

Teaching Commons News

Get ready for a **HOT** summer season

The summer is here. The weather is beautiful outside and the campus is in full bloom. And things are heating up inside too! Besides various workshops and courses, in May, we also had three successful pan-university events on teaching and learning: York University's Summit on the "First-Year Experience in the Classroom: Rethinking Retention" on May 1, the second annual Support Teaching at York (STAY) symposium on May 2, and the second annual Teaching in Focus (TIF) conference on May 22. We have also started to support a group of colleagues involved in online course design and development through York's Curriculum Innovation Grant and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Ontario Online Initiative.

This is an excellent time to prepare, catch-up, and get ahead with your teaching. In June, we have several events planned for all who teach at York. Join us to catch and enjoy the energy of the season!



TIF Conference in May



May was a busy month for us with our two keystone conferences – STAY for TAs at the start of the month and Teaching in Focus (TIF) on May 22nd. Both events were widely supported with double the numbers attending compared to last year. Be sure to mark your diaries for next year!

TIF Conference

The full details of the TIF agenda, the two keynote addresses, and presentation PPTs and Camtasia recordings of selective sessions are available online:

<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/conferences/tif2014/>

Upcoming Summer Workshops and Courses

LA&PS Faculty Workshops

The Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies and the Teaching Commons invite **all** York instructors (CUPE, YUFA, and TAs) to join us in a series of Teaching and Learning workshops this summer.

Who are our students? What is YU START? How can we build on the YU START foundation in the way we teach?

Facilitated by Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning, Diane Woody, and Director of the Teaching Commons, Celia Popovic.

Wednesday August 13, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in Room 1014 , TEL Building
To register: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=117713>

Using Mindfulness Techniques in the Classroom

Facilitated by Professor Deborah Orr from the Department of Humanities

Tuesday August 12, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in Room 1014 , TEL Building
To register: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=117512>

Supporting and Engaging ESL Learners with ESL colleagues

Facilitated by Professors Karen Englander, Geoff Lawrence and Antonella Valeo from the Department of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics

Tuesday August 19, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in Room 1014, TEL Building
To register: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=117851>

Course Design @ York 2014

The Course Design @York course is a series of 4 workshops which provides participants with the opportunity to develop a new course or redesign an existing course. See: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/course-design-york/>

- Monday, June 9, 2014, 9:30 am – 12.30 and 1.30 - 4: 30 pm in TEL 1014
- Tuesday, June 10, 2014, 9:30 am – 12.30 and 1.30 - 4: 30 pm in TEL 1014

Facilitated by Ellen Sims and Yelin Su, Education developers, Teaching Commons; Academic Literacies session facilitated by Faculty from the Learning Commons and Writing Centre. You may attend any or all of the sessions.

To register online, go to
<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=115359>

eLearning training for TAs

Teaching Commons provides tailored pedagogy training for TAs upon request. If you want to arrange training for a group of TAs (6 minimum), please contact us teaching@yorku.ca

Supporting eLearning Initiatives @ York

York takes strides in increasing our online offering to students. We are pleased to be involved with several new initiatives which are leading the University's advance in eLearning. In collaboration with other offices across campus, the Teaching Commons provides pedagogical supports in eLearning course design, development, and delivery for these eLearning initiatives.

eLearning Curriculum Innovation Grant award winners

We extend our congratulations to the 22 winners of the eLearning Curriculum Innovation Grant.

The winners are course directors who have been selected to convert their courses or create new ones for blended or fully online delivery. The TC is pleased to support these colleagues through our own blended course in eLearning. The awards involve CDs from 6 Faculties: three in Environmental Studies, six in Fine Art, two in Health, eight in LA&PS, two in Lassonde and one in Osgoode.

In addition to a generous research grant the award winners receive priority pedagogical and technical support to assist their course development.

