



ASSOCIATION OF ATLANTIC UNIVERSITIES
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITÉS DE L'ATLANTIQUE

Award for Excellence in Teaching
2026
Distinguished Teaching Award

DR. AMI GOULDEN

Dr. Ami Goulden is an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at Memorial University and a registered social worker committed to accessible, inclusive, and transformative education. Through teaching, research, and leadership, she has advanced Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a foundation for disability-affirming educational practice. Grounded in respect, curiosity, and care, her teaching encourages students to think critically and draw meaningfully on their lived experiences.

A hallmark of Dr. Goulden's work is ensuring that students feel considered before they enter the classroom. By embedding UDL principles into course design, she anticipates and removes unnecessary barriers while maintaining high academic standards. She approaches teaching as a form of social work, modelling accessibility and responsiveness while embodying the values of equity, self-determination, and human dignity that she hopes students will carry into practice. Through student-led inquiry, critical reflection, and practice-based learning, students examine assumptions, engage with research, and apply knowledge to their developing practice. Students describe her classrooms as welcoming spaces where participation is invitational and critical reflection is encouraged. One student described Dr. Goulden's course as "the first time I truly felt like I belonged in a classroom," capturing how inclusive teaching can foster confidence, engagement, and academic success.

Dr. Goulden extends this commitment beyond the classroom. She founded and leads Newfoundland and Labrador's UDL Community of Practice, served as Co-Chair of the Disability Caucus of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education, and led the development of open-access academic integrity resources for social work students across Atlantic Canada. A colleague noted that, through these initiatives, Dr. Goulden's leadership has inspired educators across disciplines to rethink how they design learning environments, making accessibility and inclusion central to teaching practice.

Her research strengthens this work. Dr. Goulden has studied UDL within her own teaching, leads a national study of disabled social work students' experiences of accommodation, accessibility, and belonging, and contributes to research advancing neurodiversity-affirming curriculum and disability justice. This work contributes to creating conditions in which more disabled and neurodivergent students can enter, belong, and thrive in social work education, helping the profession better reflect the communities it serves.

Dr. Goulden's creativity, scholarly excellence, and support for students and colleagues distinguish her as an innovative educator and leader. Her contributions have strengthened students' sense of belonging and advanced inclusive education institutionally, provincially, and nationally. She is most deserving of the 2026 Association of Atlantic Universities' Distinguished Teaching Award.