

Compulsory Non-Tuition-related Ancillary Fees: Guidelines Pertaining to Learning Resources¹ and Field Trips

Office of the Associate Vice-President (Academic)
and Office of Resource Planning and Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) regulates fees that universities charge to students. Fees charged in addition to tuition are governed through the MTCU ancillary fee protocol.

In December 2013, MTCU issued their **Tuition Fee Framework and Ancillary Fee Guidelines for Publically-Assisted Universities, 2013-14 to 2016-17**. These guidelines consider a **compulsory non-tuition-related ancillary fee** to be “*a fee which is levied to cover the costs of items which are not normally paid for out of operating or capital revenue.*”

Below is a summary of the guidelines that relate to learning resources and field trips. The guidelines related to learning resources will be in place for the 2014-2015 academic year and reviewed by Resource Planning and Analysis (RPA) and the Office of the Associate Vice-President (Academic) (AVPA) at the end of the Winter 2015 semester. There has been no change to the guidelines related to field trips.

Guidelines Related to Learning Resources

The University of Guelph recognizes the benefits that technology-enabled resources can provide to both students and their instructors, through enhanced engagement, greater achievement of learning outcomes and the provision of a broader array of assessment tools. Technology-enabled learning is firmly established across the spectrum of teaching and learning activity at the University of Guelph. This includes fully online and blended courses, digital content, online examinations and quizzes, electronic submissions of assignments and reports, discussion groups, and so on.

Where previous ancillary fee guidelines issued by MTCU effectively prohibited any requirement for students to purchase digital learning resources and associated assessment tools created by third-party vendors, current MTCU guidelines recognize the “*contribution that these resources can make to the quality of teaching and learning, including support for adaptive learning and formative assessment.*”

¹ Adapted with permission from the University of Waterloo.

Importantly, MTCU has delegated the responsibility for developing policies on the use of third-party digital learning resources to universities, and this document outlines these policies for the University of Guelph.

Digital Learning Resources (including online or downloaded resources)

MTCU's revised ancillary fee guidelines establish clearly that institutions can require students to purchase third-party digital learning resources that can include test/assessment tools. The guidelines indicate further that *"where a course or program relies substantially on assessments that are included with a learning resource, such as an online textbook, the Ministry expects universities to have a policy with respect to their students' interests in these situations."*

In the spirit of the MTCU guidelines, the University of Guelph has determined the following:

- a) Instructors can require students to purchase access to third-party digital learning resources, including e-textbooks, simulations and software for the duration of the course.
- b) Instructors can require students to purchase physical and/or digital textbooks that have bundled software or online access to additional learning resources, provided that students have options to purchase the bundled components separately. For example,

Option 1 - Bundled printed textbook with online learning resource (with or without e-textbook)
Option 2 - Online learning resource with e-textbook
Option 3 - Online learning resource without e-textbook
- c) Instructors may use third-party vendors of digital learning resources to assess student performance so long as this assessment constitutes 20% or less of the final grade in the course. Values above 20% (to a maximum of 35%) must be approved by the Dean of the College or Dean's designate (ADAs for undergraduate programs, Assistant Vice-Provost for Guelph-Humber and ADRs for graduate programs).
- d) As with traditional, paper-based learning resources, instructors should endeavor to keep the costs of digital learning resources at a level that students can reasonably afford.
- e) Instructors will communicate details concerning the use of third party digital resources clearly in their course outlines.
- f) **In situations where purchasing or accessing a digital learning resource would cause undue financial hardship, *including digital learning resources requiring students to use their own mobile device in or out of class (smart phone, tablet, laptop)*, instructors should, where feasible, provide the student with an alternative learning resource. Multiple grading schemes can often facilitate these reasonable accommodations and the instructor and student must**

come to an acceptable agreement in writing per the University's Grading Procedures policy.

The University of Guelph will be proactive in monitoring the use of online learning resources and has determined that the above guidelines strike an appropriate balance between the desire to incorporate technology, and the incremental expense these resources impose for students.

Material Learning Resources (tangible resources that become property of the student)

Students can be required to purchase:

- textbooks, lab manuals, or course reading packages*.
- a hardware-based clicker device such as the OpenEd-supported iClicker
- learning resources such as art supplies, optometry kits, and laboratory equipment (e.g., lab coats, goggles) as long as those resources are retained by the student after completion of the course.

*Instructors are strongly encouraged to make use of the Library's course reserve system to allow for no-cost student access to course material including: textbooks, course packs, e-journals and e-book content.

Guidelines Related to Field Trips

Field trips associated with credit-earning courses are also subject to MTCU guidelines. Instructors should be aware of the following:

- Students cannot be charged fees for compulsory field trips outside the province of Ontario².
- Students can be charged fees for the reasonable, direct costs of travel and accommodation on compulsory field trips within the province of Ontario. Fees cannot contribute to the salaries and benefits, or travel and accommodation, of instructors or teaching assistants participating in the field trip. Charging students a tuition-related activity fee for compulsory field trips is not permitted.
- Students can be charged fees for the reasonable, direct costs of travel and accommodation on elective, credit-earning field trips outside the province of Ontario. Fees, however, cannot contribute to the salaries and benefits, or travel and accommodation of instructors or teaching assistants participating in the field trip.

Questions

Please direct any questions regarding the MTCU ancillary fee protocol and the use of digital learning resources to Cathy Beattie, Resource Planning and Analysis at c.beattie@exec.uoguelph.ca or Patricia Tersigni, Director, Academic Programs and Policy at p.tersigni@exec.uoguelph.ca.

²Exemptions may be granted by the Ministry. To discuss requesting an exemption, please contact Resource Planning and Analysis.