

2024

# Pan-Canadian Report on Digital Learning

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Author

Dr. Nicole Johnson



Canadian Digital Learning  
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Association canadienne de  
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The CDLRA recognizes that, as a remote team, we live and work in many different locations on lands taken from Indigenous peoples. As a team, we seek to understand better the ongoing impacts of colonial systems and structures, particularly within the Canadian post-secondary education sector.

We thank the many people who have met with our team to discuss possible survey topics, to give feedback on our findings, and to share insights from the field. These perspectives have been critical in shaping our research initiatives.

We also thank the CDLRA team members and contractors who perform the tasks that support our day-to-day operations and our ability to conduct our research studies.

Most importantly, we thank our survey respondents.

## Sponsors and Partners

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## Executive Summary

The term *digital transformation* is frequently used when discussing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) on the Canadian post-secondary sector. Digital transformation suggests that technological advances are driving changes impacting our daily lives and our broader culture. In the wake of the pandemic, technology has become more integrated into the post-secondary experience, and the CDLRA findings over the past four years have been clear on this point. At the same time, nearly five years from the onset of the pandemic, we must now take a step back and carefully discern actual change from anticipated change.

There is a narrative that massive change is on the horizon, if not already unfolding at an unprecedented rate. That same narrative suggests that those who do not embrace technology and the change it brings will find themselves left behind and ill-equipped to thrive in the future. But what is happening in actuality? Are we living through a time of profound digital disruption? Or are things more or less how they've always been?

As we navigate messages about technology adoption and its anticipated impact on teaching and learning, the 2024 Pan-Canadian Report exists to provide evidence-based insight to the Canadian post-secondary community.



## Key findings from 2024

The 2024 Pan-Canadian Report is based on the findings of two surveys conducted in Spring and Fall, with different sets of questions. Respondents held a range of roles at all types of Canadian post-secondary institutions (universities, colleges, polytechnics, and CEGEPS), including administrators, teaching and learning leaders, instructional designers and educational developers, institutional researchers, library services staff, student support staff, and educational technology specialists.

- Respondents expect technology use in post-secondary education to continue to increase (e.g., hybrid learning, online learning, greater technology use in all modalities).
- The most common types of technology being used in teaching and learning are learning management systems (LMS) to facilitate interactions, online polling and quizzes, and video-based technologies.
- Extended Reality (XR) technologies such as virtual and augmented reality are rarely used.
- There is a strong consensus among survey respondents that GenAI will become a normal part of post-secondary education within a few years.
- Respondents view the need to accommodate competing priorities as the main reason why students choose to learn online, whereas a desire for interaction is the primary reason students choose to learn in person.
- According to respondents, academic integrity is the most pressing teaching and learning challenge, followed by faculty fatigue and burnout.
- The impact on faculty workload and technology infrastructure is the most pressing operational challenge, according to administrators.
- Confidence in faculty skills and know-how to teach in different modalities decreases as modality-specific technological demands increase.



## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Sponsors and Partners.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Key findings from 2024.....	4
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Survey Topics.....	6
Survey Respondents.....	7
<b>Digital Learning Trends.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Defining Key Terms Related to Course/Program Modality.....	8
Modality Trends.....	9
Technology and Resource Trends.....	10
Commonly Used Technologies.....	10
Faculty and Student Preferences.....	13
Perceived Drivers of Student Modality Preferences.....	16
Open Educational Resources (OER).....	17
<b>Artificial Intelligence.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Digital Learning Challenges.....</b>	<b>21</b>
Teaching and Learning Challenges.....	21
Operational Challenges.....	23
<b>Faculty Competencies and Professional Development.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Faculty Competencies for Teaching with Technology.....	25
Professional Development for Digital Learning.....	26
<b>Looking to the Future.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Concluding Thoughts.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Contact.....</b>	<b>36</b>



## Introduction

Over the past four years, post-secondary education in Canada has changed. Undoubtedly, the use of technology in teaching and learning has increased and become more commonplace. Many institutions are developing and expanding online and hybrid course offerings to provide more flexibility to students in response to demand. One of the objectives of this report is to assess the extent of the change that has occurred and the extent to which it will persist.

In 2023, the CDLRA resumed the Pan-Canadian Digital Learning Survey Project with a renewed focus on gathering longitudinal data. Our 2024 Pan-Canadian Report compares some 2023 and 2024 findings to illustrate where change and plateaus occur. In presenting these comparisons, we remind our readers that year-to-year changes may happen for a myriad of reasons, including differences in the research sample. As we continue our longitudinal work in the years to come, we can better discern single-year anomalies from persistent trends.

### Survey Topics

The 2024 Pan-Canadian Report summarizes the findings from two surveys, one conducted in the Spring (April 2 – May 31, 2024) and one conducted in the Fall (September 9 - October 11, 2024). Each survey covered a different set of topics, listed in the table below.

Table 1  
*Survey Topics*

Spring Survey	Fall Survey
Digital learning trends	Technologies used in teaching and learning
Faculty competencies, attitudes, and preferences	Accessibility and student support
Student attitudes and preferences	Professional development and digital learning
Digital learning challenges	Open educational resources (OER) and open practices
Feelings about the future	

## Survey Respondents

In 2024, we continued our approach of surveying multiple individuals at each institution, representing a variety of roles. The findings presented in this report include the perspectives of administrators (e.g., senior administrators, deans, and directors), teaching and learning leaders, instructional designers and educational developers, institutional researchers, library services staff, student support staff, and educational technology specialists. There were 441 Spring Survey respondents and 196 Fall Survey respondents. More information about the survey participants can be found in the [methodology section](#) of this report.

