The Role of Students' Assessment Literacies in Navigating University Assessment, GenAI, and Academic Integrity

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Abstract

Academic integrity concerns related to students' use of technology have renewed calls for teaching, assessment, and learning best practices, including those that involve and empower students. Empowerment is a benefit of developing students' assessment literacies, or how students contextually understand, plan, and undertake assessment and use assessment information to monitor and progress their learning. Informed by Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and reflexivity (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983), a qualitative exploratory case study examined first-year university students' experiences with assessment and the development of their assessment literacies. The findings highlighted student autonomy and empowerment benefits while stressing the importance of reflexivity and assessment literacies for both students and teachers. Teaching, assessment, and learning best practices commonly suggested to promote academic honesty in the GenAI context were also evident. Accordingly, this paper explores the role of students' assessment literacies as part of these best practices, with implications for all levels of education.

Keywords: student assessment literacies, academic integrity, GenAI, student empowerment, transition to university

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Introduction

Technology-related academic dishonesty concerns are not new to higher education (HE) (e.g., Eaton & Christensen Hughes, 2022). However, the uptake of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has resulted in an escalation of these concerns (e.g., Bin-Nashwan et al., 2023; Eke, 2023; Sullivan et al., 2023). Reaction to GenAI in HE classrooms is varied from both the student (e.g., Chan & Hu, 2023; Schiel et al., 2023) and educator (e.g., Kaplan-Rakowski et al., 2023; Newell et al., 2024) perspectives. Some educators have revived calls for formative, creative, authentic, and aligned assessments (e.g., Bearman et al., 2023; Rudolph et al., 2023; Swiecki et al., 2022) as a way to mitigate GenAI-related academic dishonesty concerns.

Classroom assessment has evolved from summative assessment of learning, or a snapshot of learning at the end of a unit or course, to formative assessment for learning, where a continuous cycle of teaching, assessment, and learning is facilitated by feedback (Fox et al., 2022). More recently, formative assessment as learning has recognized the value of involving students in teaching, assessment, and learning processes (Earl, 2013). The student autonomy and empowerment resulting from their involvement are shared benefits of developing students' assessment literacies (Nicol, 2009), or their contextual understanding of assessment, how they plan for and undertake assessment, and how they reflexively use assessment information to monitor and progress their learning. This paper draws from a qualitative exploratory case study that examined how first-year university students' experiences with, knowledge of, and expectations about assessment impacted the development of their assessment literacies as they transitioned to university. The findings, when considered at the intersection of academic integrity and GenAI, highlight common grounding in teaching, assessment, and learning best practices. Accordingly, this paper explores the role of student assessment literacies as part of these best practices to promote academic honesty in the GenAI context, with implications for all levels of education.

Background and Literature

Assessment and Assessment Literacies in University

The transition to university is an exciting but challenging time of social and intellectual adjustment (Tinto, 1987, 1993), during which students must adapt to the norms, expectations, and supports of university. Students' early experiences with assessment shape their expectations and attitudes towards assessment (cf. DeLuca et al., 2018; Kahu et al., 2016; Mancuso et al., 2010). Standardized testing and a dominance of summative assessment lead to a focus on grades and competition, test preparation, and test-wiseness strategies or tips and tricks on how to approach different kinds of assessments (Black & Wiliam, 1998; DeLuca et al., 2018). Early assessment experiences can also result in the development of test anxiety (e.g., Eizadirad, 2020; McLeod & Boyes, 2021) or students' phenomenological, physiological, and

behavioural reactions to assessment based on perceived negative consequences of failing (Zeidner, 1998).

Some of what students learn about assessment in high school may help them in university, but they will encounter differences. For example, first-year students may not be prepared for differences in how disciplinary knowledge is expressed, demonstrated, and assessed (Johnston et al., 2022). Students may be socialized into disciplinary norms to some extent in high school, but they will encounter different expectations in university and not all university-level disciplinary studies are offered in high school (Beynen, 2020). Cordiner and Kift (2008) stressed that first-year students need scaffolding with tertiary-level academic language, academic conventions, and assessment genres to understand the knowledge they need to demonstrate. However, this information is often implicit or presumed of students as "something that will be absorbed, as if by osmosis, as part of navigating their way through the higher education process" (Price et al., 2012, p. 3).

Early research on students' assessment literacies investigated the impact of making assessment criteria explicit and understandable (e.g., O'Donovan et al., 2008; Rust et al., 2003). Sadler (2010) probed how students could leverage feedback and develop strategies for improving by understanding assessment learning outcomes and how to evaluate their work against expectations. Smith et al. (2013) found that by discussing and applying an assessment rubric to samples of student work, students were better able to apply the criteria to similar assessments and interpret expectations and standards of performance.

