

Assignment 3 - An institutional eLearning readiness/maturity audit

Andrew Morris

Master of Educational Technology, University of British Columbia

ETEC 520: Planning and Managing eLearning

Dr. Susan Dintoe

July 19, 2026

Introduction

Almost twenty years ago, Sinclair et al. (2006) argued that the value of eLearning was more than moving content online, but in using technology to create participatory learning environments. The report recognized that this shift depended on institutional change and concluded with questions intended to support post-secondary organizational self-assessment (Sinclair et al., 2006, pp. 27-28). In the present, the Changing Landscape of Online Education report (CHLOE 10) shows why this type of assessment is still needed. CHLOE 10 reports growing demand for online learning among graduate students, adult undergraduates, and traditional-age undergraduates (Simunich et al., 2025, p. 5). However, only 28% of institutions rated their faculty as fully prepared to design online courses, while 45% considered them fully prepared to teach online (Simunich et al., 2025, p. 6). This suggests that faculty readiness and strategic alignment have not kept pace with the expansion of online learning (Simunich et al., 2025).

This gap between the growing demand and higher educational institutional preparedness provides a strong rationale for the following eLearning maturity audit. Western University offers online and blended courses, as well as dedicated eLearning support through its Centre for Teaching and Learning and technology services (Centre for Teaching and Learning, n.d.-d). However, the existence of online courses and support services does not necessarily demonstrate that an institution has developed a mature approach to supporting and sustaining eLearning. This report will use publicly available information to audit Western University's eLearning maturity. Western will be assessed using the institutional criteria developed by Bates and Sangrà (2011), and the findings will then be used to identify its best-fit stage within Bates's (2007) model of eLearning integration.

The University of Western Ontario

Western University is an established, highly ranked postsecondary institution in Canada and internationally. With 12 faculties, 160 graduate degree programs and collaborative specializations, and a current enrolment of more than 42,000 students, Western

represents a large and complex research-intensive university (Western University, 2025a). Within the institution, the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) describes itself as one of Canada's oldest teaching centres. The CTL has 11 full-time staff, including educational developers whose areas of responsibility include eLearning and curriculum (Centre for Teaching and Learning, n.d.-d). In 2019, the Office of the Provost established a task force to examine Western's online education landscape, the potential benefits of expanding online learning, and possible approaches to that expansion. The resulting *Report of the Provost's Task Force for Online Education* was released in June 2020. Western's institutional scale, established teaching-support infrastructure, and recent report on online education make it a useful case for this eLearning maturity audit.

Audit Assessment Criteria

Several eLearning readiness and maturity assessments were considered for this audit. Marshall's (2012) *eLearning Maturity Model* offers a detailed assessment of institutional eLearning processes, while Sankey and Mishra's (2019) *Benchmarking Toolkit for Technology-Enabled Learning* provides a more recent indicator-based approach. These tools are suited to internally conducted assessments with access to institutional personnel, operational data, and course-level evidence. Chounta et al. (2024), for example, identified the *Benchmarking Toolkit* as one of four instruments applicable to higher education, but the stakeholders involved in their study raised concerns about the time, resources, and institutional coordination required to conduct such self-assessments. Since the following audit relies on public documents rather than primary data, Bates and Sangrà's (2011) qualitative institutional criteria provide a more appropriate and proportionate framework.

Bates and Sangrà (2011) introduce a set of criteria aimed to track and measure the success and failure of technology integration in higher education institutions. The criteria are more closely associated with eLearning readiness than with a formal maturity model. Readiness generally considers an institution's preparedness to adopt and integrate digital technologies, while maturity examines its present level of integration and optimization

(Chounta et al., 2024, p. 2). However, their case studies included institutions at different points of development, ranging from early integration to full maturity (Bates & Sangrà, 2011). For this audit, the criteria have been adapted to focus on evidence of Western's current implementation. Each category will examine whether the relevant structures and supports are available, actively implemented, or embedded across the whole institution. These findings will then inform an overall placement within Bates's (2007) five stages of eLearning integration, since the Bates and Sangrà (2011) criteria do not themselves categorize an institution's level of maturity.. Table 1 identifies the nine criteria derived from Bates and Sangrà (2011). The original criteria were reorganized into nine titled categories and reworded as broad evaluative questions that could be applied consistently to available evidence.

