

21st Annual Teaching & Learning Conference

Reimagining assessments: Sparking innovation, equity and impact to promote student learning

Wednesday, August 13th, 2025

9:00 am – 1:30 pm (EDT)

What's the Point? Assessment and Authenticity in Teaching & Learning (9:10-10:20)

- **Kristina Meinking, Elon University**
- What values do we hold about the purpose of higher education? How do these inform our teaching and shape student learning experiences? How do we communicate and honour our principles, and how do we work with students to cultivate the skills, competencies, and capabilities that we hope will endure beyond their degree? Underneath these questions lies a broader concern with whether a transformative learning experience is still possible: daily headlines decry a lapsing confidence in the educational system, confusion or exasperation over the use of AI, frustration over the lack of student engagement, concern over student well-being, growing attentiveness to educator burnout, and much more.
- This talk will examine what current and emerging trends in teaching and learning reveal about a more deeply rooted preoccupation with the purpose of higher education. We'll consider how our experiences and pathways shaped our own — and our students' — ideas of higher education's socio-cultural role. Next we'll explore how those ideas show up in our syllabi, our classrooms, and on our campuses, with an attentiveness to how our assessments, especially, align with our sense of purpose.
- Finally, we'll explore actionable and sustainable strategies for crafting student-centered assessments, bringing authenticity to our work, and embracing the messiness of teaching and learning together.

Kitchen Table Talks: Trusting Students to Facilitate Learning (10:30-10:50)

- **Stephanie Hernandez Rivera, Elon University**
- Creating spaces for students to understand their place in their learning and that of their peers is important in a critically engaged classroom. This talk explores the practice of "Kitchen Table Talks" as a course assignment and the ways that Kitchen

Table Talks encourage students to facilitate learning for their peers and assess their engagement.

- Furthermore, the talk underscores how educators can use their epistemological perspective to creatively develop assignments for their courses that align with their epistemology and pedagogical practice.

Co-designing inclusive and authentic assessment: A students-as-partners approach (11:00-11:20)

- **Katie Lee Bunting, Elly Park, Nicole Arsenault, Savannah Miles, Laura Yvonne Bulk & Alexis Davis, University of British Columbia**
- The students-as-partners approach is transforming assessment by fostering inclusive learning, increasing student agency, and deepening engagement. Our team — two student partners and four educators — co-designed a graduate health professions class on anti-oppressive practice. We centered an authentic assessment approach by co-creating case scenarios to assess students' application of learned strategies, ensuring diverse perspectives and appropriate complexity.
- Educators facilitated critical discussions in class and the team as a whole provided targeted feedback, reinforcing learning. This session will explore using co-created assessments, student voice in design, and equitable partnerships. Participants will leave with strategies to embed students-as-partners in their own assessment practices.

If They Build It, They Will Come: Empowering Students to Design the Assignment (10:30-10:50)

- **Sarah Jacoba & Carmen Wessel, Lakehead University**
- Our presentation describes the implementation of a student-designed, end-of-term, culminating project. Inspired by project-based learning, this alternative assessment sees students design their own culminating assignment (including a grading rubric), before completing the original activity, receiving peer feedback, and improving their work before final submission. In our presentation, the instructor and a student share their respective experiences from both the teaching and the learning standpoints.
- Together, we describe the implementation of this alternative final assessment, outline its pedagogical benefits as well as the increased learning equity it affords, and address challenges faced by instructor and student alike.

A Linguistically Just Approach to Assessment: Students as Collaborative Partners (11:00-11:20)

- **Catherine Bowlin, Elon University**
- This session will explore an alternative assessment model that invites students into the assessment process by collaborating in the development, feedback, and reflection phases of projects. This assessment schema prompts students to collaboratively write learning objectives, provide feedback, enact revisions, write grading checklists for final submissions, and reflect on final submissions to assess themselves.
- Participants will consider how a student-inclusive assessment model can build confidence, trust, agency, and authentic learning in any higher ed context. Participants will also reflect on potential adjustments to their own assessment practices to prioritise a linguistically just framework in the classroom.

