

Western

Western's Future of Teaching & Learning: Strategic Action Areas

2026



Why the Future of Teaching & Learning?

Across our campus, exceptional student learning experiences and innovative teaching practices are thriving. Western's Future of Teaching and Learning builds on these strengths with a comprehensive, campus-wide action plan.

Western's Future of Teaching and Learning: Strategic Action Areas serves as a bridge plan, integrating priorities from existing initiatives—including the Global Engagement Plan, the EDIDA Strategic Plan, Faculty-specific plans, and Towards Western at 150.

This work responds to a pivotal moment for reflection and action in higher education. Its purpose is both aspirational and practical, to enhance teaching and learning within our current environment while preparing for what lies ahead.

Why Now?

Higher education is at a turning point. Technological advances, public perception, and the perceived misalignment between degree outcomes and the workforce skills gap require us to assess our values and priorities to address the central question:

Why go to university? And what is the added value of learning at a research-intensive university?

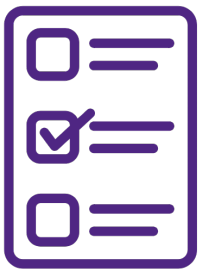
Further, teaching and learning goals appear across a range of Western plans. An overarching strategic action plan commensurate with the importance of teaching and learning at Western can further advance these goals.

Key Partners

Western's Future of Teaching and Learning Strategic Action Areas is supported through partnerships with:

- Western Libraries;
- Student Experience;
- Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion;
- Office of Indigenous Initiatives;
- Western Technology Services;
- Office of the Vice-Provost (Academic Programs) including the Centre for Teaching and Learning and the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement;
- Office of the Registrar;
- School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies;
- Academic and administrative leaders and teams from across campus.

Working together, the goal is to support uptake and actioning of the plans across the Faculties.



3,100+

responses to our campus wide survey



75+

Action Planning Group members



300+

participants at two Towh Hall events

Action Plan Oversight

Western's Future of Teaching and Learning Steering Committee oversees reporting and tracking and includes representation from the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and academic and administrative leadership from a cross-section of campus.

The Steering Committee meets quarterly to review and guide progress. Committee membership, progress and results are shared on Western's Future of Teaching and Learning site.

Strategic Action Area 1: Prepare Students for Success at Western and Beyond

1.1 **Raise awareness of academic norms and expectations (the hidden curriculum), especially among first-year students**

1.2 **Promote existing resources**

1.3 **Engage students who would benefit from additional support**

1.4 **Promote career/professional education in support of lifelong learning**

1.5 **Help equity-deserving students successfully navigate the transitions throughout their journey at Western, from undergraduate to graduate programs to the work environment**

Action	Impact
Introduce required training in academic integrity for all incoming students *(1.1)*	6,000+ undergraduate and graduate students receive the required training in academic integrity, with impact on their studies, the culture of learning, and stronger student understanding of citation and attribution.
Create a First Year Student Success Toolkit *(1.1, 1.2)*	Toolkit available to all faculty, including orientation and other welcome materials that already exist. Creates more consistency in the first-year experience.
Incorporate learnings from a previously funded Parr Centre project to create guidelines and a toolkit for redesigning more first-year courses based on this model *(1.3)*	Undergraduate students in first-year classes. Resulting toolkit positions additional courses to adopt the model, scaling impact in subsequent years across multiple Faculties.
Create a landing page in Brightspace for wayfinding and navigation to the University's supports for student academic success and wellness *(1.2)*	Reach 48,000 students with targeted resources and support Anticipated outcomes include earlier help-seeking, improved navigation of services

Action	Impact
Showcase examples of student transition programming and scale *(1.2)*	Solicit examples from Faculties, including impact on first-year students and courses.
Promote the Graduate Student Life webpage as a resource for academic, learning and wellness supports for graduate students *(1.2)*	Reach 48,000 students with targeted resources and support Anticipated outcomes include earlier help-seeking, improved navigation of services.
Offer academic coaching to transfer students, mature students, international direct entry students, and by referral *(1.3, 1.5)*	Reach 400+ students with targeted resources and support to improve student retention and success.
Create a Career framework for embedding career education in curriculum *(1.4)*	Framework available to all faculty, with examples and support from Career Education unit.
Pilot career education-embedded program *(1.4)* i.e., taking an existing academic program and strategically embedding career education at multiple levels	Create a model that can be applied in other departments/faculties
Enhance awareness and access to Career Education by adding a Professionalization module to the Training section in Brightspace for all students *(1.4)*	Module accessible to all students; supports awareness of and access to career education resources.

