



Your Guide to Supporting Student Success at the University of Victoria: Some Tips from Colleagues

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University
of Victoria

About This Document

The goal of this booklet is not to be comprehensive, but rather to indicate some ideas to think about as we work towards enhancing the student experience at UVic on multiple fronts. If you notice gaps in the document or information that is out-of-date, please let us know.

Acknowledgements

- Teresa Dawson, Learning and Teaching Centre.
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- Susan Chalmers, who helped put the book together
- Dr. Marty Wall, who edited the original and current version of this document
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For more information about this document, or to suggest changes, please contact the Learning and Teaching Centre, [Program Coordinator](#), 250-721-8571.

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1. Teaching Methods, Styles, and Tools

DISPLAYING EXCITEMENT AROUND THE DISCIPLINE

Students respond well when instructors show them what they find most fascinating about their discipline rather than merely presenting their knowledge of their specialty. Displaying enthusiasm engages students and motivates them to carry on with their work on the course outside the classroom.

PROVIDING A PERSONAL TOUCH

Personalizing classes helps students feel more connected to teachers and fellow colleagues. For instance, professors in the Faculty of Education make every effort to learn student names. Similarly, the Faculty of Business uses photographs, name plates, and assigned seating to help instructors and classmates get to know one another.

STIMULATING CRITICAL THINKING

By encouraging students to question and engage in course material in a thoughtful manner, instructors can enhance the learning process more effectively than other ways, such as memorization. Students will process the material at levels beyond mere definitional knowledge.

TUTORIALS, SEMINARS AND DISCUSSION GROUPS

Through these small group settings students are able to interact more with one another and the course material, which strengthens their learning. These sessions also give students skills that they need to read effectively and to interpret scholarly ideas.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Lab work is an established successful method of teaching students, particularly in the sciences, engineering and anthropology. In other courses, experiential learning exercises can take the form of student presentations, debates, panel discussions, symposia, role playing and simulations.

PROBLEM BASED LEARNING

This instructional method challenges students to “learn to learn,” working cooperatively in groups to seek solutions to real-world problems. These problems are used to engage students’ curiosity, to initiate learning the subject matter, to prepare students to think critically and analytically, and to find and use appropriate learning resources.

DISTRIBUTED LEARNING

Under particular circumstances, classroom teaching can be supplemented by an instructional model that allows instructor, students, and content to be found in different locations so that teaching and learning occur independently of time and place.

USE OF NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

These tools can make teaching and learning more engaging. Clickers are an excellent example of how engagement, feedback, and learning can be enhanced in a large-class situation.

BUILD ON KNOWLEDGE

Many disciplines require students to master facts, formulas, and typologies as a foundation on which critical thinking can build. Build on this core knowledge by giving students practice to develop automaticity and then ask them to apply their knowledge to novel problems and real-world situations.

2. Academic Help for Students through the Learning Commons

The [C.W. Lui Learning Commons](#) is located on the main floor of the McPherson Library and is a place where academic support is available for students in one physical location. The Commons provides academic services as a cohesive whole so that students have access to effective, efficient and integrated academic assistance. The Learning Commons is a space that encourages collaborative work between students and their tutors, librarians, and instructors. Services in the Learning Commons include:

ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS SUPPORT

The [Centre for Academic Communication \(the CAC\)](#) helps both graduate and undergraduate students with skills like writing clearly, reading strategically, and presenting in an engaging, focused manner. The CAC also provides support for understanding the academic expectations of UVic. Advice is available in a one-on-one setting, in workshops, and through personalized learning plans. In addition, the Manager provides support to instructors regarding the design of written assignments and strategies for providing effective feedback.

MATH AND STATS ASSISTANCE CENTRE

The [Math and Stat Assistance Centre](#) offers one-on-one tutors who can provide personalized help regarding 100-level math courses and 200-level statistics courses, including those specific to engineering students. The Manager and Coordinator also provide mentoring and support for TAs.

PHYSICS HELP

The [Physics Help](#) tutor assists students with a range of topics covered in undergraduate Physics classes.

LIBRARY INSTRUCTION

The integration of library instruction programs into classes can improve the quality of class assignments and encourage students to make effective use of library resources.

RESEARCH HELP

By integrating examples of one's scholarly research into the classroom, instructors can illustrate real-life or discipline-based applications of concepts and theories. Students can connect more readily with the course material and be excited about future participation in library or laboratory-based research. The Research Help Desk is available to answer student questions about how to find scholarly articles, narrow a research question, and cite sources appropriately.