Table 1

Adapted Bates and Sangrà (2011) Criteria for Assessing eLearning Maturity

Category	Key Questions to Consider
Leadership	Is there evidence of clear leadership over eLearning within the institution?
Infrastructure	Is there a comprehensive and stable technology infrastructure accessible to staff, faculty, and students?
Administrative Services	Are the administrative systems digitized and accessible to staff, faculty, and students?
eLearning Strategy	Is there a clear rationale and strategy for eLearning? Is there evidence of priorities, actions, and outcomes for eLearning at the institution?
Resource Allocation	Are there financial and human resources dedicated to support and sustain eLearning?
Integration	To what extent is eLearning used institutionally and for what purposes?
Innovation	Is there evidence that technology is being used to change or improve teaching and learning?
Faculty and Student Support	Are instructional, professional, and technical supports available to faculty and students participating in eLearning?
Impact	What evidence is available demonstrating the impact of eLearning on teaching, learning, access, or student services?

The questions are intentionally broad so that each category can examine whether evidence is limited to stated intentions or available services, reflects active implementation, or suggests broader institutional integration. No formal rating will be assigned to individual categories.

Audit Findings

The *Report of the Provost's Task Force for Online Education* (Western University, 2020) provides a starting point for this audit. Each category compares the report's findings and recommendations with current evidence to identify Western's progress, remaining gaps, and implications. As this audit is limited to publicly available evidence, the absence of documentation can be viewed as a limitation in Western's transparency rather than proof that a practice or structure does not exist.

Leadership

The Provost established a task force in 2019, which found that Western lacked a university-wide vision and strategy. It recommended that senior leadership champion future online expansion (Western University, 2020). Western has identifiable technical leadership and established eLearning units, but at the time of writing, available information does not establish clear institution-wide academic leadership for online learning. The current Western Technology Services (2026) organization chart identifies a Chief Technology Officer and places the eLearning Technology Group, Instructional Technology Resource Centre, Classroom Technology Group, Helpdesk, and related services under Client Services. The structure demonstrates technical leadership, however, it does not show that the CTO has academic responsibility for online learning strategy. Without clear academic ownership, eLearning may continue to develop unevenly across faculties. Western would need to assign institution-wide responsibility for strategy, quality, and implementation.

Infrastructure

In 2020, Western already had a substantial central technology base for eLearning. WTS maintained the infrastructure, systems, and core applications required for online learning, while providing technical support to instructors and students. The report found that the LMS generally met user expectations, although it identified several limitations involving mobile access, accessibility, assessment tools, and the approval of new technologies (Western University, 2020). Since the 2020 report, Western has replaced its former LMS with the cloud-based OWL Brightspace platform (Western University, 2026a) and implemented it across more than 12,000 courses and 40,000 learners (Western University, 2025b). Current service documentation describes the system as centrally managed by WTS and available across the university (Western Technology Services, n.d.). The evidence at the time of writing indicates Western's infrastructure appears sufficient to support further eLearning development. The next priority would be ongoing evaluation of reliability, accessibility, and user experience rather than major technical expansion.

Administrative Services

The 2020 report findings show that administrative services for online courses and registration are handled differently based on student and program type (Western University, 2020). Currently, Western appears to provide digital administrative services across a broad spectrum including applications, registration, academic records, distance-study information, and Registrar support (Office of the Registrar, n.d.). This evidence suggests these services are strongest for students, but does not specifically address their relationship to the eLearning experience at Western.

eLearning Strategy

The 2020 report's first recommendation was the establishment of a clear vision and strategic plan for online learning. It found that Western had successfully implemented specific online programs despite lacking a coordinated institutional plan and clear intentionality

(Western University, 2020). Western's current institutional strategic plan, *Towards Western at 150*, is broad and includes a commitment to respond to the needs of twenty-first-century learners by "executing our online learning strategy" (Western University, 2021, p. 29). However, at the time of writing, no standalone online learning strategy, implementation plan, or related measures of progress could be located publicly. The 2025 progress report identifies several related accomplishments, including the implementation of Brightspace, the modernization of 98 teaching and academic spaces, and the introduction of artificial intelligence initiatives across teaching, research, and operations (Western University, 2025b). These developments demonstrate progress in educational technology, but they do not clearly establish the vision, goals, responsibilities, or measures that would define a comprehensive institutional eLearning strategy. Without a visible implementation plan, Western's technology initiatives are difficult to connect to shared goals or assess over time.