Adult Learners as Collaborators: Developing ELT Educators' Critical AI Literacy (10:30-10:50)

- **Plamen Kushkiev, George Brown College**
- This presentation explores the affordances of ChatGPT as a critical friend in developing adult educators' critical AI literacy (CAIL) in English language teaching (ELT). Based on a three-semester narrative inquiry in an Ontario community college, the study examines the researcher's perceptions of CAIL, pedagogical interventions, and AI-mediated assessment design.
- Thematic analysis of journal entries and ChatGPT interactions highlights how critical engagement with GenAI fosters human-focused pedagogy, learner collaboration, and formative assessment as learning. Findings emphasise the need for ELT educators to develop CAIL, adapt AI-mediated approaches, and empower learners as co-creators of knowledge in AI-enhanced multilingual classrooms.

Navigating the New Norm: Partnering with AI for Assessment (11:00-11:20)

- **Becky Kloepper, Kendra Nanton, & Dhvani Toprani, Elon University**
- As AI tools become more accessible in higher education, faculty face both excitement and uncertainty about their use. While AI offers productivity gains, concerns about authentic learning remain. Elon University's Learning Design and Support Team developed a workshop supporting faculty in exploring generative AI for student-centered assessment design using student-as-partners approach.

Rather than positioning ourselves as AI experts, we fostered collaborative experimentation to discover innovative assessment and engagement strategies. Students supported this initiative by presenting their needs and AI perceptions to faculty. This session shares key takeaways from the workshop and invites new perspectives on partnering with faculty to integrate AI intentionally into assessment practices.

Design Thinking Assessment for Wicked Problems (10:30-10:50)

- **Danielle Lake, John Cirelli, & Peyton Patrick, Elon University; Heather Keith, Radford University**
- This session will document the findings and provide recommendations for boundary-spanning curricula designed to prepare students to address wicked problems. In particular, facilitators will document Radford University's five-year pilot initiative, an ecosystems approach to assessment, and the teaching and learning strategies found to be most valuable. The pilot includes innovative curricula, co-curricular programming, and new student associations.
- It also spans the university, transforming student involvement in real world problem-solving. To study the merits and limitations, Elon's Center for Design Thinking created an ecosystem approach to assessment, including a review of materials, faculty interviews, student focus groups, surveys, and a site visit.

Reimagining Assessment in Experiential Learning: Contracts, collaboration, and care (11:00-11:20)

- **Jessica Mace & Ainsley Goldman, University of Toronto**
- What happens when you combine two innovative pedagogies, experiential learning and contract grading? This presentation shares research findings from a case study of an upper-year undergraduate humanities course that coupled an industry project with a contract grading assessment model. Our findings demonstrate the impact that it had on students: it helped them to thrive individually, but also perhaps more significantly, it built community, collaboration, and trust.
While not a one-size-fits-all approach, we share key lessons from this innovative method of grading experiential learning that may be applied to a broad range of courses.

Reflective Writing as Authentic Assessment: Strategies and Frameworks for Using Metacognitive Responses to Assess Experiential and Integrative Learning (10:30-11:20)

- **Shelley Reid & Tom Polk, George Mason University**
- This workshop will introduce faculty to strategies for designing, teaching, and especially assessing reflective assignments in their class, internship, capstone experience, or co-curricular learning environment. The workshop builds on research that demonstrates that metacognitive assignments help learning “stick” with students and transfer to other classes and professional sites.
Participants from all disciplines are invited to explore frameworks for deciding when and how to guide students’ reflective learning; participants will have time to adapt their own assignments and assessment criteria in light of these frameworks.

