

The MacPherson Institute New Instructor Handbook for McMaster University

THE MACPHERSON INSTITUTE NEW INSTRUCTOR HANDBOOK FOR MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

THE MACPHERSON INSTITUTE



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PART I

WELCOME TO MCMASTER!

- [Teaching and Learning at McMaster University](#)
- [The Paul R. MacPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation and Excellence in Teaching \(The MacPherson Institute\)](#)

TEACHING AND LEARNING AT MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

Congratulations on your appointment and welcome to the McMaster teaching and learning community!

McMaster University is a diverse and vibrant post-secondary institution with over 33,000 students and 1,500 full-time faculty across six Faculties and the Arts and Science Program. McMaster is known for educational innovations like problem-based learning and is home to many nationally recognized professors. With its deep commitment to student-centered learning, all instructors at McMaster (e.g., sessional instructors, Contractually Limited Appointment instructors, teaching-track or permanent professors, tenure-track or tenured professors) play a vital role in creating and maintaining an exceptional student learning experience.

At present, [four areas of impact](#) are the foci of the institution's teaching and learning objectives:

- [partnered and interdisciplinary learning](#),
- [inclusive and scholarly teaching](#),
- [active and flexible learning spaces](#), and
- [holistic and personalized student experience](#).

You can read all about these in McMaster's [Teaching and Learning Strategy](#). For a more in depth understanding of the McMaster teaching and learning context, consider reviewing the information and resources (e.g., [Digital Learning Strategic Framework](#)) provided on the Teaching & Learning tab on McMaster's [Academic Excellence website](#).

McMaster instructors have access to a wide variety of tools and resources to support them in their teaching (e.g., Microsoft Office 365, MOSAIC, Avenue to Learn). This handbook, created by [The Paul R. MacPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation and Excellence in Teaching](#), will review these tools and resources, serving as a quick reference for most things teaching and learning at McMaster.

THE PAUL R. MACPHERSON INSTITUTE FOR LEADERSHIP, INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING (THE MACPHERSON INSTITUTE)

The [MacPherson Institute](#) is McMaster's teaching and learning support centre and research institute. It offers a wide variety of professional development for teaching activities, supports, and services to all McMaster educators (e.g., Teaching Assistants, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, instructors, faculty, and staff), cultivating an environment where learning deeply matters, and teaching is valued. Staff at the Institute collaborate to explore, enhance, support, and recognize teaching and learning experiences at McMaster. They partner with, support, and connect diverse groups of educators by:

- Creating and delivering professional development that engages educators throughout their careers in teaching and learning in order to enhance the student learning experience.
- Facilitating curriculum development and revision that fosters continuous enhancement and engagement in learning.
- Supporting, conducting, and recognizing teaching and learning scholarship that has the capacity to develop, inform, and enhance educational initiatives and student learning.
- Encouraging and elevating the pedagogical use of educational technologies and creative solutions to enhance teaching and learning.

Through these activities, supports, and services, educators have an opportunity to hone their teaching skills, develop and redesign courses, enhance their educational technology skills, and learn about and engage in research on teaching and learning.

To learn more about the MacPherson Institute, please see the [About Us](#) page on the Institute's website.

PART II

MCMASTER'S TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICIES

- [Course Management Policies](#)
- [Course Outlines](#)
- [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Academic Accommodations for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances \(RISO\)](#)
- [McMaster Student Absence Form \(MSAF\)](#)
- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Provisional Guidelines on the Use of Generative AI in Teaching and Learning](#)

COURSE MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Instructors for undergraduate courses are highly encouraged to review the [Undergraduate Calendar](#) (an inventory of all programs currently offered by McMaster), [undergraduate sessional dates](#), and the [Undergraduate Course Management Policies](#) document prior to commencing teaching at McMaster.

Likewise, instructors for graduate courses are highly encouraged to review the [Graduate Calendar](#), [graduate sessional dates](#), and the [Graduate Course Management Policy](#) document before they start teaching.

The course management policies are of particular importance as they summarize instructor responsibilities. While both policies have some things in common (e.g., an overview of minimum requirements for course outlines, due date restrictions, academic assessments, McMaster University grading scales, retention of examination papers and other graded material, authenticity/plagiarism detection, conflict of interest guidelines, and protection of privacy), there are important differences. In the [Undergraduate Course Management Policies](#) document, for example, there are policies regarding the maximum value of academic assessments, the provision of early feedback, and accommodations and missed work. There are even approved advisory statements that must be included in each undergraduate course outline regarding:

- Academic Integrity
- Authenticity/Plagiarism Detection
- Courses with an On-Line Element
- Online Proctoring
- Conduct Expectations
- Academic Accommodations of Students with Disabilities
- Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work
- Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)
- Copyright and Recording
- Extreme Circumstances

COURSE OUTLINES

As noted in the [Undergraduate Course Management Policies](#) document, a course outline describes what is expected of students as well as what students can expect in terms of the course experience they will receive, the format in which the course will be delivered and the knowledge and skills that can be gained. The outline introduces the course and the instructor and sets out the expectations of the instructor so that students are aware of how they will learn, what level of participation will be expected and how they will be assessed. Some Faculties have their own requirements for course outlines. It is recommended that you check with your Department to see if there are pre-existing templates or samples upon which you could base the course outline for the course(s) you will be teaching.

Course Outline Library

In the Spring/Summer of 2023, in an effort to better understand the decentralized processes and challenges of managing course outlines across McMaster, a [Course Outline Library](#) was developed. It allows for streamlined and simplified course outline creation, in addition to serving as an archive for outlines across all Faculties.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The [Academic Accommodations of Students with Disabilities policy](#) outlines the roles and responsibilities for instructors and students regarding requests for academic accommodations in courses at McMaster. At the start of term, you will be required to [login to review accommodation letters](#) outlining the requirements to make assessments accessible to students in your course registered through Student Accessibility Services (SAS). At any point in the term, additional students may register and upload new letters, so it is important to check the site regularly for any new or updated letters. Any questions you may have about accommodation requests can be directed to the staff members named in the accommodation letter.