Resource Allocation

Resource allocation was described in the 2020 report as largely decentralized. Funding and human support came from a combination of faculty resources, release time, one-time funding, and external grants, with only Education, Health Sciences, Ivey, and Schulich identified as having dedicated online development resources at that time (Western University, 2020). Subsequent budgets provide evidence of more direct institutional investment. In the 2023-2024 budget, Western added \$1 million in ongoing funding for LMS licensing, \$500,000 in one-time funding for LMS implementation staff, and \$100,000 in base funding for an eLearning specialist within the Centre for Teaching and Learning (Western University, 2023). The 2026-2027 budget maintains the Information Technology Infrastructure Fund at approximately \$8.3 million and adds further one-time technology funding (Western University, 2026b). These allocations demonstrate sustained central investment in eLearning technology and support. However, because current faculty, WTS, and Academic Programs budgets are reported as combined totals, the documents do not show how much each faculty currently directs toward online course development, faculty support, or online-specific student

services. It is difficult to assess whether faculties have equitable access to development and support, and greater transparency and consistent resource planning should be considered.

Integration

Online learning was clearly present in 2020, but it was unevenly distributed. The report found that undergraduate online enrolment had increased by 22% since 2012-2013 even as the number of online course offerings declined by 29%. Western had six fully online graduate programs, with the most established activity concentrated in Education and other professional faculties. The overall pattern was growth in student interest without online course expansion (Western University, 2020). Current evidence points to an institution-wide integration of OWL, the learning management system, being used by 40,000 students across 12,000 courses. This is inclusive of in-person, blended, and online-only delivery options (Western University, 2025b). The greatest integration efforts are evident in graduate professional programs. Examples include the fully online Master of Health Science and Doctor of Education, along with online fields in the Master of Professional Education. (School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, n.d.). Current evidence indicates a concentrated integration of eLearning and does not demonstrate that fully online programming has expanded equally across faculties or beyond the professional and graduate areas where it was already strongest. Institutional maturity would require intentional expansion and support across a broader range of faculties and programs.

Innovation

The 2020 report recognized that effective online learning required more than placing lectures, readings, and other existing materials in an LMS. Western already had relevant expertise through the CTL and other units, but access to that expertise and the use of consistent design processes varied across faculties and instructors (Western University, 2020). This remains visible in the CTL's support for online and blended course design, technology-enhanced learning activities and assessments, accessibility, and the selection

and evaluation of eLearning tools (Centre for Teaching and Learning, n.d.-a). The Supported Course Redesign program provides one example of Western using evidence-based principles to support online and blended course design. However, the program began in 2017 so it reflects an established approach rather than a new response (Centre for Teaching and Learning, n.d.-b). More recent initiatives include ten projects that received a combined \$1 million through Ontario's Virtual Learning Strategy in 2021 and the 2025-2027 Generative AI Teaching Fellowships, which provide funding and release time for faculty to develop, evaluate, and share technology-enabled teaching innovations (Centre for Teaching and Learning, 2021; Centre for Teaching and Learning, n.d.-c). These examples demonstrate continued support for pedagogical innovation, but publicly available information does not establish that evidence-based eLearning design is consistently used across faculties.

Faculty and Student Support

The task force found that eLearning support existed for both faculty and students, but faculty access to instructional design, release time, and locally dedicated staff varied by faculty. It also recognized that existing student services provided a foundation for online learning, while questioning whether their capacity and delivery had been designed for students who might rarely or never attend campus (Western University, 2020). As discussed earlier in this audit, the CTL and related units currently provide substantial support for faculty incorporating technology, redesigning assessments, developing online courses, and creating evidence-based online learning experiences. Online-specific student support appears less developed. Brightspace resources primarily explain how to access and use the LMS, while the Learning Development & Success department provides general learning-skills services and a small number of self-help resources addressing online courses (Learning Development & Success, n.d.; OWL Brightspace Help, n.d.). Available information does not show a coordinated orientation or pedagogical support model designed specifically to help online students manage participation, connection, self-regulation, and success in an online learning environment.

