THE EXTENSION

ACADIA UNIVERSITY | **OPEN ACADIA**

**News from the Director of Digital and Extended Learning
Home of Open Acadia**

Hello,

I joined Acadia as the Director of Digital and Extended Learning back in April. I've been getting myself up to speed on all things Open Acadia ever since, it's been a busy summer! There is always so much happening in our unit and much of it affects so many individuals and departments around campus. So, I thought I'd try my hand at a digest to help keep the university in the loop. Thanks to everyone who has been so kind in orienting me to Acadia.

Jack Rice
Director, Digital and Extended Learning

OPEN ACADIA POLICY UPDATE

<u>Extension Policy for Open Acadia Continuous Intake Courses</u>

Starting on Sept 1, 2025, Open Acadia will be instituting a new policy for online course extension requests. Please note course instructor permission is no longer required for routine course extensions.

Students who for various reasons are unable to complete their online continuous-intake course in the allotted 6-month course completion timeframe are eligible for an extension. Extensions are valid for a 2-month period, and each course may be extended up to 3 times, to a maximum of 6 months of extended time. Extensions are available for continuous-intake online courses only.

It is recommended that students contact their instructor prior to submitting an extension request to discuss a course completion plan. Requests must be submitted through the HUB request form at least one month in advance of the original completion date.
The extension extends the course from the originally scheduled completion date, and fees are applied to the student's account for payment.

Course Extension Fee: $150 per 2-month extension request

Open Acadia will provide consideration to fees being waived for extension requests related to exceptional circumstances such as medical considerations, and requests made by Acadia's Accessible Learning unit.

OTHER NEWS AND UPDATES

Staff Update

I would like to announce that Sharon Churchill Roe has taken on an expanded role within Open Acadia as the Manager of Learning Innovation. In this role, Sharon will work with our instructional design team to assist with the quality and continuous improvement of our existing and new online offerings.
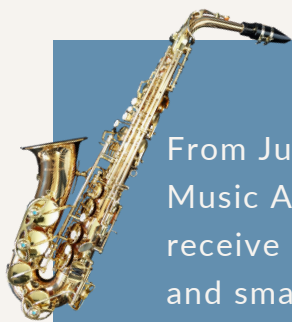
Course Merchant

One of the projects that we have been working on this summer, is a new Moodle instance for non credit offerings and a platform for the registration and payment of these courses. We hope to debut the new platform in October. If departments around campus have a use case for such a system, please reach out, we would love to work with you.

Open Acadia Exams

We are looking closely at our processes for assessment in our Open Acadia Continuous Intake Courses. This is an area that has seen a great deal of innovation in the sector over the past decade. During that period enrollment and exams in Open Acadia have exploded in volume and complexity. Please be patient as we look closely at our systems to ensure that the students can access timely and well supported processes for assessment. I would like to thank Leah Warner for her work on Open Acadia exams, and we all look forward to working together to make improvements.

Music Camp Recap

From July 6-12, 2025, Open Acadia helped to facilitate the Summer Music Academy, whereby 120 musicians congregated on campus to receive instrument-specific coaching and participate in beginner bands and small and large ensembles.

Most students opted to stay in residence for the week, and all campers benefitted from a jam-packed week of music instruction and activities. The week culminated in a final concert open to all, held at the Festival Theatre in Wolfville showcasing all camp musicians.

A big thank you to Courtney London who joined the Open Acadia team this summer to help set up the camp for success.

Intersession Summary

Below are a few statistics from our Summer Intersession offerings:

- 26 courses offered (11 Fully Online, 6 Hyflex, 2 Hybrid and 7 In-person).
- 326 students registered in total (170 NS, 91 CAN, 65 INTL)
- Of 326 registrations 296 have an active academic program (ie. Current Acadia students)

Jessica Saunders does a wonderful job of coordinating the summer session and keeping track of all the incessant changes, we look forward to continuing to serve the campus and our students with this valuable service.

English Language Centre, Summer Program

Students in English Language Centre's Summer Institute explored Nova Scotia's culture, history, environment, food, and entrepreneurship through projects on campus and in the community. They engaged in hands-on research and project-based learning, developing new knowledge and insights through local archives, museums, field trips, and campus resources.

A heartfelt thank you to the faculty, staff, and community partners who supported and welcomed our learners throughout the summer.

Acadia Lifelong Learning

Acadia supports a community of learners aged 50 plus known as Acadia Lifelong Learning (ALL). The group has an active Advisory Board, with strong leadership provided by the current chair Richard Haworth.

