TO: Priya McMurtie, Senator

CC: Ekam Sandhu, Vice-President Student Affairs

From: Jaismine Kaur, Campaigns Assistant

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Date: March 6, 2025

**RE: Use of Paid Digital Assessment Tools at Capilano University Survey**

# Introduction

Per your request the following data has been compiled from the *Use of Paid Digital Assessment Tools at Capilano University s*urvey.

The survey was conducted from February 6, 2025 to February 28, 2025 with a total of forty-one respondents.

The purpose of the survey was to assess the prevalence and impact of paid digital assessment tools across different faculties at Capilano University.

# Key Findings

* 92.7% of respondents were required to purchase access to a digital assessment tool in at least one of their classes.
* The most-used platforms are McGraw Hill Connect and Pearson Revel.
* 46.2% of respondents paid between $100-$150 per course, 33.3% paid $50-$99.
* 25.9% of respondents reported their instructor using the online platform for exams and quizzes, 18.8% of respondents reported use for classwork and assignments, and 14.3% of respondents said their instructors used the platform for course instruction.
* 55% of the respondents did not think the platform was necessary for learning and that the instructor could have taught the material without it. 35% thought it was somewhat useful, but other free alternatives could have been used.
* 70% of respondents reported that it was a significant financial burden.
* Over 60% of students faced technical issues with the online platforms.

# Survey Results

## 1. What faculty or department is your course in?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Faculty** | **Number of Respondents** | **Percentage of Respondents** |
| **Arts & Sciences** | 20 | 48.8% |
| **Business & Professional Studies** | 17 | 41.5% |
| **Education, Health & Human Development** | 1 | 2.4% |
| **Fine & Applied Arts** | 2 | 4.9% |
| **Global & Community Studies** | 1 | 2.4% |

## 2. Have you been required to purchase access to an online platform or e-resource for a course?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Purchase Requirement** | **Number of Respondents** | **Percentage of Respondents** |
| **Yes** | 38 | 92.7% |
| **No** | 2 | 4.9% |
| **Not sure** | 1 | 2.4% |

## 3. Which platform(s) were you required to use?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Platforms** | **Number of Respondents** | **Percentage of Respondents** |
| **Pearson Revel** | 20 | 52.6% |
| **McGraw-Hill Connect** | 34 | 89.5% |
| **Cengage MindTap** | 3 | 7.9% |
| **WileyPLUS** | 3 | 7.9% |
| **Globus** | 1 | 2.6% |
| **Zybook** | 1 | 2.6% |
| **Achieve.Macmillan** | 1 | 2.6% |
| **ProctorU** | 1 | 2.6% |
| **Other** | 1 | 2.6% |

## 4. How much did you have to pay for access to the digital platform(s)?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Cost** | **Number of Respondents** | **Percentage of Respondents** |
| **Less than $50** | 1 | 2.6% |
| **$50—$99** | 13 | 33.3% |
| **$100—$150** | 18 | 46.2% |
| **More than $150** | 7 | 17.9% |

## 5. What was the platform used for in your course? (select all that apply)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Platform Use** | **Number of Respondents** | **Percentage of Respondents** |
| **Course instruction (videos,**  **lessons, lectures)** | 16 | 39% |
| **Classwork and assignments** | 32 | 78% |
| **Exams and quizzes** | 29 | 70.7% |
| **Other** | 2 | 4.9% |
| Just for weekly homework worth 18%, otherwise it was useless. Those 18% could have been covered with something else. | | |
| My asynchronized course had a professor who wanted to take exams on ProctorU (paid). | | |

## 6. In your experience, how often did your instructor provide direct teaching instead of relying on the platform?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Teaching without platform** | **Number of Respondents** | **Percentage of Respondents** |
| **Always** Instructor primarily taught the course without using the online platform | 10 | 24.4% |
| **Often**  Instructor supplemented platform with their own instruction | 6 | 14.6% |
| **Sometimes**  Instructor relied on platform for most teaching | 11 | 26.8% |
| **Rarely**  Instructor mostly assigned platform content without much instruction | 11 | 26.8% |
| **Never**  Instructor relied entirely on the platform | 3 | 7.3% |

## 7. Did you feel that the use of the paid platform was necessary for your learning?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Necessary for learning** | **Number of Respondents** | **Percentage of Respondents** |
| **Yes, it was essential** | 3 | 7.5% |
| **Somewhat, but other free alternatives could be used** | 14 | 35% |
| **No, the instructor could have taught without it** | 22 | 55% |
| **Unsure** | 1 | 2.5% |

## 8. Did the use of this platform create financial hardship for you?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Financial Hardship** | **Number of Respondents** | **Percentage of Respondents** |
| **Yes, it was a significant burden** | 28 | 70% |
| **Somewhat, but I managed** | 11 | 27.5% |
| **No, it was not an issue** | 0 | - |
| **Prefer not to say** | 1 | 2.5% |

## 

## 9. Did you experience any technical issues that affected your ability to complete coursework or exams?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Technical Difficulties** | **Number of Respondents** | **Percentage of Respondents** |
| **Yes, frequently** | 12 | 30.8% |
| **Occasionally** | 12 | 30.8% |
| **Rarely** | 8 | 20.5% |
| **No, never** | 7 | 17.9% |