Assessing for Hope and Agency in a new Environment Degree (10:30-11:20)

- **Noah Martin, Keaton Nara, Jesse Meiller & Susannah McGowan, Georgetown University**
- Georgetown University launched a new degree, BS in Environment and Sustainability, in 2024. This degree responds to the urgency and complexity of the environmental crisis through interdisciplinary learning experiences that teach students to analyse human impact across sectors, advance sustainable practices, and to be good stewards of the planet.
- In order to respond to this urgency, the curriculum designers (faculty, staff, and students) needed to develop assessments aimed to measure specific competencies which included: ways of thinking, ways of knowing, and ways of acting. “Ways of acting” includes developing students’ dispositions around hope, agency, and innovation. We aim to invite colleagues into a co-analysis of our assessments to determine how and where to look for student learning within their actions.

Ultimate UDL Project: Collaborating with Students on Course Redesign (11:30-11:50)

- Ellen Swider, Goodwin University
- Universal Design for Learning is a powerful tool, but what if it could be made even better? By integrating UDL with Culturally Responsive Teaching, designers can create cultural authenticity and accessible curriculum for diverse learners. This

case study examines how faculty collaborated with students and utilised UDL and CRT to redesign an African American history course.

Co-Creating Role-Playing Games: Teaching, Research, and Mentorship (12:00-12:20)

- **Yidi Wu & Alexandra James, Elon University**
- Dr. Yidi Wu is collaborating with Alexandra James '26 to develop the role-playing game centered around the dialogues in 1989's Tian'anmen Protests. Alexandra, who has taken Dr. Wu's modern Chinese history and possesses Chinese language skills, will research and create comprehensive role sheets and faction guides, as well as translating and annotating relevant primary sources.
- The project will culminate in a pilot game involving student volunteers, allowing us to test the effectiveness of the role sheets and game mechanics. This session will share the role-playing game creation process and reflect on the collaboration experience.

Building Blocks to a Stronger Final Project (11:30-11:50)

- **Peggy Kerr, Gwynedd Mercy University**
- A final course project effectively assesses learning synthesis, but students often struggle to create cohesive and insightful projects at the end of a busy semester.
- This session explores strategies to help students build their projects gradually throughout a course using low-stakes assignments. These building blocks allow failure and integrate feedback and revision, strengthening the final product. Key strategies include chunking content, instructor and peer feedback, revisions, and reflection on learning to identify barriers so they can be addressed when they occur. Grounded in Vygotsky's Social Development Theory, this iterative approach mirrors real-world problem-solving, preparing students for future careers.

Assessing the Unseen: Effective Metrics for Immersive Learning Success (12:00-12:20)

- **Jennifer Blush & Michelle Corvette, Ph.D., William Peace University**
- This session explores how to measure the effectiveness of assessments and feedback in supporting student growth within immersive learning environments. Building on our University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), we will discuss key metrics for evaluating teaching impact and student outcomes. The session will focus on holistic scoring, performance-based assessments, and feedback strategies that foster a growth mindset.

- Participants will learn how to design and evaluate assessments that align with immersive learning goals, ensuring students develop problem-solving and collaboration skills essential for lifelong learning. We will also examine innovative assessment methods, such as immersive assessments and alternative performance assessments, which provide more accurate measurements of learner progress and engagement.

Argument, Research, and the Video Essay (11:30-11:50)

- **Maggie Kelly & Andrew Bacon, Elon University**
- The video essay is quickly becoming a popular mode of research and argument in this digital age. This information session will explore the dynamics of a video essay project for Elon English 1100 students.
- From the pedagogical benefits of digital arguments to the technical intricacies of teaching students video production skills, Maggie Kelly (assistant professor of English) and Andrew Bacon (video producer for Elon) will share their experiences of collaborating to help ENG 1100 students create well-researched argumentative video essays about cultural artefacts.

Making the Assessment Procedure Resemble the Learning Process: Achieving Transparency and Reducing Anxiety through Mastery Grading (11:30-12:20)

- **Michael Callahan & Theo Greer, Michigan State University**
- Are you seeking a grading system that normalises and rewards the persistence and repeated attempts that learning requires? Workshop participants will learn the main features and potential benefits of Mastery Grading (MG); they will acquire a list of tips, pitfalls, and considerations that are important to foreground when implementing MG, drawn from the results of a mixed-method study that assessed student mindsets and self-management behaviours, instructor behaviours, and student success in a required undergraduate skills course with MG during fall 2024; and they will sketch the beginnings of an evidence-based MG implementation within their own specific pedagogical discipline.