You can find

You can find more information about teaching accessibly in [Considerations for Effective Teaching](#) of this book. Should you wish to learn about equity and inclusion in teaching, [the Equity and Inclusion Office](#) offers many valuable training opportunities for McMaster educators.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS AND SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

The [Policy on Academic Accommodations for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances](#) applies to all students enrolled in a course or program of study as approved by the University Senate and who are seeking accommodation as a result of academic obligations that conflict with their religious, Indigenous or spiritual observances (RISO). The policy does not apply to the following: general course or program requirements; co-op, clinical and other experiential placements; residence; athletics; dietary restrictions; access to space; use of space; ablution; and employment matters, including teaching assistantships.

The student is to submit the RISO form to their Faculty, electronically or in person, normally within ten working days from the beginning of each term in which they are anticipating a need for Accommodation. The faculty office manages student requirements and students are responsible to contact the instructor to make arrangements for missed work.

There may be occasions where the date of an observance is not yet confirmed or where an observance is unanticipated. In such cases the student is advised to contact the Faculty as soon as they become aware of the conflict to request accommodation.

The Equity and Inclusion Office maintains a [multicultural/multifaith calendar](#) you may find helpful when planning dates and times for assignment submissions, tests/exams or other assessments.

MCMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)

The [McMaster Student Absence Form](#), or MSAF, is a self-report tool in MOSAIC that students can use for relief for missed academic work worth less than 25% of the final grade resulting from medical or personal situations lasting up to three calendar days. It does not require students to produce documentation unless the assessment is worth 25% or more, in which case, they must visit the Faculty office for discussion of accommodations.

In each of their teaching experiences, it is important for instructors to consider how they will be able to accommodate students who have utilized the MSAF for any assessment valued at less than 25%. You may want to offer an extension for a due date, an alternative testing time, or a supplementary assignment. These suggestions should take into consideration the intended learning outcomes for the missed work, students' workload, as well as other course policies in the [Undergraduate Course Management Policies](#).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The [Academic Integrity Policy](#) defines academic dishonesty and gives a number of examples of offenses that you may encounter in teaching. It also outlines the responsibilities of the instructor(s), student(s) and others that may be involved in addressing an academic dishonesty offence. The Office of Academic Integrity maintains a record of reported offences that you should consult if you have determined that an offence has been committed. In the case that it is a student's first offence, you have the discretion to determine the scope of the penalty and to report the offence to the Associate Dean's Office as well as the Office of Academic Integrity. If it is the student's second offence, it must be reported to both offices and will be referred for adjudication which may or may not require a hearing. Please see the policy for more details.

It is recommended that instructors review the policy and work with others on their teaching team (TAs, Instructional Assistants, Lab Managers, etc.) to establish parameters for collecting evidence and reporting on academic dishonesty offences. It can be helpful to make sure that you are confident proceeding with a decision and that you or others responsible for grading gather any required evidence before responding to an offence. While academic dishonesty cannot be entirely eliminated, there are some teaching and assessment strategies you can employ to discourage certain kinds of academic dishonesty. Please see the Office of Academic Integrity [Preventing Academic Dishonesty](#) page for suggestions on how to design assessments that prevent academic dishonesty offences.

PROVISIONAL GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE AI IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

McMaster has released [Provisional Guidelines on the Use of Generative AI in Teaching and Learning](#). Some key take aways from the provisional guidelines, last updated in August 2023, include:

- Instructors are not required to use generative AI tools for teaching
- Instructors who do incorporate generative AI in their courses should:
 - Ensure the generative AI will support core intended learning outcomes
 - Ensure incorporation offers meaningful learning (not just novelty)
 - Discuss with students the strengths, limitations, and ethical considerations of the technology, as well as the rationale for using it (see Appendix A for examples)
 - Alert students to the privacy policies and user agreements of each tool in the course outline
 - Rely on free versions of tools for student use; Alternatives should be provided for tools that are restricted to users 18+ (e.g., ChatGPT)
- Instructors who include assessments that incorporate generative AI should:
 - Consider including reflective components that invite students to comment on the use of/ experience with generative AI in the assessment
 - Explicitly review criteria and/or rubrics in ways that demonstrate how the use of generative AI is being assessed (see Appendix C for example)
- McMaster's existing academic integrity policy applies when using generative AI
 - Unless otherwise stated, students should assume use of generative AI is prohibited
 - Instructors should clearly communicate if and to what extent generative AI is acceptable in the course in the course outline, verbally in class, and in assessment descriptions (see Appendix B for examples)
 - Likewise, Instructors who incorporate generative AI into courses should explain to students in writing and verbally in-class how generative AI material should be acknowledged or cited (see Appendix A for examples)
 - Instructors may add an honour pledge to assessments (see Appendix D for example)
 - Generative AI plagiarism detection software is currently unavailable or not recommended at McMaster
- Instructors should not submit student work to generative AI tools for feedback without students'

consent and ability to opt-out

To support McMaster educators in learning about the capabilities, limitations and possibilities of generative AI in teaching and learning at McMaster, the MacPherson Institute has crafted a [Generative Artificial Intelligence in Teaching and Learning at McMaster University](#) guidebook that may come in handy to new and experienced instructors alike.

PART III

CONSIDERATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING

- [Preparing Your Teaching Environment](#)
- [The First Day of Class](#)
- [Accessible Teaching](#)
- [Inclusive Teaching](#)
- [Learner-Centred Course Design](#)
- [Collecting Feedback on Your Teaching](#)
- [Student Engagement and Motivation](#)
- [Class Sizes and Spaces](#)
- [Classroom Management](#)

PREPARING YOUR TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

In recent years, the teaching and learning environment at McMaster have expanded beyond the physical classroom. If you would like some professional development in the areas of blended and online learning, the [Effective Teaching Strategies for Blended Learning](#) learning module and the [Learning to Teach Online](#) course (please note that this course requires access to Avenue to Learn) are both great, free places to start.