The research on students' assessment literacies consistently reports increased personal agency, autonomy, self-regulation, and self-efficacy as benefits (Charteris & Thomas, 2017; Deeley & Bovill, 2017; Nicol, 2009; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). These benefits are similarly reported in the student involvement literature, where students are partners in teaching, assessment, and learning processes (Clancy et al., 2019; Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Deeley, 2014; Deeley & Bovill, 2017; Nel, 2017). The evaluative and reflexive expertise afforded by well-developed assessment literacies may help students to be more engaged in their learning and provide the tools they need to critically evaluate and use technology, including GenAI, to facilitate their academic success in an honest way.

Academic Integrity in University

Academic integrity concerns in HE have escalated with the increase in online access to services and tools that assist students with course work and assessments (Eaton & Christensen Hughes, 2022). Online assessment during the Covid-19 pandemic further exacerbated cheating concerns (e.g., Khan et al., 2021; Lee & Fanguy, 2022; Reedy et al., 2021). In response, institutions changed onsite, proctored exams to online, open book exams, and written

assessments (e.g., Bladt et al., 2022; Eaton, 2020; Eaton et al., 2022; Kumar, 2020). Some used e-proctoring surveillance, but research emerged on the unreliability of some of these methods and the tendency for bias against vulnerable student populations unfairly targeted by the software (Eaton, 2022; Hayden et al., 2021; Lee & Fanguy, 2022). Other research that has probed how to promote positive integrity practices has identified formative and authentic assessment as promising strategies (e.g., Eaton, 2021; Holden et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2021; Sotiriadou et al., 2020; Vellanki et al., 2023).

There are different attitudes and beliefs about what constitutes plagiarism as one form of academic dishonesty, and these differences are further exacerbated by questions about what knowledge/knowledge production consists of in an AI world (Eke, 2023). There is a lack of explicit instruction on how to cite and reference (e.g., Awosoga et al., 2021; Hossain, 2022; Poitras Pratt & Gladue, 2022; Sanni-Anibire et al., 2021) that has implications for students' academic literacies development. Additionally, there are power, identity, and agency issues surrounding citing and referencing (e.g., Gravett & Kinchin, 2020; Strangfeld, 2019). Accordingly, there have been calls to reconsider conceptualizations of plagiarism to promote ethics, fairness, and a positive, empowering, coaching approach over a punitive, policing approach (Eaton, 2021; Kenny & Eaton, 2022; Stoesz, 2023; Vaccino-Salvador & Hall Buck, 2021).

Generative AI in Higher Education

Educator reactions to GenAI have ranged from fear to outright rejection, and cautious exploration to embracing the new technology (Kaplan-Rakowski et al., 2023; Newell et al., 2024). Similar to the response to pandemic online learning integrity concerns, there have been renewed calls for best practices in teaching, assessment, and learning to mitigate the negative effects of GenAI use. This includes student-centred learning that is more interactive and engaging, with a focus on deep rather than surface learning where rote memorization is featured (Fawns & Schuwirth, 2023; Hoidn, 2022); and learning-oriented, innovative, authentic, and formative assessment (e.g., Kurtz et al., 2024; Ogunleye et al., 2024; Rudolph et al., 2023).

Some educators have shifted focus to learning processes over final products, and reconsidered the role of written assessments (e.g., Harris, 2024; Hartwell & Aull, 2023; Mills et al., 2023; Newell et al., 2024). Others have called for alternative grading options (Crogman et al., 2023; Overono & Ditta, 2023). Some use AI detectors, but as with e-proctoring, these are not reliable (e.g., Ibrahim, 2023; Walters, 2023) and can unfairly target vulnerable student groups (e.g., Ajjawi et al., 2023; Dawson, 2023; Poitras Pratt & Gladue, 2022; Stephenson & Harvey, 2023). For educators choosing to incorporate GenAI into teaching, learning, and assessment, transparency and clarity in expectations are crucial since both educators and students are learning and adapting as this technology rapidly evolves (e.g., Newell, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and reflexivity, inspired by the work of Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983), framed this research. Social cognitive theory is based on Bandura's (1986) model of triadic reciprocity and self-generated influences. The main premise is the bidirectional relationships between individual, environmental, and behavioural determinants, or his "model of reciprocal determinism" (p. 23). Bandura (1986) asserted that behaviour is driven by self-influences, or a system of "cognitive structures that provide reference mechanisms… for the perception, evaluation, and regulation of behaviour" (p. 348). These influences are referred to as self- prefixed terms like self-regulation and self-efficacy. Self-regulation involves the self-motivation to control and adapt one's behaviour as they work towards personal goals, and self-efficacy is one's perception of their abilities to take specific steps or actions towards achieving goals (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1986, 2001, 2006) stressed the importance of personal agency, explaining that people are active and deliberate in their day-to-day existence, development, and functioning. Social cognitive theory is useful in illuminating students' agency and self-driven influences to facilitate their academic success.

