

UAlberta Policies to be Aware of when Planning for Assessment

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Assessment at the University of Alberta is primarily guided by two documents: (1) the [Assessment and Grading Policy](#) of the University of Alberta policies and procedures (UAPPOL), and (2) the University of Alberta Calendar. Both of these documents are approved by the General Faculties Council (GFC) and can be accessed by searching the University of Alberta main website.

Showing the Connections

At the University of Alberta, we must provide valid and reliable information and assessments in which students, employers, and accrediting bodies can have confidence. According to UAPPOLs seven guiding principles, each of the assessments in a course should be clearly aligned with the learning activities and stated learning outcomes. An easy way to represent these connections is with the use of a course map indicating the connections to learning outcomes and in-class experiences.

Let's say you had a course in the Faculty of Education with six learning outcomes¹. In this course, you decide to include 5 major assessments, each with connected formative assessments and learning experiences. This could be represented in the following way:

Table 1: Sample Course Map for a Faculty of Education Course

Assessment Title	Learning Outcomes	Grade Weight	Supporting Learning Experiences	Supporting Formative Assessment ²
Teaching Reflections Due: 1st Friday of each month	1, 3, 6	20% (4 at 5% each)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion questions • Shared reflection on experience • Lecture on effective reflection • Class Content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer rubric reflection • Class discussion Comments
Lesson Plan Due: October 14	1, 2	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture on lesson planning • In-class activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson plan • critique activity
Midterm Exam Written October 11 in class	4, 5	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion questions • Student response system (SRS) questions • Class Content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRS questions • Review of questions • Sample Midterm
Unit Plan Due: November 20	1, 2, 3, 4	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture on effective unit planning • Critique of unit plans • Unit Planning reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer review • Monthly check ins • Critique of unit plans
Final Exam December 13 at 2:00 p.m. in ED	3, 4, 5, 6	30% ³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion questions • Student response system (SRS) questions • Class Content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRS questions • Review of questions • Sample exam questions

¹ If you want to know more about learning outcomes, check out our [learning outcomes booklet](#) available here

² For an explanation on the term “formative assessment”, please [see this document](#).

³ According to the U of A Calendar, final exams must be assigned a weighting between 30 and 70%. Exceptions can be made only by authorization from the Faculty council in which the department offering the course is situated.

As you can see in Table 1, all six of our learning outcomes are assessed at some point throughout the course. Some of these learning outcomes are assessed multiple times, in different types of assessment. These multiple assessment points fulfill the multifaceted assessment requirement found in UAPPOL. This aspect is also supported by the multiple formative assessments included within this course; UAPPOL indicates that students should be assessed in a formative manner throughout the course and a summative manner both during and at the end of a course. Including these formative assessments, and multiple assessment points, provides both the instructor and student with a clearer idea of whether or not the student has achieved the intended learning outcomes within a course.

What do I put on my Course Outline?

According to UAPPOL, instructors must clearly communicate their general assessment methods and grading standards to students at the beginning of the course. Much of this communication can be done through the course outline; the “Evaluation Procedures and Grading System” found within the “Academic Regulations” section of the University of Alberta Calendar provides a comprehensive list of course outline requirements around evaluation and assessment. These include both required statements as well as items to be sure are included on your course outline prior to commencing the term.

Table 1, or at least the first three columns of it, may also be provided to students on your course outline to meet the inclusion requirements by the University of Alberta Calendar⁴:

- distribution of weight between term work and the final exam including the relative weight of all term work contributing to the course grade;
- whether marks are given for class participation⁵ or other in-class activities and the weight of these marks if given;
- dates of any exams and course assignments with a weighting of 10% or more of the overall course grade; and,
- that each assessment is linked to the stated course learning outcomes.

Note that this course has four assessments all over a value of 10% of the overall grade of students. For these assessments, due dates and examination dates **must** be provided on the course outline, and have been made visible within the chart. Changes to these dates *may* be made, but they must be made in consultation with the class and far enough in advance of the due date that effective communication of the new date is feasible; it is best not to change any dates on your course outline as students often plan their academic lives around due dates.

