

# Values and Principles Framework for Teaching and Learning

University of Ottawa



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## Background

The Values and Principles Framework for Teaching and Learning at the University of Ottawa (the “Framework”) was developed between 2018 and 2023. The Framework was developed with the aim of providing guidance to support policies, processes, programs, and practices related to teaching and learning. The foundational values, principles, and orientations of the framework are grounded in the narratives and experiences shared with us by participants from a wide range of stakeholder groups and cultural communities within the University of Ottawa.

The Framework is the product of many hearts and minds. It represents a collective aspiration for excellence in teaching and learning and the University of Ottawa.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Framework is to provide **guidance** to stakeholders involved in teaching and learning at the University of Ottawa. The Framework is more like a **compass** than a map. It helps orient how we think about and value teaching and learning at the University of Ottawa. It does not tell us where we are going or how we ought to get there.

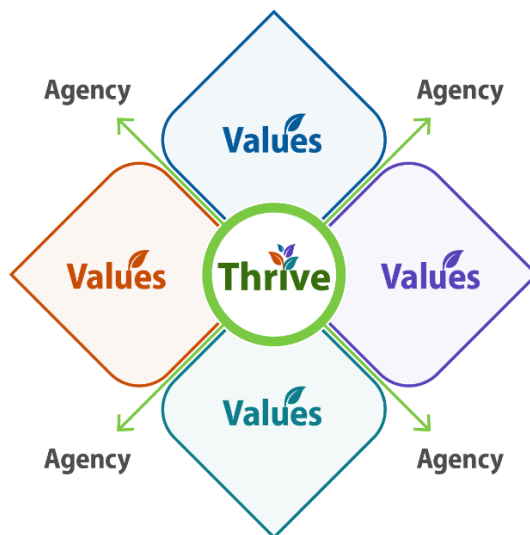


Figure 1: A values framework as a tool for orientation

## How to use the Framework

The Framework is open-ended by design.

We cannot define how teaching and learning take place in every context across widely varied learning environments connected to the University of Ottawa. Nor would we want to. Instead, the Framework provides orientation to help teaching staff, students, academic leadership, program support staff, partners, and stakeholders think about the dimensions of the teaching and learning experience, how these dimensions can be understood in context, and what we can do together to create excellence in teaching and learning.

The Framework is both general – it can be applied to every case – and specific – it can be applied at whatever level of granularity is required. It applies as much to developing individual learning activities as it does to the design of learning programs. It applies as much to an individual educator's reflection on their teaching practice as it does to the assessment of teaching excellence.

Because the Framework is both adaptive and descriptive, it does not (and cannot) provide specific prescriptions to specific questions. Instead, it serves to provide stakeholders engaged in teaching and learning at the University of Ottawa with a common framework for exploring, planning, evaluating, and assessing the teaching and learning strategies we develop in specific contexts.

# Framework Structure

The Framework is designed around five core principles.



Figure 2: Architecture of the values framework

## Purpose: Thrive

The question of what matters in teaching and learning is inseparable from the “why” question: *Why do we teach and learn at the University of Ottawa?* There are as many different answers to this question as there are students, instructors, supervisors, staff members and partners engaged with the University of Ottawa. There is, however, a common thread that joins them together: we **thrive** in teaching and learning when we realize our potential as subject-matter experts, community members, changemakers and reflective citizens in a complex world.

## Context: Engage with the world

Teaching and learning is an encounter that takes place in a specific context. Teaching and learning environments vary widely across the University of Ottawa, including virtual, multimodal, and in-person classrooms, teaching labs, design labs, large lectures, research teams, one-on-one meetings, off-campus placements, and more. The practice of teaching and learning must always respond to this multifaceted context.

## Community: Build relationships

Teaching and learning are interconnected activities grounded in human relationships. Regardless of the role played in the teaching encounter, every participant is also a person engaging with others in teaching and learning. The roles and responsibilities of teaching and learning are grounded in relationships between people that demand reciprocity and respect. How stakeholders engage in their roles as participants in human relationships sets the foundation for the teaching and learning experience.

## **Agency: Act with purpose**

The teaching and learning environment is not (just) defined by the what, when, where, and how of the learning encounter but by the people who teach and learn in this environment. Teaching and learning involves the active participation of many different actors. Teaching and learning is a collaborative activity that requires engagement from all stakeholders, teaching staff, students, community partners, as well as the support staff and academic leadership who help to define, plan, and support the teaching encounter. The practice of teaching and learning is shaped by what each of these actors does to create and support the teaching and learning environment and encounter.

## **Growth: Reflect on experience**

Experience – and the sharing of experience – is the central source of teaching and learning at the University of Ottawa. Whether in a lecture theatre or a field placement or anywhere in between, teaching and learning is grounded in the experiences we bring, the experiences we build, and the experiences we share. By engaging with problems, sharing ideas and perspectives, building solutions, and reflecting together on change we build the conditions for learning, growth, and community.

