


**MEMORANDUM DCD #4, 2019-20**

**To:** Chairs and Academic Directors  
**From:** Professor William Gough, Vice-Principal Academic & Dean   
**Cc:** Desma Charlemagne-Michel, Director, Human Resource Services  
David Jang, Executive Director, Marketing & Communications  
**Date:** 9 March 2020  
**Re:** **COVID-19 Follow-up**

---

Further to the Principal's message sent earlier today, I am resending the information with attention to the **highlighted items** targeted to you specifically as academic leaders. Please share the following information widely with faculty and staff in your department/academic centre. Additional information pertaining to research contingency planning, will follow from the *Office of the Vice-Principal Research* shortly.

The University is continuing to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation and has begun preparing contingency plans - establishing a steering group of senior administrators, including leaders who responded to the SARS crisis in 2003, to co-ordinate U of T's response across all campuses. The University also has academic and business continuity plans that will be enacted if needed.

Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health continues to advise that the risk to Ontarians is low. The University has prepared answers to [some FAQs and provided some helpful contact numbers](#). We recommend that you stay informed on the latest information about symptoms and treatment, how to protect yourself, and the status of COVID-19, by reviewing the credible information sources listed at the bottom of this message.

The University follows the guidance of the federal and provincial authorities. We encourage you to check on destination-specific travel restrictions on the Government of Canada's [COVID-19 travel advisory website](#).

No one should be excluded, or banned, from attending classes or work. The assessment of risk should be based on travel and exposure history, and not on race or ethnicity. We encourage you to reinforce messaging of the University's commitment to human rights and our values of diversity, inclusion, and respect.

We are not changing policies or practices at this time. Rather, we are asking you to consider your contingency plans for classes, and work units, in your department/academic centre should there be a disruption.

For both faculty and staff, this includes:

- planning for, maintaining access to, any physical files you might need from your office, in the event you need to work from home
- ensuring that you have appropriate IT gear to maintain your engagement with your courses and/or work from home (e.g., camera, mic, VPN, ensuring your shared drives are mapped)

Faculty should also consider:

- ensuring that you have a plan for posting course materials to Quercus; contact [Centre for Teaching & Learning](#) if you require assistance
- being understanding if students self-quarantine, and considering ways to allow them to do so without penalty to participation marks, etc.
- beginning to think about alternative ways of designing and administering deliverables through the rest of the term, including exams
- Teaching staff may also wish to refer to the following information:
  - [Academic Continuity](#) website and [Continuity Planning](#) website
  - [Supporting Course Resiliency: Best Practices for Teaching Staff](#)
  - the University of Toronto's [Policy on Academic Continuity](#)
  - the [University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy](#)

Shortly, we will be distributing information to all chairs to assist in academic continuity planning. This information will include a [Continuity Checklist](#) for chairs to help organize continuity within courses in their departments, as well as a course resiliency form to be distributed to all instructors to aid them in their continuity planning. We ask that you distribute, and subsequently collect, this information from all faculty in accordance with the timelines we have laid out in these forms.

Should there be a significant disruption due to COVID-19, courses and other University activities may be affected. For example, faculty may need to accommodate several students in their course, or staff providing support may not be available due to illness. Faculty may fall ill and require alternative means of communicating with their students and administering their course, or staff may require remote working arrangements. If there are severe disruptions to University academic continuity, decisions around altering course delivery (changing course activities and assessments; length of term, etc.) or when to alter policies regarding absences and accommodations will come from the Provost's Office, which has convened an academic continuity working group that meets weekly, and of which, Vice-Dean Mark Schmuckler is a member.

As it is still influenza (flu) season, and given that students are advised to stay home if they are experiencing flu-like symptoms, we ask that you ensure that students are aware that they will not be penalized for any such absences. Doing this will also help minimize the impact of both influenza and

COVID-19 on our broader community. If students feel that their academic performance or their grades are in jeopardy, it is possible that sick students will come to campus, thus putting others at risk.

Disruptions to overall academic and business continuity will be monitored and managed in accordance with the University's academic continuity policy and business continuity plan, and will be communicated accordingly. The University is working to respond effectively to COVID-19. We are preparing contingency plans should the situation change and will keep you informed if we need to alter our regular operations. Our preparations revolve around the need to ensure the health of our community, and to support the continuity of our courses and programs.

Finally, we all need to practice basic protective measures against COVID-19. Please consider these tips from [\*Toronto Public Health\*](#).

**Resources:**

Health

[\*Toronto Public Health\*](#)

[\*Ontario Ministry of Health\*](#)

[\*Health Agency of Canada World Health Organization\*](#)

Travel

[\*Government of Canada Travel Advice \(COVID-19\)\*](#)