Review Committee – Learning Outcomes Working Group**

The Teaching Fellow was invited by the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies to participate on a committee for reviewing ENV co-op programs in Winter 2021. The committee comprised of 12 faculty, staff, and students with each department/school represented. The goal of this project was to develop learning outcomes for ENV co-op programs (with reference to the Future Ready Talent Framework), propose an approach to better integrate these experiences across a co-op degree program, and to recommend whether any changes to co-op plan requirements are necessary.

The committee met several times in February and March 2021 before breaking off into two working groups, (a) WG1: Learning Outcomes (chaired by Su-Yin Tan), and (b) WG2: Work-term Reports (chaired by Michael Wood). WG1 was tasked with developing co-op program learning outcomes. This process involved iterative meetings during March and May 2021 to complete group brainstorming exercises, mapping to the strategic plan and the Future Ready Talent Framework, and drafting of learning outcomes. Veronica Brown (CTE) was recruited as a third-party facilitator to assist with this process. In the end, 8 learning outcomes were drafted for ENV co-op programs, which were shared with the rest of the co-op review committee and brought forward to the Faculty leadership. Up to date, Environment is only the second Faculty on campus to have established co-op program learning outcomes ([Math](#) is the only other Faculty to do so). The co-op review committee's work concluded in May 2021.

## **9) Teaching Fellow Meetings**

A key responsibility of the Teaching Fellow is to attend monthly Teaching Fellow meetings with the Associate Vice President, Academic (AVPA) and to serve as a liaison with academic support units (e.g., CEL, CTE). All six Faculties' Teaching Fellows are in attendance and most 2020-21 meetings were devoted to developing the university's Blended Learning Initiative. Concerns and best practices related to teaching were shared, especially related to the pandemic response from each Faculty. Other meetings were geared towards meeting with the Future Ready Talent Framework team, consultation session with President Vivek Goel, and recent meetings have been preoccupied with start of Winter 2022 preparations and discussing the new [Accessibility for Ontarions with Disabilities Act \(AODA\) Education Standards](#) to more fully meet the needs of students with disabilities.

AODA Education Standards propose a universal design approach to reduce the need for individual accommodations, but will require significant resources, procedures, and protocols, which have major implications for individual instructors and instructional support units, such as CTE, the Library, and Accessibility Services. It is envisioned that Teaching Fellows will have a role in the implementation of these standards. The Teaching Fellows are currently discussing proposing a new university-wide initiative in 2022 related to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) that could be associated with the university's response to meeting AODA Education Standards. This new project also relates to efforts to improve both student and instructor wellbeing; a significant need that has become apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **10) Liaison for Academic Support Units**

The Teaching Fellow's responsibility of serving as a liaison with academic support units (especially CTE and CEL) continues. CTE and CEL regularly consult Teaching Fellows about practices within their Faculties and feedback on initiatives, such as the CEL Agile Development team, CEL Online Teaching and Course Design Awards, CTE teaching and learning workshops, and other training opportunities for instructors.

Each year, the Teaching Fellow also supports the [UW Teaching and Learning \(UWTL\) Conference](#), reviewing and rating abstracts/proposals, participating in a pre-conference workshop scheduled with the keynote speaker, and attending the conference itself. The Teaching Fellow assists ENV applicants in their submissions to the CTE LITE Grant program and provides feedback as necessary.

## **Summary**

In summary, despite the challenging and busier than usual times due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this period has demonstrated the need for and value of the University Teaching Fellow program and community level initiatives for sharing best practices pertaining to teaching and learning. This role will be further needed as we return to more in-person learning, engage in classroom spaces that require social distancing, and adjust to changing educational standards and requirements. The University Teaching Fellows will continue to plan and engage in more timely and relevant initiatives during the upcoming year to support instructors. As always, feedback and requests related to needs and resources that can further improve teaching practices and the learning experience for students are welcome as we continue to adjust to these changing times.