# Perspectives on Values and Principles

Teaching and learning is a collaborative activity that engages many different stakeholders. The values implied by the orienting principles of the framework depend on whether we understand our actions from an individual, relational, academic, or social point of view. For example, when an instructor aims to “act with purpose” in a classroom, they are:

- from a **relational perspective**, facilitating **empowerment** in the development and implementation of solutions.
- from an **individual perspective**, enabling **autonomy** in learning.
- from an **academic perspective**, supporting **collaboration** in solving problems.
- from a **community perspective**, encouraging **connection** in building relationships within and beyond the university community.

By integrating these perspectives we can take a holistic view on teaching and learning across the whole of the University of Ottawa as a collaborative, participative, multi-stakeholder activity.

Principle	Relational perspective	Individual perspective	Academic perspective	Community perspective
	The Learning Environment	The Learner	The Educator	The University
Engage with the world	Relevance	Courage	Purpose	Impact
Build relationships	Belonging	Empathy	Inclusion	Responsiveness
Act with purpose	Empowerment	Autonomy	Collaboration	Connection
Reflect on experience	Responsibility	Resilience	Accountability	Recognition

# The Learning Environment

## How do we build thriving Learning Environments?

Educators, learners, support staff, and stakeholders within and beyond the university community come together to create learning experiences across a wide range of learning environments. When we come together to teach and to learn, we come together with different roles and responsibilities. We do not always have the same role in the learning environment, but we always come as a whole person with our knowledge, our skills, our emotions, and our lived experience.

Regardless of our role in the learning environment, we come as people who live out human relationships. A holistic learning environment is defined not just by its physical features, but by the people in those places and spaces and how they relate to each other. The learning environment must both enable teaching and learning and meet the needs of its many stakeholders as individuals in human relationships.

We build thriving learning environments when we **live** as a community of teaching and learning grounded in relevance, belonging, empowerment, and responsibility.



Figure 3: Values in the learning environment

## Relevance

Together, we **promote relevance** in our engagement with the world, grounded in the latest research, appropriate learning challenges, and key experiences that enable us to solve the most pressing problems of today and tomorrow.

## Belonging

Together, we **create belonging** and inclusion to ensure that every person in their diversity and difference feels welcome and included so that we can build meaningful relationships and take the risks that lead to learning and growth.



## Empowerment

Together, we **build empowerment** through collaboration and self-determination so that we can lead our own learning, take up new challenges, and build innovative solutions to shared problems.

## Responsibility

Together, we **develop responsibility** for ourselves and for others by understanding ourselves and the others, our relationships, and the impacts of our actions on the world around us.

# The Educator

## How do we thrive as Educators?

As educators, we are responsible for shaping the learning environment. We thrive as high-impact Educators when we **share** our experience and our expertise as subject-matter experts, community members, changemakers and reflective citizens with purpose, inclusion, collaboration and accountability.



Figure 4: Values from the educator's perspective

## Purpose

As educators at a research-intensive institution, we guide students in mastering the key issues and challenges that define excellence in the discipline in ways that respond to our teaching context. We:

- **Demonstrate credible expertise** by integrating experience and the cutting edge of advanced disciplines into the learning environment.
- **Share our passion** for discovery and innovation, bringing students into the heart of the discipline and its frontiers of innovation.
- **Create impactful learning encounters** by engaging the learner in formative experiential learning grounded in appropriate challenges and relevant disciplinary applications.

## Inclusion

As educators, we lead the creation of a welcoming, inclusive and caring learning environment that encourages every learner to fully engage in our own learning. We:

- **Model inclusive practices** that recognize diversity in identity and experience and welcome participation from all perspectives.

- **Engage our students with empathy** to understand the student experience, to take stock of the challenges and mental stress they are facing, and to reflect student experiences and identities in the learning environment.
- **Work proactively with students to create solutions** to challenges in the learning environment that are inclusive and support learning and personal development.

## Collaboration

As educators, we lead the creation of experiential learning environments that empower learners to set goals, make decisions and action plans, gather feedback, and reflect on outcomes throughout our learning experience. We:

- **Develop collaborative learning environments** that provide the scaffolding for learners to develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to succeed.
- **Collaborate with students in their learning** by guiding students to knowledge, learning, and growth in their academic, professional, and personal lives.
- **Enable active learning communities** through which learners create networks of learning, feedback, and growth that extend beyond the formal learning context.

## Accountability

As educators, we reflect on our teaching practice as we adapt to a complex social learning environment in constant evolution. We:

- **Are mindful of the impact we have on learners** and the ways in which our time and attention can shape the learner's experience self-understanding by creating or removing barriers to belonging and participation.
- **Seek out professional growth** by inviting feedback from students, colleagues, and advisors to improve learning environments, course materials and assessments, integrate new technologies, and increase teaching impact.
- **Promote accountable teaching** by supporting the systems and processes of peer feedback, teaching assessment, and quality improvement.

