

**16th Annual University of Waterloo
Teaching and Learning Conference**

Disruption and Uncertainty as Drivers for Change

April 30, 2025 – Online | May 1, 2025 – In-person

The context in which we teach has permanently changed; there are more expectations and requirements than ever – some of them even contradicting each other – amidst diminishing resources. Even more in recent years, university pedagogy has increasingly come to reflect “contingency and uncertainty” (Shulman 2005), where educators must be resourceful, flexible, and aware. In a world “that continues to face multiple, compounding crises” ([Global Futures](#), UW 2024), we need to take care of our students and ourselves as we learn to cope, adapt, and respond. Faced with many competing, complex challenges, the university community must “continue to be bold and unconventional” (“[Our strategic vision](#)”) in devising strategies that prioritize our well-being, while also building community, capacity, and a shared culture of teaching and learning.

While there is no shortage of disruptions and sources of uncertainty to teaching and learning, some have been paramount in the past few years: the pandemic skill gap; the rapid expansion of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) and the accompanying concerns about academic integrity; the uncertainty around the implementation of the proposed Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Postsecondary Education Standards recommendations; the realization that we must do more to Indigenize and decolonize our campus, and ensure that equity, accessibility, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism shape the decisions we make, even as we face the prevalence of sexual harassment, sexual violence, homophobia, and transphobia on campus and beyond.

For our 16th annual University of Waterloo Teaching and Learning Conference, we will centre our conversation around strategies for responding to disruption and uncertainty and leveraging them as occasions to innovate and improve our educational practices. How do we address challenges and opportunities that arise from crises, whether local or global, individual or collective? How do we deal with these disruptions to our carefully planned terms or programs? What are the key lessons to take into future disruptions? How do we support students and faculty and staff members? How do we survive expanded workload expectations? How do we help our students navigate having a full course load, a part-time job, and care duties? How do we deal with the high levels of stress experienced by our colleagues and students? How do we partner with colleagues and other units on campus to support each other and leverage each other’s strengths? How can we use technology to limit the impact of disruptions? How do we encourage our students to “think differently” (“Vision, Mission, and Values”) about challenges and build resilience? How do we provide them with the tools they need? How do we engage with local and global communities to bridge academia and real-world challenges? What new directions are we taking?

We invite you to submit proposals for presentations, panel discussions, workshops, alternative sessions, and posters that address these questions. We also welcome proposals from recipients of Learning Innovation and Teaching Enhancement (LITE) grants.

Additional ideas and questions to consider

- **Adapting Teaching Methods**
 - How are students and instructors addressing the COVID-19 pandemic skill gap?
 - What innovative teaching practices have emerged in response to disruptions?
 - How can we partner with our students and teaching assistants to develop new teaching and assessment methods?
 - What is the role of teaching assistants in shaping these new methods? How can we leverage their expertise?

- **Pedagogical Innovations in Online and Blended Learning**
 - How do we critically leverage or manage GenAI?
 - How do we integrate learning technologies in our classrooms?
 - How do we engage students in core content through innovative approaches?
 - What are effective strategies for transitioning and enhancing online and blended learning environments?

- **Course and Curriculum Design and Renewal**
 - What strategies help to balance core content with emerging issues?
 - What are strategies for redesigning curricula to be more flexible and resilient in the face of disruptions, to re-evaluate core content in the context of global challenges?
 - What are methods for assessing student learning during disruptions?
 - What are the long-term implications of disruptions for curriculum design?

- **Student Engagement and Support**
 - How do we develop approaches to maintain and increase student engagement and support during times of upheavals?
 - How do we ensure that first-generation students have the resources and the support systems they need to navigate challenges and change?
 - How do we address disparities in educational access and outcomes?

- **Equity and Inclusion**
 - How can Indigenous ways of knowing shift disciplinary models of navigating change?
 - How do we devise inclusive approaches to teaching and learning to proactively limit the impact of disruptions?

