
Subject: Documented feedback to students in academic coursework

Prepared by: Greg F. Naterer, Chair, Academic Planning and Curriculum Committee

Prepared for: Senate

Date: February 18, 2026

ISSUE

Proposed amendment of the Course Registration regulation #6 to identify expectations for documented feedback to students in coursework prior to the last day for course discontinuation in a semester.

BACKGROUND

Past studies in archival literature have shown that early assessment of academic performance in coursework leads to improved student retention rates and progression to graduation. Providing feedback to students through graded work, early in the semester, enhances student engagement, enables early intervention for struggling students, and promotes a sense of progress and belonging.

A proposal was developed by APCC in September 2025, then presented to Senate at its meeting of Friday October 24, 2025, to provide graded work back to students at least one week before the last day to discontinue courses in the semester. At the Senate meeting, concerns were raised, including issues around teaching pedagogy and the extent of consultation conducted across the university.

Feedback from the Senate meeting was brought back to APCC for further consideration. A subcommittee was formed to investigate and explore avenues to address the concerns. Members of the subcommittee were Dr. Janet Loo, Dr. Charlene VanLeeuwen, Darcy McCardle, and Deanelle Sotiar.

In November 2025, consultation with the broader campus community was conducted through a request to send feedback on the proposed regulation. Ten submissions of written feedback were received from across the university – some on behalf of other colleagues in their department. Most of the feedback was against the proposed regulation. Among the comments raised, the evidence (from past studies) supports early feedback but not necessarily early grades. It was felt that the motion was too prescriptive (20% of the final grade) and would interfere with teaching pedagogy including ungrading, self-grading, courses that are set up with learning upfront, and assessments that occur later based on that learning.

Feedback also mentioned that the drop date fluctuates, which can cause issues with adjusting the curriculum. Another issue was that it may create a burden for faculty and students when many courses have the same deadline for a portion of graded work to be returned. Also it was felt that it doesn't suit disciplines where material is built cumulatively. One of the responses suggested that it has accreditation implications for one discipline whose reviewing body expects a major portion of grades from final exams and major assessments.

Based on this feedback received, and further review of a recently published report, *Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning: A Report by the University of Calgary*, the committee suggested an alternative, less prescriptive approach as follows.

RECOMMENDATION

Students are entitled to make informed decisions about continuing in a course prior to the deadline for discontinuing courses in a semester. This means that students shall have a reasonable opportunity to assess their progress in each course and to receive documented feedback on their performance in each course before making a decision. Instructors are expected to provide an informative level of feedback (graded or not) prior to the deadline for course discontinuation in a given semester.

RATIONALE

It is a common practice at Canadian universities to have a required expectation of graded work returned to students early in the semester. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- University of Ottawa, 25% minimum returned, one week before the withdrawal date;
- University of Guelph, 20% minimum returned, by the 40th class day;
- University of Toronto, Mississauga, 15-20% minimum returned, by mid-October;
- Wilfrid Laurier University, 15% minimum returned, before the withdrawal deadline;
- Mount Allison University, 20% minimum returned, before the withdrawal deadline;
- University of Alberta, 20% minimum returned, by week 6 of the semester.

Although these examples have expectations of a specific percentage of graded work, the current recommendation is not as prescriptive as peer institutions. In the current recommendation, instructors are expected to provide an “informative level” of feedback – without a specific percentage – and not necessarily graded.

A [research study](#) at the University of Calgary’s Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning showed that early assessment in university courses improves academic motivation and persistence by providing feedback that helps students monitor and self-regulate their learning. When early feedback is provided, students can adjust their study strategies before performance gaps become too difficult to overcome.

The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) [reported](#) that early-assessment policies – requiring that students receive at least one substantial graded component (worth 10–20% of the final mark) by the third to fourth week – correlates directly with lower course failure rates. The analysis showed the importance of early feedback in promoting knowledge retention throughout the remainder of the semester.

[Crouse](#) (2021) linked early grade assessments with improvements in student retention and progression to graduation. Academic advisors who contacted students after these early graded evaluations found improvements in student retention to the next semester. The author concluded that early academic assessment fostered student commitment to the course. This sense of commitment was found to be a strong predictor of continuation in the program.

Another recent study by [Marzouk](#) (2024) showed that early progress assessment in academic coursework contributed to improved first-year retention rates. This early assessment enables an increased student sense of progress, opportunity of intervention, and support for at-risk students.

Institutional policies and practice guidelines on assessment can have significant influences on the quality of student learning ([Boud](#), 2020) and by extension, the assessment practices impact overall student experience and retention.

Below are links to further examples of past studies at Canadian universities which outline the importance of assessment practices in student learning.

- **University of Calgary - [Assessment Principles](#)**

The University of Calgary has created eleven principles to guide practices for the assessment of student learning. The principles are the result of an extensive two-year process that included a [comprehensive literature review](#), an [environmental scan](#) of U15 institutions, and [widespread campus consultations](#). The process was also guided by Indigenous Elders and scholars to ensure the university's commitment to the ii' taa'poh'to'p Indigenous Strategy and reflected through a parallel process grounded in oral traditions and Indigenous ways of knowing.