Impact

The 2020 report provided evidence of growing enrolment and successful online programs, but highlighted the limited institution-wide evaluation of student learning, retention, accessibility, satisfaction, or the effectiveness of online supports (Western University, 2020). Updates to the current strategic plan continue to emphasize implementation and reach rather than measurable educational outcomes (Western University, 2025b). Current evidence demonstrates the scale of Western's eLearning activity more clearly than its impact on teaching and student learning. Without institution-wide evidence of student outcomes and experience, Western cannot clearly demonstrate whether its eLearning investments are effective; regular evaluation and public reporting would be needed to guide improvement.

Overall Assessment

Based on this audit, Western most closely aligns with Stage 4: Planning in Bates's (2007) model of eLearning integration. Western has moved beyond isolated eLearning activity through institution-wide infrastructure, central support, and sustained investment. However, its development remains uneven, with limited available evidence of coordinated academic leadership, a clear eLearning strategy, consistent implementation across faculties, online-specific student support, or systematic evaluation of online student experiences and outcomes. Western is therefore best understood as operating within the planning stage rather than having reached the sustainability associated with Stage 5.

Recommendations

The following recommendations address the main gaps preventing Western from progressing out of Bates's (2007) planning stage into sustainability. Considering the implications, they consolidate findings across the nine audit categories. Overall, since Western's technical infrastructure appears capable of supporting further eLearning

development, the priorities should be institutional coordination, consistent implementation, student support, and evaluation.

- **Publish an institutional eLearning strategy and assign clear academic leadership.** Western should identify a senior academic leader or governance body responsible for coordinating online learning and publish a strategy that establishes its rationale, intended learners and programs, priorities, responsibilities, timelines, and measures of progress. This recommendation closely reflects the first recommendation of the 2020 task force, but the continued absence of a publicly available strategy suggests that it remains unresolved rather than outdated (Western University, 2020).
- **Establish consistent development and resourcing expectations across faculties.** Western should define minimum expectations for online course design, accessibility, faculty preparation, and instructional support, while clarifying how faculties can access funding, release time, educational development, and technical expertise. A shared institutional guideline could reduce dependence on individual instructors and the small number of faculties with established online development capacity. Greater transparency around eLearning-specific funding would also make the consistency and sustainability of these supports easier to assess.
- **Develop coordinated support for fully online students.** Western should create a centralized orientation and support model that addresses participation, connection, self-regulation, academic support, accessibility, and navigation of university services. This also responds directly to the task force's concern that student services existed but were not necessarily designed for learners who rarely or never attend campus (Western University, 2020).
- **Evaluate and publicly report eLearning outcomes.** Western should regularly report online course and program numbers, enrolment by delivery format, retention and completion, student experience, accessibility, use of support services, and findings from course or program reviews. This would distinguish the reach of eLearning from

its educational impact and provide evidence for decisions about future expansion, redesign, and resource allocation.

Statement on use of artificial intelligence:

Consensus was used to identify academic research relevant to Western's current eLearning readiness and maturity. ChatGPT was used as a research and editing aid to locate and verify Western University sources, check budgeting and program claims, and review the draft for citation consistency, clarity, grammar, and potential source overlap. I independently explored and reviewed the sources, determined which evidence to include, created and revised the final text, and take responsibility for the submitted work.

