

MEMORANDUM DCD #20, 2021-22

To: Chairs, University of Toronto Scarborough
Cc: Chairs' Assistants
From: Professor William A. Gough, Vice-Principal Academic & Dean
Date: 5 January 2022
Re: **Preparation for Start of Winter Term**
Note: For broad distribution



Dear Chairs,

I hope that you were able to enjoy a good and restful break.

As we prepare for the start of classes on 10 January, I am writing with a few reminders to assist departments and instructors in their preparation. Further updates about the transition back to in-person will be provided later this month as we learn more. We will be discussing our post-31 January plans at the 14 January Joint Chairs & Academic Directors (CAD) meeting.

Health, Well-Being, and Making It Through This Time

The latest round of restrictions in the midst of the Omicron surge, including the announcement of further school closures, is having a major impact on many. The well-being of our community continues to be our main priority. I encourage you to assess (or re-assess) departmental plans and related service workload for the term to create as much space and flexibility as possible. We are doing the same in the Office of the Vice-Principal Academic & Dean in terms of what we are asking of departments, reducing the number of meetings and adjusting timelines. Any instructor or staff member who needs additional support, including for health accommodations, childcare, and/or eldercare, should be encouraged to reach out for assistance. As necessary, Chairs may consult with Health & Wellbeing, the Family Care Office, Human Resources, and the Vice-Dean Faculty Affairs, Equity & Success for support and guidance.

Please be sure that all members of your department are aware of campus supports for well-being and mental health.

For faculty, staff, and postdoctoral fellows: <https://people.utoronto.ca/employees/efap/>. For undergraduate and graduate students: <https://www.utscc.utoronto.ca/home/mental-health-resources>

Please refer to the following guidance provided earlier in [DCD #18 - Winter Term](#):

Course Planning

Faculty who are new to online learning should refer to the Centre for Teaching & Learning's Academic Resources site <https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/209988> and to the supports that are outlined in the [DCD #5 - Fall Teaching](#) memo.

Faculty should be planning their courses with flexibility in mind. Given the current Omicron situation, in any given week there will be faculty and students who will be ill, needing to isolate, or taking time to care for family members. Courses should be set up to ensure that students can follow materials if they have to miss a class session. This access might take the form of recorded lectures, notes, slides, or other materials. Faculty are also encouraged to use universal course design principles to provide flexible pathways for students, including for participation and for assessments: <https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/udl/>

For advice on how to provide flexibility within the context of regulations related to student petitions and grade submission, please contact Shelby Verboven, Registrar & Director Enrolment Management shelby.verboven@utoronto.ca, and Shehna Javeed, Assistant Registrar, Petitions shehna.javeed@utoronto.ca.

Given the ongoing uncertainties related to Omicron, please ensure that syllabi do not include specific details about the format and structure of assessments. The syllabus must include a basic marking breakdown for assessments (e.g. “Midterm 20%”), but faculty are encouraged to provide specific details about assignment and assessment structure separate from the syllabus. This will enable faculty to adjust the format of course elements more easily to pandemic circumstances. Faculty are encouraged to consider alternatives to timed tests and exams, including take-homes and final projects, wherever possible and where appropriate, with your approval.

The current university policies for face masks and vaccines are enclosed:

Face masks: <https://www.provost.utoronto.ca/planning-policy/joint-provostial-and-human-resources-guideline-on-facemasks-at-the-university-of-toronto/>

Vaccines: <https://www.utoronto.ca/utogether/vaccines>

We recommend including explicit language in the syllabus that notes that further information about any additional requirements will be provided as we approach the transition to in-person, based on the latest provincial guidelines and any related updates to the university's response to COVID-19.

Student Self-Declaration of Absence

A reminder that during the pandemic the university is not requiring students to provide any medical documentation for absences. Students are asked to fill in the self-declaration of absence form on ACORN. Faculty should not be asking students to provide any other documentation. [Include link to 20 July 2021 faculty memo about this]

Reporting of COVID Cases

The university continues to follow the same protocols for the reporting of COVID cases.

If a student, faculty, or staff member tests positive for COVID, or is ill with symptoms consistent with COVID, they must do the following:

1. Report this result directly to U of T's occupational health nurse (OHN) by email at ehs.occhealth@utoronto.ca.
2. Report their illness to their supervisor or manager in accordance with departmental processes.
3. Students must complete the self-declaration form on ACORN.

Note: Faculty members, librarians, or staff who become aware of a symptomatic/confirmed COVID-19 case amongst students, contractors, or visitors, should also contact the OHN who will provide guidance to the unit. Please note: All contact tracing for the University must be conducted by the OHN.

Snow Days

In the event of inclement winter weather that necessitates the closure of the campus, this will apply to all U of T Scarborough classes in the Winter term, whether in person or online.

Thanks to all of you for your ongoing work and leadership as we continue to navigate this difficult time. We wish you a good term ahead, and a hopeful 2022.

Best wishes,

William A. Gough

Vice-Principal Academic & Dean
Office of the Vice-Principal Academic & Dean