We continue to work to gather diverse perspectives as we expand our survey reach in the years to come. We invite any readers of this report who work at a post-secondary institution to sign up to join our survey roster by [clicking here](#) or scanning the QR code.



### Student Findings from Academica Group

Each year, when sharing our findings, the CDLRA is asked about students' perspectives. For 2024, CDLRA's organizational partner, Academica, conducted a survey to better understand perspectives on digital and virtual teaching among Canadian post-secondary students. The Academica survey is aligned with and contains questions adapted from the CDLRA's annual surveys. The survey had a strong response rate, with 1192 student respondents. Insights from the Academica student survey will be highlighted throughout the report. More details about the Academica survey participants can be found in the [methodology section](#) of this report.



## Digital Learning Trends

The 2024 Pan-Canadian Surveys asked respondents to share their observations and opinions on the growth of different learning modalities, commonly used technologies, faculty and student attitudes and preferences, and open educational resources (OER).

### Defining Key Terms Related to Course/Program Modality

The CDLRA acknowledges that each institution may use slightly different terms to describe the learning modalities offered to students. Over the years, we have developed and refined a Modes of Learning Framework to categorize learning modalities broadly. In this report, we define key terms related to modality as follows:

**ONLINE LEARNING** means that a course or program is delivered entirely online with no on-campus student requirements. Online learning experiences may be synchronous, asynchronous, or a mix of the two.

**IN-PERSON LEARNING** means students must attend all classes in person (or on campus). Technology may be used to varying extents in an in-person course or program.

**HYBRID LEARNING** (also referred to as blended learning) means a mix of in-person and online instruction within a course or program. There are many different variations of hybrid learning.

**MULTI-ACCESS LEARNING** means that instruction is available in different modes for a given course, and students can move between modalities at their discretion. Hyflex learning is an example of multi-access learning.



**Modality Trends**

The CDLRA Spring Survey asked respondents about the likelihood of course and program growth by modality over the next 24 months. Table 2 shows the proportion of respondents who expected that growth in each of the following modalities was very likely or somewhat likely. Overall, the findings remained consistent with the 2023 survey results.

Table 2  
*Respondents Expecting Growth to Some Extent (Modality)*

	2024	2023
More courses and/or programs offered in a hybrid format	73%	80%
More courses and/or programs offered in a fully online format	62%	69%
More courses and/or programs offered in a fully in-person format	52%	58%
More courses and/or programs offered in a multi-access format	51%	53%

The results show that of all modalities, hybrid learning is expected to be growing at the fastest rate. Most respondents in both years that this question was asked clearly expected courses or programs that offer a mix of online and in-person offerings would grow at a faster rate, more so than any other modality. The findings also suggest an overarching perception that fully online offerings will grow faster than in-person offerings over the next two years. In-person and multi-access courses are expected to grow, albeit at a slower pace than online and hybrid approaches.

It is important to clarify that the findings should not be interpreted to mean that fully online or hybrid offerings are expected to become predominant or overcome in-person offerings over time. Instead, the greater expected growth in fully online offerings would be better attributed to the longstanding lack of fully online offerings throughout the Canadian post-secondary system and an identified market need to expand the number of online courses to make college and university education more accessible for non-traditional students.



## Technology and Resource Trends

The CDLRA Spring Survey also asked respondents about the likelihood of growth in technology use, alternative credentials (e.g., microcredentials, badges, stackable credits), and OER over the next 24 months. Again, the results were highly consistent with the findings from 2023 (see Table 3).

Table 3  
*Respondents Expecting Growth to Some Extent (Technology and Resources)*

	2024	2023
Greater technology use in teaching and learning, regardless of mode of course delivery	84%	89%
More alternative credential offerings	71%	77%
Greater support for the use of OER	64%	66%

## Commonly Used Technologies

The CDLRA Fall Survey asked respondents who had taught over the past 12 months about the types of technologies used in their courses, regardless of course modality. The results for 2024 were higher than 2023 for most technologies; however, a high proportion of 2024 fall survey respondents (74%) who had taught over the past 12 months had taught online. Knowing that many respondents had recent online teaching experience is critical to helping us correctly interpret the following findings related to technology use. In other words, the increase in the year-to-year results may reflect the sample composition rather than an uptake in technology use. The CDLRA will continue to ask this question in future years to see if increasing technology use persists.

Two noteworthy trends are 1) the large increase in the use of GenAI technologies in 2024, which is unsurprising given the publicity surrounding GenAI and the relative ease at which it can be accessed by the general public, and 2) the continued low use of XR technologies (e.g., virtual reality, augmented reality). Considering that XR technologies have been available for years, it would be worthwhile to investigate why their use in post-secondary education remains sparse.

Table 4

*Types of Technologies Used in Teaching and Learning*

Type of Technology	% YES	
	2024	2023
Online platform (e.g., learning management system) to facilitate interaction between faculty and students	90%	92%
Online polling or quizzes	78%	64%
Online platform (e.g., learning management system) to facilitate student-to-student interaction	71%	59%
One-on-one video meetings (e.g., online office hours)	71%	75%
On-demand instructional videos	67%	51%
Full-class video meetings	64%	55%
Small group synchronous activities (e.g., Zoom breakout rooms)	64%	45%
Small group asynchronous activities	58%	35%
Recorded lectures for later viewing	52%	52%
GenAI (e.g., ChatGPT, DALL-E, BARD, etc.) to support teaching activities (e.g., the production assignments, rubrics, or other course materials)	49%	19%
Student speeches or presentations online	46%	39%
GenAI (e.g., ChatGPT, DALL-E, BARD, etc.) use in student learning activities (e.g., use by students in their assignments)	41%	12%
Online tools to ensure academic integrity	30%	24%
Online labs or simulations	14%	10%
XR technologies	3%	1%



## Academica Spotlight on Students

**Experiences with Technology:** Most students had taken a course that used an LMS to manage interactions between instructors and students (84%), shared recorded lectures for later viewing (65%), and/or included online polling or quizzes (64%). Despite media attention around the use of XR technologies in the classrooms, students rarely experienced these in the classroom (2%).