Live Actor Role-Play Simulation as an Authentic (and AI proof!) Assessment Practice (11:30-11:50)

- **Lauren Spring, Conestoga College**

- Live actor role-play simulation has a long history in post-secondary education, enhancing clinical skills and communication abilities in health sciences and medical education. It is also used in policing education to simulate high-stress scenarios, aiding future officers in decision-making and de-escalation. The success of live-actor role-play has led to its adoption in other disciplines such as business, social work, law, education, and hospitality.
- This presentation focuses on ways that live-actor simulation is being incorporated into courses at Conestoga College across various disciplines including culinary arts, auto mechanics, interdisciplinary studies, social services, and paramedics as authentic assessments that align with course learning outcomes and are resistant to AI manipulation.

Assess, Engage, Achieve: PowerPoint and Google Slides as Your Assessment Allies (12:00-12:20)

- **Shawn R. Cradit, North Carolina State University**
- This session explores how digital tools like PowerPoint and Google Slides enhance student assessments in both academic and fitness settings. By integrating these platforms into activity and lecture classes, educators create interactive, engaging assessments that go beyond traditional methods like tests, quizzes, and worksheets.
- In fitness testing, these tools complement traditional methods and innovative approaches, such as water-based tests and Functional Movement Screen (FMS), enabling a more dynamic evaluation that the students appreciate. This integration fosters deeper student engagement, improves learning outcomes, and provides diverse, accessible ways to assess progress effectively.

Partnering with Students: Leveraging Mid-Semester Surveys and Focus Groups for Teaching Improvement (11:30-12:20)

- **Henrietta Paz-Amor, New York University**
- Our team of student partners from the NYU Student Faculty Partners Program (SFPP) formulated, collected, and presented student feedback to faculty partners to help improve class experiences. In this workshop, our team – including several participating students – will guide participants through a thought-provoking discussion about collecting student feedback to improve classroom engagement. This workshop will include best practices for mid-semester surveys, hands-on experiences, and a small group breakout session. Join us to get a taste of collecting

student feedback and applying gathered data to improve student learning in your class, as well as the opportunity to learn from the students involved.

Inquiry Learning Performance Assessment (12:30-12:50)

- **Lee Anna Stirling, Thomas College**
- “...large numbers of college seniors are leaving college with a very weak grasp of how to use evidence to build a well-supported argument.” (Schneider, 2017, p.47) To overcome this deficit, inquiry learning, as part of all college and graduate courses’ curriculum, is needed – at least for a week and half or two-week unit. Effective inquiry includes structures/scaffolds while students are guided in learning to create their own inquiry structures.
- For effective inquiry learning, students engage in inquiry to learn about a topic of interest. Participants will learn how to incorporate inquiry learning into courses they are teaching. They will be shown and receive a link to an Inquiry Planning Template, the presenter has created for her students and view slides that illustrate the inquiry process and how to facilitate students’ implementation of it.

Case-based authentic assessment (1:00-1:20)

- **Kim Stokes, Elon University**
- Developing healthcare providers is challenging, as success is often measured by standardised multiple-choice exams. Learners accustomed to these exams prefer knowing what will be tested and find comfort in multiple-choice options, rather than applying knowledge and critical reasoning. With the shift towards competency-based education, it’s crucial to design assessments that engage learners and allow skill mastery with feedback. Authentic assessment, cited in various disciplines, supports this approach.
- This presentation showcases learning outcomes from a course using mapped, case-based questions and a scoring rubric, enabling instructors to provide personalised, skill-specific feedback.