There are a variety of technologies that can be included in your teaching and all of them require careful consideration before they can be used effectively. The MacPherson Institute offers [consultation](#) for technology-enhanced teaching. Consider contacting the Institute if you are thinking about using a new teaching tool in your course and you would like to discuss it.

When you plan to use technology in your teaching (whether in-person or online), it is critical that you have had the opportunity to practice in advance. While you may be familiar with the software on your own computer, the particularities of your teaching environment may introduce issues that can disrupt your teaching. Before the first day, visit your teaching space to test all of the tools you plan to use on your first day. Contact [Campus Classroom Technologies](#) for codes to the computer cabinets, login details of any computers that may already be available in the room, and to ask any questions you may have about the teaching and learning technologies in your classroom.

THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS

The first day of class is an important one for you and your students. This class is an opportunity for you to: introduce yourself and meet your students, set the tone for the course (e.g., you may wish to consider [establishing classroom norms](#)), review the course outline, describe course expectations (particularly the intended learning outcomes, assessments, due dates, and grading scheme), answer questions, and begin engaging with course materials.

For courses that will make use of Avenue to Learn, it can be helpful to walk through the course site to clarify where you will post learning materials and to demonstrate which tools you intend to use in the course. This is especially important for first year students as it is likely that they will have limited to no experience using a course site in their prior learning experiences.

ACCESSIBLE TEACHING

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

McMaster University is committed to creating accessible teaching and learning environments where students, teaching assistants, faculty, and staff can access all university classes, resources, and experiences at the time that they are needed and without encountering unnecessary barriers. All teaching staff are encouraged to apply the principles of universal design for learning to curriculum development, instruction, and assessment. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) centres on providing:

- Multiple means of representation (present information in different ways),
- Multiple means of engagement (engage students in learning in a variety of ways), and
- Multiple means of action and expression (give students options as to how they can express what they know).

For more information on universal design and accessible education, you may wish to consult the [FLEX Forward Teaching and Learning Resource](#) or [CAST's Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\) Guidelines](#).

Academic Accommodations

Regardless of your best intentions to design fully accessible learning experiences, it is likely that you will receive at least a few formal accommodation requests through [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) as not all barriers to access can be predicted or prevented. Instructors are required to provide academic accommodations upon official request from students registered with SAS. These requests from students are typically shared very early on in the term. Discussions regarding accommodations should centre on the accommodations themselves, never the reason for the accommodations. The SAS [Instructors](#) page is a great resource with an FAQ that addresses common questions like:

- How do I know if students in my course are registered to receive accommodations?
- What action is required from students to activate their accommodations?
- When is the deadline for instructors to submit test details and copies to SAS?
- Who administers accommodations for tests and midterms? Exams?
- I have questions about a student's accommodations. Who should I talk to?

On the SAS [Instructors](#) page there is also helpful information in the Instructors dropdown menu, including:

- [Common accommodations](#) and general best practices to follow
- How to log in to the [Instructor Portal](#), ClockWork (students must first activate their accommodations in the Student Portal)
- How to review and confirm [accommodation requests](#) to meet students' needs
- How to make [course accommodations](#) to help students with disabilities experience full participation during and outside of class
- The different options and processes involved in making [accommodations for tests and exams](#)

Please remember to review the [Academic Accommodations of Students with Disabilities](#) policy should you need clarity regarding your roles and responsibilities as an instructor. The [SAS Information for Instructional Support](#) booklet is also a very helpful resource to support instructors with implementing academic accommodations for tests and exams.

It is also important to note that if you require an accommodation yourself, you can reach out to [Employee-Labour Relations](#) or [CUPE 3906](#), depending on your employee group.

Students may also approach you about accommodations independently of Student Accessibility Services. For example, a student may indicate that a significant personal issue is preventing them from completing their assignments on time. For one-time academic accommodations you are encouraged to use your discretion. It might be that the student (if an undergraduate) would benefit from using their once per term [McMaster Student Absence Form](#) if they have not already used it.

Professor Hippo-on-Campus Mental Health Education Program

With the various roles that students often play (student, employee, caregiver, etc.), it is perhaps no surprise that many students can at times feel stressed and/or distressed. McMaster offers an excellent online asynchronous [Professor Hippo-on-Campus](#) mental health education program to help educators learn about common sources of stress and distress, how to recognize warning signs of stress and difficulty, how to communicate with students in distress or difficulty, and how to create a mental health positive learning environment. Please visit the Refer to the [Professor Hippo-on-Campus](#) website to learn more about the program and how to register and gain access.

INCLUSIVE TEACHING

You will find that there are many ways in which you may apply inclusive practices in your teaching. Some examples include:

- Sharing a land acknowledgement and reflection/discussion at the beginning of your first class
- Using inclusive language (e.g., a student's gender pronouns)
- Addressing discriminatory behaviours and stereotypical comments as silence or inaction may be taken as an endorsement

As noted earlier, [the Equity and Inclusion Office](#) offers many valuable training opportunities for McMaster educators. In addition, MacPherson Institute's [Inclusive Teaching and Learning Resources](#) page offers several resources, links and tools that instructors may find helpful in creating inclusive teaching and learning spaces, with special attention paid to anti-racist pedagogies and decolonization.

LEARNER-CENTRED COURSE DESIGN

Constructive Alignment

Regardless of whether you are designing a new course or teaching a course you have taught several times, it is important to ensure that your course has clear intended learning outcomes and that they are aligned with the course's assessments and teaching and learning activities. This is referred to as constructive alignment.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

Establishing and communicating what you want your students to know or be able to do the end of the course is beneficial both to you, and to your students. Intended learning outcomes can easily be formed by stating “By the end of this course, you should be able to [verb] + [noun].” The best learning outcomes are specific, measurable, and concise, and are composed with the student perspective in mind. For more information on creating learning outcomes, see [this guide](#) from the University of Toronto or this [short LinkedIn Learning course on creating learning objectives](#) (you will need to login to [LinkedIn Learning](#) with your MacID first).

Assessment Methods

Your assessment methods should allow you to accurately evaluate the extent to which students have achieved the course's intended learning outcomes. Assessments can be graded or ungraded, but it should be clear to students how they can meet the criteria.

