

University of Toronto Mississauga Degree Level Expectations (2016)

Preamble

In December, 2005, the Council of Ontario Universities issued a set of degree level expectations (drafted by the Ontario Council of Ontario Academic Vice-Presidents or OCAV) which would be used to measure the quality of proposed new programs and existing programs in Ontario's publicly assisted universities. These were developed as part of an initiative to provide guidance to governments in Canada seeking to assess new degree programs and degree granting institutions. In May 2006, OCAV advised the Principals and Deans of the University of Toronto that each division should consult its stakeholders and propose its own degree level framework.

In response, the UTM community developed a set of Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations, or UDLEs, that have served from 2006 to the present. At that time, it was agreed that once departments had sufficient time to map their curricula and work with these expectations, they would be revisited. Accordingly, a Degree Learning Expectations working group composed of members from disciplines across the curriculum met over 2015-16 to revise and renew UTM's UDLEs.

This document, Guidelines for University of Toronto Mississauga Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (2016), is the result of the working group's efforts. It provides a set of guidelines that UTM has established for its undergraduate degree level students. In keeping with the practice of other first-entry divisions at the University, we have taken as our starting point the six general categories contained in the 2005 OCAV document.

In practical terms, we envisage that this document will be used to guide departments in:

- the review, mapping, analysis, and development of curricula in their specialist, major, and minor programs;
- the evaluation of specialist, major, and minor program changes and new programs as part of the governance approval process; and
- the assessment and reviews of academic units and their programs by external reviewers and program auditors.

More generally, the guidelines will help to inform and assess the work UTM's faculty, staff, and administrators do when supporting the academic and personal development of their students. To help program developers and reviewers situate their development or review of a program in relation to these guidelines, we have included an interpretive appendix that provides illustrative examples and commentary.

These guidelines encompass a range of competencies that students will acquire as part of their overall degree experience: some within the context of a major or specialist program, others as part of the complex of personal and intellectual changes that students experience as members of a research-intensive university and of the UTM community. In developing the guidelines, we have made assumptions about what students do both within

and outside programs (e.g., electives), and we acknowledge that not all of the guidelines will be satisfied within a program's curricula.

It is important to stress that these guidelines reflect our minimal objectives for our students, not our fullest aspirations. In envisioning our ideal graduate, we hope that many, if not most, of our students acquire competencies and experience that far exceed these guidelines by taking full advantage of the experiential and inquiry-driven opportunities that UTM has to offer, including research, study abroad, artistic endeavors, volunteer work, and student leadership. We want our undergraduate students to form friendships and have moments of meaningful scholarly, artistic, and personal discovery that will remain with them for years to come. Finally, we hope our graduates will be distinguished professionals and educators; effective agents of change; and creative, ethical, and intellectual forces in the broader community.

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This document provides the general competencies that must be demonstrated by students in our degree programs and should be used in conjunction with the administrative index, which provides both an interpretive guide and information about the broader context (including support services, academic resources, and general program information) that shapes our students.

The term “goals” refers to an instructor-centred, general outcome for each of the fields of study.

The term “learning outcome” refers to a student-centred, specific and measurable outcome for each of the fields of study.

The H.B.A., H.B.Sc., B.B.A., and B.Com. at the University of Toronto Mississauga are awarded to students who have demonstrated the following competencies:

1. Breadth & Depth of Knowledge

Goals:

Breadth of Knowledge: In the course of their studies, students will gain an awareness and appreciation of the variety of modes of thinking, methods of inquiry and analysis, and ways of understanding the world that underpin different intellectual fields. Students will engage in critical thinking and analytical skills through courses within and beyond their core field(s) of study, across the humanities, the social and behavioural sciences, and the natural sciences.

Depth of Knowledge: Students will attain depth of knowledge in their core field(s) of study through a progression of introductory, core and specialized courses.

Outcomes:

- a. Identify and examine the central concepts, theoretical approaches and assumptions, intellectual history, and recent advances of the core field(s) of study.*
- b. Describe the major topics in the core field(s) of study and how they relate to other fields of study.*
- c. Apply critical and analytical skills within and beyond the core field(s) of study.*

2. Knowledge of Methodologies

Goals: Students will have knowledge of and experience with different methodologies and approaches relevant to their core field(s) of study.