Reflexivity stems from academic reflective thought, which is conscious and deliberate evidence-driven thought towards solving problems or fact-finding (Dewey, 1933). Reflexivity occurs when thought spurs action (Ryan, 2015). In the educational context, disciplinary expectations and learners' prior knowledge, abilities, and academic and other experiences all impact attitudes towards and approaches to reflective thought and behaviour (Ryan & Ryan, 2015). Schön (1983) differentiated between tacit and explicit thought, explaining how practitioners know more than they articulate or consciously think about (tacit knowing-in-action; p. 49). They also sometimes think more consciously about what they are doing while doing it (reflection-in-action; p. 54). Schön further differentiated between reflecting on action, where the positive and negative consequences of particular actions are consciously noticed; and reflecting in action, where reflection occurs during activity and on-the-spot adjustments are made (p. 55). Finally, Schön distinguished knowing-in-action, or what is tacitly learned by testing and evaluating during activity; and knowledge-in-action (p. 59), where evolving learning is explicitly communicated. The metacognitive awareness of knowledge and the ability to discuss it help to build autonomy, which is crucial to success during the transition to university (Garrigan, 1997; Henri et al., 2018).

Method

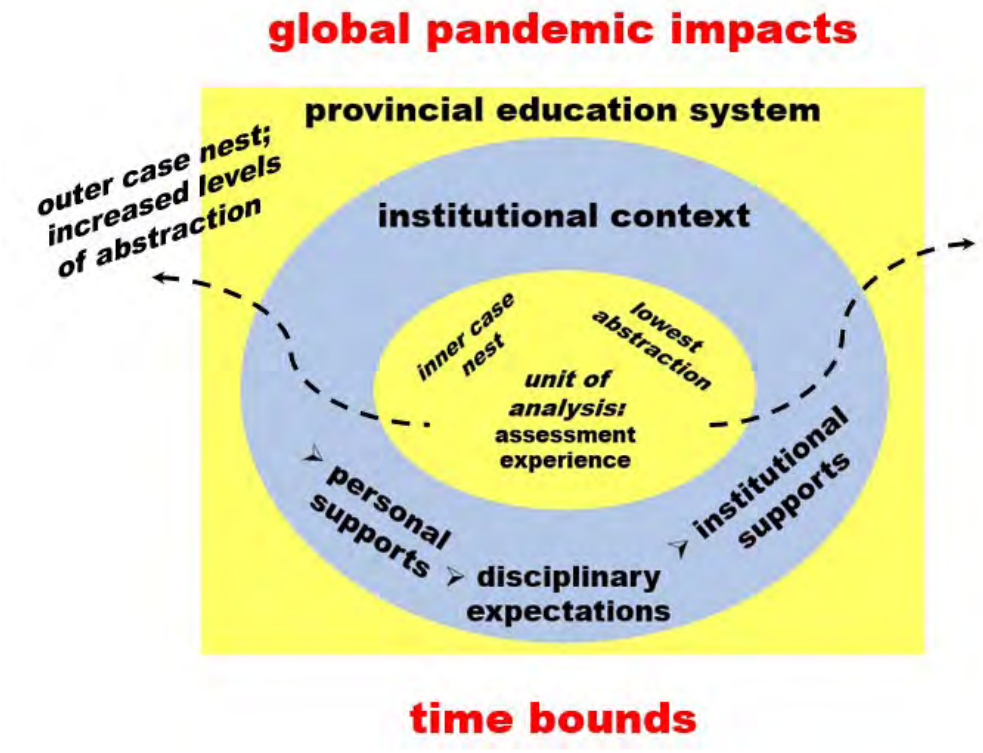
The Case

This investigation was approached as an exploratory, qualitative case study to provide baseline data on an under-researched area (cf. Merriam, 1998). The study took place at a mid-sized, comprehensive Canadian university. I drew on Grünbaum's (2007) nested case conceptualization,

which isolates the unit of analysis (students' assessment literacies) at the lowest level of abstraction from the case, which as a whole includes the contextual bounds at increasing levels of abstraction. This conceptualization is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Case Study Conceptualization



Several contextual elements comprised the case's bounds. Time bounds encompassed students' experiences with assessment and assessment literacies from high school through the first year of university, which spanned the 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 academic years. Many institutional contextual bounds impacted students' first-year experiences, such as personal and institutional supports, disciplinary expectations, and institutional and program-level regulations and policies. The provincial education system was another contextual bound, and the Covid-19 pandemic became an important part of the case context and bounds.

