Supplementary Materials for the Use of the University of Toronto Mississauga Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (2022)

This document is intended to supplement the [UTM Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations](#) guidelines by providing interpretative direction and contextual information that will be useful for the wide range of members of the UTM community involved in the development, renewal and assessment of our programs, as well as external reviewers. Additional materials are available from the many organizations and resources listed at the end of this document.

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, including a critical awareness of a variety of historical and regional perspectives and biases**.**

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. In final years, students in UTM programs have many opportunities to develop their research and applied work skills through activities such as laboratory and fieldwork, internships, essays, senior theses and projects, as best suit their individual career aspirations. Non-departmental members of the UTM community also provide opportunities for students to increase the depth and breadth of their knowledge, as indicated in the links to further resources at the end of this document.

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, programs have intensified their focus on the development of general academic skills, including writing, information literacy, critical thinking, numeracy, and research skills. Many courses integrate lectures from members of our academic skills and library staff to strengthen their understanding of academic skills and research techniques. As of Fall 2022, UTM will also be halfway through its planned rollout of a first-year foundational writing requirement, ISP100H5 *Writing for University and Beyond*, with nearly 2000 students enrolled in this course. This course will also serve as a cohort-building

and transition to university support course for students, with direct teaching by instructors in small classes.

Another area of increasing interest in course and program development is a recognition of the effects of historical bias within methodological development and application, as well as an interest in exposing students to diverse ways of knowing drawing on a wider variety of perspectives and community-engaged methods. This point also applies to UDLE 3, Application of Knowledge.

3. Application of Knowledge

The requirements for each of our major and specialist 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 UTM organizations listed in the final section, the Resources List. 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, often involving experiential learning. These include both independent research projects and work placements in the private sector, government, and NGOs.

Critical reflection is a crucial part of our students' education, including assessment of data, arguments, assumptions, and conclusions, and a knowledge of how historical and present biases affect questions, problems, and solutions.

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 to diverse audiences using inclusive language. This includes an awareness of accessible communication methods, as well as gender- and culturally-inclusive approaches.

In addition to the foundational writing project noted above, all major and specialist programs within UTM are expected to provide students with opportunities for writing development, completion of writing assignments, oral class participation, and group work. The Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre (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. Many UTM programs have expanded the use of group work in recent years, which enables students to exchange ideas and engage in collaborative problem solving. Other methods of communication, including numerical, graphical, and visual communication, are well-established in some programs but are only in initial stages of development from a UTM-wide perspective.

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 inquiry and debate and respect members of our community.

5. <u>Awareness of Limits of Knowledge</u>

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.

UTM programs often employ self-reflection and peer reviews as additional tools to enhance students' acknowledgement and appreciation of the limits of their own knowledge, as well as our collective knowledge. An awareness of the uncertainties, biases, and power relations involved in analyses and interpretations is also a key aspect of student education in all programs.

6. <u>Autonomy and Professional Capacity</u>

It is vital that students acquire an appreciation of the values and practices of respect, equity, 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 offer students the opportunity to learn more and participate in the variety of communities that comprise our institution and address and promote issues such as social justice, global citizenship, and sustainability. 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 expectations with respect to academic integrity and professional conduct.

Equally important is the development in UTM students of an ability to self-assess, self-regulate, and self- correct with respect to their learning and academic choices. 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.

Finally, UTM aspires to instill students with a sense of the importance of sustainability in all aspects of human endeavours, as well as their role as global citizens. Both of these aspirations require respect for diversity, an awareness of personal and collective limitations and humility, and a true desire for inclusiveness. We continue to strive for this level of inclusive (educational) excellence in all our academic programs, and beyond them.

Additional Resources at UTM   *(Work in progress – suggested links welcome!)*

- UTM Library: https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/ReferenceUTML/ReferenceUTML, offers instruction in research techniques and the use of electronic and library resources,

- Educational Technology Unit in the UTM Library: https://utm.library.utoronto.ca/services/instructional-technology

- Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre: https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/

- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Office at UTM: https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/edio/home

- Centre for Student Engagement: https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/utm-engage/, works with departments to provide Exam and work experience opportunities

- Accessibility Services at UTM: https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/accessibility/

Additional Resources at U of T

- CTSI: https://teaching.utoronto.ca/

Links to useful documents:

- Report of the UTSC Campus Curriculum Review: https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/curriculum-review/sites/utsc.utoronto.ca.curriculum-review/files/docs/UTSC%20Campus%20Curriculum%20Review-Full%20Document-FNL.pdf