Outcomes:

- a. Identify and describe methods of enquiry and/or creative activity in their core field(s)*

of study.

b. Select and implement appropriate methodologies to engage in enquiry in their core field(s) of study.

c. Evaluate the efficacy of different methodologies in addressing questions that arise in the core field(s) of study.

3. Application of Knowledge

Goals: Students will be able to frame relevant questions for further inquiry within or beyond the core field(s) of study. They will be able to identify and apply the appropriate tools with which they can address such questions effectively.

Outcomes:

a. Gather, review, interpret, produce, present, and critically evaluate information, arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts, hypotheses and/or creative options.

b. Make informed judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts, methods, and intellectual and creative traditions of the core field(s) of study.

c. Apply relevant concepts, principles, and techniques within and beyond the core field(s) of study.

d. Frame appropriate questions, solve problems, and propose and test solutions.

e. Formulate coherent lines of argument.

4. Communication Skills

Goals: Students will be able to effectively communicate and critically evaluate information, arguments, and analyses, using a range of modes of communication.

Outcomes:

a. Express information, arguments, and analyses accurately and with clarity, using a range of modes of communication.

b. Present work in a variety of formal and informal contexts in forms appropriate to the core field(s) of study.

c. Communicate effectively with a range of audiences.

5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge

Goals: Students will acknowledge and appreciate the limits of their own knowledge. They will also gain an awareness of the uncertainty, ambiguity, and limits of our collective knowledge and how these might influence analyses and interpretations.

Outcomes:

a. Identify the limits of their own knowledge and ability.

b. Recognize the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge and how this might

influence analyses and interpretations.

6. Autonomy and Professional Capacity

Goals: Students will acquire the skills and knowledge they need to become informed, ethical, independent and creative thinkers and decision-makers; gain an awareness and appreciation that knowledge and its applications are influenced by and contribute to society; and to lay the foundation for learning as a life-long endeavour.

Outcomes:

- a. Manage their own learning within and beyond the core field(s) of study.*
- b. Uphold the ethical values of the University, including freedom of expression and enquiry and its principles of academic integrity, equity and inclusion.*
- c. Exercise initiative, personal responsibility and accountability in personal and group decision-making contexts.*
- d. Identify how their areas of study relate to their personal and professional development.*

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How to use this document

This appendix is intended to supplement the guidelines by providing interpretative direction and contextual information that will be useful for faculty, curriculum developers and reviewers in the development and assessment of our programs.

1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge

University of Toronto Mississauga students are required to complete: i) a double major or ii) a major and two minors; or iii) a specialist program. Major and specialist programs are designed to provide students with both a broad and incisive understanding of a discipline, its practice, and the creation of knowledge within that discipline. For example, the English major and specialist programs require that students cover a range of subfields and periods that will provide them with a coherent and comprehensive understanding of English literature, its development, genres, and traditions. Furthermore, we expect that, as students progress, they will be challenged with increasingly more difficult material and tasks: that 200-level courses will be more complex, both in content and evaluative measures, than 100-level, and so on.

Students have many opportunities to develop their research skills through activities such as laboratory and fieldwork, internships, essays, senior theses and projects. For example, in many of our specialist programs, there is a senior research project or thesis requirement. In addition, the library offers instruction in research techniques and the use of electronic and library resources.

Finally, UTM has a distribution requirement designed to expose students to areas of knowledge outside their main focus. Each student is required to complete a course in each of the main subject areas: science, social science, and humanities.

2. Knowledge of Methodologies

The development and delivery of our curricula are entrusted to faculty participating in, and conversant with, current methods in their disciplines. These curricula are in turn reviewed each year and updated to keep pace with developments in the discipline. In recent years departments have intensified their focus on the development of general academic skills, including writing, information literacy, critical thinking, numeracy, and research skills. For example, Mathematics offers a writing-intensive course called *Ideas of Mathematics*. Other courses integrate lectures from members of our academic skills and library staff to strengthen their understanding of academic skills and research techniques.