The Student Participants

There were 10 female student participants in this investigation, from whom all data sources were collected. After obtaining ethics approval, 11 student participants were recruited by a colleague from a Fall 2019 introductory applied linguistics course that I taught. Their identities were revealed after the course was complete and final grades were approved. After the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, three student participants (including the sole male volunteer)

withdrew from the study. No data from these withdrawn students was used. In the following months, it became clear that the transition to university was going to be a dramatically different experience. I amended the ethics application and successfully recruited two additional student participants who began in Fall 2020 from the same introductory applied linguistics course taught by another educator. Most of the student participants entered university directly from high school (sometimes after taking a year off). Table 1 provides the student participants' pseudonyms, program of study, and entry path into university.

Table 1

Overview of Student Participants

Entry term	Participant no. and pseudonym		Program of study	Method of entry
Fall 2019	1	Alanna	Applied Linguistics	Direct from high school
	2	Ariana	Applied Linguistics	Direct from high school
	3	Emma	Linguistics	Direct from high school (IB)
	4	Hannah	Linguistics	Direct from high school after gap year
	5	Maya	Cognitive Science	Direct from high school after gap year
	6	Nediva	Social Work	Mature, international student with prior university (overseas)
	7	Olivia	Applied Linguistics	Direct from high school
	8	Talibah	Global and International Studies	Direct from high school
Fall 2020	9	Eva	Criminology and Criminal Justice	Transferred after 1 year of college
	10	Rebecca	Linguistics	Direct from high school

Data Analysis

I collected and analyzed three data sources (see Table 2). First, the student participants documented their experiences with and impressions of assessment during their first term of university in an assessment journal. They were asked to do this to help them consciously think about similarities and differences between high school and university assessment and to encourage reflexive evaluation and adjustment of their approaches to university assessment. I provided guidelines that included parameters and suggestions for entry topics such as the

kinds of assessments they encountered in high school and university and how these were administered, how they prepared, what instructions or help they received, and their thoughts on marking and feedback.

Second, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews after their first and second terms of study[1]. In the first interview, the student participants were asked about assessment experiences in their high school and university courses; their studying habits and strategies; what they learned about assessment in high school and their first term of university, and if/how educators contributed to this learning; their expectations about university assessment; and the similarities and differences they found between high school and university assessment. For the Fall 2020 student participants, they were also asked about what they believed were the positive and negative impacts of the pandemic on their studies and assessment practices in their courses. In the second interview, student participants were asked to describe the assessments in their winter term courses and to reflect on their first year of university. They were asked about their first-year goals and what they believed helped and hindered their success. Fall 2019 student participants were asked how the onset of the pandemic and switch to online learning affected them, and Fall 2020 student participants reflected on pandemic lessons learned, or what practices they would like to see continued and discontinued.

Table 2

Overview of Data Collection and Analysis

Data source	Collection point	Analysis
Assessment journal entries	End of first term	Coding in NVivo; analysis driven by theory
Semi-structured, in-depth interviews	End of first term; end of second term	Transcribed; coding in NVivo; analysis driven by theory
Course assessment documents	End of first term; end of second term	Visual inspection and analysis

The interview responses were transcribed by hand and, together with the assessment journal entries, loaded into NVivo Release 1.5 (935) (QSR International, 2021), where I coded them using an adapted version of Saldaña's (2016) structural coding, followed by emotion and values coding. In structural coding, phrasing based on interview questions is applied to segments of data (MacQueen & Guest, 2008; Saldaña, 2016). Some, but not all, code names were derived

[1] For the Fall 2019 student participants, the first interview took place after our course was finished and their identities were revealed to me.

top-down from interview question topics, theory, and literature. Emotion coding is labelling the emotions expressed or described by participants directly or inferred by the researcher, and values coding is labeling participants' values, attitudes, and beliefs that represent their perspectives or worldviews (Saldaña, 2016, pp. 124, 131). After the codes were refined, 27 structural codes and 29 affective codes remained. These 56 codes were organized into 14 categories and three top-down themes (behaviour, environment, and personal) based on Bandura's (1986) triad determinants to enhance the theoretical grounding. Categories and themes are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Coding Categories and Themes

