

# Faculty Checklist for Successful Student Transitions



Lakehead  
UNIVERSITY

Research shows that faculty play a highly impactful role in successful student transition and retention. Transitioning to University is an important part of the [student lifecycle](#) when students need extra support and guidance in navigating their new academic home. From the time they accept their offer, through to the first 6 weeks of the term, they will be required to meet deadlines and make decisions while navigating a brand new academic, cultural, and social climate.

The following checklist was developed using key findings from Lakehead University's First Year Experience Survey and existing research on Orientation and Transition programming.

## Participate in social activities and foster approachability.

Interpersonal student-professor communication beyond academics increases students' commitment to their studies and overall retention.

### Helpful hints:

- ☐ Join in and facilitate conversation during online Orientation events and activities. This includes multicultural and Indigenous events.
- ☐ Share a few personal interests with your students.
- ☐ Describe student purposes for communication and your preferred methods.
- ☐ Maintain consistent office hours.
- ☐ Offer students a survey (through myCourseLink) to provide course feedback

## Review how to read the course outline and interpret a scoring rubric with the class.

For students to develop academic competence, it's important that they understand the course structure and standards.

### Helpful hints:

- ☐ Use your first class to thoroughly review the syllabus and what it means to students.
- ☐ Use your first assignment to put the scoring rubric into context.
- ☐ Include prior knowledge and skills that are assumed for the course.
- ☐ Encourage students to copy due dates into their calendars.
- ☐ Share course information in readily accessible formats.
- ☐ Share orientation and transition programming listed on the Lakehead online events calendar ([orientation.lakeheadu.ca](https://orientation.lakeheadu.ca)), through department website pages/social media, and through courses on D2L.

## Specify the role of faculty and the responsibility of students within your first class.

A clear understanding of student responsibilities and the role of faculty leads to greater retention and student satisfaction.

### Helpful hints:

- ☐ Communicate the presence of and purpose of Faculty Advisors/Program Chairs early in the term through Faculty Info Session.
- ☐ Introduce who you are, your role, and office hours by reaching out before the term starts by [email](#) and by visiting a synchronous class or recording a video for posting to D2L.
- ☐ Connect students to [Student Central](#) to stay on track to completing their degree with course selection and registration assistance.

## Acknowledge, consider, and celebrate student diversity (Indigenous, International, students with disabilities, first-generation, mature, transfer, etc.)

Developing a culture of respect and inclusivity exemplifies Lakehead's core values and beliefs and creates a sense of belonging.

### Helpful hints:

- ☐ Encourage students to start/explore clubs and associations.
- ☐ Showcase student achievements.
- ☐ Seek support from [Student Accessibility Services](#) to implement accommodation plans.
- ☐ Connect with [Lakehead International](#) for tips on offering a culturally supportive environment.
- ☐ Support accessible learning for all students using resources from the [Teaching Commons](#).
- ☐ Connect with [Indigenous Student Services Centre](#) to learn more about Indigenous culture and to connect with Elders.
- ☐ Connect with Jerri-Lynn Orr, Indigenous Curriculum Specialist with the Teaching Commons, for assistance on embedding the Indigenous Content Requirement (ICR) into academic programs.



### Link course outcomes to knowledge and skills required

By providing real-world examples for students linking what they're studying to a career path, students will have an increased enthusiasm for course material and its relevance to their lives.

#### Helpful hints:

- ☐ Share stories about research/practices/interesting challenges.
- ☐ Share relevant 'breakthroughs' or leaders in the field during class lectures/on D2L.
- ☐ Invite guest speakers into class to connect course material with career options.
- ☐ Share something about your personal career path/experiences and/or examples of how students from past years have used their learning for personal success.
- ☐ Promote [Career Zone services](#) and the [Co-operative Education](#) program.
- ☐ Share information and contact details for work-integrated-learning opportunities such as placements, internships, community service learning, or applied research opportunities.

### Facilitate community-building in class.

Research shows a significant relationship between classroom community and students' perceptions of their performance/satisfaction as

#### Helpful hints:

- ☐ Design and incorporate experiential learning activities within the class or independently.
- ☐ Online: utilize video interactions rather than just text and offer a discussion forum.
- ☐ Consider teaching your class outside or in a different location.
- ☐ Normalize struggles, assure students that difficulties are expected and they are part of the learning process.

### Normalize the use of [learning services](#) for all students.

Removing the stigma associated with accessing support services allows a student to seek help as early as possible before difficulties become too overwhelming.

#### Helpful hints:

- ☐ Express that student difficulties are expected, diverse, and part of the learning process.
- ☐ Invite support staff into class.
- ☐ Embed academic skills development exercises into classwork and share [Student Success Centre](#) services.
- ☐ Encourage Indigenous students to access academic, transitional, and cultural supports through the [Indigenous Student Services Centre](#)
- ☐ Encourage International students to access academic, immigration, cultural and other supports through [International Student Services](#)
- ☐ Consult the "Supporting Students in Distress" guide to support student well-being, and take advantage of the training [opportunities](#) available

### Promote Academic Integrity and help create awareness of Lakehead's [Student Code of Conduct](#) and [Academic Integrity policy](#).

Our students come from a broad range of academic and cultural backgrounds, which means their baseline understanding of academic

#### Helpful hints:

- ☐ Take time at the beginning of the term to talk about academic integrity and its importance with your students
- ☐ Use examples of specific academic integrity violations and discuss strategies for avoiding academic misconduct
- ☐ Require that students complete the [Academic Integrity Matters \(AIM\) Course](#) and the AIM Annual Refresher
- ☐ Work to promote the [Academic Support Zone](#) and its services (tutoring, writing coaches etc)
- ☐ Explain referencing and citation procedures
- ☐ Always follow the [formal process](#) outlined in the [Academic Integrity Code](#) whenever you suspect academic misconduct.

**For a quick reference on services and supports available for students and who to contact take a look at Lakehead's Student Referral Guide ([Thunder Bay](#), [Orillia](#)).**