Teaching and Learning Activities

Once you have established your course learning outcomes and your methods of assessment you can start to think about what strategies you can use in the classroom to help students practice and achieve the intended outcomes. This is often where students can engage in [active learning](#) to practice and reflect upon the lessons.

Thinking about constructive alignment at the level of the course is an important consideration when planning your teaching. You might also think about how your course relates to the broader curriculum in the program itself, and how course-level considerations are reflected in individual lessons.

COLLECTING FEEDBACK ON YOUR TEACHING

Collecting feedback on your teaching is an important way to learn about students' experiences in your courses, both in terms of what might be working well and where there might be room for instructional improvement.

Student Experiences Surveys

You are likely already familiar with the summative student experience surveys that are administered to students at the end of each course. These evaluations have predetermined questions about the students' learning experience and other aspects of the course.

In an effort to enhance the quality of feedback yielded from Student Experience Surveys, The Office of Institutional Research & Analysis (IRA) has prepared a [Feedback Guidance](#) page that provides helpful tips that instructors can share with their students regarding how to complete the survey in a reflective and meaningful way.

Formative Feedback

While summative course evaluations provide the opportunity for students to comment on their experience in the course after its completion, collecting formative feedback midway through the course (or the first term, if it is a yearlong course) is an excellent way to gauge students' opinions about the course while you still have time to implement suggested changes, as appropriate.

Please note that student feedback should always be collected anonymously.

Do-it-Yourself (DIY), Teaching Observation or Teaching Refinement

The MacPherson Institute offers a series of supports, services, and resources dedicated to supporting instructors seeking formative feedback. For those who would like to collect the feedback themselves, we have a series of Do-it-Yourself (DIY) [step-by-step guides](#). For those who would like more hands-on support, they can request a [Teaching Observation or Teaching Refinement](#).

Regardless of which approach you use to collect feedback, it is essential that you follow up with your students afterwards, indicating what you learned from the feedback, what you are able to change, what you are unable to change, and, if applicable, what you will not change. You do not need to share every piece of feedback but providing an overall summary of students' comments reinforces that you care about their learning experience and allows you to explain or contextualize some of your instructional choices.

If you'd like to speak to an Educational Developer about what you've learned from your feedback, or any changes you might make to your course or teaching, please feel free to reach out to your [Faculty's Liaison](#) in the MacPherson Institute – there is a dedicated Educational Developer assigned to each of the six Faculties, as well as one assigned to Arts & Science.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION

Each student in your class has their own unique set of motivations and interests. Of course, there are commonalities across the individuals to which you can anchor your teaching. Motivation can be categorized as intrinsic, extrinsic or both and intrinsic motivators can be linked to extrinsic ones as well. Intrinsic motivators are factors that encourage engagement from within the student themselves. These can include personal interest in a topic, high work ethic, systems of values or even competitiveness. Extrinsic motivators are factors that encourage engagement from other sources such as grades, praise and other systems of reward.

Often, students are motivated when they have autonomy to explore what interests them the most. Offering assessments with open or guided topics can give just enough self-direction to keep most students engaged. Also, you might want to think about giving some choice to the weighting of assignments. This can allow students to take off some pressure if they feel anxious about certain types of assessments, like writing or tests to keep fear and anxiety from eroding their motivation.

Students ultimately hold the responsibility to attend classes, manage their time, and work as much or as little as they choose. It's important to keep this in mind when thinking about engagement in your courses. Even the best designed teaching experience will still be subject to the individual interests, abilities and circumstances of each student.

CLASS SIZES AND SPACES

Large classes offer instructors a particular set of challenges for teaching. There is a wide variety of spaces you could find yourself teaching in at McMaster. There are smaller seminar rooms to large lecture halls. You may even find yourself in one of the active learning classrooms on campus.

Active learning classrooms at McMaster are classrooms equipped with moveable tables and/or chairs and strategically-located technology (screens, video connectors, microphones, etc.) around the room to help better engage students. McMaster has a number of active learning classrooms in the L.R. Wilson Building and the Peter George Centre for Living and Learning. Active learning classrooms differ from traditional classrooms in that they encourage sustained collaboration among students and shift the focus from the instructor. Accordingly, active learning classrooms require instructors to plan their courses with different considerations in mind, such as how to reduce the amount of lecture time and how to organize lessons around group participation and assessment.

Lecture halls work well for delivering content using didactic methods. As a result, attention and motivation can decline quickly. It is recommended that instructors utilize active learning techniques periodically to increase engagement. While some active learning strategies work for smaller groups or can be very time and resources intensive, there are many strategies that can be employed in larger classroom settings. A simple Think, Pair, Share, for example, can be used frequently to get students talking with each other and generating new ideas about what they are learning in class. Think-pair-share is a classic exercise that involves presenting students with a question or problem, giving them a moment to think on their own, having them pair up with another person, and then having them discuss their thoughts. A variation of this involves asking pairs to share what they discussed with the larger class. This technique is particularly useful for generating participation when individuals do not necessarily know each other well, but it can be applied in many different circumstances. Using a variety of delivery methods, such as in-class video clips, readings, and active problem solving go a long way to keep students' minds on task and engaged with your material.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

If students are feeling disengaged, you may find that they are quick to indulge distractions. In person, this may entail them playing on their computers or phones, talking over you while you're teaching, and so on. If this happens, you can pause the lesson to ask for their attention. If this doesn't work, it can be helpful to move around the room while you're teaching, speaking to groups of students directly to keep them engaged, and offering a more dynamic learning environment if possible. It can also be helpful to pause to ask questions or get the class to work through a problem to refocus their attention. Finally, if you're teaching a multi-hour class, it may be that students require a break to get up and leave the room in order to come back ready to be focused on the class. It is recommended that you do schedule breaks in any class longer than two hours.

In an online environment, disengagement may take different forms, like cameras being turned off, a lack of participation in chat/discussion and other active learning exercises, and possibly even rude or inappropriate behaviour.

