

Open Learning Scholars Program of Open Learning, Thompson Rivers University

Program Description

About the program

As a part of its growing research mandate, TRU-OL will invite scholars to undertake research at its BC Centre for Open Learning in Kamloops, Canada. This document describes the characteristics of the Open Learning Scholars (OLS) Program at TRU-OL, including criteria for selection of invitees and the financial and other supports available to successful candidates.

Program Goals:

1. to bring research expertise to the TRU campus to support the reinvigoration of research and scholarly work into open, distance and online education at TRU-OL
2. to further enhance the vibrancy and diversity of the research community at TRU-OL and at TRU generally

Terms and Stipends

Open Learning Scholars are expected to be in residence for a minimum of one to a maximum of four months during the academic year, optimally during the fall or spring semesters (September-December; March-June). The precise time-frame for this residence is negotiable. During the residency, off campus research trips, interviews, attendance at scholarly meetings or speaking engagements must be limited to no more than 5 days, and scholars must not accept teaching appointments or other major commitments during the supported visit. Scholars will receive an honorarium not to exceed \$20,000 (i.e. paying CA\$5,000 per month). TRU-OL will provide reimbursement for one round trip economy class ticket from the scholar's place of residence to the city of Kamloops, incidental travel expenses related to this trip, accommodations on campus, office space, computer services, library privileges, and other organizational support.

Selection Process

Candidates will be invited to apply for this program. Invited applicants will be scholars who are recognized internationally for their research and publications in open, distance and online education. Their expertise can also include the innovative use of various technologies, tools, as well as related pedagogies and methodologies.

A committee shall recommend one or more suitable candidates for the OLS Program to the VP Open Learning. The process of searching for and selecting suitable candidates shall occur according to the following steps, and utilize the following criteria:

Information to be provided by Candidate

An information sheet for each OLS candidate (providing information re: educational background, contact information, nationality, languages spoken)

Curriculum Vitae

1- 3 page discussion document for their visit to TRU-OL that would suggest possible plans for research and/or dissemination activity, and indicate the possible results of this activity to be achieved by the end of the visit (see listing of project possibilities, below).

Selection Criteria

Candidates will be selected and ranked on the basis of:

- International scope and recognition of candidate's previous work, as indicated by:
 - Number of publications in international, peer-reviewed venues;
 - Reputation of publication venues (according to established rankings)
 - Number of book-length publications, and reviews of them;
 - Number of presentations at international events, including:
 - Invited Keynotes
 - Range of event types and locations
- Innovative approach, technique or ideas
- Potential contribution of work to be undertaken while at Open Learning;
- Relevance of proposed project to TRU and TRU-OL as an institution, and to open, distance and online learning as a field of research;

Project Possibilities:

As indicated above, the visit of the OLS would take place in the context of a project that would combine the strengths of the OLS with the opportunities provided by his/her visit to TRU-OL. It is recognized that this activity may not be fully completed by the end of a 1-4 month stay, but the majority or bulk of any activity must be completed during the visit. Examples of possible project types are listed below. They include the following (additional suggestions are welcome):

1. Short-term research into conditions, processes, technologies or other aspects characteristic of TRU-OL as an institution of open learning. (Note: the one- to- four-month timeline means that longer term research projects [e.g. ethnographies] are not possible.);
2. A multi-week series of workshops or seminars, representing the results of research, or the combination of research and praxis (e.g. action research, or undertaken in combination with training research);

3. A series of workshops, presentations and or training sessions on an innovative approach, techniques or ideas that is/are deemed relevant to the future direction of TRU-OL.
4. Research that would be undertaken in collaboration with one or more individuals (in their capacity as researchers or researcher-learners) at TRU or TRU-OL;
5. Research and research collaborations of any kind that might be longer-term in nature, starting before and/or continuing after the visit, but producing a milestone product during or shortly after the visit;
6. A completed grant application that would ask for funding support for research involving collaboration with researchers at TRU and/or TRU-OL or research into TRU-OL.
7. Research of any of the kinds mentioned above that might produce a research report specifically of strategic value for TRU-OL. Note that such a report might require additional honoraria or costs than those budgeted, below.

About Thompson Rivers University

Thompson Rivers University (TRU) is a dual mode, dual sector university with more than 20,000 students studying in programs spanning trades and vocational education through the Masters level. TRU attracts more than 1,200 international students per year from more than 70 countries to study on its campus.

The Open Learning Division of TRU (TRU-OL) specializes in providing adult learners with flexible learning options, open access to education, and a wide variety of course and program choices, meeting the needs of its own students and helping other institutions and organizations meet the open and online learning needs of their communities. This Division manages the open, distance and online delivery of courses and programs for the University. This includes offering more than 400 courses, comprising 57 different credentials, to more than 13,500 students per year. TRU-OL develops and offers print and web based courses for independent study, along with conventional (paced, cohort, instructor led) online courses. TRU-OL is recognized for its research emphases in prior learning assessment and recognition; e-learning tools, technology and methodologies; as well as instructional design, curriculum development, and production techniques. TRU-OL is home to an international centre for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition, and a Canada Research Chair in E-Learning Practices.

TRU-OL is situated in the BC Centre for Open Learning located on TRU's Kamloops campus, located in the Interior region of British Columbia, Canada. TRU is located in the heart of Kamloops, a city of over 80,000, at the centre of the southern Interior of BC. Shopping, housing, entertainment and even the province's largest municipal park are just a couple of blocks away. Hot and dry summers, four dramatic seasons, sports and outdoor recreation, and a diversity of cultural activity that few small cities can match are among the attractions of Kamloops.