Strategic Action Area 2: Transform Programs Relevant to Students, Society, and Industry

- **2.1** **Embed Indigenous knowledge systems and relational approaches alongside equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization, accessibility and anti-racism principles in undergraduate and graduate education**
- **2.2** **Guarantee all undergraduate students opportunities for experiential learning**
- **2.3** **Reduce or eliminate barriers to uptake of experiential learning, particularly for equity deserving students**
- **2.4** **Develop more experiential learning opportunities, including land-based learning and Indigenous-led opportunities**
- **2.5** **Critically assess the impact of GenAI across disciplines on learning outcomes**
- **2.6** **Expand the current essay requirement to a communications intensive (CI) requirement to distinguish Western and strengthen alignment with Western Degree Outcomes and EDIDA priorities**
- **2.7** **Recognize knowledge justice as a core academic value of our programs, learning outcomes, and assessments**

Action	Impact
Embed dedicated reflections about how academic programs are integrating EDIDA in program operations, curriculum and outcomes as part of Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Processes (IQAP) *(2.1)*	All academic programs and students who take them More deliberate program-level commitments to EDIDA, identification of structural barriers, and concrete actions.
Introduce questions on GenAI and learning outcomes into Cyclical Program Reviews *(2.5)*	Potential for program/course level changes at undergraduate and graduate levels Better guidance for graduate students on the use of GenAI in thesis-related work.
Develop workshops and resources for faculty on knowledge justice-informed teaching, including Indigenous Sovereignty (Data, Governance, Justice and the Land), and foster uptake of Indigenous Learning Bundles *(2.1, 2.7)*	Supports institutional commitments under the EDIDA Strategic Plan.

Action	Impact
Expand access to EL for equity-deserving students *(2.2)*	Increase opportunities for equity-deserving students to benefit from EL.
Make EL opportunities more visible to students: pilot having EL course tagging information (i.e., EL type and low/medium/high intensity) visible to students; add EL information to course description *(2.2)*	Predictability of EL access for students planning their academic pathways.
Review all programs to ensure all students have opportunity for EL *(2.2)*	All undergraduate programs include accessible EL opportunities.
Increase number of project-based learning courses *(2.3)*	Reduce financial and time-based barriers to EL participation, especially among equity-deserving students.
Expand access to work integrated learning (WIL): ensure access for international students to all WIL programs; consider co-op model (i.e. flexible start times, length, paid) in faculties with other forms of WIL *(2.3, 2.4)*	Increase access to WIL.
Explore opportunities to align EL practices with Indigenous epistemologies and expand partnerships with Indigenous communities toward goal of increased land-based learning within signature type strategy *(2.1, 2.4)*	Supports Western's commitments under the Indigenous Strategic Plan and contributes to the broader institutional EDIDA agenda; centres Indigenous-led approaches to learning and knowledge.
Bring forward any proposed changes to WDOs and implement changes through IQAP *(2.1-2.7)*	Western Degree Outcomes closely aligned with institutional priorities and reflected at the program level.
Bring forward briefing note to Senate Committee on Academic Policy to establish a working group to draft a proposal to shift essay requirement to a communications requirement and recommend to Senate by January 1, 2027 *(2.6)*	Strengthened institutional commitment to communication competencies; alignment with Western Degree Outcomes.

Strategic Action Area 3: Reimagine Assessment

3.1 **Embed accessibility and universal design for learning (UDL) in assessments to support all students, including those with academic considerations and accommodations**

3.2 **Support strategies for assessment at scale of critical thinking, teamwork, and communication skills**

3.3 **Support no/low stakes assessment and feedback practices to encourage student curiosity and engagement in learning**

3.4 **Support assessment integrity through technology, teaching methods, and infrastructure**

3.5 **Support transparency on use of Generative AI in courses, assessments, and other academic activities**

3.6 **Support grading standards and the value of the Western degree**

Action	Impact
Support development of and promote uptake of the UDL Accessibility Toolkit *(3.1)*	UDL principles embedded in assessment design across programs
Foster discipline-specific decision making on impact of GenAI on assessment across all courses and other academic activities in a program *(3.2-3.5)*	Supports strategic assessment practices and student learning
Create showcase and repository of examples from across Faculties (course outlines, assessments, active learning) *(3.2)*	Community sharing of effective practices across the Faculties
Streamline and target communications and supports for faculty to implement flexibility into assessments *(3.1)*	More consistent implementation of flexible assessment practices supporting student wellness and success
Promote resources for authentic assessment in large class assessments *(3.2)*	Enhances student learning and reduced over-reliance on high-stakes exams, stronger assessment alignment with program learning outcomes.

