



York University

Provostial Guidelines on Use of Online and Digital Learning Materials

The Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) regulates the ability of universities to charge non-tuition related ancillary fees – those fees that a student is obliged to pay in order to enroll in and complete a course. These MTCU regulations are set out in the Ministry document *Tuition Fee Framework and Ancillary Fee Guidelines for Publicly-Assisted Universities*.

In December 2013 the MTCU revised the Ancillary Fee Guidelines to allow for the charging of fees for online and digital learning materials, which may include assessment tools. In the guidelines (excerpted below) the Ministry notes that the University must have a policy in place to guide the use of these resources that respects the interests of our students.

Fees for digital learning materials that are the property of the student and which can include test/assessment tools.

The Ministry considers the payment of tuition as supporting the cost of instruction and assessment. 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. Such a policy could include a rebate to students of a portion of their textbook fees where bundled assessments represent a substantial portion of a student's mark for a course.

The Ministry acknowledges the contribution that these resources can make to the quality of teaching and learning, including support for adaptive learning and formative assessment. Universities should be proactive in monitoring conditions attached to the use of learning resources by faculty and students, to ensure that these are consistent with institutional academic policies and values.

(MTCU, Tuition Framework and Ancillary Fee Guidelines, December 2013, p. 20).

In cases where access to course content and/or testing relies on an external digital resource, the University recognizes the potential of these resources to contribute to quality student learning and consistent with MTCU guidelines seeks to ensure that the use of these resources is fair to our students. Students may be required to purchase these resources based on the following considerations.

- If the digital resource includes an assessment component, that component should not form a substantial portion of the overall assessment. Normally that assessment component should not exceed 15%.

- The total cost of the digital learning assessment resources for a three credit half course equivalent shall not exceed \$60.
- Students cannot be compelled to purchase a textbook combined with a digital resource therefore an option to purchase the digital resource alone must be made available.
- Wherever possible students must be informed of the costs in advance, ideally upon registration for a course but no later than within the first two weeks of class.
- Though not required, Instructors are highly encouraged to work with Publishers, the University Libraries and other resources/units to make options available for students for whom the cost of the digital resources may present undue hardship.

If instructors wish to introduce digital resources that fall outside of the parameters described above then a case must be made to the Associated Course Fees Committee that includes a rationale for the need and appropriate actions undertaken to address student fairness, access, and affordability.

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