Quality Academics Policy

Expires: April 30, 2029

1. Facts

1. Student success is realized when students receive quality instruction, meaningful academic challenge and support to foster a positive, safe, and memorable learning-rich experience that advances their personal growth, knowledge, and practical skills.
    a. Quality in undergraduate instruction affects every student on campus and provides them with a positive, safe, memorable, and learning-rich experience throughout their degree.
    b. Student success is realized when students receive both meaningful academic challenge and support that encourages learning in a way that advances their personal growth, knowledge, and practical skills.
2. Outstanding instruction in undergraduate education reflects positively on the University, as it allows them to "produce graduates who fuel new possibilities for our province and the world."
    a. Outstanding instruction in undergraduate education reflects positively on the University.
3. Student feedback and evaluation of instruction allows for effective and clear communication between students and instructors, which can aid instructors to improve their teaching.
    a. Excellence in instruction requires effective and clear communication and interaction between students and instructors.
    b. Student feedback and evaluation of instruction provides students with a voice in their learning environment and can aid instructors to improve their teaching.
4. Students pay high tuition and in turn, expect that they are receiving high-quality education and instruction by quality, well-educated instructors while in their undergraduate degree.
    a. The Alberta Tuition Framework establishes that Exceptional Tuition Increases are introduced "only if the increased tuition would result in improvements in program quality."
    b. Students pay high tuition and in turn, expect that they are receiving high-quality education and instruction while in their undergraduate degree.
        i. Students also expect that they are being taught by quality, well educated instructors
        ii. Students often pay high costs for educational materials that do not always reflect the quality of these materials.
5. A culture of excellence in teaching requires institutional commitment, investment and innovation, including faculty access to high-quality, progressive professional development coupled with supporting policies relating to teaching and learning.
    a. Academic faculty members need access to high-quality, progressive professional development coupled with supporting policies relating to teaching and learning.
    b. Establishing a culture that promotes excellence in teaching requires institutional commitment, investment and innovation, including support for the scholarship of teaching and learning.
6. Assessment and grading of undergraduate students' academic performance and learning outcomes are central to the university's core academic mission and the most critical determinant of further academic and future career opportunities pursued by undergraduate students upon graduation.
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        i. The transferable skills well-suited for the workforce and continuing educational endeavours, are a direct result of quality instruction.
            a. Quality instruction prepares students with transferable skills well-suited for the workforce and continuing educational endeavors.
                i. When asked for student responses to an agree/disagree question on a 0-100 slider scale: "I feel like my experience at U of A is preparing me to find a good job." The average rating on that scale was 58.5[1].

7. Section 2 of the U of Alberta Policies and Procedures On-line (UAPPOL) Grading Procedure states that course expectations regarding assignments, grading and other course related matters must be communicated clearly in the course syllabus[1]
    a. Section 2 of the U of Alberta Policies and Procedures On-line (UAPPOL) Grading Procedure states that course expectations regarding assignments, grading and other course related matters must be communicated clearly in the course syllabus[1].
8. Section (2)f of Evaluation Procedures and Grading System of the University of Alberta University Calendar states “Each assessment is linked to the stated course objectives and/or learning outcomes. Students should be provided with the criteria for these assessments early in and, if necessary, throughout the course”.
    a. Section 23.4(2)f of Evaluation Procedures and Grading System of the University of Alberta University Calendar states “Each assessment is linked to the stated course objectives and/or learning outcomes. Students should be provided with the criteria for these assessments early in and, if necessary, throughout the course”.
9. Grading and assessment policies and procedures need to be regularly updated to ensure they are structured to increase student success and minimize confusion.
    a. Grading and assessment policies and procedures need to be regularly updated to ensure they are structured to increase student success.
    b. Students should be able to understand why they received any grade
10. The importance of complex performance based learning in undergraduate education continues to grow and many courses across faculties and programs incorporate at least some form of such learning to enhance student success.
    a. Performance Based Evaluations are an approach to teaching and learning that emphasizes students being able to execute a unique skill set as a result of instruction and are given the ability to demonstrate or apply this ability, rather than simply knowing the information[2].
    b. The importance of complex performance based learning in undergraduate education continues to grow and many courses across faculties and programs incorporate at least some form of such learning to enhance student success.
        i. Performance Based Evaluations are an approach to teaching and learning that emphasizes students being able to execute a unique skill set as a result of instruction and are given the ability to demonstrate or apply this ability, rather than simply knowing the information[2].
11. Rubrics can be used to evaluate a wide variety of student assignments, and strong research demonstrates that rubrics improve teaching and learning[3].
    a. Rubrics can be used to evaluate a wide variety of student assignments, and strong research demonstrates that rubrics improve teaching and learning[3].
        i. Use of rubrics helps ensure that the measurement process (the assessment of performance) is free of error, reliable and consistent in producing equitable results for students.
    b. Use of rubrics helps ensure that the measurement process (the assessment of performance) is free of error, reliable and consistent in producing equitable results for students.
12. There are many academic support services available to students across campus[4].
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13. The University of Alberta is expecting significant enrollment growth in the coming years, and with a larger student population, there is an increased need for diverse instructional modes of delivery to accommodate an increased demand for remote learning.
14. In 2022, 38% of surveyed students reported their internet access was not stable enough to allow effective remote learning