Whether teaching in in-person or online settings, the principles of mutual respect, responsibility, dignity, and consideration for the well-being of others must be upheld. For example, if teaching online, online etiquette known as netiquette should be followed. Netiquette is the standard for communicating and good behaviour on the internet, which applies to all online communication—from email, to the online classroom, to social media platforms. Students should be encouraged to think before they type, treat others with respect, and to act online as they would in person. With respect to video and web-conferencing contexts, even a student's presence should meet this standard, with clothing being appropriate for a classroom setting, and backgrounds being free of things that others may find offensive.

In keeping with [McMaster's Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), all students share responsibility in maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online. As an instructor, your role goes beyond simply reminding students of expectations of netiquette and McMaster's Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. You also need to be aware of the privacy and security settings of any virtual platform you plan to use in your course so you can work to prevent opportunities for unwanted, disruptive behaviour, and know how to take appropriate action if and when it occurs. For example, you should know how to mute the virtual class, mute an individual student, remove an individual student, and abruptly end the session for all students if need be.

If a student breaches netiquette or McMaster's Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities guidelines, be sure to respond quickly to the situation and to document and follow-up on the incident. For disruptions that are particularly egregious, you may also want to consider emailing McMaster Student Support and Case Management at sscmo@mcmaster.ca for support. This will provide you with an opportunity to consult with a case manager who can address your concerns.

In the case of an emergency, don't hesitate to contact Campus Security. You have several options for doing so:

- Phone: 905-525-9140 ext. 24281 OR 905-522-4135
 - Any University Phone – Dial 88
 - Any on-campus pay phone – Dial “Security Button”, no charge
 - [Safety App](#)
 - The official Safety App of McMaster University is integrated with the institution's safety and security systems. To learn more about it and/or download the app, please visit the [Safety App](#) page.
 - In Person: Main Security Office – E.T. Clarke Center, Room 201 (use Floor 1 Intercom)
 - Email: security@mcmaster.ca

PART IV

AVENUE TO LEARN: MCMASTER'S PRIMARY LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (LMS)

- [Leveraging Digital Learning Environments](#)
- [Avenue to Learn](#)
- [Requesting an Avenue Course Shell](#)
- [Account Status and Course Roles](#)
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- [Commonly Used Tools](#)
- [Avenue Support and Resources](#)

LEVERAGING DIGITAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Courses can be classified as fully online, blended/hybrid/hyflex or in-person, depending on how much teaching and learning happens online. If students are engaged in a substantial amount of learning activities or assessments online then the course is considered to be a blended or hybrid course. What constitutes a substantial amount of online activities is debated given that most students and instructors access much of their learning resources online – even in a traditional in-person course.

Often, courses are blended through the use of online lecture videos or modules. This can allow students to reinforce what they have learned in class or extend learning to other topics following the content of that week. Online modules can also facilitate a Flipped Classroom design in which content is delivered through videos, readings and online discussions in the student's own time and class time is used to engage them in problem solving activities, group discussions, debates, etc.

There are many pros and cons to such an approach so if you are considering this kind of design for your course, do feel free to reach out to the MacPherson Institute for a [consultation](#).

AVENUE TO LEARN

- **Supporting Unit:** MacPherson Institute
- **Avenue Homepage:** <https://avenue.mcmaster.ca/>

Nearly all courses at McMaster use a web-based learning management system as a communication tool, for sharing course resources, and for assessments.

[Avenue to Learn](#), a rebranded instance of Brightspace by D2L, is McMaster's primary institutionally supported web-based learning management system. While some faculties and/or programs use their own systems, Avenue to Learn ("Avenue" for short) is the system you'll likely make use of in your teaching.

While there is no mandate to use a course site through Avenue or otherwise, it is considered an effective and accessible practice to create and maintain a course site. You can use a course site to post course materials, share announcements, create online discussions, administer quizzes, collect student assessment submissions, and even post grades.

Logging into your Avenue account

You will need your [MacID](#) to log in to your Avenue account.

Please note: Your MacID is ***not*** your employee or student number rather it is typically the same username and password you will use to log into your McMaster email account.

REQUESTING AN AVENUE COURSE SHELL

- **Supporting Resource:** [Avenue to Learn: Course Request](#)

If you plan to utilize Avenue in your teaching, you will need to request a course shell, ideally, well in advance of the start of the course.

It typically takes 15 minutes for courses to be created as long as the information matches exactly what is provided by MOSAIC. If it does not, it may take up to 24 hours (excluding weekends).

The request form will ask you to include details on which sections you are teaching so that it can automatically enrol the students on the registrar's class list in the shell. You will also be able to make additional changes like minor course title edits and add additional instructions, as long as they have a MacID.

How long will I have access to my course?

You will have access to your Avenue course for the duration of your access to your MacID.

Who owns the course?

When considering questions of ownership of the instructional material you create during your appointment at McMaster, we recommend you consult the following:

- [Copyright Ownership and a Policy Framework for Licensing Instructional Material](#)
- Your teaching contract
- Your professional association or union

ACCOUNT STATUS AND COURSE ROLES

Your Avenue account status and course roles

Your **role** within a course depends on your relationship to the course. For instance, if you are assigned as the instructor of a course in MOSAIC, then you will be automatically listed as an **Instructor** for the sections of the course you are assigned to teach. The first indication of this will be your listing as an instructor in the Course Request form. More information about [Avenue Roles](#) and what they can do in the Avenue to Learn Knowledge Base.

Role Switch function

When developing your

When developing your Avenue course shell, it will be helpful to see what the course will look like to your students. Avenue has a [“View as” feature](#) that allows you to see and test your course in the same way someone assigned to a **Student** role would.

STUDENT ENROLMENT AND ACCESS

Avenue course student enrolment

Avenue to Learn's course enrolment is connected to MOSAIC. Once a student's enrolment into your course via MOSAIC is complete, then they will be added to your Avenue course and you will be able to see their enrolment status in the [Classlist](#) tool.

Making your course active

In order for your students to access your course, you must first [make it Active](#). Once this is done, your students will be able to see and access your course in their **My Courses** widget on their Avenue home page.