**Most Helpful Technologies:** Students identified LMS platforms as helpful for interactions with instructors and students (59%) and recorded lectures (48%).

**Least Helpful Technologies:** Students reported that academic integrity tools (11%) and/or online small group activities (9% each for asynchronous and synchronous) were least helpful to their learning. Over one-half of the students (54%) selected “none” when asked to identify listed tools that they found unhelpful.



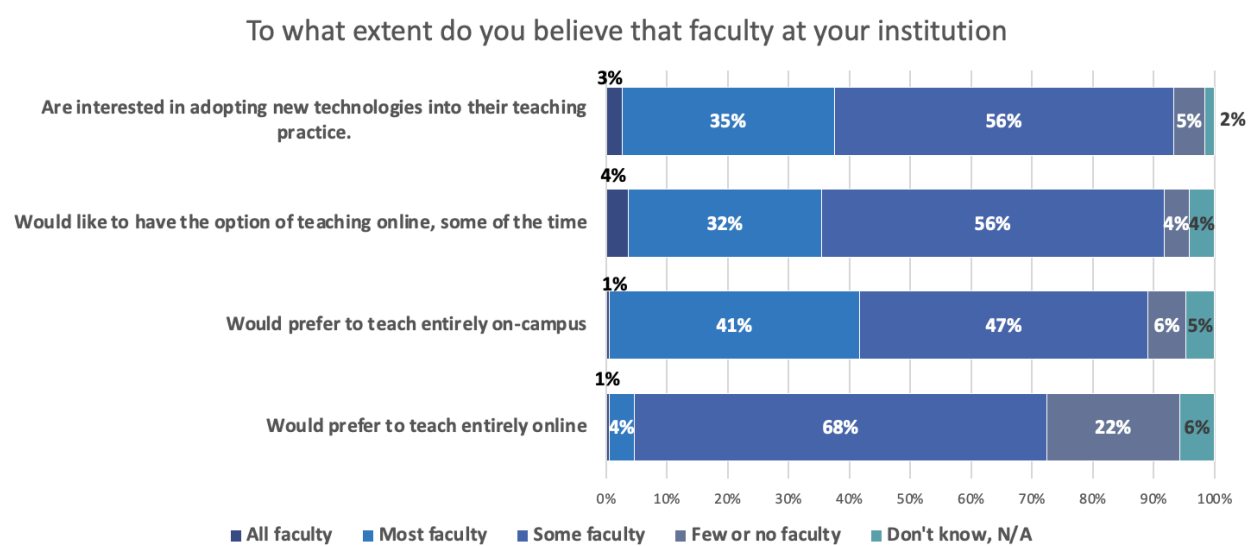
## Faculty and Student Preferences

The Spring Survey asked respondents about faculty and student preferences, including their preferences related to digital learning. The findings from 2024 are consistent with the findings from 2023, with the notable differences being a decrease in the percentage of respondents who said that all or most faculty at their institution were interested in adopting new technologies and an increase in the percentage of respondents who said that all or most faculty would prefer to teach entirely on campus.

Table 5  
*Faculty Preferences*

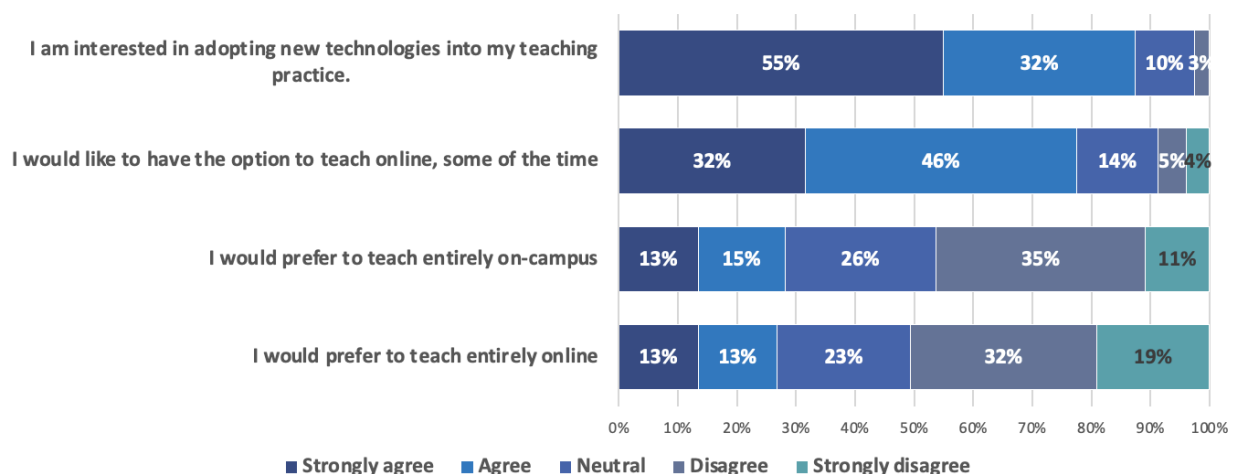
All or most faculty at my institution:	2024	2023
Are interested in adopting new technologies into their teaching practice	38%	50%
Would like to have the option of teaching online some of the time	36%	41%
Would prefer to teach entirely on campus	42%	34%
Would prefer to teach entirely online	5%	4%

The 2024 findings also showed that for most of these scenarios, at least some faculty at each respondent's institution were interested in teaching in various modalities.