Action	Impact
Pilot new digital assessment platform that allows faculty to create high-quality assessment experiences for students, including feedback on their learning, in a secure and supportive environment *(3.3)*	Impacts all courses, faculty, and students that take this up; interest identified in Future of Teaching and Learning Survey
Develop an approach to deliver oral assessments at scale using existing technology tools *(3.4)*	Impacts all courses, faculty, and students that take this up; interest identified in Future of Teaching and Learning Survey
Monitor and enhance the integrity of in-person assessments *(3.4)*	Maintains the integrity of the Western degree
Develop workshops and resources on GenAI disclosure statements for faculty to indicate how they have used GenAI in the development and delivery of their courses, including feedback and assessment *(3.5)*	Faculty supported in transparent GenAI disclosure across course design and assessment
Briefing note to Senate Committee on Academic Policy to propose update to the Senate Policy on Course Outlines requiring faculty to indicate if/how they have used GenAI in the design and delivery of their course, including feedback to students *(3.5)*	Updated Senate Policy on Course Outlines establishes a consistent expectation for transparency on GenAI use in course design, delivery, and feedback to students.
Review grades and Faculty-level grading policies and consider ways to improve implementation of existing grading policy or bring forward changes *(3.6)*	Preserve the value and meaning of grades over time

Strategic Action Area 4: Teaching Excellence

4.1 **Advance teaching priorities in the Faculties**

Orient faculty to the teaching culture at Western and in their disciplines

4.2 **Prepare and support faculty to incorporate EDIDA more fully into the classroom to enhance the learning experience of students**

4.3 **Build university-wide culture that values EDIDA in teaching and learning at the level of policy and governance**

4.4 **Create resources to increase opportunities to receive feedback on teaching and to demonstrate teaching quality**

4.5 **Create new awards to recognize teaching excellence**

4.6 **Develop processes and resources to reduce teaching-related administrative workload**

Action	Impact
Enhance role of Associate Deans Academic Undergraduate and Graduate (or designates) as faculty champions for teaching and learning *(4.1, 4.2)*	Amplify uptake of central resources and bring forward input and ideas from Faculties
Facilitate workshops to prepare faculty and staff to incorporate EDIDA into pedagogy and curriculum design *(4.3)*	Focus on program-level workshops to scale across Faculties
Support faculty to co-create accessible classrooms of inclusion and belonging; equip instructors with pedagogical tools, resources and strategies to teach, engage and accommodate students with disabilities and diverse needs *(4.3)*	Focus on program-level workshops to scale across Faculties

Action	Impact
Revise existing and develop new policies and governance procedures to embed EDIDA in teaching and learning *(4.4)*	Impacts all students, faculty, staff groups
Create a peer assessment framework for faculty *(4.5)*	Supports teaching quality and culture of teaching and learning Stronger formative feedback for instructors at all career stages
Increase opportunities for proactive feedback from students early in a course *(4.5)*	Supports teaching quality
Showcase and share promising teaching practices *(4.6)*	Feature faculty member practices and scale for impact
Review awards in VPAP portfolio, create new ones, and introduce easy ways to nominate and recognize teaching excellence *(4.6)*	Expand recognition of teaching excellence and support (for instance, recognition of administrative staff supporting teaching, librarians and archivists, preceptors)
Streamline academic considerations procedures with more targeted communication to faculty *(4.7)*	Reduce teaching-related administrative workload

Strategic Action Area 5: Advancing Graduate Student Success: Support, Development, Innovation

Supervisor/Student Relationships

5.1 Increase supervisor and student awareness of responsibilities and relationship building

5.2 Develop more support and recognition for supervisor excellence

Professional Development

5.3 Integrate professional development opportunities into graduate program curricula

5.4 Develop a co-curricular strategy to support graduate students

Flexible Pathways

5.5 Encourage program level assessments of the barriers and opportunities to create more pathways through graduate school

5.6 Develop doctoral options for practicing professionals and laddering options into graduate education

Action	Impact
Revive Graduate Education Committee (GEC) Supervision and Mentorship committee *(5.1)* Develop/enhance resources for best practices in graduate student supervision and mentorship *(5.1)* Revamp orientation programming to better communicate information about the resources and SGPS regulation on Supervision to incoming graduate students *(5.1)* Include best practices around supervision as part of the Grad Chair info sessions offered by SGPS *(5.1)*	All graduate students and their supervisors.

Action	Impact
New Supervisor Excellence Award *(5.2)*	Recognizes and supports excellence.
Better coordination with Faculties on professional development activities through Own Your Future (OYF) e.g., digital badging *(5.3)* Increase accessibility to OYF modules through increased online, asynchronous offerings (new and existing content) *(5.3)* Promote OYF modules as stackable within existing program courses/milestones *(5.3)*	Better career preparedness for graduate students.
Launch of the revised co-curricular record *(5.4)*	Recognition of graduate students' co-curricular learning; supports holistic professional development.
Focus topic for Associate Dean-Grad retreat in Autumn, 2026 *(5.5)* Share examples of program modifications to reduce barriers and increase opportunities *(5.5)* Encourage reflection explicitly about reducing barriers and creating opportunities in program narratives as part of Cyclical Program Review *(5.5)*	Identification of and reduction in barriers to graduate student progression and degree completion.
Focus groups with industry representatives to understand barriers and opportunities *(5.6)* Develop partnerships with companies to consider new approaches to doctoral education including accessibility to eligible employees to conduct PhD as well as WIL opportunities for PhD students *(5.6)* Develop laddering and stackable options in graduate education through graduate diplomas or micro-credentials *(5.6)*	Greater connection with industry supports career pathways for students.

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