This fall, Open Acadia is transitioning back to a defined paid membership for ALL. ALL member benefits include:

- Access to take non-credit ALL mini courses (fall courses include Borders and Migration in the 21st Century with Can Mutlu and a Drawing Native Birds of Nova Scotia art workshop with Isabelle Kehoe)
- Ability to audit select Acadia undergraduate courses
- An ALL membership card with barcode access to the Acadia library
- Invitations to engage in Acadia community events (e.g., research initiatives, guest speakers, Convocation events, etc.)
- An Acadia lunch discount at Wheelock Dining Hall with ALL membership card

ALL will continue to provide the Friday afternoon ALLways Learning Series as a community service piece. This series remains free and accessible to everyone.

Certificate in Mathematics Teaching (Grades 5-9)

September marks the return of Acadia University's Certificate in Mathematics Teaching (Grades 5-9) with MPHEC approval. We have a full cohort for the 30 credit-hour post-B.Ed. program. Students will complete the program on a part-time basis through a combination of summer courses and evening courses supported by on-line delivery formats.

The first six courses (18 credit hours) include undergraduate courses focusing on key topics in mathematics curriculum at the target grade levels. The final four courses (12 credit hours) include graduate education courses in pedagogy, curriculum practice and instructional design, and assessment, all focused on these elements as applied to mathematics teaching.

I'd like to thank Christina McRae for her tireless work in conjunction with the School of Education to get this program restarted.

New Certificate in Democratic Leadership

This summer we began work on the new Certificate of Democratic Leadership. Dr. Alex Marland, Jarislowsky Chair in Trust and Political Leadership, Department of Politics, is spearheading the initiative.

This is an innovative and collaborative effort. Acadia is partnering with instructors from across Canada and Open Acadia's instructional design team to develop engaging, high-quality courses. This flexible certificate program will be available fully online by 2027.

I want to make a special mention to Michael Shaw and Chris Edwards, our intrepid instructional designers, who in addition to providing support to faculty and maintaining over 100 online courses, also look upon these new projects with enthusiasm.

Dalhousie's Certificate in Technology Education Program

Open Acadia continues to partner with Dalhousie by providing the first two courses for students enrolled in their Certificate in Technology Education program. This year will be the 20th cohort of the program.

The Acadia courses are EDUC 5873- Technology & Curriculum: Technology Studies and EDUC 5053- Topics in Education: Technological Education and Sustainability. Both courses are online, synchronous offerings.

Summer Technology Updates

Moodle has been upgraded from v4.5.4 to v4.5.6. This minor update contains mostly bug fixes and security patches. You should not see any noticeable changes. Unfortunately, we have been having an intermittent issue with quick mail since the latest update, that we are trying to fix, and recently we seem to come up with a solution. If you are finding that quick mail messages from Moodle are failing to deliver, please let us know. As a workaround, if you are attempting to deliver a message to the full class you might want to use the Announcement section of your Moodle course.

The best way get support on Moodle is through our Moodlehelp@acadiau.ca address where you will be greeted by our Academic Technology Support Specialist Justin Lingard and the beloved Terry Aulenbach (aka Moodle Guy) who will do there best to orient you and get you sorted. I've worked with many LMS support staff over the years, and I must say the campus is lucky to have such a talented and dedicated support team.

New Open Acadia Course Developments

We have recently re-developed or developed anew, several online, continuous-intake courses including:

- Financial Accounting 1 and Financial Accounting 2 with Ian Feltmate
- Leadership in Community Development with Mary Sweatman
- Composition 1 with Stephen Ahern
- Introductory Psychology 1 with Daniel Lametti

Over 20 additional courses are currently being redeveloped or developed, signifying Open Acadia's ongoing commitment to providing high-quality online course offerings. Unfortunately, we have a budget to adhere to, so only a finite number of courses can be reoffered, but we acknowledge that our continuous intake courses are popular, and I'd like to thank all our faculty members for the tireless work they do to develop and deliver the courses.

Teaching support

The best email to use if you are looking for more than basic on demand support with Moodle is Teaching@acadiau.ca . That email will be monitored by Danielle Pierce in the Office of Teaching and Learning and Open Acadia's Sharon Churchill Roe. They can then connect you with the right person to act on your query.

During the year, we will be offering one-on-one training sessions for new faculty members needing help with Moodle in addition to workshops for experienced users or for those wanting to take their course design skills to the next level. Sharon will reach out to faculty on the organization and timing of these events.

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