



GUIDELINES

THIRD-PARTY TEACHING AND LEARNING PLATFORMS

The University of Regina's official Learning Management System (LMS) is the Moodle-based UR Courses. UR Courses is institutionally supported by CCE and Information Services. Additionally, the University provides institutional licences and support for a number of other teaching, learning, and research related software and/or online platforms. (<https://www.uregina.ca/is/common/ur/software/index.html>). For example, Zoom is one such program widely used by faculty and staff that supports the delivery of remotely-taught synchronous courses as well as the facilitation of student support services via virtual meetings.

All of these institutionally licensed and/or supported applications have been assessed for adherence to the University's computing infrastructure, institutional data, and privacy protocols for the protection of sensitive and personal information. Faculty, staff, and students using institutionally-licensed programs are provided with technical supports offered by the relevant units of the University. Furthermore, these applications are generally available to University employees and students free of charge. (See Supported Hardware, Software and Related Products Policy OPS-080-015 <https://www.uregina.ca/policy/browse-policy/policy-OPS-080-015.html>)

The University follows and promotes the principle that Faculties and academic staff should adopt institutionally licensed and/or supported software and online platforms for the teaching and delivery of University of Regina courses as well as for the performance of other University related activities, whenever possible. Reasons for this guidance include:

- to ensure the safety and security of the University's computing infrastructure and institutional data and the protection of faculty, staff, and student personal information; and
- to provide for University-wide familiarity, consistency, and quality in instructional technology-based teaching and learning experiences, particularly from the perspective of students.

Nevertheless, in some cases, academic staff may opt to use a third-party platform or software for the teaching and delivery of courses for various reasons, such as pedagogical factors, technical features, content integration considerations (e.g., the chosen course textbook offers a software environment), and for other similarly valid reasons. To assist instructors in making informed decisions about whether or not they should adopt third party applications for the delivery of their courses, the following questions are provided:

1) What are my main reasons for wanting to adopt this particular third-party platform **instead of the University's platforms (UR Courses and Zoom)? Before you adopt the third-party platform under consideration, it is recommended that you compare it to the relevant University platform. For the third-party platform to be considered, **it should rank higher than the University platform or offer a significant additional value** with respect to at least some or ideally all of the following factors:**

- Ease of use for the instructor
- Ease of use for students
- Enhances the quality of teaching and/or learning experiences
- Enhanced features for constructing and delivering exams and tests in the course
- Ability to integrate course materials and resources easily
- The course textbook is well-supported by this included platform
- Other similar technical or pedagogical reasons

2) Does the third-party platform being considered for adoption replicate the features of the University's existing programs / platforms (e.g., UR Courses, Zoom) without a substantial additional value according to the above criteria? If the answer is yes, you are advised not to use the third-party platform.

3) Will this program / platform require students to pay a fee? Or, is there a similarly featured, free alternative?

If students are required to pay a fee for the platform / program, you are advised to inform and consult the appropriate academic lead in your unit (Department Head, Program Chair, Associate Dean, or Dean).

4) Are there potential security risks to the University of Regina's computing infrastructure and institutional data due to the adoption of this third-party platform?

If you cannot answer this question confidently or if you are aware of some security risks, you must contact Information Services. (Application Service Providers Policy OPS-050-020 <https://www.uregina.ca/policy/browse-policy/policy-OPS-050-020.html>)

5) Have you considered the impact of adopting the third-party platform / software on the protection of students' personal information or privacy?

For instance, are students required to provide personal information (e.g., their names, ID, nationality, phone number, email address etc.) to use this software / platform, such as, for taking course exams? (For the University's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Policy GOV-060-00, <https://www.uregina.ca/policy/browse-policy/policy-GOV-060-005.html>.)

If the answer is yes or if you are unsure, you must consult the Chief Privacy Officer of the University (Executive Director, University Governance) so that privacy risk can be assessed before proceeding, and appropriate mitigating controls can be put into place in cases where the platform / software will be adopted.

6) Are there costs to the University such as institutional technical support requirements for the adoption and/or use of the third-party platform / software being considered? Would you need technical support from the University's Information Services in the event that you or your students experience technical difficulties with this platform / software?

If there are institutional costs as outlined above, it is important that you consult with the University's Information Services.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning, as well as Information Services, are resources that you are encouraged to consult regarding questions such as those above for the platform or software that you are considering to adopt.

Please note that it is important that you inform the appropriate academic lead in your unit of your intention to use a third-party platform / program in your course after you assess this platform / program according to the above criteria and before you adopt it for a course for the first time.

The academic leads are advised to notify the Centre for Teaching and Learning upon the adoption of a third-party platform / software for the delivery of a course in their units. The objective is to inform institutional decision-making in the area of instructional technologies (such as, when deciding on purchasing institutional licences or providing institutional support).

We appreciate that this Guide may mean additional work when planning for your courses. However, its purpose is to improve the overall experience of our students while potentially reducing personal and institutional costs and risks. If you have suggestions for improving this Guide, please contact AVP.Academic@uregina.ca.

This document was prepared by the Working Group on Third-Party Platforms, which was created by the Provost. The Working Group was composed of the following members: Alec Couros (Director, CTL), Art Exner (AVP-Information Services), David deMontigny (Associate Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science), Douglas Farenick (Dean, Faculty of Science), Harold Riemer (Dean, Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies), and Nilgün Önder (AVP-Academic and Chair).

This Guide was endorsed by the Deans' Council (4 November 2020).

You may contact AVP.Academic@uregina.ca about this document.

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