We recognize that there will be some variation in the range of methodologies required of students: to illustrate, in the sciences, students will be expected to test hypotheses by use of the scientific method and, in the arts, by the application of critical theory to primary

texts.

3. Application of Knowledge

The requirements for each of our major and specialists programs require that students complete courses at increasing levels of complexity. At each level, from first year through fourth year, students develop the competencies that we have designated as essential for advanced undergraduate work in their discipline. Our programs provide students with ample opportunities to gain and practice these competencies within their disciplines and through extensive academic support from the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre and the Library in the Hazel McCallion Academic Learning Centre, both of which align their academic programming to support the needs of students as they build their academic competencies throughout their programs. Many programs at UTM have capstone or summative experiences in the final year of study that require students to demonstrate these competencies at the level deemed appropriate to their disciplines. One example of a summative, capstone experience is provided in ENV400Y Environmental Internship. In this course, specialists in Environmental Studies are involved in work placements at local conservation authorities, federal agencies, consulting companies and other organizations where they apply the environmental expertise that they have gained through previous course work. The course concludes with the submission of written reports and oral presentations by each student, which are assessed by faculty and external placement supervisors.

4. Communication Skills

Communication is one of the ways in which students convey their mastery of a subject. It is therefore essential to our mandate as educators that students have the capacity to communicate the material they have learned in a clear and coherent manner. All major and specialist programs within UTM are expected to provide students with opportunities for writing development, completion of writing assignments, class participation, and group work. For example, the course *Communication in Biology* provides students with the opportunity to learn fundamental writing and oral presentation skills. The RGASC provides writing instruction and works with students to develop their oral presentation skills. In the few programs that do not offer writing instruction but assign and assess writing tasks, faculty and TAs are expected to work with the RGASC to arrange for writing support and instruction in academic and transferable skills.

We expect that students will have access to courses in which they can formally present material and/or interact with their peers and instructors in the communication of information. In upper-level research courses and in the Research Opportunity program, students present their work through posters and presentations. Some programs, such as Commerce and Management, assign group work, which enables students to exchange ideas. Increasingly, information and instructional technology inform the teaching-learning relationship and expand the forum for discourse. It is important that students acquire the ability to use these modes of communication in ways that promote enquiry

and debate and respect members of our community.

5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge

Each major and specialist program within UTM moves students from a more general understanding of the structure and scope of the discipline at the 100 and 200-level to a specialized and nuanced appreciation of a discipline's depth and intricacies at the 300- and 400-level. We expect students to have the capacity to do advanced library and electronic searches on published material. This process in itself develops their awareness of the complexity of areas of study and the expansive body of knowledge that underpin every subfield in a given discipline. The design and content of courses at each level, approach to pedagogy, assignments, and rigorous standards we observe for evaluation reinforce students' awareness of their limitations.

6. Autonomy and Professional Capacity

It is vital that students acquire an appreciation of the values of tolerance, inclusion, and academic freedom that are integral to our educational mandate. We have a wide range of student clubs, activities, events, and programs – both academic and non-academic - that educate students about the communities that comprise our institution and address and promote issues of social justice. Students must understand and follow the procedures and policies governing classroom and course protocol, registration, and academic and non-academic conduct, and plot a course of study that will be intellectually rewarding and lead them to graduation. UTM provides extensive student advising, transitional support for students in first year, and information about our expectations with respect to academic integrity and civility.

Equally important is the development in our students of an ability to self-assess and self-correct with respect to their learning and academic choices. We seek to prepare them to determine when a program of study is ill-suited to their skills or when an approach to mastery of course content or completion of an assignment is misguided. Similarly, it is important that students acquire some sense of how their degree fits within the broader context of their lives, both personal and professional. Program coordinators, career services, and counseling staff can all contribute to a development of this understanding. In order to succeed, our students must learn to balance academic challenges effectively with pressures in their lives outside the University, often having to make astute choices in the midst of competing demands on their time and energy. UTM has a rich and well-publicized array of financial, academic, and personal supports for students.

