



An Assessment Project of Research Consultations

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Land Acknowledgement

The University of Alberta stands on amiskwacîwâskahikan, a Cree word meaning "beaver hills house", in the Treaty 6 Territory city now known as Edmonton--where many indigenous nations lived for generations before European settlers came to Turtle Island, and continue to do so to this day.



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Outline

- Introducing the Consultation Assessment Project
- Survey and Focus Groups
- Development of the Consultation Toolkit
- Impact and Future Directions



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Introducing the Consultation Assessment Project

In the beginning...

The Assessment and Insight Team (AIT) launched in June, 2021

A data inventory of current assessment practices and CARL Logic Models were AIT's first tasks

Initial research question: How do we conduct and assess consultation at UAL?

UAL
7 Libraries

Serving 40,000+ students
(undergraduate and
graduate) and 15,000+
faculty and staff

16,000+

Consultations delivered by
librarians 2017 - 2022

The Survey

The Survey


A Qualtrics survey was sent to all UAL librarians, archivists and staff in July, 2022

We wanted to know:

- How were consultations conducted?
- How were consultations evaluated?
- What were the challenges or concerns of librarians when delivering consultations?

Survey Says...

- Consultations are highly variable in terms of purpose, audience, and process
- Consultations are individually tailored to suit the needs of the user
- Few respondents assessed their consultations in any way, cited lack of time and burden on users
- But, many respondents stressed the importance of knowing they were being effective during their consultations



"How do we conduct
and assess
consultation at UAL?"



"How do we support
consultation practices
at UAL?"

Focus Groups

Focus Groups

- 10 participants, 2 focus groups
- Hybrid format
- Semi-structured approach, some engagement and discussion questions were provided

Example Questions:

1. What motivated you to participate in this focus group? What is it about the evaluation of consultations that is important to you?
2. How is consultation different from teaching in your mind?
3. Many survey responses indicated that "you know" when a consult has been effective, i.e. successful. Is this true for you? How do you know this (or not)?
4. Do you think that your interpretation of "success" is the same or different from your clients?

Focus Groups Results

Focus Groups Results

- Concerns about efficacy, sustainability, and quality of consultations as a service
- Do not evaluate for the sake of it
- Self-assessment continued to emerge as a solution

The Consultation Toolkit

Introduction to the Consultation Toolkit

This Consultation Toolkit was developed as a result of a survey consultation practises of Librarians, APOs and Information Specialists at the University of Alberta Library. A report of the findings of the survey can be found on [Staffhub](#). It is hoped the toolkit will support those who provide any type of consultation services at UAL. The original contributors to this toolkit were: Carolyn Carpan, Lucinda Johnston, Megan Kennedy, Doris Wagner and Lydia Zvyagintseva.

The purpose of the Toolkit is to support the diverse consultation practises currently employed by librarians and staff at the University of Alberta Library. Since this Toolkit serves librarians and staff working with different learners, different disciplines, and different topic areas, it would be impossible for it to be "one-size fits all"; there may be elements of this Toolkit you may find relevant and adaptable for your consultation work, and others less so. The use of the tools outlined in this Toolkit is optional and are intended to be used for personal reflection and improvement of one's own consultation effectiveness.

The toolkit has 3 sections (use the links to jump to sections):

1. [Consultation General Best Practises Checklist](#)
2. [Training and Resources for Providing Consultations](#)
3. [Strategies for Improving Consultation Practises](#)
 - 3.1. [Recognizing Student Learning and Cognitive Load](#)
 - 3.2. [Asking Effective Questions During Consultations](#)
 - 3.3. [Collecting User Feedback After Consultations](#)
 - 3.4. [Conducting Effective Self-assessment](#)
 - 3.5. [Turning Feedback into Actions \(for Improved Service Delivery\)](#)

There is vast literature available regarding consultation, reference and teaching for librarians. The [Consultation Toolkit Reading List](#) has been curated with select items that reflect the information in this toolkit, but it is by no means exhaustive, nor is it intended to be.

The Consultation Toolkit and the Reading List is managed by the Assessment and Insight Team, who will review them every 2-3 years. If you have feedback regarding the toolkit, or recommendations for the reading list, please fill out this [Consultation Toolkit Feedback Form](#), or direct questions to libait@ualberta.ca.



Impact and Future Directions

Sustainable approach to consultations that centers on professional development, skill enhancement, and user experience

The toolkit focuses on practical, actionable feedback to support consultation services

Questions?

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**Opens the Consultation
Toolkit!**



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