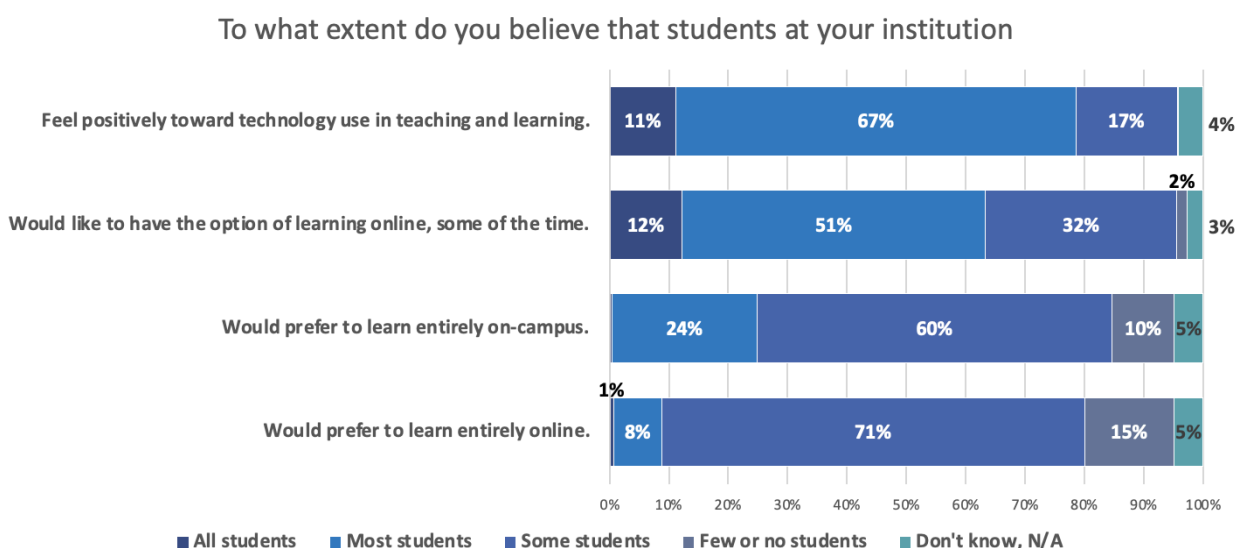


The Spring Survey also asked respondents who had taught over the past 12 months about their personal preferences related to teaching with technology and teaching in different modalities. The vast majority of respondents (87%) agreed to some extent that they were interested in adopting new technologies into their teaching practices, and a considerable majority (78%) also agreed that they would like to have the option to teach online some of the time.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your preferences



Lastly, the CDLRA Spring Survey asked respondents about the extent to which they believed students were interested in using new technologies and learning in different modalities.



Overall, respondents believe that many students felt positively toward technology use in their courses and, like faculty, preferred having the option of learning online some of the time rather than opting for a fully on-campus or fully online learning experience.

### Academica Spotlight on Students

**Experiences with Modalities:** Most students had experienced at least one fully in-person class (69%); many had experienced at least one fully online class (40%) and/or at least one hybrid class (36%).

**Preferences:** When discussing their preferences, over half (58%) of students preferred a learning format where their courses are mostly or entirely in-person/on-campus; however, a sizable proportion (21%) preferred an entirely or mostly online education.



## Perceived Drivers of Student Modality Preferences

In 2023, Spring Survey respondents were asked to provide an open-ended comment listing factors that influenced students' choice of learning modality. The CDLRA research team identified common reasons for modality choice and used these findings to create two new questions for the 2024 Spring Survey.

The first question asked respondents about the extent to which they felt a variety of factors contributed to student needs and preferences for online and hybrid learning. Nearly all respondents (94%) agreed to some extent that students chose online or hybrid learning to accommodate competing priorities. Other top reasons that the majority of respondents agreed to some extent that students chose online or hybrid options were:

- an inability to access affordable housing on or near campus (75%)
- to accommodate a disability (72%)
- an inability to access affordable or reliable transportation to campus (67%)
- cost savings (61%)

Student inability to access affordable housing on or near campus is a problem that has become increasingly pronounced over the past few years due to the overall affordable housing crisis in Canada. Accessing affordable housing on or near campus was not a widespread concern in the past, nor was it a major driver for expanding online courses or program offerings. The fact that Canada's housing crisis is now driving a preference for online or hybrid learning options reveals the ways in which online learning is connected to broader socioeconomic concerns.

The second question asked respondents about the extent to which they felt a variety of factors contributed to student needs and preferences for in-person learning. Almost all respondents (94%) said a desire for in-person interactions drove student preferences for in-person learning. The majority of respondents also agree to some extent that the following factors influenced students to choose in-person learning:

- students feel that they learn best in an in-person context (79%)
- students perceive that the quality of instruction is better when in person (72%)
- inability to access technologies (59%)
- uncomfortable or unfamiliar with using technologies (60%)



Open Educational Resources (OER)

According to the [William and Flora Hewlett Foundation](#), open educational resources are "teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others."

The findings from the 2023 and 2024 Fall Surveys (as shown in Table 6) are consistent and show that there is a high level of awareness of OER, with only a few respondents unfamiliar with the term.

