

Western University

GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF ONLINE AND DIGITAL RESOURCES

Background

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) regulates the ability of universities to charge Compulsory Ancillary Fees (CAFs), which are defined as those fees, other than tuition, which students are required to pay to enroll in, or successfully complete, any credit course.

The MTCU regulations now permit charging fees for online and digital learning materials, which may include assessment tools. However, while recognizing the importance of digital resources in teaching, the MTCU wants to ensure that the central role of instructors in teaching and assessing students is covered by tuition, and that students are not being charged extra for materials that replace the instructor's role.

In order to comply with Ministry guidelines, and as a matter of good pedagogy and fairness to students, the following should be considered when using digital and online resources.

Guidelines

1. Students can be required to purchase access to digital learning resources, including e-textbooks, for the duration of a course.
2. Students cannot be compelled to purchase a print textbook component. Where the digital learning resources have been bundled with a print textbook, to which they might have access by other means (e.g., a library or classmate's copy), an option to purchase access to the digital learning resources component alone should be supplied.
3. Where the digital learning resource includes assessment tools, instructors may use these tools to assess student performance provided that their use does not form a substantial part of the overall assessment. Normally the proportion of the course grade determined by such assessment tools should not exceed 25%.
4. In requiring students to purchase learning resources, instructors should have regard to the overall cost of these resources for the course and endeavor to keep them at an affordable level for the students. Instructors should endeavor to have options available for students for whom the cost of such resources would cause undue hardship.