

MEMORANDUM

To: Faculty, University of Toronto Scarborough
From: Professor William A. Gough, Vice-Principal Academic & Dean
Date: 12 May 2020
Re: Fall Session

Dear Faculty,

Thank you for your great work, in particular over the last two months. I am very proud of you, the faculty, staff, and departmental leadership, for your support of our students.

I want to turn our minds to the Fall session and how we will deliver our courses. I know you have had some discussions with your Chair or Academic Director and among yourselves. The necessity of making decisions about summer offerings has informed perspectives about what approach we will take for this Fall.

One thing none of us want is uncertainty. However, we don't have a lot of choice in our current circumstances and "certainty," even in the best of circumstances, can be ephemeral. I want to share my reasoning, which has been informed by broad consultation, including the VP Dean's Group, your Chairs and Academic Directors and many others, the review of data from student surveys, as well as our lived experience over the past two months. I want to take you down the road of the various considerations we have encountered.

There are a number of guiding principles that we need to reference.

1. First is the health and safety of our faculty, staff and students.
2. We want to continue to attract and support excellent students who reflect our academic standards and our commitment to inclusion.
3. We want the very best of educational experiences for our students fulfilling well-articulated learning outcomes on the course, program, and degree levels.
4. We want to ensure that the delivery and evaluation of course work is grounded in integrity and fairness.
5. We want the totality of the student experience, curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular, to be fulsome.
6. We want faculty to conduct their scholarship and related teaching with academic freedom.
7. We wish to maintain a good working environment for faculty and staff.

There are five lenses that I would like you to consider.

First, I want to turn to some pragmatic space issues.

It is difficult to predict the restrictions that Public Health may (or may not) be imposing at the beginning of September. It is however reasonable to assume that social distancing will continue until a vaccine is widely available. This is highly unlikely to happen by September, so I think we have no choice but to assume restrictions. Social distancing will have implications on classroom capacity. At present we have 53 classrooms. To accommodate social distancing our room capacity is reduced to about 20%. No classroom can seat 100 students or more. The only possible space that could be used as a classroom of higher capacity is the Highland Hall event centre, although this is far from an ideal space in which to teach. Of the remaining inventory of classrooms, 90% of them will have a capacity of 24 or less. We also need to consider the possibility of a second wave of infection and a return to lockdown, and how this would make in-person offerings simply impossible.

Second, health of all academic staff and students.

Let's consider getting to campus. Most of our faculty, instructors and TAs commute 25km or more, and many take transit to get to campus. Although our students and staff tend to live closer to campus, many of them also use transit. We have over 13,000 students, and less than 10% live on campus. Our residences will be reduced to 400 occupants to accommodate social distancing. Thus, any required on-campus activities may place academic staff and students at risk simply getting to campus. We must also consider that 20% of our faculty are over 60 and are considered a vulnerable demographic. In addition, some academic staff under 60 are at risk themselves, or live with family members who are risk. We also have students who are part of 'at risk' demographics; although this is a smaller percentage, the absolute numbers are higher. For those of you wondering whether our solution to Fall course offerings will differ from STG, I want to point out that this is a major area of contrast between the campuses. STG has more residence space and many faculty, staff and students who live closer, with no or shorter transit travel.

Three, fiscal considerations.

We are dependent on student enrollment for our fiscal well-being. We have both domestic and international targets. We need to consider what drives their (and their parents') thinking process when deciding to accept our offer, and more importantly, actually attending in September. For international students who are unsure of their mobility, or who have concerns about endangering their health by coming too soon, having a fulsome set of remote offerings that remain remote offerings throughout the term is critically important to their decision. However, for the international students who do come, or are already here, having no campus engagement may not be the best student experience. Similarly, for some domestic students, the safety and consistency of remote offerings is reassuring, while for others there will be regret if they cannot engage with the campus.

Four, faculty workload.

The familiar in-person teaching is of course the preferred mode of delivery for most faculty. However, in light of the concerns laid out above, such a sole delivery mode is unlikely to be tenable. We either go with remote only or a dual mode delivery. We know going remote is a major workload consideration for many faculty; a dual mode delivery is likely to be more so. Additional teaching support can mitigate increased workload, but I acknowledge that this forces a substantive re-thinking of pedagogy.

Five, academic integrity.

We have academic integrity (AI) issues even with the traditional modes of delivery and we have worked to police this activity, as well as to educate both students and faculty on AI issues. That said, we have major additional AI concerns with remote delivery and these need to be addressed. This is important for all programs but is a critical issue for admission into limited enrollment programs. For disciplines in which the final exam is heavily weighted, not having traditional invigilation is a critical consideration. We have piloted *ProctorU* for five courses with mixed results. We continue to explore invigilation options with privacy and online security for students and faculty as a key consideration.

I hope this gives you a flavour of the variables at play. I recognize there may be other considerations that are of concern to you.

This has led me to the following guidelines for Fall instruction, which I have shared with your Chairs and Academic Directors.

1. A “remote access guarantee”. This means that we will provide a fulsome range of course offerings delivered remotely. Any student who begins a remote course in September will be able to complete the course as a remote course.
2. Any in-person delivery will derive from the remote set of offerings. This means there will be no in-person only courses, but as conditions permit, we could add in-person components provided that “remote” students are not disadvantaged. Mindful of workload and safety, such in-person components will not be compulsory for faculty; instead, decisions about when in-person offerings will be available must arise from pedagogical considerations raised by faculty, to the degree they can be accommodated within the realities of our limited space inventory.
3. For residence and local students, we will strive to provide an on-campus student experience in addition to their taking remote courses and any in-person course components that emerge.

A memo sent to Chairs and Academic Directors will prompt a review our Fall offerings and provide the Registrar’s Office with more details about such offerings within the guidelines provided above. You can expect additional conversations about Fall courses in this context.

We are not alone in these decisions. Coincident with my memo to Chairs and Academic Directors, McGill University (and other institutions) announced very similar guidelines. While I have been in continuous conversations with the Deans of FAS and UTM, and there is commonality underlying our approach, the unique features of each campus may lead to variations on this theme for undergraduate teaching.

Thank you once again for your dedication to the academic mission of the University.

Yours sincerely,



William A. Gough

Vice-Principal Academic & Dean University of Toronto
Scarborough