Categories	Themes
Autonomous behaviour	Behaviour
Workload management	
Assessment	Environment
Courses	
Pandemic impacts	
Social aspects	
Syllabi	
Teaching staff	
Transition	
Emotions and attitudes	Personal
Literacies	
Mental and physical health	
Motivation	
Self-efficacy	

The third data source was assessment-related documents the student participants provided from their first- and second-term university courses at the time of the interviews. Examples of these documents included syllabi, assessment instructions, grading rubrics, and feedback on written work. These documents were compared and categorized (Maxwell & Miller, 2008) and considered socially situated by how they appeared, their purpose or function, and how they were authored, produced, used, and consumed (Coffey, 2014). Interview responses triangulated assessment journal entries; some second interview questions and responses triangulated those from the first interview; and course assessment documents triangulated the other data sources. Interview and journal data are prioritized in the Findings and Discussion section below to promote the student participants' voices.

Findings and Discussion

This study investigated the question of how first-year university students' experiences with, knowledge of, and expectations about assessment impacted the development of their assessment literacies as they transitioned to university. Three of the most significant impacts relevant to this discussion are highlighted: (a) the multiple interacting literacies needed to facilitate academic success; (b) variability in teaching staff; and (c) expectations and assumptions made by educators and other institutional staff regarding what students should know, could do, and resources they had access to and could use. Indirect and direct quotations are referred to from assessment journal entries (AJ) and interview responses (IR).

Multiple Literacies

In addition to assessment literacies (students' contextual understanding of assessment, how they plan for and undertake assessment, and how they reflexively use assessment information to monitor and progress their learning), I found (as expected) significant evidence of academic literacies in the data. Digital and feedback literacies also figured prominently. The definitions for academic, feedback, and digital literacies as they were understood in the context of this research are provided in Table 4. The data illustrated how literacies overlapped and interacted to influence students' experiences with assessment and the development of their assessment literacies in both positive and negative ways.

Table 4

Literacies Definitions

Literacies	Definitions used in the context of this research
Academic	The tools and expertise that students use to facilitate their academic success at the institutional and disciplinary levels while recognizing the ideological, political, social, cultural, and linguistic contexts within which they study (cf. Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007).
Digital	Students' ability to find or gain access to, evaluate, use, troubleshoot, and seek help regarding the equipment, software, and technology needed to complete course and program requirements.
Feedback	Students' recognition of feedback, ability to manage affective responses, use of feedback to evaluate and monitor progress, and reflexively adapting performance to move it closer to expectations (cf., Boud & Molloy, 2013; Carless et al., 2011; Molloy & Boud, 2014).

The student participants learned about assessment in both high school and university, but what they learned and how or from whom varied. In high school, they learned test-taking strategies related to the mechanics of writing multiple-choice exams and essays. In university, assessment literacies development focused less on how to approach assessment, with the exception of sometimes scaffolded academic literacies. Many of the student participants learned some basic citing and referencing conventions in high school but had to learn more to adapt to stringent and detailed university expectations: "In high school, I didn't really find that plagiarism was covered a lot until I got into Grades 11 and 12. But in university, if you're caught, it's a big deal" (Hannah, IR).

Some of the student participants benefited from assessments that helped them learn and demonstrate their knowledge. Eva compared small, regular assessments that built upon one another to structure learning (i.e., continuous assessment; Furnham et al., 2011). In one class, the purpose of these assessments was clear, and they helped her to keep up and gauge her understanding of content. But in another class, they seemed random and therefore unhelpful. While the student participants were often focused on marking and grades, Hannah and Emma began to understand that they could recover from one bad grade in a course. Rebecca reflected on the role of marks in learning:

> I find that if there's a chance not to worry about marks as much, you learn more. I just feel like sometimes the way school is set up is to achieve these high marks, but not to actually understand what you're doing… I know that sometimes I focus a little too much about what grade I'm going to get rather than—did I actually understand what they're trying to teach me? (IR)

The student participants made strides in their feedback literacies as they considered, evaluated, and incorporated feedback; managed their emotions; and overcame help-seeking fears. Maya discussed her emotional responses to feedback and was working to overcome them:

> I don't do very well with feedback… I tend to do this thing where I scroll through it really quickly or I just glance over it and then later, I actually feel the confidence to go point by point. In one class we always got a lot of feedback for our written assignments, which while it stung me a little inside while skimming over it, eventually I was like "these are really good points" and I need to remove these from how I feel. (IR)

Other self-regulated and reflexive adjustments tapped into the student participants' digital literacies. They all had to find information and forms on the institution's website and in the library system, and they had to learn to navigate within a learning management system for the first time. Most appreciated being able to access course and assessment information, submit, and sometimes complete assessments online. However, they were sometimes plagued with

technical difficulties. They often had to troubleshoot problems with equipment and software on their own since they sometimes worked outside of institutional technical support hours: "There were some unexpected events that were more stressful… like not being able to access practice quizzes and having my computer crash and losing notes" (Eva, AJ).