Table 6  
*How aware are you of Open Educational Resources (OER)?*

Extent of Awareness	2024	2023
I am very aware of OER and know how they can be used in the classroom	49%	43%
I am aware of OER and some of their use cases	35%	32%
I am somewhat aware of OER, but I am not sure how they can be used	3%	7%
I have heard of OER, but don't know much about them	8%	8%
I am not aware of OER	5%	9%

Although, the survey respondents were mostly familiar with OER, the Academica Student Survey revealed that many students are not. Further research is recommended to explore the gap between OER awareness among those working at post-secondary institutions and students.

Academica Spotlight on Students

**OER Awareness:** Most students were not at all aware of OERs (64%); of those who were aware of OERs, about half (49%) said that OERs were being used in at least one of their classes for the 2024-25 academic year.

The Fall Survey (in 2023 and 2024) asked respondents whether their institution has a policy or strategy for open educational resources and/or other free course materials. The findings from 2023 and 2024 show that institutional policies related to these are rare.

Table 7  
*Prevalence of Institutional Policies Related to OER*

Type of Policy	2024	2023
Yes, we have a published institutional policy	12%	15%
Yes, individual departments/units have a published policy	5%	3%
Yes, we have an informal policy	22%	20%
Not yet, but one is under development	12%	10%
No	31%	30%
Don't know	24%	27%



A central tenet of OER advocacy is the ability of OER to drastically reduce the cost of course materials for students. The 2023 and 2024 Fall Survey asked respondents whether the cost of course materials was a barrier for students at their institution. The majority of respondents selected a response that was somewhere in the middle: few respondents identified cost as a critical barrier, and few stated that cost was not an issue.

Table 8

*Cost of Course Materials for Students*

Is the cost of course materials an issue at your institution?	2024	2023
Yes, cost is a critical barrier preventing students from having the required materials	6%	6%
Yes, cost is often a barrier preventing students from having the required materials	36%	28%
Yes, we have a few instances where cost has been a barrier preventing students from having the required materials	25%	27%
Perhaps, there may be instances where cost has been a barrier preventing students from having the required materials	17%	20%
No, cost of required materials is not an issue for our institution	4%	8%
Don't know	11%	12%



# Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), has been at the forefront of technology-related conversations in Canadian post-secondary education for the past two years. The open-ended survey responses from each year show that when respondents are discussing AI, they are mostly referring to GenAI.

In Fall 2023 and Spring 2024, the CDLRA asked AI-specific questions to explore GenAI use in the sector and its potential benefits and drawbacks.

Table 9  
*Percentage of Respondents that Agreed to Some Extent About AI-Related Issues*

Statements About AI	2024	2023
Within a few years, AI use will become a normal part of education	85%	92%
The widespread availability of AI will make teaching more challenging	73%	72%
The widespread availability of AI will make teaching more efficient	46%	59%
The widespread availability of AI will make teaching more engaging	35%	49%
The widespread availability of AI will make teaching more effective	34%	48%
Students will use AI to cheat	83%	76%
Students will use AI as a study tool	80%	86%

Conversations about AI use in post-secondary education tend to be primarily about GenAI and tend to focus on 1) academic integrity and 2) the potential for AI to support students. As seen in Table 9, many individual respondents held mixed feelings about AI use: viewing it as a tool that would increase academic dishonesty, but seeing its value as a potential study tool for students as well.

Respondents felt the least positive about AI’s potential to make teaching more effective, engaging, and efficient. They felt more positive in 2023 than in 2024, and this might be a point worth exploring further.

## Digital Learning Challenges

Given the continuing interest in increasing hybrid, online, and technology-supported learning, it is important to acknowledge the challenges associated with technology adoption. Some challenges, like faculty and student digital literacy or technology infrastructure, are directly related to technology use, whereas others are more systemic in nature and become more pronounced when technology is introduced into the institutional context (e.g., faculty fatigue and burnout, quality assurance, and addressing inequities).

### Teaching and Learning Challenges

In 2023 and 2024, the Spring survey asked respondents what teaching and learning challenges were pressing at their institution at that moment. The survey invited respondents to select all that applied from their perspective. Table 10 shows the teaching and learning challenges selected by the majority of respondents for each year.

Table 10

*Teaching and Learning Challenges Selected by the Majority of Respondents*

Challenges	2024	2023
Academic integrity	78%	78%
Faculty fatigue and burnout	70%	66%
Faculty digital literacy	64%	61%
Effective assessment practices for online learning contexts	62%	68%
Social and mental health supports for students	58%	Not asked
Effective instructional practices for teaching with technology	57%	59%
Accommodating diverse learning needs among students	55%	67%
Readiness for post-secondary studies among first-year students	53%	57%
Student digital literacy	52%	42%
Evaluating the quality of courses taught in online or hybrid contexts	39%	56%

In both years, respondents were asked to identify the most pressing teaching and learning challenge from their selections. Table 11 shows the top challenges as identified by 10% or more of respondents in either year. In both Tables 10 and 11, academic integrity and faculty fatigue and burnout persist as the top teaching and learning challenges.

Table 11  
*Most Pressing Teaching and Learning Challenges*

Most Pressing Challenge	2024	2023
Academic integrity	20%	15%
Faculty fatigue and burnout	17%	16%
Effective instructional practices for teaching with technology	9%	12%
Readiness for post-secondary studies among first-year students	9%	11%
Effective assessment practices for online learning contexts	9%	10%
Accommodating diverse learning needs among students	7%	10%



## Operational Challenges

The 2023 and 2024 Spring Surveys also asked respondents who identified as administrators to identify operational challenges at their institution related to digital learning. The results remained relatively consistent from year to year, with the exception of student demand for online and hybrid offerings being identified less frequently as a challenge in 2024 compared to 2023.