⁴The 2017-2018 Calendar was used to write these statements. For an updated version of the policy please visit the “Evaluation Procedures and Grading System” in the most recent version of the calendar at: <https://www.registrarsoffice.ualberta.ca/Calendar.aspx>

⁵If you are thinking about giving participation (or professionalism) grades, please review our document on this topic [found here](#).

Evaluative Material

For those **assignments worth greater than 30%, and all final examinations**, there is an additional layer of complexity added: evaluative material. According to UAPPOL, an instructor must provide access to past *or representative* evaluative course material in undergraduate courses as well as giving an indication of how students can access this material on their course outline. This evaluative material can be made available by the instructor, Faculty, department, or via a student's association. This evaluative material must be permitted to leave the classroom. Some examples of evaluative materials might include:

- Samples of students' past submissions for this assessment⁴,
- Past exams or portions thereof,
- Sample questions which prepare students for all types of questions,
- A fictional example of what is expected for an assessment.

Mark Translation

One final aspect of assessment that must be included in your course outline is the process by which term marks are translated into a final letter grade. It is noted here that the University of Alberta **does not** have a system to translate from a percentage grade to a letter grade; this is up to the discretion of the instructor, department, and/or Faculty. The University of Alberta Calendar *does* provide descriptors to match each letter grade and the corresponding grade point value. It is important that you clearly explain your process of determining a letter grade for students, particularly if you generally give assessments a percentage grade.

The University of Alberta does not endorse grades assigned on the basis of a curve, historic distribution, or a predetermined system (UAPPOL, 2012). When translating your grades, you *can* follow Faculty, department, or unit developed guidelines to set out a reasonable distribution of grades; these guidelines must go through the Academic Standards Committee and be communicated via the University Calendar prior to use.

⁴If you choose to share student work, it is a good idea to collect consent prior to sharing. For more information, see <http://www.ipo.ualberta.ca/FOIPP-Act/Guidelines/Use-of-Student-Course-Work.aspx>

When do I share how I am grading assignments?

It is not required that you share your assessment criteria on the course outline; the calendar states that students should be provided with the criteria for assessments early in and throughout the course. This is supported by UAPPOLs (2012) guiding principle, “clear and transparent assessment criteria should be provided to students throughout the course”. Along with clear assessment instructions and the learning outcomes to be demonstrated, students should be provided with clear, unambiguous assessment criteria well in advance of the assessment deadline.

Giving students the assessment criteria prior to completing an assessment, similar to evaluative material and exemplars, provides students with an idea of what an exemplary (or poor) assignment may look like. Often, these criteria can answer simple questions for students such as “how many citations do I need?” as well as give direction on more complex aspects such as “what counts as evidence for my argument?” One effective way of providing assessment criteria is the use of a rubric. In a rubric you provide students with the criteria the assessment is to be assessed. These criteria are supported with various quality definitions that connect to a scoring strategy. In giving students the assessment criteria, instructors are also complying with the UAPPOL guiding principle of summative assessments being open, accountable, and equitable in nature.

The University of Alberta does not require the use of rubrics, it does, however, require that you provide students with the assessment criteria on which they will be graded. To be thorough, connect your assessment criteria clearly to the learning outcomes covered by that assessment, since assessment needs to be aligned with the learning outcomes of a course. These criteria, including full assignment descriptions, are not required on your course outline, but it is a good idea to make them available as early in the term as possible. Should you decide to include these criteria on your course outline, remember that this is an agreement between you and your students and it will be difficult to make changes throughout the term.

Final Thoughts

It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with both the Academic Regulations within the University of Alberta Calendar as well as the Assessment and Grading Policy and Procedures available on UAPPOL. It should be noted that the University of Alberta encourages innovative forms of effective assessment, provided they comply with both policies. Providing students with an assessment map connecting learning outcomes, experiences, weightings, and clear criteria will better equip them to complete their assessments as well as provide instructors with supporting documentation showing the integration within their course.