3. Curriculum Design and Structure

COURSE PROGRESSION AND PROGRAM COHERENCE

Courses in a program are designed to support academic progression. This provides a coherent connection among the courses and encourages students to enroll in courses that are appropriate for their level of understanding in a subject. To map your program, see the LTC tool, [ProgramMapper](#)

STUDENT INPUT IN CURRICULUM RE-DESIGN

Student feedback on existing courses and their views on course content and how courses could be taught can provide useful input into initiatives on program and course re-design.

FLEXIBILITY AND DIVERSITY OF COURSE STRUCTURE AND ARRANGEMENT

Implementing courses that differ in length and distribution of course meetings can provide useful flexibility, where relevant, and can be appealing for both students and instructors. For example, Environmental Studies offers an intensive five-day course.

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY COURSES

Initiatives that involve the design of courses team-taught by faculty from different disciplines can provide rich and sometimes unexpected synergies.

4. Professional Development and Career Preparation

JAMIE CASSELS UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AWARDS (JCURA)

Students in 3rd or 4th year of their undergraduate studies can undertake a research investigation under the mentorship of a faculty supervisor. There are two or three scholarships available per academic unit for a total of approximately 100 scholars per year.

THE ARBUTUS REVIEW

This undergraduate, peer-reviewed, [online research journal](#) showcases the best of undergraduate research at UVic.

GRADUATE STUDENT PROGRAMMING

The Learning and Teaching Centre provides extensive support to graduate students to help prepare them to enter the academic job market and to hone their teaching skills. Included are the Teaching Assistant Consultant program, workshops and conferences to support TA development, and the LATHE certificate program (Learning and Teaching in Higher Education).

INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

Opportunities for students to spend a term [studying at an overseas institution](#) for course credit provide outstanding educational experiences.

CO-OP EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND CAREER SERVICES

[Co-op education](#) allows students to combine academic studies with paid work experience related to their field of study and is an excellent way to gain relevant work skills and experience. One in four UVic students takes part in the program each year. In addition, students can work one-on-one with a career consultant, join career exploration workshops, and learn how to conduct their own job research.

CAREER COUNSELLING

In addition to providing personal [counselling](#), the counsellors provide information to help students decide on an appropriate career path or choose the best graduate school.

ACADEMIC ADVISORS

Most faculties maintain advising centres where students can receive counselling on programs, courses, and regulations.

SPECIAL PROFESSIONAL EVENTS

UVic provides the basis for showcasing student endeavors in the arts. For instance, the Faculty of Fine Arts organizes many events that allow writing and theatre students to promote their work. Readings—and a follow-up reception—

are held at the Belfry Theatre to showcase aspiring writers. In addition, an annual film festival displays student videos before industry personnel. Several student plays are produced and directed by colleagues in the Department of Theatre.

5. Social Support from Faculty, Staff and Other Students

ALUMNI AND UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT EVENTS

These social gatherings allow students to interact socially with alumni and learn about career opportunities following graduation.

STUDENT SOCIETIES

These organizations provide students with opportunities to socialize with one another, which serves to enhance their overall university experience. The primary events usually consist of lectures, workshops and social outings.

CLUBS AND COURSE UNIONS

Students can join [numerous clubs and course unions](#) encompassing a broad range of interests to augment their academic experience.

STUDENT ORIENTATIONS

Annual [orientations](#) initiated by Faculties or by the University help students become familiar with the university, specific programs of study, student services and the range of experiences available to them.

COHORTS

In certain disciplines, students take the same courses and thus regularly interact with the same cohort group for the duration of their studies at UVic. Cohort identity helps to sustain a social support structure, which can be useful for many undergraduates and graduates.

INDIGENOUS STUDENT SUPPORT

[Indigenous student support](#) can be found to help students feel welcome and supported on campus.

CAMPUS RESIDENCES, RESIDENCE ADVISORS AND THE FAMILY CENTRE

Residence advisors help students adapt to living in [UVic residences](#) and maintain an environment for students to live and learn comfortably. The [Family Centre](#) serves the families of UVic students both living on and off campus and provides family-initiated activities and programs that support both new and experienced families.

RESOURCE CENTRE FOR STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY

In addition to arranging for alternate exams, note-taking assistance and assisted learning strategies, the [Centre](#) maintains an extensive inventory of up-to-date adaptive equipment and software.

Learning and Teaching Centre

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