- **University of Saskatchewan - [USask Assessment Principles](#)**

The University of Saskatchewan Assessment Principles describe assessment practices that are supportive of students' learning and likely to generate trustworthy representations of how well students have learned.

- **Athabasca University - [Guiding Principles for Developing Assessments](#)**

The six principles provide guideposts for developing innovative practices that recognize its unique position as an open and online university. They do not dictate a one-size-fits-all approach. The principles were developed through extensive consultation with the AU community—undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, tutors and academic experts, learning designers, and others—and reflect the diversity of the institution, our programs, and our students.

- **Thompson Rivers University - [Learning Outcomes and Assessment Principles and Procedures](#)**

The Learning Outcomes and Assessment Task Force (LOATF) at Thompson Rivers University proposed six principles to guide institutional and program level learning outcomes assessment.

- **University of Alberta - [Assessment and Grading](#)**

The University of Alberta's Assessment and Grading policy sets out the fundamental principles and core elements which characterize and guide the assessment of student performance.

- **McGill University - [Policy on Assessment of Student Learning](#)**

A policy document that provides a set of principles to guide assessment practice.



CALENDAR & CURRICULUM CHANGE

Motion #

Revision is for a: Calendar Entry Change

Faculty/School/Department: Registrar's Office

Department/Program(s)/Academic Regulations: **Academic Regulation #6**

MOTION: To amend the Course Registration regulation to identify expectations for documented feedback prior to the last day for course discontinuation in a semester.

<u>Reproduction of Current Calendar Entry</u>	<u>Proposed revision with changes underlined and deletions indicated clearly</u>
<p>6. Course Registration The registration process consists of three steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. payment of tuition deposit; 2. registration in courses; and 3. payment of fees by the published deadline. <p>Double scheduling: students are not permitted to register in two courses that are offered during the same time period or during time periods that overlap.</p> <p>Course changes: students may make changes to their course selections as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding: changes are made online, up to the “last day to register”; after this date, or at any time for classes that are “closed” by the Registrar’s Office, permission of the instructor and the Chair [Arts and Science] or instructor and Dean [Professional programs, Faculty of Sustainable Design Engineering and the Faculty of Business] is required. • Course Dropping: changes are made online, up to the “last day to register”; after this date, and up to the deadline for discontinuation as published in the calendar, changes must be made in person at the Registrar’s Office. 	<p>Click here to enter text. Please note maximum allowance of 40 characters for course titles & 100 words for course descriptions.</p> <p>6. Course Registration The registration process consists of three steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. payment of tuition deposit; 2. registration in courses; and 3. payment of fees by the published deadline. <p>Double scheduling: students are not permitted to register in two courses that are offered during the same time period or during time periods that overlap.</p> <p>Course changes: students may make changes to their course selections as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding: changes are made online, up to the “last day to register”; after this date, or at any time for classes that are “closed” by the Registrar’s Office, permission of the instructor and the Chair [Arts and Science] or instructor and Dean [Professional programs, Faculty of Sustainable Design Engineering and the Faculty of Business] is required. • Course Dropping: changes are made online, up to the “last day to register”; after this date, and up to the deadline for discontinuation as published in the calendar, changes must be made in person at the Registrar’s Office. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Students are entitled to make informed decisions about continuing in a course prior to the deadline for discontinuing courses in a semester. This means that students shall have a reasonable opportunity to assess their progress in each course and to receive documented feedback on their performance in each course before making a decision.</u>



CALENDAR & CURRICULUM CHANGE

Motion #

<u>Reproduction of Current Calendar Entry</u>	<u>Proposed revision with changes underlined and deletions indicated clearly</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-Credit Status: changes from “for credit” registration to “audit” status are made in person until the “last day to register”. Note: courses taken as non-credit audits will not be changed to “for credit” status beyond this date. “Audit” Status: requires the permission of the instructor and Chair or Dean, as appropriate. 	<p><u>Instructors are expected to provide an informative level of feedback (graded or not) prior to the deadline for course discontinuation in a given semester.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-Credit Status: changes from “for credit” registration to “audit” status are made in person until the “last day to register”. Note: courses taken as non-credit audits will not be changed to “for credit” status beyond this date. “Audit” Status: requires the permission of the instructor and Chair or Dean, as appropriate.

Rationale for Change: To provide students with transparency and clear expectations for receiving an informative amount of feedback before the course discontinuation deadline to support decisions regarding their progress and to inform action necessary within regular deadline guided processes.

Effective Term: FALL 2026

Implications for Other Programs: NA

Impact on Students Currently Enrolled: Supports current students

Authorization	Date:
Departmental Approval: N/A	N/A
Faculty/School Approval: N/A	N/A
Faculty Dean’s Approval: N/A	N/A
Grad. Studies Dean’s Approval: N/A	N/A
Received by Registrar’s Office: Click here to enter name of approver.	December 4, 2025