Table 12  
*Operational Challenges*

Challenges	2024	2023
Impact on faculty workload	54%	50%
Technology infrastructure	47%	41%
Cybersecurity	41%	*see note
Quality assurance	39%	47%
Addressing inequities	32%	31%
Student enrolments	29%	28%
Financial stability of the institution	26%	22%
Privacy	23%	*see note
Student demand for online and hybrid offerings	21%	31%

*\*In 2023, cybersecurity and privacy were grouped together as a single challenge with 35% of respondents selecting it as a challenge.*



The survey then asked administrator respondents to choose the most pressing operational challenge from their list of selections.

Table 13  
*Most Pressing Teaching and Learning Challenges*

Most Pressing Challenge	2024	2023
Impact on faculty workload	26%	18%
Technology infrastructure	22%	20%
Financial stability of the institution	14%	11%
Student enrolments	12%	11%
Quality assurance	8%	20%
Addressing inequities	7%	9%
Cybersecurity	6%	*see note
Student demand for online and hybrid offerings	3%	5%
Privacy	2%	*see note

*\*In 2023, cybersecurity and privacy were grouped together as a single challenge with 6% of respondents selecting it as the most pressing challenge.*

For the most part, findings related to operational challenges remained consistent between the two years; however, quality assurance was perceived to be the most pressing operational challenge by a greater number of respondents in 2023 than in 2024. Our data does not offer any explanation for this change, and further research is needed to explore whether this is a trend or a single-year anomaly.

It is important to note that the Spring Survey was conducted prior to most of the announcements about international student caps by the Canadian government. In our 2025 survey, we expect to see student enrolments identified as a more pressing concern than in 2023 or 2024.

## Faculty Competencies and Professional Development

### Faculty Competencies for Teaching with Technology

The 2023 and 2024 Spring Surveys asked respondents whether faculty at their institution had the skills and know-how to effectively teach in different modalities. The findings from both years show that respondent confidence in faculty teaching competencies decreases in relation to the technological demands of the course.

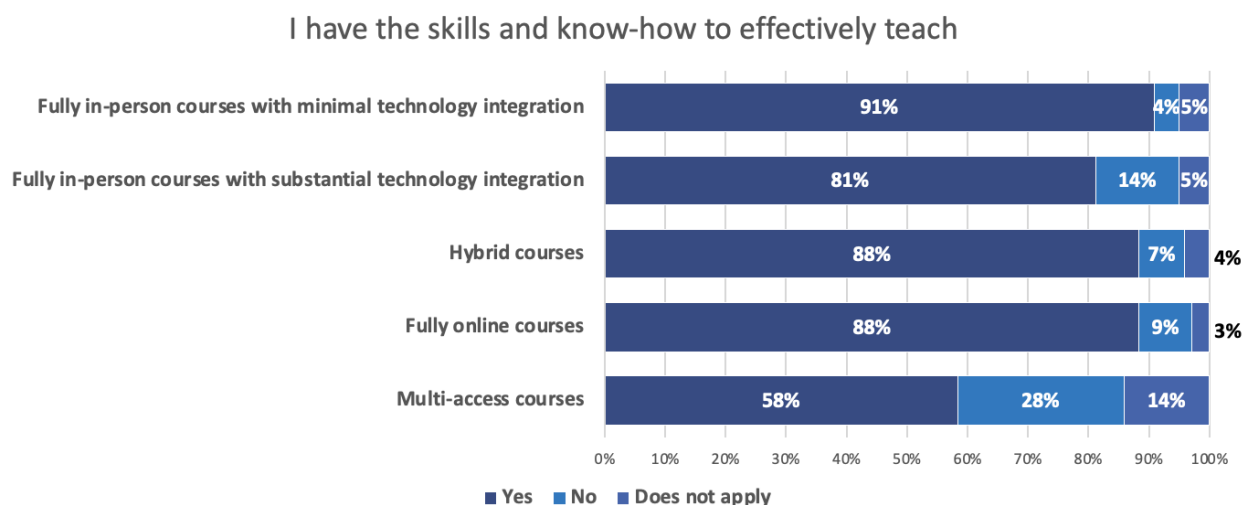
Table 14

*All or most faculty have the skills and know-how to effectively teach in the modality*

Modality	2024	2023
In-person courses with minimal technology integration	88%	92%
In-person courses with substantial technology integration	45%	52%
Hybrid courses	39%	42%
Online courses	23%	33%
Multi-access courses	11%	12%



In Spring 2024, respondents who taught over the past 12 months were asked to rate their own skills and know-how for teaching in different modalities. They tended to rate their competencies significantly higher than when rating the faculty at their institution in general. This finding may be explained by self-selection bias within the sample, in that faculty who are more experienced and interested in educational technologies are perhaps more likely to respond to the survey.



## Professional Development for Digital Learning

Professional development topics related to digital learning are broad and varied. Like the challenges related to digital learning, some topics are directly related to technology use and others are more technology-adjacent (professional development related to assessment, instructional practices, and student support).

We know from the questions about professional development asked in 2022 and 2023 that it tends to be voluntary, with only a minority of institutions requiring training for new teachers or ongoing training for all faculty. We also know from 2023 that professional development requirements do not tend to differ based on the modality in which the instructor teaches.

The 2023 and 2024 Fall Surveys asked respondents about the extent to which institutions offer professional development for faculty on various topics.