2. Resolutions

1. The Students' Union will advocate for continued and growing institutional commitment towards excellence in instruction, including support for innovative teaching pedagogies and for the scholarship of teaching and learning.
    a. “The Students’ Union will advocate that all new instructors will be required to take a mandatory course on developing their teaching through the Centre for Teaching and Learning.”

2. The Students' Union will advocate for the continuous modernization of our curricula to adapt to the dynamic changes in research and knowledge. This will further enhance student learning and incentivize instructors to adopt innovative and effective teaching strategies, such as open educational resources.
    a. "The Students' Union will advocate that instructors with low USRI ratings will utilize the available resources through the Centre for Teaching and Learning to continue to develop their teaching techniques"
3. The Students' Union will advocate that the University of Alberta recognizes the importance of professional development in an instructor's performance, with evidence of efforts towards professional development being incorporated into evaluations in Faculty Evaluation Committees and annual reviews.
    a. "The Students' Union will advocate that the University recognizes the importance of professional development in an instructor's performance evaluation in Faculty Evaluation Committees."
    b. "The Students' Union will advocate that instructors be required to present evidence of their current and past teaching professional development experience as part of their annual review."
4. The Students' Union will advocate for increased and ongoing communication between students and professors through the continuation of mid-semester teaching evaluations such as SPOTs
    a. "The Students' Union will advocate for increased and ongoing communication between students and professors through mid-semester teaching evaluations such as URSIs"
5. The Students' Union will advocate for the sustainability and accessibility of the Universal Student Rating of Instructors (USRI's) and Student Perspectives of Teaching (SPOT) database.
    a. "The Students' Union will advocate for the sustainability and accessibility of the Universal Student Rating of Instructors (USRI's) database.
6. The Students' Union will advocate for clear and student-friendly mechanisms in French and English that allow students to raise concerns and appeals around academic standing and report instructors who fail to meet the standards of quality instruction.
    a. "The Students' Union will advocate for a clear and student friendly mechanism in French and English to report an instructor who fails to meet the standards of quality instruction."
    b. "The Students' Union shall advocate that each Department, Faculty, and bodies at the University clearly connect students to processes that allow them to raise concerns and appeals."
7. The Students' Union shall advocate that assignments be structured to increase student success.
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8. The Students' Union shall advocate that instructors are providing clear and explicit expectations of students for any given course in terms of assignments, tests and participation.
    a. "The Students' Union shall advocate that instructors are providing clear and explicit expectations of students for any given course in terms of assignments, tests and participation"
9. The Students' Union shall advocate that students are made regularly aware of their progress and academic performance in any given course, with due notice of academic performance before withdrawal deadlines.
    a. "The Students' Union shall advocate that students are made regularly aware of their progress and academic performance in any given course."
    b. "The Students' Union shall advocate that students should be made aware of their academic performance before the withdrawal deadline in any given course."
10. The Students' Union shall advocate that performance-based learning assessments be made available to students.
    a. "The Students' Union shall advocate that performance-based learning assessments be made available to students."
11. The Students' Union shall strive to create awareness around the academic support services available to help students improve.
    a. "The Students' Union shall strive to create awareness around the academic support services available to help students improve"
12. The Students' Union shall advocate that the appropriate infrastructure and resources are in place to offer quality instruction, in the cases where hybrid or remote learning is the mode of instruction

3. References

1. ↑ Perceived Career Value of a University of Alberta Education https://www.su.ualberta.ca/media/uploads/1143/PerceivedCareerValueofaUAlbertaEducation.pdf
2. ↑ Effective Teaching and Learning: A Framework for Multifaceted Assessment, Council on Student Affairs, January 30, 2020 Meeting Minutes
3. https://teaching.uwo.ca/teaching/assessing/grading-rubrics.html
4. https://www.ualberta.ca/current-students/academic-resources

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