

Teaching Commons

Faculty Newsletter

Teaching Commons Faculty Newsletter January 2024

To view all of our upcoming offerings, [here is the link to our events calendar](#)



The Teaching Commons is a positive and safe space where faculty, graduate students, and staff from across our campuses can engage in professional development activities related to any aspect of teaching and learning. We offer a [broad range of courses, certificates and other programming](#) as well as various additional [services](#), targeted [resources](#), and [support for scholarly teaching](#). [Our team](#) is ready to help you explore best practices and innovative strategies, support program renewals and course design, and offer guidance specific to York institutional priorities. We are here to help connect you to a network of colleagues, scholarly resources and evidence-based practice to explore and develop your teaching in new and unimagined ways.

Introducing our Student Consultants on Learning and Teaching 2023-24



Thanks to the [Academic Innovation Fund](#) (AIF), the Teaching Commons has hired our first group of Student Consultants on Learning and Teaching. The work these Student Consultants undertake is as diverse as the needs of our community: from student-centered syllabi review and classroom observations to resource creation and assessment discussions, Student Consultants work in partnership with Educational Developers to respond to the teaching and learning needs of York students, faculty, and staff.

[Here is the link to learn more and to register.](#)

If you have any questions, you can contact Matthew Dunleavy, Educational Developer at mdunleav@yorku.ca or Lisa Endersby, Educational Developer at lendersb@yorku.ca



Reading for Teaching Winter 2024 (ONLINE)

A collaborative program co-facilitated by the Teaching Commons and [York University Libraries](#), Reading for Teaching is an informal, collegial opportunity to engage with colleagues from across campus interested in reading and talking about teaching. Participants will meet between 2-4 times over the term to discuss a common reading related to current challenges, opportunities, and conversations in teaching and learning.

[Here is the link to learn more and to register.](#)

If you have any questions, you can contact Lisa Endersby, Educational Developer at lendersb@yorku.ca



Trauma-Informed Pedagogies Workshop Series – Fall 2023-Winter 2024 (ONLINE)

This 10-part workshop series will introduce participants to the topic of trauma-informed teaching and offer practical strategies for supporting students and themselves while developing a trauma-informed classroom. Through participation in active learning activities, reflective discussions, and collaborative conversations, participants will explore how to apply learned strategies in their own teaching contexts and consider their own personal parameters within their teaching.

This workshop series is co-organized and co-facilitated by the Teaching Commons and the Centre for Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusion. **Our next session will be held on January 18.**

[Here is the link to learn more and to register.](#)

BOLD Institute: Blended and Online Learning Development (January 31 -- March 20)

The BOLD Institute is an eight-week, fully online program offered to course directors, graduate student instructors, and teaching assistants as an opportunity to gain both theoretical understanding and practical experience with the pedagogy, planning, and hands-on production involved in designing and assessing eLearning activities in their fully online/blended courses. Upon completion of this course, participants will be better able to apply sound learning theories and pedagogies to design and build various key components or learning objects of fully online/blended modules. No design experience is required.

[Here is the link to learn more and to register.](#)



Share Your Thoughts! Generative AI in Teaching & Learning Needs Assessment

We want to hear from you! What are your top concerns and questions regarding the use of generative AI in postsecondary teaching and learning? What are you hearing from your students? We are currently conducting a broad needs assessment that will help us develop effective and timely resources and programming to support York University educators in responding to the challenges and opportunities posed by this technology. Let us know what you need by completing a brief survey! Sign-in with York ID is required, but all responses are anonymous.

[Click here to access the needs assessment survey.](#)



Join our Community of Practice: Generative AI Pedagogies at York

This community of practice is dedicated to uniting York University educators who share an interest in generative AI. Together, we connect, collaborate, and share resources, exploring best practices and addressing the challenges and opportunities we face in integrating this technology into postsecondary education. Beyond practical tips and strategies for adapting our teaching, we foster critical conversations about the implications of generative AI. We hold regular virtual community meetings twice per semester. Additionally, all members have access to an eClass site for asynchronous discussions and resource sharing. As generative AI continues to evolve in higher education, our community will adapt, reflecting the interests and priorities of our members.

[Here is the link to join this community of practice.](#)

TA Mentorship Strategy #5: Peer Support & Teamwork



In addition to getting feedback from TAs directly on ways that course directors can improve efforts to support them, creating opportunities for fostering collaboration between TAs is another way to help support mentorship efforts. TAs may feel more comfortable sharing with each other strategies for what is working well in the classroom and can help support each other on a peer-to-peer basis. This can help to strengthen the dynamics of a teaching team where the course director and TAs are working together to support undergraduate student learning.

Tips for incorporating this strategy:

- Connect new TAs with more experienced TAs to offer guidance and allow for opportunities of peer mentorship to emerge
- Shift the focus away from viewing TAs as working for you and instead focus on TAs working with you to support the learning needs of students
- Acknowledge TA efforts and contributions during lectures to reinforce a cohesive teaching team

Further Reading

Park, C. (2004) The graduate teaching assistant (GTA): lessons from North American experience, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 9:3, 349-361



TA Mentorship Strategy #6: Share Resources & Strategies of Success

Sharing resources and strategies of success with TAs is another way that course directors can support graduate student development. Articulating best pedagogical practices to TAs gives course directors a chance to critically reflect on their pedagogical approach and, in doing so, provides opportunities for them to grow as well. And sharing one's experience with TAs is also beneficial because it ensures that TAs are in the best position to successfully meet the responsibilities of supporting course directors in the classroom.

Tips for incorporating this strategy:

- Share lesson plans with TAs to help them tailor their tutorials or labs to help students focus on core course content
- Inform TAs of university-wide resources so they are prepared to redirect students to appropriate support on campus
- Set up time to grade a few essays or lab reports with TAs so they have clear guidance to ensure impartial and consistent evaluation of student work

Further Reading

Acosta, L. A., Overgaard, P. M., Pool, N. M., Renz, S. M., & Crist, J. D. (2019). You learn when you teach: A narrative pedagogy for faculty and graduate teaching assistants. *The Qualitative Report*, 24(11), 2891-2902