## 10. Would you like to share any additional thoughts on the use of paid digital assessment tools in your courses?

|  |
| --- |
| Teachers always say to read the book on your own and I’ll just highlight 10 percent in class and when in exam we get the things we are not taught just highlighted and said to do assignments. Most of the teachers just read their presentation and the class is over and in exam we get less number and they say that you didn’t saw the textbook |
| There should always be an option for students to not buy and complete the coursework the other way. |
| They shouldn’t be compulsory |
| Ban it |
| I think it is very unfair especially on students already paying an exorbitant amount, plus, in my experience, everything I read in the software was everything we could’ve EASILY learnt without one. it was pointless purchase but then not really because I needed to pass |
| I believe every course an instructor teaches carries its own unique touch and evokes different emotions in students. If I had to choose between an online class with graded assignments on a paid platform and an offline class where all materials are freely provided or accessible, I'd choose the latter. The online option feels like a trick—students who prioritize money might complete the course simply because the university keeps 20% of the fee if you drop out later. Additionally, some students have limited funds and can only afford to take a few courses, so they can't afford to make the wrong choice. If I had the option, I'd prefer to take five courses and drop one if it didn't meet my expectations, especially if I could get an honest refund. |
| Universities have turned into a business. This is one of the many little problems with University. If you could use this as a gateway to figuring out and understanding where students could save money, that would be great. “Oh no the poor cap u board, what will they do with the millions of dollars from international students” |
| I think that the question if the paid tools were necessary attaches to the idea if a textbook is required for the course. Because if you need a textbook, then some extra amount for exercises and assignments seems okay. But for classes where you can do without reading the chapter, that's where this whole Connect or Pearson is useless. For example, in My BADM 202 41 class this semester, we got Connect just to do proctored exams there. That's it. Quizzes and term tests will have content from other resources and not necessarily textbooks so why spend so much money to be proctored when we could have been proctored for free at elearn??? |
| It's tough to pay |
| This is my 5th semester and I guess I have spent about $1500 in total for purchasing online books. We can do the quizzes and exams on elearn but we still are encouraged to purchase these and it is additional financial burden |
| Students already pay for their courses, and unexpected costs for external tools feel unfair. These extra expenses should be disclosed upfront or covered by institutions to ensure equal access to education. |
| The books should be included in the course as we are already paying a bunch of money. |
| I don’t think we should be required to use an outside program when we have and actively use eLearn with other courses, online or in-person. McGraw Hill has been a relatively helpful resource for my psychology textbook and quizzes, but it is not laid out well for someone who wants to look at an entire textbook. We should have the choice whether or not to sign up for an outside digital resource for an online course, especially considering that eLearn is a free and convenient tool where ALL of our classes can post class work and resources to. I only use McGraw Hill for one course, and it’d be a pain to have to remember multiple digital websites for multiple different courses the way that other students likely have to. |
| I think any extra material if necessary should be free |
| This is totally useless. And it's very difficult to pay for this every new semester in every course . So it should be stopped. It is just a way to earn money. |
| It’s very expensive for a student to buy and it’s complicated to use |
| Shift on elearn because we pay a lot of fees already. |
| Too expensive, it should be provided by the university on elearn. Why are we paying an extra $200 for a textbook that the professor doesn't even teach us from? They just go from their own notes. |
| We are already paying for the tuition fees so these books should be shifted on e learn instead of buying these |
| It is pretty expensive and only for a limited time. |

# Survey Comparative Analysis

## Cost Breakdown by Faculty

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***How much did you have to pay for access to the digital platform(s)?*** | | | | |
| ***What faculty or department is your course in?*** | $100—$150 | $50—$99 | Less than $50 | More than $150 | Grand Total |
| **Arts & Sciences** | 6 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 18 |
| **Business & Professional Studies** | 10 | 3 |  | 4 | 17 |
| **Education, Health & Human Development** |  |  |  |  | 0 |
| **Fine & Applied Arts** |  | 2 |  |  | 2 |
| **Global & Community Studies** | 1 |  |  |  | 1 |
| **Grand Total** | **17** | **13** | **1** | **7** | **38** |

* **44.74%** of respondents paid $100-$150, with the majority (58.8%) belonging to Business & Professional Studies.
* **34.21%** of respondents paid $50-$99, with 61.5% coming from Arts & Sciences.

## Perceived Necessity and Financial Hardship

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Did the use of this platform create financial hardship for you?*** | | | |
| ***Did you feel that the use of the paid platform was necessary for your learning?*** | Prefer not to say | Somewhat, but I managed | Yes, it was a significant burden | Grand Total |
| **No, the instructor could have taught the material without it** |  | 2 | 20 | 22 |
| **Somewhat, but other free alternatives could have been used** |  | 8 | 5 | 13 |
| **Unsure** | 1 |  |  | 1 |
| **Yes, it was essential** |  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| **Grand Total** | **1** | **11** | **27** | **39** |

* **51%** of total respondents (20), who faced financial hardship due to these purchases, also believed the instructor could have taught without the paid platform.
* **33.3%** (13) of respondents believed free alternatives could have been explored instead of the paid platforms.