Can they see my course while I'm developing it?

By default, your course is hidden from your students when it is first created. So long as the course is not active, your students won't be able to see or access your course in their *My Courses* widget.

COMMONLY USED TOOLS

Avenue contains a number of excellent tools that you can use to support student learning. If this is your first time preparing a course site in a learning management system, we outline here a few of the most frequently used tools.

Content

The [Content](#) section of the course site is where you can post the learning materials you intend to share with your students. It allows you to organize your content into folders and you can include virtually any kind of media from PowerPoint slides to documents to web resources and videos. It is highly recommended that you take the time to create a well-structured content section to make finding resources easier for students to navigate and for you to manage. It's important to note that any content you post on Avenue is subject to copyright. You can find out more about use of copyrighted material for educational purposes on McMaster's Office of Legal Services [Copyright](#) website.

Classlist

The [Classlist](#) details all the students who are enrolled in your course, their student numbers, and MacIDs. You can manually enroll or unenroll students if that is required during the course. If you plan to use Avenue to manage students' grades, you must make sure that all of the students in your course are enrolled in the course shell or you will not be able to manage their grades in the Grades tool. While Avenue mail is available in Avenue, it is distinct from institutional (McMaster) email and the two do not sync. It is highly recommended that instructors stick to using McMaster email for communicating with students.

Discussions

The [Discussions tool](#) is an online discussion forum where students can be engaged in discussions about course content. They can respond to one another or ask questions to receive help.

Assignments

The [Assignments tool](#) is a virtual folder that allows students to submit their work electronically. You can manage and grade students' work within the system and offer them feedback.

Grades

From [Grades](#), instructors can create gradebooks for their course and manage grades for individual students. This tool offers flexibility in the way grades are displayed and entered to make grade management as smooth as possible. Grades can be imported/exported as a spreadsheet for management outside of Avenue. A point to note is that some characters are sorted differently in Avenue than they are in Excel. To avoid issues with this, it is recommended that you sort grade lists by student number whenever possible. Grades can also be imported into Mosaic directly from Avenue.

Quizzes

The [Quiz tool](#) contains powerful options for creating and administering quizzes. There are options to use quizzes as low-stakes or no-stakes assessments (ungraded) or they can be used for holding online tests for larger courses, if that is appropriate for your teaching context. Quizzes let you import questions from repositories if you maintain your own or utilize a publisher's assets from a textbook.

AVENUE SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Avenue to Learn Knowledge Base

To learn more about Avenue, visit the [Avenue to Learn](#) website. A wealth of resources, including tool descriptions and tutorials, can also be found on the [Avenue to Learn Knowledge Base](#).

Avenue AMA (Ask-Me-Anything)

Every Wednesday at noon one of our Learning Technologies Analysts will be available in the [Avenue to Learn Channel](#) of the [Blended Community of Practice](#) team on McMaster's MS Teams to answer your Avenue questions.

Demo and Support Requests

If you require a demo or would like to connect with someone for Avenue support, please visit <https://avenue.mcmaster.ca/support/> to submit a help form to a member of MacPherson Institute's Learning Technologies Team.

PART V

OTHER INSTITUTIONALLY SUPPORTED TEACHING TECHNOLOGIES

- [MacPherson Institute-Supported Learning Technologies](#)
- [Microsoft 365](#)
- [Tools for Synchronous Online Learning](#)
- [Do-It-Yourself Media Creation](#)

MACPHERSON INSTITUTE-SUPPORTED LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

The MacPherson Institute and other units on campus support a collection of learning technologies. You can find out more about what technologies the MacPherson Institute supports by visiting the [MacPherson Supported Teaching Technologies](#) page.

MICROSOFT 365

- **Supporting Unit:** [University Technology Services](#)
- **Support:** [Office 365 Hub](#)

All instructors and staff at McMaster have access to Microsoft 365 which includes the full suite of Microsoft Office tools. You will be able to install office on your device(s) or to use the online version of office from within a browser.

You can store and share documents using OneDrive and edit documents simultaneously with your collaborators.

Of particular interest for instructors is PowerPoint, the widely used presentation software from Microsoft. The most recent version of PowerPoint, included in the 365 suite, can be used to design and deliver effective and accessible presentations or lessons. It even includes an automatic, live captioning tool that we recommend everyone use whenever possible. This tool is a great asset in our efforts to make teaching accessible to all students.

TOOLS FOR SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE LEARNING

Much of the synchronous online teaching that occurs on our campus is facilitated through the use of Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Echo360.

Microsoft Teams

- **Supporting Unit:** [University Technology Services](#)
- **Support Resources:** [Office 365 Hub](#)

Teams is a collaboration software that includes chat, posting, file sharing, quizzing and assessment tools, and even its own web conferencing functionality. Teams can be used to collaborate with teaching teams or across departments and also can be used to organize and host course content and live sessions (teaching, office hours, etc.). To find out more about Teams, visit McMaster's University Technology Services' [Office 365 Hub](#).

Zoom

- **Supporting Unit:** [University Technology Services](#)
- **Support Resource:** [Discover Microsoft 365 and Zoom](#)

Zoom can be used to host virtual classes, online office hours, or meetings with remote members over the internet. The MacPherson Institute offers consultations for teaching online so do reach out to staff there if you would like support for online teaching with Zoom. For more information and technical support for Zoom, visit University Technology Services [Discover Microsoft 365 and Zoom](#) page.

Echo360

- **Supporting Unit:** [Campus Classroom Technologies \(CCT\)](#)
- **Support Resource:** [Echo360 Knowledge Base](#)

Some large lecture halls are equipped with the technology to capture your teaching while you're delivering a class in person. Echo360 can also capture your teaching from your personal computer or laptop. These recordings can be very helpful for allowing students to review lecture content at a later time. If you would like to use Echo360 to create videos for an online or blended course, it is recommended that you follow best practices for teaching online. To get started with Echo360, connect with [Campus Classroom Technologies \(CCT\)](#).

