



MEMORANDUM DCD #18, 2021-22

To: Chairs, University of Toronto Scarborough
Cc: Chairs' Assistants, Undergraduate Coordinators & Departmental Assistants
From: Professor Katherine R. Larson, Vice-Dean Teaching, Learning & Undergraduate Programs
Date: 15 November 2021
Re: **Winter Term**

Dear Chairs,

As we prepare for the Winter 2022 term, we hope the enclosed information will be helpful for your department's planning. Please circulate to all faculty, instructors, and TAs who will be teaching in your unit in the Winter, as well as to administrative staff. Some of this memo focuses on continued pandemic-related planning, while also underscoring reminders for those who may be new to U of T Scarborough about ongoing academic policies and practices.

Further details about classroom protocols for the Winter term will be circulated closer to the holidays to ensure we are providing the most recent guidance from the Provost's Office and from the province.

Transitioning Back to Campus

This Fall approximately 25% of our courses have been running in person as we have been transitioning gradually back to campus. In January this will shift to approximately 80% of our courses. We are excited to be preparing to return fully to campus after almost two years, but we recognize that this brings challenges as well as anxieties.

If faculty and staff have not yet been on campus since the transition back to in person began in September, please encourage them to visit before the holiday break to reacquaint and refamiliarize themselves with the campus and the experience of navigating the buildings with COVID protocols in place. The campus is taking every precaution to ensure safety, and for those of us who have been on campus throughout the term it has eased anxiety considerably to experience that directly. I can also attest to how wonderful it is to see students and colleagues in person again.

Vaccine and Mask Mandate

All U of T Scarborough faculty, staff, and students must be vaccinated or have a university approved exemption to be on campus. Proof of vaccination or exemption must be uploaded directly to UCheck (<https://www.utoronto.ca/utogether/uccheck>). In addition to uploading proof of vaccination or exemption, faculty, staff, and students must also complete UCheck's Self-Assessment **every time** they come to campus to confirm they do not have COVID symptoms and that they have not been in contact with a positive COVID case.

Masks will be required indoors, including in classrooms. Experience on other campuses that have returned more fully to in-person activities this Fall has found mask-wearing compliance to be high among students in classrooms. Students may not remove their masks to eat in class. Faculty are not under any obligation to continue lecturing if students are not complying with masking requirements.

Please be aware that a very small number of students have a university approved exemption from mask-wearing for disability-related concerns. Once an exemption is confirmed, *AccessAbility Services* will be in touch with faculty with a letter outlining the accommodations for those students.

Faculty who require a mask exemption while lecturing for pedagogical reasons (e.g. demonstrating language instruction) or health-related reasons should reach out to their Chair for guidance.

Faculty may check students' UCheck green screens, but if so, this must be done for every student in class and not randomly. Faculty are not, however, required to monitor green screens.

Well-Being and Mental Health

Even as we prepare to return to campus, we all continue to face the challenges and additional pressures of the pandemic. Faculty and staff who need additional support, including for needs related to health accommodations, childcare, and/or eldercare, should not hesitate to reach out directly to their Chair, as well as to the Family Care Office (<https://familycare.utoronto.ca>) and Health & Wellbeing (<https://people.utoronto.ca/culture/wellness/>).

Please be sure that students are aware of campus supports for well-being and mental health (<https://www.uts.utoronto.ca/hwc/>), including the 24/7 My SSP App.

We encourage faculty, staff, and students to also draw on the resources offered by U of T Scarborough's *AccessAbility Services* (<https://www.uts.utoronto.ca/ability/welcome-accessability-services>) and Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Office (EDIO) (<https://www.uts.utoronto.ca/edio/>), as well as the University of Toronto's Anti-Racism & Cultural Diversity Office (ARCDO) (<https://antiracism.utoronto.ca>). Please also advise students that academic learning support is available through the Centre for Teaching & Learning (<https://www.uts.utoronto.ca/ctl/academic-learning-support>).

A reminder that students who need to miss academic activities due to illness or other reason should submit an [absence self-declaration form](#) through ACORN. To ensure that students are not coming to campus while ill and to ease pressures on the Health & Wellness Centre, **please remind instructors that they should not be asking students to provide additional documentation or verification of illness forms.**

Course Planning

The return to in-person classes will coincide with colder weather and seasonal illnesses, as well as the continuation of COVID. It is crucial that faculty continue to plan their courses with flexibility, resiliency, and compassion in mind.

If a faculty member needs to self-isolate for a short period and is well enough to lecture, it is acceptable to pivot a class online for that period of self-isolation.

Students will not be permitted to come to campus if they are ill or if they need to self-isolate. Faculty will need to plan their courses to ensure that students are able to continue to follow the course even if they need to miss classes for a short time. Universal design for learning (UDL) principles will assist with this, giving students multiple pathways for success in a course (<https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/udl/>).