References

Bates, A. W. (2007). Strategic planning for e-learning in a polytechnic. In M. Bullen & D. P. Janes (Eds.), *Making the transition to e-learning: Strategies and issues* (pp. 47-65). Information Science Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-59140-950-2.ch004>

Bates, A.W. & Sangrà, A. (2011). Chapter 3: Tracking existing strategies for technology integration. In *Managing technology in higher education: Strategies for transforming teaching and learning* (pp. 52-76). Jossey Bass

Centre for Teaching and Learning. (n.d.-a). *eLearning at the CTL*. Western University. <https://teaching.uwo.ca/elearning/index.html>

Centre for Teaching and Learning. (n.d.-b). *Supported course redesign (SCoRe)*. Western University. <https://teaching.uwo.ca/programs/allprograms/score.html>

Centre for Teaching and Learning. (n.d.-c). *Teaching fellows*. Western University. <https://teaching.uwo.ca/centre/people/teachingfellows.html>

Centre for Teaching and Learning. (n.d.-d). *What we do*. Western University. <https://teaching.uwo.ca/centre/what-we-do.html>

Centre for Teaching and Learning. (2021, May 17). *Western attracts \$1 million to advance virtual learning*. Western University. <https://teaching.uwo.ca/news/2021/western-VLS2021.html>

Chounta, I.-A., Ortega-Arranz, A., Daskalaki, S., Dimitriadis, Y., & Avouris, N. (2024). Toward a data-informed framework for the assessment of digital readiness of higher education institutions. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 21, Article 59. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-024-00491-0>

Learning Development and Success. (n.d.). *Self-help*. Western University.

<https://learning.uwo.ca/selfhelp/>

Marshall, S. (2012). Improving the quality of e-learning: Lessons from the eMM. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 28(1), 65-78.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2729.2011.00443.x>

Office of the Registrar. (n.d.). *Services*. Western University. Retrieved July 15, 2026, from

<https://www.registrar.uwo.ca/services/index.html>

OWL Brightspace Help. (n.d.). *OWL Brightspace self-guided student training*. Western

University. <https://brightspacehelp.uwo.ca/student/owl-brightspace-student-training.html>

Sankey, M., & Mishra, S. (2019). *Benchmarking toolkit for technology-enabled learning*.

Commonwealth of Learning. <https://hdl.handle.net/11599/3217>

School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. (n.d.). *Explore our programs*. Western

University. Retrieved July 20, 2026, from

<https://grad.uwo.ca/admissions/programs/index.cfm>

Simunich, B., Garrett, R., Fredericksen, E. E., & Gay, K. (2025). *CHLOE 10: Meeting the moment: Navigating growth, competition, and AI in online higher education*. Quality Matters; Eduventures Research; EDUCAUSE.

<https://qualitymatters.org/qa-resources/resource-center/articles-resources/CHLOE-10-report-2025>

Sinclair, G., McClaren, M., & Griffin, M. J. (2006). *E-learning and beyond: A discussion paper*. British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education.

Western Technology Services. (n.d.). *Learning management system (OWL Brightspace)*. Western University.

<https://wts.uwo.ca/services/o/learning-management-system-owl-brightspace/index.htm>

Western Technology Services. (2026, April 13). *Organization chart*. Western University.

<https://wts.uwo.ca/about-wts/wtsorgchart.html>

Western University. (2020, June). *Report of the Provost's Task Force for Online Education*.

https://www.provost.uwo.ca/pdf/planning_reports/OTF_final_report_2020June10.pdf

Western University. (2021). *Towards Western at 150: Western University strategic plan*.

<https://strategicplan.uwo.ca/pdf/Western-Strategic-Report.pdf>

Western University. (2023, March 31). *2023-24 operating and capital budgets*.

https://www.ipb.uwo.ca/documents/2023_budget.pdf

Western University. (2025a, September). *Facts & figures*.

<https://www.uwo.ca/about/whoweare/facts.html>

Western University. (2025b). *From strategy to impact: Highlights of key achievements 2021–2025*.

[https://strategicplan.uwo.ca/pdf/From-Strategy-to-Impact-Progress-Update-Dec-2025.p
df](https://strategicplan.uwo.ca/pdf/From-Strategy-to-Impact-Progress-Update-Dec-2025.pdf)

Western University. (2026a, June 22). *OWL migration plan*. <https://owlmigration.uwo.ca/>

Western University. (2026b, March 31). *2026-27 operating and capital budgets*.

https://www.ipb.uwo.ca/documents/2026_budget.pdf