DIY (DO-IT-YOURSELF) MEDIA CREATION

MacVideo

- **Supporting Unit:** MacPherson Institute
- **Support Resource:** [MacVideo Knowledge Base](#)

In order to facilitate video creation and streaming for instructors, the MacPherson Institute hosts a service called MacVideo. This service can be accessed by anyone using their MacID and allows instructors to record, edit and post video content for their courses on a platform that is similar to YouTube but for the McMaster community. The [MacVideo Knowledge Base](#) has been created to answer any video creating questions or general inquiries. If you are using videos that you have created in your teaching, MacVideo is the best way to host and share them with your students. MacVideo has been integrated into Avenue to make it even easier to post your videos into your course content. Of course, as a legislative requirement, all media utilized in courses must comply with accessibility guidelines which includes captioning for video posted in courses. MacVideo contains an auto-captioning tool that will generate captions. Once the system has generated these captions, you can edit them to ensure 100% accuracy and accessibility compliance from within MacVideo. Find out more about MacVideo in the [Getting Started with MacVideo](#) tutorial.

MacPherson Studios

- **Supporting Unit:** MacPherson Institute
- **Support Resource:** [MacPherson Studios](#)

The MacPherson Institute offers a variety of studio spaces on campus to support video and audio production and editing. Find out more about studio booking and the different types of studios on the [MacPherson Studios](#) page.

EdTech Stations

- **Supporting Unit:** MacPherson Institute
- **Support Resource:** [EdTech Stations](#)

There are also three [EdTech Stations](#) situated within the MacPherson Institute that complement the supports and services available through MacPherson Institute's studios.

PART VI

WORKING WITH A TEACHING TEAM

- [Working with Teaching Assistants \(TAs\)](#)
- [Working with Instructional Assistants \(IA\)](#)

WORKING WITH TEACHING ASSISTANTS (TA)

Depending on the size of your class, you may be assigned **teaching assistants (TAs)**. TAs can be graduate or undergraduate students and may be offered these roles as part of funding packages or through a competitive application process. All teaching assistants are members of [CUPE 3906 \(Unit 1\)](#) and work according to the terms of the [Collective Agreement](#). A full teaching assistantship consists of 260 hours (130 per term), and a partial teaching assistantship consists of less than 130 hours.

TAs fulfill a number of important roles, including leading class discussions, supervising a lab or tutorial group, marking assignments, meeting and corresponding with students, and facilitating study sessions. The specific duties you require your TA(s) to complete and the estimated amount of time each activity is expected to take should be discussed with them before the term starts and recorded in their Hours of Work form provided by your department.

Please note that all TAs are required to complete Workplace Health and Safety training and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act training before they begin their first teaching assistant position. Moreover, each TA must also complete five hours of one-time paid anti-oppression and pedagogy training. This training is external to their TA contract hours and must be completed within the first 2-weeks of the start date of their appointment. To learn more about this training, please refer to the [Mandatory TA/RA in Lieu Training \(Anti-Oppression and Pedagogy\)](#) page on McMaster's Human Resources Services website.

Should TAs wish to engage in additional professional development for teaching, please be sure to make them aware that there are many opportunities to do so via the MacPherson Institute. A full listing of opportunities can be found on the Institute's [New TA Programming](#) page.

WORKING WITH INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANTS (IA)

Instructional Assistants (IAs) are staff members (UNIFOR, Unit 1, if applicable) and have a wide variety of skills and responsibilities across the university. Some support courses by managing course websites, student assessments and grading. Others coordinate large groups of TAs and help with training and coordinating their activities. Others still might build and maintain course materials for others or themselves to use in teaching a course. Regardless of their specific roles and responsibilities, IAs focus on one thing: the education of undergraduates. As a result, they are a valuable ally to have in your teaching journey. IAs will often have long histories within a department and can be a great place to start if you're looking to connect with someone about teaching in your discipline.

PART VII

DEVELOPING A TEACHING PORTFOLIO

- [Preparing a Teaching Portfolio for Tenure, Promotion, or Permanence at McMaster](#)

PREPARING A TEACHING PORTFOLIO FOR TENURE, PROMOTION, OR PERMANENCE AT MCMASTER

A teaching portfolio is a curated document that showcases your teaching beliefs, practices, impacts, and goals. For tenure- and teaching-track faculty, a teaching portfolio is required as part of the documentation you submit when applying for tenure and permanence.

If you are a sessional instructor, and particularly if you are on the academic job market, a teaching portfolio is often required for job applications. In both cases, and for tenured and permanent faculty, a teaching portfolio can act as a tool that allows you to reflect upon, evaluate, and document your teaching strengths and areas for enhancement. A teaching portfolio can also, of course, come in handy when applying to teaching awards!

For tenure-track or teaching-track faculty, teaching portfolios for the purposes of tenure, promotion, or permanence are expected to align with the requirements of the [SPS B2 Teaching Portfolios policy](#). This document outlines the main parts of the teaching portfolio and lists the specific components required for each.

- **Part A: Executive Summary**

- Description of responsibilities and mechanism of evaluation drawn from the appointment letter, or updates thereto (maximum one page);
- Description of teaching approach/philosophy (about one page);
- Description of teaching practice, including examples of how the approach/philosophy has been realized, or how teaching has been adapted to unusual conditions (one to two pages);
- Description of contributions to teaching, for example, course design, publications and research on teaching and learning, presentations on teaching and learning, professional development, educational leadership, reports on issues pertaining to teaching and learning (about one page);
- Complete details of responses to the summative question in the student feedback on all courses taught over the past five years. The information should be set in the context of all the teaching done in the department. It is the responsibility of the Department Chair to provide all instructors with contextual data for all the courses given in each term.

- **Part B – Supporting Documentation**

- This section is optional and may contain additional material compiled by the faculty member in support of Part A.

For more information on developing a teaching portfolio that aligns with the McMaster SPS B2 policy, see the MacPherson Institute guidebook on [Preparing a Teaching Portfolio](#) or feel free to reach out to the [MacPherson Institute](#).