Teaching Staff Variability

Educators in both high school and university were sometimes sources of formal or professional help-seeking support (Karabenick, 2003). However, the variation in these important stakeholders experienced by the student participants significantly impacted the development of their assessment literacies. The variation was most evident in whether or not educators contributed to the student participants learning about assessment and the clarity (or not) of expectations. Lack of clarity manifested itself primarily in assessment instructions and feedback.

It was evident that teaching staff had different attitudes about and approaches to assessment in both high school and university. Some high school teachers explicitly discussed assessment and provided students with tips, strategies, and academic literacies-related help, but the student participants found some of their high school teachers unhelpful at times and difficult to approach. This may have contributed to help-seeking fears in university. Similarly, the student participants had mixed experiences with teaching staff in university. Ariana and Maya appreciated academic and information literacies presentations from library or writing centre staff. Almost all the student participants discussed how much they valued help, tips, and resources like review sessions, assessment preparation checklists, practice tests or questions, modelled responses, and step-by-step or scaffolded multimodal instructions.

The student participants highlighted occasional problems relating to communication between professors and teaching assistants (TAs). Emma and Hannah described instances when they received conflicting information from each of these sources. Hannah and Talibah experienced inconsistencies with multiple TAs who marked assessments and provided feedback.

> The one TA marked one of my writing assignments and then the other marked the other one and they were slightly different in how they marked it. I'm like "wait, but I got the marks for it last time, why didn't I get it this time? Oh… because it's two different people so they're looking at different things." (Talibah, IR)

Clarity (or lack thereof) in instructions and expectations was frequently discussed by the student participants. They noted how helpful it was when instructions and expectations were clear, because it helped them prepare for and undertake assessments efficiently and effectively. It also reduced (but did not eliminate) stress and test anxiety. Emma described some positive experiences with university teaching staff, but her anxiety is palpable in this remark: "I was so

worried about this assignment, as it was worth 10% of my grade and I had no clear idea what was expected of me, that I couldn't start writing it" (AJ). In a different example, Hannah angrily described how one professor changed his mind about the structure of an exam and did not communicate this to students in advance. This meant that she and her classmates prepared for different kinds of questions.

The student participants noticed less feedback in university than in high school. They were understanding of workload limitations that prevented a lot of detailed feedback, especially in larger classes. However, it frustrated them when feedback was vague or unclear, which is consistent with what is reported in the literature (Bols, 2012; Carless, 2006; Ferguson, 2011). Maya recounted one of her first university writing assessments:

> I get that TAs are very overworked sometimes. But I was hoping for something and the 1 point of feedback I got was "Good. Could use more organization." I was like "what does that mean?!" I was just kind of like "Oh… that's a let-down." (IR)

In one experience that Rebecca discussed, she received feedback that she did not understand and followed up, but the explanation was similarly ambiguous and caused her to repeat the same error:

> I got that feedback that there were clarity issues. I was like "okay, I don't really know what that means." So I asked, and it was very… unspecific. And my next paper I handed in, the same thing, clarity errors. I was like "I don't know what I did wrong on the first one to know that I did it again"! (IR)

The variability in teaching staff experienced by the student participants was not a new concept to all of them; some had figured out in high school that they needed to adapt to meet new expectations for each course and teacher. Alanna noted how instructions and expectations could vary and explained how it was important to "carefully read instructions, because what you did for something similar in another class might not work for another prof" (IR). The student participants noted that they did not have personal relationships with university teaching staff like they may have had in high school, and they were working with TAs for the first time. Accordingly, the moving target of expectations was more significant for them in university.

Expectations and Assumptions by Educators and Other Institutional Staff

While this research set out to investigate student expectations about assessment, the data revealed that educators and other institutional staff (e.g., administrative and counselling staff, policymakers) had expectations and made assumptions about what students should know, could do, and resources they had access to and could use. These expectations and assumptions

were most apparent relating to students' background knowledge, academic literacies, and technology or digital literacies.