- Can inclusive curricula that reflect diverse perspectives and experiences help us navigate disruptions?
 - Do we need to *introduce* disruptions to our teaching and learning practices to meet our institutional commitments to Indigenization?
 - What support do we implement for marginalized and vulnerable student populations?
 - Do disruptions differentially impact students already at risk of marginalization, and if they do, are there ways to mitigate this problem?
 - How do we amplify Indigenous ways of knowing and culturally sustaining pedagogies in courses and academic programs, ethically and non-extractively?
- **Student and Educator Mental Health and Wellbeing**
 - How can we limit the impact of disruptions on students' and educators' mental health?
 - How do we embed support systems and interventions into our courses, without sacrificing content or essential requirements?
 - How do we foster resilience and wellbeing in our educational communities?
 - How do we address compassion fatigue?
- **Faculty and Staff Members Development**
 - How do we challenge the culture of demanding immediate solutions and the push to do more with less?
 - How do we build interdisciplinary connections with colleagues?
 - How do we promote professional development initiatives that prepare faculty to handle uncertainty effectively?
 - How do we build institutional frameworks that support rapid adaptation and resilience in teaching and learning?

Works Cited

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Artificial Intelligence Disclosure: Artificial Intelligence Tool: Microsoft Copilot (University of Waterloo institutional instance); Information Collection: Microsoft Copilot was used to find relevant sources; Writing – Review & Editing: Microsoft Copilot was used for sentence-level editing and to highlight writing patterns.

Further Readings

- Alexander, B. (2023). *Universities on fire: Higher education in the climate crisis*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
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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 20, 2025, at 11:59p.m.** 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.
- Number of proposals per person: Each attendee may submit up to two proposals for conference sessions but may be the primary presenter for only one of these sessions. For the second session, they must be listed as co-presenter. 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. Replace names of people and institutions with Xs in the title, abstract, and session abstract.
- 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?)

Session Types

Online day	In-person day	Session Length
Online panel	Alternative session	60 minutes
Online workshop	In-person panel	60 minutes
	In-person workshop	60 minutes
	Presentation	60 minutes total: three 15-minute sessions, each followed by a 5-minute Q&A
	Poster Session	60 minutes

Online day (on Zoom) – April 30

Online workshop: 60 minutes. Refer to the in-person format description.

Online panel discussion: 60 minutes. Refer to the in-person format description.

In-person day (Science Teaching Complex, Biology 2, and Federation Hall) – May 1

Technology provided for all sessions (except the poster session): Computer, clicker, projector, and microphones.

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; share the insights gained and/or the research and literature supporting 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 here. 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). This year, the poster session will take a new form. We want to recognize the work that goes into designing a poster and offer presenters multiple opportunities to showcase their research during the day.

- **Lunch screening** (projected on the big screen before the Igniting our Practice plenary, 1:00-1:45 p.m.). If poster presenters wish to have their posters projected they will need to send an electronic copy of their poster (in PDF format) to the organizing committee by April 28 at 12:00 p.m. (noon EST). Posters emailed after that date will not be included in the display. Presenters do not need to attend lunch to have their poster showcased.
- **Flash talk presentation (Concurrent Session 3, 3:00-4:00 p.m.):** Participants will also be asked to deliver a 1-minute flash talk presentation in front of their display during the third series of concurrent sessions of the day. (Standing room only. Chairs can be accommodated.)
- **End-of-day reception** (5:15-6:30 p.m.): a more traditional poster session walk-around.

Technology provided: A board and clips/pushpins will be provided to attach your printed poster. More details on poster size will be provided later.

Components of the Proposal

- **Session type:** Please review and select the session type best suited for your proposal and session goals. **Please be mindful that we have limited space for in-person and online alternative sessions, panels, and workshops (8-12 slots in person, 16 online); if you select these modalities ensure you provide a strong rationale that focuses on the interactive aspects of your proposal.**
 - For in-person and online alternative sessions, panels, and workshops, you will be prompted to provide an outline of the session activities, including a description of the types of guiding questions and interactions planned. Be as detailed as possible.
- Research sessions proposals should describe methodology and results.
- Presenter information (include name, affiliation, and current contact information for the main presenter and all co-presenters).
- Session title.
- Session abstract (no more than 300 words).
- Learning outcomes, Goals, or Takeaways (one or two outcomes; one or two specific, actionable takeaways for participants).
- References (3-5).

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.

Important Submission, Review, and Schedule Release Dates

Acceptance Notifications: Notification about conference acceptances will be sent in early March to the email address used for your submission.

Submission dates

- November 1, 2024: Call for Proposals circulated.
- November 15, 2024: Proposal submission opens.
- January 20, 2025: Proposal submission closes at 11:59 p.m.

Reviewer dates

- January 27, 2025: Anonymized proposals sent to reviewers.
- February 21, 2025: Proposal reviews completed.

Schedule release dates

- Mid-March to early April: Preliminary schedule released for presenters to flag time conflicts; last opportunity to edit title and abstract.
- Mid-April: Final schedule and full program with abstracts released.