Table 15 highlights the findings on professional development related to technology use. In both years, the use of the institution's learning management system (LMS) and video-based technologies were the most popular topics, followed by the use of GenAI technologies.

Table 15  
*Professional Development Related to Technology Use*

Topic	Year	A Great Deal	Somewhat	Not at All	Don't Know
How to use the institution's LMS	2024	52%	41%	3%	4%
	2023	57%	33%	2%	8%
How to use video-based technologies	2024	32%	53%	8%	7%
	2023	31%	58%	3%	8%
OER and open practices in teaching and learning	2024	21%	60%	10%	9%
	2023	13%	57%	13%	17%
How to use GenAI technologies	2024	14%	58%	20%	9%
	2023*	14%	53%	18%	14%
Digital learning leadership	2024	6%	41%	36%	17%
	2023	11%	39%	29%	22%
How to use XR technologies	2024	5%	28%	50%	16%
	2023	2%	27%	43%	28%

Table 16 shows the extent of professional development offerings related to assessment. One noteworthy observation is that, despite effective assessment in online contexts being identified by 62% of respondents as a teaching and learning challenge (see p. 21), there does not appear to be significantly more professional development related to online assessment strategies to help mitigate this challenge. Academic integrity, more broadly, receives more attention from a professional development standpoint; however, the data does not capture what academic integrity training entails.

Table 16  
*Professional Development Related to Assessment*

Topic	Year	A Great Deal	Somewhat	Not at All	Don't Know
Academic integrity	2024	43%	41%	9%	8%
	2023	49%	41%	4%	7%
Online assessment strategies	2024	30%	50%	9%	10%
	2023	33%	57%	4%	7%
In-person assessment strategies	2024	38%	44%	6%	12%
	2023	38%	48%	3%	11%

The 2023 and 2024 surveys also asked about institutional professional development offerings relating to subject matter expertise.

Table 17  
*Professional Development Related to Subject Matter Expertise*

Topic	Year	A Great Deal	Somewhat	Not at All	Don't Know
Subject matter expertise	2024	24%	35%	26%	15%
	2023	18%	40%	22%	20%

Table 18 shows the extent of institutional offerings for professional development related to student support and engagement. The majority of respondents (62% in 2024 and 55% in 2023) reported that there was a great deal of training related to effective teaching practices.

Table 18

*Professional Development Related to Student Support and Engagement*

Topic	Year	A Great Deal	Somewhat	Not at All	Don't Know
Effective teaching practices (any modality)	2024	62%	33%	2%	3%
	2023	55%	36%	1%	7%
Accessibility practices (any modality)	2024	28%	52%	13%	7%
	2023	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Decolonization practices (any modality)	2024	26%	52%	13%	9%
	2023*	16%	55%	11%	17%
Familiarity with wraparound supports	2024	24%	59%	8%	9%
	2023	23%	58%	8%	11%
Student mental health	2024	21%	60%	10%	9%
	2023	13%	57%	10%	16%
How to increase student engagement in online contexts	2024	23%	55%	11%	11%
	2023	28%	57%	6%	10%

Overall, the most popular professional development topics in 2024, as identified by the survey respondents, were effective teaching practices, how to use the institution's LMS, and academic integrity.

# Looking to the Future

The 2023 and 2024 Spring Surveys asked respondents to answer three questions related to the future of post-secondary education in Canada:

- How different do you think post-secondary education will be from the present state in 5 years' time?
- Do you feel ready for the changes that the future might bring to your institution?
- Considering the current situation, are you optimistic or pessimistic about the overall future of higher education over the next 5 years?

The 2024 survey findings show that the majority of respondents (54%) expect the future to be somewhat different from the current state. An additional 28% of respondents expect the future to be very different, while 16% of respondents expect only slight change. Hardly any respondents expect post-secondary education in five years' time to be the same as now. The distribution of responses between the two years is nearly identical.

Table 19  
*How different will post-secondary education be in five years' time*

Year	Very Different	Somewhat Different	Slightly Different	The Same as Now	Don't Know
2024*	28%	54%	16%	1%	0%
2023	28%	53%	16%	1%	2%

*\*The numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole number for the purposes of this report, making the sum 99%; however, when rounded to the nearest tenth, they add to 100%.*



Again, when looking at the year-to-year distribution of responses related to readiness for the changes that the future might bring to their institution, there is almost no change from 2023 to 2024. The majority of respondents in 2024 (57%) indicated that they were somewhat ready for future change, with an additional 30% stating that they felt ready. Only a small minority of 2024 respondents (11%) did not feel prepared for future change.

Table 20  
*Preparedness for Future Change*

Year	Yes	Somewhat	No	Don't Know
2024	30%	57%	11%	2%
2023	29%	58%	12%	1%


Despite there being little year-to-year difference in anticipated change and feelings of preparedness, feelings of optimism or pessimism appear to have shifted, with considerably more participants feeling pessimistic in 2024 compared to 2023.