Faculty may consider drawing on the following online tools to enhance in-person course resiliency during the COVID context and support students:

- 1) Schedule class meetings with a mix of up to 1/3 of online sessions. This option is available to faculty within "in-person" teaching parameters and should be planned and clearly indicated on the course syllabus from the start.
- 2) Host online office hours to minimize groups of students gathering outside of offices or at the podium.
- 3) Provide asynchronous access to course materials. Courses with enrolments of 200+ that are not running online will be WebOptioned, and WebOption units will also be in place in some mid-sized courses based on availability and pedagogical needs. Faculty who are not using WebOption can consider flipped classroom techniques, with class time used primarily for discussion and short lectures provided asynchronously and recorded using SnagIt (<https://teaching.utoronto.ca/ed-tech/teaching-technology/lecture-capture/>). Faculty may also opt to share slides or notes to enable students who are unwell to keep up with the class.
- 4) Ensure there are multiple ways for students to demonstrate active engagement with a course, not solely based on oral participation. Not all students may be able to contribute to a course in this way, and varied pathways for engagement will benefit the class as a whole.
- 5) Consider building flexibility into assessments, e.g. students are marked on the best 8 of 10 problem sets or may drop their lowest mark in the class.

Syllabus Development

Winter classes begin on **January 10, 2022**. Please take note of the sessional dates for the Winter term, including the timing of Reading Week.

The Centre for Teaching & Learning (CTL) has a wide range of resources that faculty can draw on in developing their courses. Learn more about the support that CTL offers for both educators and students (<https://www.utoronto.ca/ctl/>). Please refer to CTL's Academic Resources site for a range of pedagogical tools and supports, including materials generated during the pandemic. We would like to draw your attention in particular to recently developed materials on Navigating Microaggressions in the Classroom and Teaching Sensitive Materials that are connected to ongoing campus conversations about equity-based, accessible, anti-racist, and anti-colonial curriculum and pedagogy (<https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/209988/>).

In addition, CTL's Educational Developers provide consultations on syllabus and assignments; course design and experiential learning (<https://www.utoronto.ca/ctl/educational-development>). For technical support for your teaching, contact quercus.utoronto.ca.

The tri-campus Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation (CTSI) website has consolidated guidelines for syllabus design, including information on accessibility and links that enable faculty to jump to sample syllabus statements (<https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/course-design/developing-a-syllabus/#samplestatements>). Statement topics include:

- Academic Integrity,
- Plagiarism Detection Tools,
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion,
- Notification to Students when Recording Online Lectures and Course Meetings, and
- Accommodations.

Syllabus templates along with customizable statements are also available on the Course Information System (CIS).

A reminder that Ouriginal is the University of Toronto's new plagiarism detection tool. This is integrated directly into the Quercus platform, and instructors can email quercus.utoronto.ca for assistance if needed.

Please take note as well of the Provostial Guidelines on the Use of Digital Learning Materials that continue to be in place during the pandemic (<https://www.provost.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/155/2020/08/Fall-2020-Digital-Learning-Materials-Guidelines.pdf>).

The course syllabus must include the marking rubric along with assessment deadlines and should be shared with students no later than the first day of class.

In recent months, there have been some issues with faculty releasing syllabi to students that include elements like exam exemptions and marking rubrics that have not been approved by the Chair and that in some cases have resulted in changes having to be made after the start of a course. With this in mind, we would ask faculty to submit their proposed syllabi and marking rubrics for Winter courses, along with any exam exemption requests, to Chairs via the Course Information System no later than **January 5, 2022**. New instructors are encouraged to discuss draft syllabi with their Chair well in advance of the start of the term.

A final version of the syllabus must be filed with the department via CIS no later than January 23, 2022, the last day to add courses for the Winter term.

Midterms and Exams

We anticipate that all midterms and exams will be able to run in person in the Winter. Given pandemic uncertainties, however, we encourage faculty to include only the marking breakdown, the types of assessment that will be required, and assessment deadlines, in their syllabus, and share further details about the structure and format of assessments with students as each assessment gets closer. This will help faculty avoid having to make changes to the syllabus in the case of a pivot.

Normally, an examination worth at least 1/3 of the final mark is required in a course. While teaching online, many faculty experimented with alternative assessments in lieu of timed tests and final examinations. Whenever possible, we encourage you to continue drawing on alternative modes of assessment as pedagogically appropriate, including final projects and take-home options. Proposed alternatives should be submitted for consideration by the Chair through the exam exemption tool on the Course Information System no later than **January 5, 2022**. Submission dates for such assessments can be scheduled by the Registrar's Office during the exam period to avoid scheduling conflicts.

Please also remember that students should receive feedback on their work totalling at least 20% of their final grade in the course before the drop date, and no changes should be made to marking breakdowns and assessed components of the course without a majority student vote that is announced in advance.

In Closing

We are continuing to face significant challenges related to the pandemic, but there are glimmers of hope as well. As we look ahead to the Winter term, we hope that your course planning will benefit from and be enriched by the pedagogical insights and creative experiments that have emerged over nearly two years of primarily online instruction. This extends to ongoing institutional change stemming from heightened awareness of the importance of planning courses and teaching that can intentionally support student access and well-being and benefit from the diverse knowledges and experiences represented in our classrooms at U of T Scarborough. It is important not to lose sight of these learnings as we return to campus into routines that feel both familiar and changed by this time. Please let us know how the Office of the Vice-Principal Academic & Dean can support and assist you as we move forward with this work.

Warm wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katherine R. Larson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'K' and 'L'.

Katherine R. Larson

Vice-Dean Teaching, Learning & Undergraduate Programs