There were expectations and assumptions about the historical, cultural, and content background knowledge student participants had that would enable them to understand course content and undertake assessments in their own and other disciplines. Some of the student participants struggled in courses outside of their program due to not knowing how to express their knowledge in a way that met the expectations of another discipline. Additionally, Nediva felt disadvantaged in her own program.

> I had to write an essay paper analysis of a Canadian policy or program that is related to social welfare. This is my major but because I came to Canada two years ago and I don't have prior information about its policies or history I am having difficulty grasping all the information in a short period of time. This assignment was the most difficult one I did this semester. (IR)

Academic writing, citing, and referencing conventions and expectations vary among and between disciplines (Ferreira & Zappa-Hollman, 2019; Nallaya, 2018). There were academic writing and other services available to help the student participants, and educators sometimes provided help and tips, though this was often just web links or a referral to the Writing Centre. As Olivia observed,

> They just kind of expect you to know how to do certain things when we don't ever really get taught in high school or in university how to write a paper that's at a university level. A lot of professors just kind of assumed you'd know how to do it, and know how to write a university level paper, how to format them properly, how to cite properly. (IR)

When it came to technology, expectations and assumptions were apparent relating to students' access to or ability to find information, use digital tools and online resources, and troubleshoot or seek help for digital tools and online resources. This was especially (but not exclusively) apparent after the onset of pandemic online learning. Assumptions were often implicit and left many of the student participants scrambling to find, figure out how to use, and sometimes troubleshoot a variety of digital tools, including web sites, software, applications, and devices. Assumptions are often made about younger generations of students and their comfort and ease with technology (Bennett et al., 2008; Davies, 2011). However, the ways in which students use technology and devices in their personal lives may not prepare them for the technological demands of postsecondary study. Almost all of the student participants reported problems with technology, but this was particularly stressful when it failed during timed online assessments, and they had to switch focus from the assessment to problem solving and help-seeking.

Implications

Navigational Work and Navigational Strategies

These significant impacts on the student participants' development of their assessment literacies resulted in navigational work or the extra work they undertook outside of class time and beyond typical class and assessment preparation. It added time management pressures, especially during the hectic midterm and final exam periods. It also frequently resulted in added stress and anxiety. However, this navigational work was necessary to meet the new expectations and demands of their university programs and courses. It required the student participants to act autonomously and draw upon their self-regulation to facilitate their academic success.

These student participants rose to the challenge and, to different extents, developed and implemented navigational strategies. These were the personal and academic strategies and approaches they reflexively developed, trialed, and adapted to cope with the new academic expectations and demands of university. They all struggled at points, but with hard work, perseverance, and sometimes creative and innovative approaches, they were all successful and periodically rewarded with boosts in self-efficacy. None of them failed a course and they were all planning to continue into the second year of their university studies.

Roles for Multiple Stakeholders

This research highlights important roles for multiple stakeholders in facilitating student success, especially in the transition context. Policymakers, administrative staff, and educators need to be conscious of and try to reduce assumptions about what students should know and can do and the resources they have access to and can use. Technology related assumptions became more apparent during pandemic online learning. These assumptions must now be carefully considered in the age of GenAI. The literature highlights how students have different levels of preparedness for post-secondary study (e.g., Browne & Doyle, 2010; Reid & Moore, 2008), and Nediva's experiences as an international student highlighted differences in background knowledge. Additionally, these students may be among the most vulnerable to academic integrity violations (e.g., Eaton, 2021).

Educators can help students prepare for assessments as efficiently and effectively as possible with transparency in expectations and by providing clear and timely instructions and feedback that is synched with TAs. Clear expectations are even more crucial in the age of GenAI, given the academic integrity implications and rapidly evolving and changing technology. Finally, students themselves have an autonomous, self-regulated, and reflexive role to play in using the resources available to them, including help-seeking, and feedback uptake.

This research stresses the importance of reflexivity and assessment (and other) literacies for both students and educators, which is consistent with Price et al.'s (2012) student assessment literacy model, where educators and students work together in informal, "cultivated communities of practice" (p. 37). Educators' assessment literacies allow them to create assessments for different learning contexts, critically evaluate assessment quality based on assessment data, and reflexively adapt assessments when needed (c.f., Popham, 2017; Stiggins, 1991). This should facilitate assessments that are fair, test what they set out to test, and are aligned with learning outcomes. Educators also need to develop assessment (and other) literacies and reflexivity so they can scaffold students. Students build expectations about assessment based on earlier experiences and need to be exposed to different forms of assessment and have opportunities to develop their assessment literacies from an early age and throughout their education (cf. DeLuca et al., 2018). Involving students in teaching, learning, and assessment processes in level-appropriate ways as they progress through their studies may engage and empower them, and provide them with positive experiences with learning and assessment that increase their self-efficacy and motivation to invest in their own learning.