# The Learner

## How do we thrive as Learners?

As Learners, we are equal and co-responsible partners in the learning experience. We thrive as Learners when we **grow** as subject-matter experts, community members, changemakers and reflective citizens by engaging in teaching and learning with courage, empathy, autonomy, and resilience.



Figure 5: Values from the Learner's perspective

## Courage

As engaged learners, we open ourselves to the wide range of possibilities, experiences, and transformations that the learning experience enables. We:

- **Prepare to encounter the unexpected**, to change our minds, to adapt our views, and to come out of our studies a different person.
- **Embrace experimentation** by trying new things, taking on new challenges, finding out what drives our interest, learning what works for us and seizing opportunities to discover the unknown.
- **Build confidence** by putting what we have learned to the test to demonstrate and reinforce competence on the way to mastery.

## Empathy

As engaged learners, we take the lead in own learning and development by choosing our own path, by seeking out opportunity, and by building relationships that will change our perspectives. We:

- **Build relationships for learning** by sharing perspectives and taking time to find common ground with others to foster inclusion and belonging.
- **Are open-minded in the learning environment** by asking questions, valuing difference, and discover opportunities through human connections.

- **Value our own experience and the experience of others** and take the time to learn from the world around us and the perspectives of others.

## Autonomy

As engaged learners, we challenge ourselves to build skills, reach new heights, and accomplish what might once have seemed impossible. We:

- **Prepare for learning by building skills and patterns for success** with a solid foundation in study skills, planning, preparation, and participation.
- **Commit to learning**, to participating fully and responsibly, to being challenged, to growing, to putting in the time and to valuing the opportunity to grow.
- **Are persistent in facing up to adversity**, finding new ways forward and seeking feedback and help when we need it.

## Resilience

As engaged learners, we build the resources we need to embrace changes in ourselves and in our relationship to the world. We:

- **Understand the importance of mental well-being and self-care**, of understanding our needs, maintaining boundaries, strengthening relationships and seeking help when we need it.
- **Plan ahead to be purposeful in our learning** by taking advantage of opportunities and experiences and seeking out the challenges that help us grow.
- **Are thoughtful** in asking the hard questions and taking the time we need time to find answers.

# The University

As members of the University community, we play a critical role in structuring and supporting the learning environment through leadership in policy, programming, and relationship development within and beyond the university. We thrive as a University when we **serve** as subject-matter experts, community members, changemakers and reflective citizens by supporting teaching and learning with impact, responsiveness, connection, and recognition.



Figure 6: Values from the University perspective

## Impact

We support innovation in teaching and learning by creating space and opportunity to take risks, experiment, and develop high impact strategies for teaching and learning. We:

- **Defend the key role played by the University of Ottawa as a public institution** that upholds the values of a free and open society, including freedom of speech, academic freedom, and academic integrity.
- **Support and strengthen the community of researchers, academics, professionals, and students** who lead us to change, to improve, and to evolve.
- **Look to the future** by promoting innovation and continuous improvement in our offerings and training opportunities.

## Responsiveness

We build programs that meet the needs of learners and community stakeholders with more flexible, adaptive, and experiential ways to learn in an increasingly complex world. We:

- **Respect the dignity, integrity, and belonging of every person** and their lived experience within our community.

- **Collaborate with community and industry partners locally and globally** to create learning experiences that meet the present and future needs of learners, communities, and partners.
- **Work with and learn from the communities within and beyond the university** and embrace opportunities to celebrate cultures and experiences.

## Connection

We build best-in-class teaching and learning experiences by partnering with local and global institutions, communities, governments, and industries to prepare learners to engage with local and global challenges and innovation. We:

- **Promote experiential, participative, and work-integrated learning** for more meaningful and impactful teaching and learning experiences.
- **Foster connectional experiences** that bring students into contact with local and global cultures and communities to foster relationships, respect, and understanding.
- **Promote our distinct national and international identity** as a uniquely Francophone and bilingual research-intensive university through partnership, cooperation and collaboration.

## Recognition

We value teaching as core to the academic vocation and career of faculty members by building policies, systems, and programs that recognize and support the importance of teaching within the institution. We:

- **Value teaching and learning as a core element of research and inquiry** and therefore vital to the strength and sustainability of the University of Ottawa as a distinguished institution of higher learning.
- **Support individual and collective efforts** to enhance the teaching and learning experience, to explore new approaches, and to build teaching and learning capacity within the institution.
- **Reward the achievements of exceptional students, educators, and professionals** who sustain a culture of excellence in teaching and learning at the University of Ottawa.