Co-Designing Honors Theses: Partnering with Undergraduate Students for Meaningful Learning (12:30-1:20)

- **Jordan Hazelwood, Kathryn R. Long, Stacy F. Thornton & Christopher M. Seiz, Appalachian State University**
- This interactive workshop explores how faculty and students can co-design in honours theses, transforming traditional assessment into a meaningful learning experience. Drawing on evidence-based practices and firsthand experiences from

our team of faculty mentors and recent honours graduates, participants will learn strategies for effective student-faculty research partnerships.

- Through guided activities that model collaborative co-design, attendees will explore the benefits and challenges of this approach while developing practical implementation plans for their own disciplines. This session will share how co-designing thesis projects with students creates more equitable, innovative assessments that enhance learning outcomes while building students' research confidence and professional identity.

We Tried to Create Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) Jeopardy and Failed, Here's Why (12:30-1:20)

- **Kimberly Springfield & Matthew Kilbride, Montgomery County Community College**
- Two instructional designers recount their failure to create a jeopardy game that focused on types of assessments and their susceptibility to generative artificial intelligence. Ultimately, what began as an excitable goal ended in a face-plant, but the lessons learned are important for every classroom interested in moving higher education forward in our new post-AI world.

Exams as Teaching Tools: Two Methods (12:30-12:50)

- **Cora Wigger & Olivia Healy, Elon University**
- In this project, we review the use of course exams as learning tools beyond their use as assessments, alone. We present two methods of exam review, comparing and contrasting their appropriateness for different learning contexts. In the first, students are incentivised to review and correct their work. In the second, students engage in a collective discussion after exams with the option to re-take portions of their exam.
- We discuss the benefits and drawbacks of each approach and describe how to choose an appropriate method based on learning objectives.

Ignite, Interact, Impact: Measuring student engagement in online courses through interactive assessments (12:00-12:20)

- **Amber Williams & Jon Mladic, Blackhawk Technical College**
- Fostering a community of engagement and collaboration in any classroom can be a challenge, yet even more so in an online modality. Join us for a session that will highlight best practices in online classroom engagement, provide small interactive

assessments that can be implemented quickly and easily, and discover how to utilise the analytics in a course to measure its results.

Exploring the student perspective of building trust in our classrooms (12:30-1:20)

- **Saffie Hollingsworth, Ali Kim, Hoyeon Chang, Jill McSweeney & Peter Felten, Elon University & Dalhousie University**
- Trust is important in the development of educational relationships, impacting student learning, motivation, well-being and degree completion in higher education (e.g., Sutherland et al., 2024). While work has explored how faculty develop trust in their teaching, scholarship is only now exploring how trust is nurtured and experienced from a student perspective.
- Sharing data from a four-country, six-university (including Elon and Dalhousie) project, we will present how students perceive the development of trust in their classrooms. Join us to hear from our student partners about their perceptions of the data, and their experiences exploring their colleagues' voices.

Communicate to Collaborate: Building rapport to obtain productive classroom feedback (12:30-12:50)

- **Christiana Bevier, Purdue University Global**
- In the online environment instructors can foster collaborative feedback through successful communication. This can build rapport, timely responses, and useful feedback. Throughout class, an instructor can utilise various forms of communication to obtain feedback from students to help with the redesign of specific content, or the entire class. In cases where it is not possible to redesign a course, an instructor can utilise feedback to make a positive change to best serve students.

Alternative Assessment Methods to Enhance Critical Thinking and Meaning-Making: An Inclusive and Transformative Approach (1:00-1:20)

- **Hatice Merve Caliskan Baser, Izmir Katip Çelebi University, Turkey**
- In a rapidly changing world driven by technological advancements, the gap between educators and students is widening, making it difficult to establish a common language of learning. To engage students actively, dynamic and thought-provoking experiences are needed. This session explores how to integrate various materials —

films, news articles, museum visits, and explorations — into assessment strategies to create an interactive and effective learning experience.

- The approach encourages critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills by bridging historical and contemporary issues. It emphasises innovation in assessment, fostering a more inclusive, engaging, and impactful learning process that transcends traditional methods.