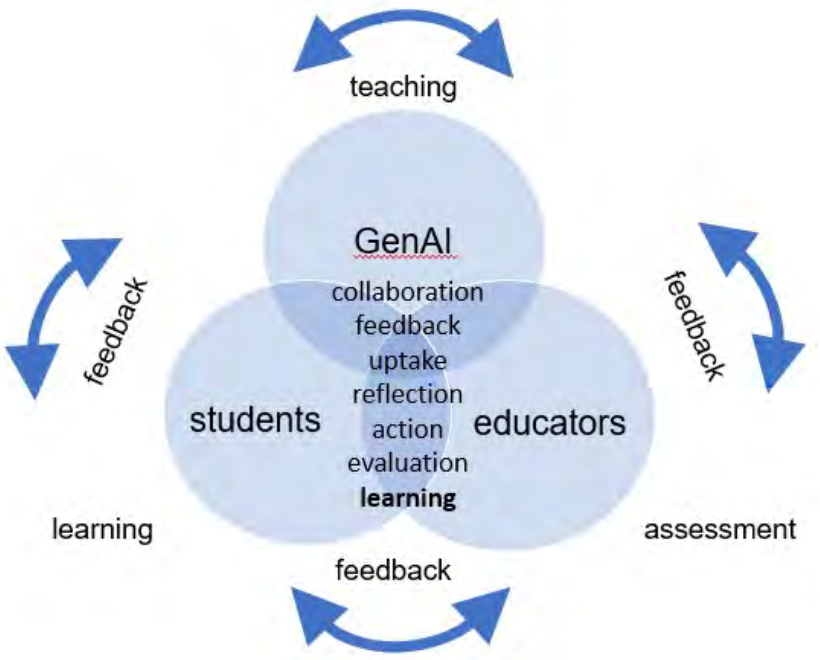
Developing Students' Assessment Literacies as Best Practices

The findings of this research align with what has previously been reported about the benefits of developing students' assessment literacies. The student participants began to think more deliberately and reflexively about assessment, their approaches to preparing for and undertaking assessment, and considering and incorporating feedback to facilitate their academic success. They could also focus more on learning when they were not worried as much about grades. They were best able to do this when educators enacted teaching, assessment, and learning best practices like student-centred learning, learning-oriented assessment, and involving students in teaching and assessment processes. These were the same best practices called upon to help combat academic dishonesty in pandemic online learning, and now in relation to GenAI.

These findings point to the development of students' assessment literacies as among the best practices that facilitate engaged, autonomous, self-regulated, and empowered students who are able to critically evaluate and use available tools, including GenAI, with integrity, to drive their academic success. The working model shown in Figure 2 illustrates a feedback-facilitated teaching, assessment, and learning cycle where students work collaboratively and reflexively with educators—and now GenAI as an additional learning partner (c.f., Eaton, 2021; Luo, 2024)—to drive their empowerment and success. These best practices and collaboration could be key to empowering students to drive their own learning in the new GenAI context in an academically honest manner. Developing students' assessment literacies is an important tool in a multifaceted toolkit of best practices.

Figure 2

Collaborative and Reflexive Cycle of Teaching, Assessment, and Learning for Student Empowerment and Success



Future Directions

It is encouraging to see advances in research on educators' assessment literacies in the Canadian context (e.g., DeLuca et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2015; Van Viegen Stille et al., 2015). However, this must coincide with research on and classroom development of students' assessment literacies at all levels of education. Classroom-based studies that involve students could shed light on the extent to and precise ways in which students with or without developed assessment literacies approach, evaluate, and use GenAI, and how students' assessment literacies facilitate empowered and engaged learning in academically honest ways. Given that the student participants in this study were all female, were studying in the humanities and social sciences, and were all academically successful, research with a more diverse range of students across disciplines would also be helpful. Finally, policymakers must find ways to prioritize resources and professional development for all university staff who interact with students. Educators need to develop assessment (and other) literacies to reflexively evaluate and adapt their own practices and scaffold students in their autonomous and empowered learning journeys, especially in the transition context. Educators now also need improved digital and GenAI literacies for the same reasons. All educational stakeholders will need to work collaboratively to navigate the ever-changing GenAI context and leverage best practices for integrity-driven student success.

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