Once you have a complete draft of your teaching portfolio you can also request a teaching portfolio [consultation](#) (to receive feedback).

PART VIII

MACPHERSON INSTITUTE SUPPORTS, SERVICES, AND RESOURCES

The MacPherson Institute offers a wide variety of professional development for teaching activities, supports, and services to all McMaster educators (e.g., Teaching Assistants, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, instructors, faculty, and staff), cultivating an environment where learning deeply matters, and teaching is valued. Below, you will find a brief description of each of the supports, services, and resources intended for instructors.

- [Programs, Workshops, and Services](#)
- [Teaching and Learning Resources](#)
- [Stay Connected](#)

PROGRAMS, WORKSHOPS, AND SERVICES

- **[Instructional Skills Workshop](#)**: In this 24-hour internationally recognized workshop, you will design and deliver three 10-minute lessons in small group settings of 4-5 peers using the BOPPPS Model of lesson planning which incorporates the principle of constructive alignment. You will receive peer feedback and a video recording of each of your lessons for later viewing and reflection.
- **[Course \(re\)Design Workshop](#)**: This workshop is dedicated to helping you design or redesign a course. The workshop teaches course design topics including constructive alignment, teaching and learning activities, assessment, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Also, the facilitated sessions allow for independent reflection/work, peer feedback, and individual consultation.
- **[Course Consultant Partnership Program](#)**: After completing the Course (re)Design Workshop, instructors may have a chance to work with a student partner to get feedback on the course as part of MacPherson Institute's Course Consultant Partnership Program. Student partners will receive training from the MacPherson Institute in relevant pedagogical theory to provide meaningful feedback on course design.
- **[Assessment Development Workshop](#)**: This workshop is an opportunity to focus on the enhancement of new or existing assessments in your own course(s). By partaking in facilitated sessions on relevant topics, you will be able to learn how to implement meaningful assessments that support student learning by acquiring peer feedback and participating in guided work time.
- **[Learning to Teach Online](#)**: This self-enrolled, self-paced course is completed in Avenue to Learn. You will learn the foundational pieces/steps in creating an engaging online learning experience for students. Furthermore, as you work through the content, you will assemble and receive feedback on your own online course, how to use an online course planning guide and weekly content activity guide, and assessment worksheets.
- **[Teaching and Learning Certificates of Completion Program](#)**: Educators can earn one or both of two Certificates of Completion offered by completing 0-unit graduate level Pass/Fail courses that range in length and format. The course descriptions and schedules can be found on the Program's website. The courses include:
 - EDUCATN 640: Essential Skills in University Teaching
 - EDUCATN 740: Peer-Evaluated Teaching Experience
 - EDUCATN 750/751: Principles and Practices of University Teaching
 - EDUCATN 760: Self-Directed Study
 - EDUCATN 770: Digital Literacies for Teaching and Learning
 - EDUCATN 780: Self-Directed Teaching Experience

- **Student Partners Program:** The Student Partners Program (SPP) provides undergraduate and graduate students with opportunities to participate as partners with faculty, instructors and staff on projects that contribute to the enhancement of teaching and learning at McMaster.
- **Leadership in Teaching & Learning Fellowship:** This 2-year program is dedicated to supporting the teaching and learning research activities of McMaster faculty. It is designed to engage faculty in leading change, practice the scholarship of teaching and learning, and support faculty communities that provide mentorship and leadership in teaching and learning
- **Teaching Refinement:** With this service, the MacPherson Institute will help you collect feedback from your students mid-way through your course. Following a consultation to identify areas of focus, a MacPherson Institute staff member will facilitate a full-class discussion during a class visit. Thereafter, they will consult with you a second time to discuss the key themes that emerged and support you in identifying next steps to enhance your teaching and the course. To apply for a refinement, please request one via the [MacPherson Institute Request Form](#).
- **Teaching Observation:** With this service, you will receive feedback on your teaching from a staff member at the MacPherson Institute. Following a consultation to identify areas of focus (e.g., you might be interested in feedback on your engagement strategies, presentation style, content organization, or integration of educational technologies), a MacPherson Institute staff member will observe one of your classes of our choosing. Thereafter, they will consult with you a second time to discuss their observations and support you in identifying next steps to enhance your teaching and the course. To request an observation, please use the [MacPherson Institute Request Form](#).
- **Teaching and Learning Consultation:** The MacPherson Institute offers one-on-one and teaching team consultations on a range of topics. To request a consultation, complete the [MacPherson Institute Request Form](#).

TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES

- **[MacPherson Developed Resources](#)**: This page includes a curated collection of resources aimed to assist, guide, and inspire instructors of all levels. Resources include those created by the MacPherson Institute alone or in collaboration with campus partners, as well as others from the broader teaching and learning community in Canada. Some of the most helpful resources for McMaster instructors include: Preparing a Teaching Portfolio, Research in Teaching and Learning Guidebook, and Program Review and Enhancement Guidebook.
- **[Learning Catalogue](#)**: This online repository of educational resources is intended to introduce you to various teaching and learning topics of relevance to post-secondary education in Canada. Much of the content is structured in the form of online asynchronous modules.
- **[Teaching Development Planning Tool](#)**: With the large number of teaching supports, services, and resources made available at the MacPherson Institute, some instructors may not know where to begin. This tool was designed to assist new faculty members in planning relevant and appropriate teaching development opportunities based on their level of experience.

STAY CONNECTED

- **The MacPherson Memo** – [Subscribe](#) to our newsletter for weekly updates about teaching and learning, information about events and conferences, professional development opportunities and other teaching and learning updates and information from across campus.
- **Conferences & Events** – Learn more about our upcoming Conferences & Events on the [MacPherson Institute website](#).
- **MacPherson Institute Faculty Liaisons** – Each of the six Faculties and Arts & Science have a dedicated MacPherson Institute educational developer assigned for discipline specific support. Your [Faculty's liaison](#) at the Institute would be a valuable support in your teaching and learning journey as an instructor.
- **Social Media** – Follow [@McMaster_MI](#) on X (formerly Twitter)