Table 21  
*Feelings of Optimism/Pessimism About the Future*

Year	Very Optimistic	Optimistic	Neutral	Pessimistic	Very Pessimistic
2024	11%	43%	22%	20%	4%
2023	12%	54%	26%	7%	1%







Respondents were invited to leave an open-ended response sharing their reasons for optimism or pessimism. The responses associated with feelings of pessimism mentioned factors such as:

- A lack of government funding
- Inadequate supports for faculty to enable them to better support students
- The sense that our current post-secondary education system is unsustainable (including mention of overreliance on international student fees)
- A lowering of educational standards and the observation that students today are not coming out of K-12 prepared for post-secondary education in comparison to the past
- The feeling that post-secondary education is becoming more transactional (e.g., payment for credits as opposed to a genuine interest in learning) and a lower societal interest in post-secondary education
- Concerns about job market changes that will lead to a devaluing of post-secondary credentials
- Concern that post-secondary education is adapting too slowly to technological advancements within society, including a sense of frustration that some faculty and administrators seem unwilling to embrace technology
- Poor management at the institutional level and inequitable workloads
- A lack of permanent faculty positions
- Concerns about AI

While it is critical to monitor the swing towards increased feelings of pessimism, the reasons behind these feelings are not new. Tensions related to resources and funding, as well as conversations about how post-secondary education should change in relation to technological innovation, have been happening for many years now. Within the data, there does not appear to be a distinct reason for the increased sense of pessimism among respondents. It could be an anomaly unique to the sample, or it could be a response to ongoing stressors and tensions felt within the sector over the past few years (e.g., the pandemic, inflation, international student restrictions, political tensions, etc.). Regardless, it is important to continue to monitor feelings about the future as these findings tend to provide insightful insights into current frustrations and anxieties.

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## Concluding Thoughts

For the most part, the CDLRA survey findings over the past two years (2023 and 2024) have shown a sense of continuity. There were no 2024 findings that stood out as surprising. The 2023 and 2024 results indicate areas of continued interest that paint a fuller picture of the Pan-Canadian landscape.

Contrary to the narrative that massive change is occurring in higher education, the CDLRA findings show that while technology use in teaching and learning is increasing, it is mostly applied to widely available technologies (e.g., LMS platforms, video-conferencing or recording tools, and GenAI). The ways that these tools are used in post-secondary education appear to be more about improving efficiency and accessibility (e.g., using digital technology to make learning more accessible for the broader population) rather than developing novel and innovative practices. In other words, digital technologies are being used to tweak educational practices rather than revolutionize them.

The COVID-19 pandemic was an inflection point in technology use within post-secondary education and within society in general. Restrictions on in-person gatherings meant that many people became more comfortable using technologies to work and learn remotely. Nearly five years later, we certainly see the imprint of pandemic-related practices on our system, mainly through increased demand for more flexible learning options that rely on the use of digital communication tools and platforms.

Are learning and assessment practices themselves dramatically different than they were in 2019? Arguably no, although technological advances that enable students to complete assessments from their own homes and the availability of GenAI to students are gradually provoking conversations about improved teaching and assessment practices in response to academic integrity concerns. Changes are happening across the sector, but they do not appear to be happening at a rapid pace.

The CDLRA looks forward to asking many of the same questions again in 2025 to observe whether the year-to-year patterns that are beginning to emerge, hold steady, or show signs of change. In closing, we once again thank our respondents who continue to help us understand the role of digital technologies in post-secondary education.

## Methodology

Information for this report comes from the 2024 Spring and Fall Pan-Canadian Digital Learning Surveys. The Spring Survey was open from April 2 to May 31, 2024, and the Fall Survey was open from September 11 to October 13, 2024.

The universe of interest for the 2024 surveys consists of all publicly-funded post-secondary institutions in Canada. Almost all universities in Canada are funded provincially. Institutions that are not included on the CDLRA roster include private for-profit universities, most of which are very small, and fully private career colleges and institutes.

### Participants

441 individuals from 132 unique institutions responded to the Spring Survey, with all provinces and one territory represented.

196 individuals from 86 unique institutions responded to the Fall Survey, with all provinces represented but no territories.

Participant roles included administrators (e.g., senior administrators, deans, and directors), teaching and learning leaders, instructional designers and educational developers, institutional researchers, library services staff, student support staff, and educational technology specialists. These roles are all represented in the findings featured in the 2024 Pan-Canadian Report.

### Survey Design and Outreach

Each year, the CDLRA research team designs the survey instruments based on prior CDLRA surveys conducted since 2017. Potential respondents who have opted into the CDLRA email roster received an email plus several follow-up reminder emails to participate in the Spring and Fall surveys. Each email included a link to the online survey form. The emails and the first page of the form provided a link to a Letter of Information with details about the survey and the ethics approval. The outreach emails and survey instruments were identical in both English and French. The link to the survey was also shared on the CDLRA's social media channels and included in CDLRA partner and sponsor email newsletters and social media posts.

***Copies of the survey instruments for each year are available upon request.***

Through the 2024 Pan-Canadian Digital Learning Report, we have compared some of the 2024 findings with the Pan-Canadian survey results from 2023. The methodology for these surveys can be found in the 2023 Pan-Canadian Report:

<https://cdlra-acrfl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2023-Pan-Canadian-Report-EN.pdf>

### **Academica Spotlight on Students**

**About StudentVu:** Academica operates a research panel called StudentVu, which is composed of approximately 10,000 Canadian postsecondary applicants and students. Panelists are compensated for their participation through points, which can be redeemed for gift cards.

**Methodology:** Current postsecondary students in Canada from Academica's StudentVu panel were invited by email to participate in a 5-7 minute online survey between September 27 and October 18, 2024. Two reminders were issued.

A total of 1,192 students qualified for and completed the survey. Findings are weighted by gender from Statistics Canada's 2021/2022 Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS) data.



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## Contact

**Dr. Nicole Johnson**, Executive Director, Canadian Digital Learning Research Association

Email: [nicole.johnson@cdlra-acrf.ca](mailto:nicole.johnson@cdlra-acrf.ca)

Website: [www.cdlra-acrf.ca](http://www.cdlra-acrf.ca)

To sign up to receive invitations to participate in future CDLRA research studies, please [click here](#) or scan the following QR code.

