

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



SENATE POLICY

VANCOUVER SENATE

c/o Enrolment Services
2016 - 1874 East Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1

Number & Title:

V-131: *Fee-Based Digital Learning Tools Used for Assessment*

Effective Date:

1 September 2023

Approval Date:

15 March 2023

Review Date:

The policy will be reviewed by the responsible committee three (3) years after approval and thereafter as deemed necessary by the responsible committee.

Responsible Committee:

UBC Vancouver Senate Academic Policy Committee.

Authority:

University Act, S. 37(1)

“The academic governance of the university is vested in the senate and it has the following powers:

... (d) to determine the conditions under which candidates must be received for examination, to appoint examiners and to determine the conduct and results of all examinations.

Purpose and Goals:

Digital learning tools and applications are an integral part of many courses at UBC and can demonstrably enhance student learning when integrated appropriately into course designs. Many applications are provisioned at an enterprise level at no cost to students or provided

freely as open source tools. Others, particularly those digital learning tools that are associated with and created by textbook publishers, have costs that are typically passed on to students, currently without any limits on such costs or weighting of such assessments in overall course marks.

By the beginning of the 2028/29 academic year, Senate expects that such costs for students will be eliminated, through continued development and adoption of Open Educational Resources (OERs) or by absorbing costs centrally and/or within Faculties. In the interim, a period of time is required to not only plan for significant course design changes that may be necessary, but also find ways to fund associated costs. During the interim period, this policy limits both the costs of fee-based digital learning tools and the extent to which a student's final grade or standing may be derived from the use of those materials, as steps toward the goal of eliminating such costs for students. Senate expects to receive annual reports from the Provost on steps taken toward this goal.

This policy also sets a limit on how much such digital assessments are permitted to weigh in a student's academic standing. The percentage limit balances the benefits of such tools to support student learning as currently employed in a wide variety of course designs against the principle that tuition should cover the cost of assessment or—where there is an appropriate pedagogical and logistical reason to use these tools—the majority of assessment.

The UBC Vancouver Senate Academic Policy Committee will review this policy in three (3) years and institute a process to track progress towards (a) decreasing the use and (b) lowering the costs of digital learning materials for which students are required to pay a fee.

Applicability

- 1) All UBC Vancouver undergraduate and graduate for-credit courses.
- 2) Compulsory non-tuition related fees for access to learning tools required for assessment in UBC Vancouver courses.

Exclusions

- 1) Digital assessment tools that do not contribute to a course mark or standing.
- 2) Digital assessment tools for which students are not required to pay a fee to access (e.g., assessment tools in UBC's learning management system).
- 3) Learning materials that become the property of the student and are retained beyond the completion of the course, such as art supplies, software, hardware, or laboratory equipment.
- 4) Textbooks, books, manuscripts, case studies, and other similar reference materials, whether purchased or rented by students.

Definitions

Consecutive courses means courses which are meant to be taken as a set, one of which is a prerequisite for the other.

Fee-based Digital Learning Tools Used for Assessment means platforms for which students are required to pay to access, and used to assess students through activities including, but not limited to, questions, assignment submissions, quizzes, exams, and similar activities. *Fee-based Digital Learning Tools Used for Assessment* are required for a component of a student's final grade or standing.

Policy

- 1) The cost limit to any student for *Fee-based Digital Learning Tools Used for Assessment* for any course shall be determined as follows:
 - a) The cost must be no more than 12% of the per-credit domestic tuition charge in the Bachelor of Arts program multiplied by the credit value of the course. (For a 3-credit course, this limit is \$70 in the year of establishment of this policy based on per-credit tuition rate of \$194.78 for 2023/24.)
 - b) For cases in which students may use the same *Digital Learning Materials Used for Assessment* for two *consecutive courses*, the total cost must be no more than 12% of the per-credit domestic tuition charge in the Bachelor of Arts program multiplied by the combined credit values of the courses.
 - c) For courses or *consecutive courses* with a credit value less than three, the cost limit is calculated using a minimum credit value of three.
 - d) When *Fee-based Digital Learning Tools Used for Assessment* are bundled with other resources, such as e-textbooks, the university and faculty should engage with publishers to ensure that, wherever possible, the fee-based digital assessment tools are available in a separate, unbundled format, with a cost that complies with the limits stated in (a), (b), or (c) above.
- 2) When *Fee-based Digital Learning Tools Used for Assessment* are used as a component of a student's academic standing in a course, no more than 20% of their final grade or standing may be derived from the use of those materials.
- 3) The relevant Dean of the Faculty offering the course may grant exceptions to section 1 or 2, or both, on a case-by-case basis for a course upon request by the instructor for pedagogical reasons. Such exceptions must be reported to the UBC Vancouver Senate Academic Policy Committee on an annual basis by the relevant Dean. An exception may be granted for up to three academic years including the year when the request is made.
- 4) The cost of the *Fee-based Digital Learning Tools Used for Assessment* shall be stated on the course syllabus, as required by [Policy V-130](#). Where exceptions have been granted by the relevant Dean under section 3 above, that fact shall also be stated on the syllabus.

Calendar Statement:

As above.

Consultations

Alma Mater Society
Associate Deans, Academic
Bookstore
Centre for Accessibility
Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology
Equity & Inclusion Office
First Nations House of Learning
Graduate Student Society
Indigenous Working Group
Library
Student Financial Management
Teaching Staff

History

Discussion on Draft Principles for Digital Learning Materials Used for Assessment as a ‘Topic of Broad Academic Interest’ at the ninth regular meeting of the Vancouver Senate for the 2018/2019 Academic Year (May 2018).

Endorsement of the “UBC Principles for Digital Learning Materials Used for Assessment” at the ninth regular meeting of the Vancouver Senate for the 2019/2020 academic year (May 2019).

Related Policies:

Senate Policy O-131: *Digital Assessment Tools*

Appendix:

UBC Principles for Digital Learning Materials used for Assessment (endorsed by UBC Vancouver Senate in May 2019).

Procedures:

TBD.