Ontario Online Initiative

As we reported earlier York was successful in our bid for 4 courses to be included in the Ontario Online Initiative. The TC and LTS are working hard to support the CDs concerned. We anticipate some exciting developments in the next couple of months which will include some resources and approaches that other Course Directors may wish to learn from and share. One example is the production of a Student Guide for eLearning, which all CDs will be able to use with their students.

Upcoming eLearning Workshops

Thursday, June 19, 9.30 -12.30 and Thursday July 17, 9.30 - 12.30, TEL 1014

To register, <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=121269>

Monday, June 23rd and Wednesday July 30th, 9.30 - 12.30, TEL 1014

To register: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=129614>

Wednesday, October 8, and Wednesday, Nov 12, 9.30 -12.30, TEL 1014

To register, <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=120743>

You will have the opportunity to adapt or develop a blended or fully online course. No experience of developing eLearning is required.

Supporting your TAs

The Teaching Commons provides a variety of programs for TAs. These supports are free and our participants find them effective and helpful. We strongly recommend course directors to forward these programs to TAs and encourage them to attend.

TA Certificate in Teaching (TACT) Course



This [SEDA](#) accredited course is for Teaching Assistants with at least one year teaching experience. It is a semester long blended course designed to help TAs to learn more about teaching in postsecondary education. The main highlights of the course, as identified by past graduates of TACT, include the opportunity to observe and be observed by a fellow TACT member, receive feedback on teaching and develop their own teaching dossiers.

This free course will be run in both the Fall and Winter terms. There are some prerequisites to enroll. For more information and registration, visit <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/professional-development/tact/>

TA Orientation

Teaching Commons invites all new graduate student TAs to attend a TA Orientation session in the first week of September. During this 3 hour session, TAs will be provided with resources and guidance to help them get started as a TA at York University.

For details and registration, visit our website: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/professional-development/ta-orientation/>

Other TA programs

For a complete list of programs for TAs and graduate students, visit <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/for-all-graduate-students/>

What do participants say about the TACT course?

“My perception of learning has certainly evolved because of the exposure to different styles of teaching, course experiences from other faculties and some critical concepts.”

“TA’s have a chance to practice and train their teaching skills more systematically.”

“I hadn’t realized I was already doing some of the things I should continue to do and change some to improve my student’s experience.”

What do participants say about TA Orientation?

“I was given info on valuable resources that I can provide to students as well as ideas on how to resolve issues that may arise.”

“It is useful to recognize that being a TA is a type of teaching – before this I thought we were best for grading.”

“I have a better idea of how/what to prepare.”



Moodle tips from Learning Technology Services

Blocks

Blocks are the panels on either side of your Moodle course page. Some familiar blocks include: Administration and Navigation, which you cannot remove. However, did you know that you can customize which blocks appear and the order in which they appear on your Moodle course page?



When you request a Moodle course, several blocks appear automatically, such as the Library and Recent Activity blocks. However, there are a variety of other blocks that you may find helpful in managing your course. Two of the most useful blocks include:

- **Calendar:** This block is particularly useful for students in managing assignments. It displays the current month and automatically highlights days when Moodle activities are due. Student can hover over the date to view the name of the assignment and a link to the activity.
- **HTML Block:** The HTML block is essentially an empty block for you to customize. You can add text, images, links to web pages and embed videos without any knowledge of HTML by using the text editor menu. For example, you may want to create a customized list of resources for students or have a block with your contact information and office hours. It is also possible to add “widgets” to your Moodle course through an HTML block. Many web sites make HTML code available for you to copy and paste into your block. Such examples include Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest feeds, and [Voki](#) widgets.

An important consideration when adding blocks to your course is the relevance of the information. Because of their prominence on the course homepage, blocks should generally contain information that would be useful to students at any point in the course. Topic-specific content is typically placed in the relevant section of the course.

For more information on adding and managing blocks, and creating customized blocks with widgets, refer to our [Using and Managing Blocks](#) documentation page.

For information about our programs, resources and much more, visit our website at <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca>

This newsletter is available as a .pdf at <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/tcnewsletter/>