

**MEMORANDUM, DCD#4, 2021-22**

To: Chairs, University of Toronto Scarborough  
Cc: VP Dean's Group, Chairs' Assistants, Academic Business Officers  
From: Professor Mary T. Silcox, Acting Vice-Principal Academic & Dean and  
Vice-Dean Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies  
Date: 19 August 2021  
Re: **Safe Return to In-person Work on Campus**  
Note: For distribution broadly

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Let me start by thanking you for your continuing good work and, in particular, for all the time you have put in this summer planning for what promises to be a challenging academic year. I hope that you have managed to take some time to disengage from your administrative duties.

I am writing in my capacity as Acting Vice-Principal Academic & Dean to provide some needed clarification on the expected role of staff in academic departments as we work during the Fall semester towards a safe return to in-person work on campus, in accordance with public health guidance and the applicable regulations. I realize that the messaging around this has been somewhat unclear, and for that you have my apologies.

Before he went on vacation, VP Dean Gough had the opportunity to review the Return to Campus Department plans that had been submitted up until that point. Emerging from that review, we felt it was important to articulate certain principles that we want to work towards with respect to on-campus staff support for both students and faculty during the transitional Fall semester.

In the coming semester, we anticipate that there will be 2000-3000 students regularly on campus; this reflects those who are signed up for residence, and those who will be present for in-person course elements. This is a much smaller number than the total undergraduate population of over 14,000 students, but it does represent a significant amount of student traffic. We will also be welcoming new faculty members—those who joined in 2019-20 and those joining us this Fall—who have never experienced U of T Scarborough campus life and whom we want to welcome to the supports, resources, and communities associated with joining the U of T Scarborough campus.

Part of the rationale for thinking of Fall as a transitional semester is also to start moving towards a return to a full in-person presence, which we are still anticipating (public health guidelines permitting) for Winter semester. As such, we think it is important that staff do start to come back on a reduced schedule in the Fall term to help to make the return to fully in-person more manageable.

Finally, we would like to start to re-build the sense of campus community that we have all been missing over the last 18 months. This is particularly important for new faculty, who have experienced an understandable sense of dislocation from U of T Scarborough.

In recognition of these considerations, most of the areas around the university will be looking to have staff make a graded return over the Fall term. All the various student support services (e.g., library, CTL, Registrar's Office etc.) will be offering a combination of in-person and remote supports. In the Office of the Vice Principal Academic & Dean, even non-student-facing staff will generally be on campus for 40-50% of their working time, unless they face a special circumstance.

Our hope is that all administrative and academic units will have some in-person work on campus to support the planned partial re-opening of campus in September. We expect there to be daily (weekday) representation of staff in academic departments, so that we are in line with other outlets of student and administrative support on campus. Because we do not want the burden of this to fall unfairly on program advisors, we would like to suggest that whoever is on campus on a particular day have as their mandate the effective triaging of questions and information, rather than necessarily being the source of all student and faculty answers.

Co-located academic departments may want to develop a plan that involves the sharing of resources. For example, the departments in the MW building may want to work together to ensure daily weekday staffing. The key element from our perspective is that the plan is regular and clear enough that it can be communicated to students and faculty. If any of your staff require accommodations related to on-campus work, please consult with your Human Resources Generalist. They will work through the process for alternate work arrangements as needed. We hope that by allowing for maximum flexibility in sharing of staff resources that it will be possible to make these accommodations and still meet the requirement of daily on-campus staff presence.

I realize that some of you have already built a plan for your departments that fulfills these principles—for that, you have our thanks. For departments who were not thinking along these lines, we are asking you to begin discussions with your Business Officers, and other staff members, about how to manage having a daily presence on campus. We would like to receive a revised plan that includes an indication of the language that will be provided to students about where and when they can go for on-campus support by **September 8th**.

I would also like to offer some reassurance about the measures that have been taken on campus to try and maximize everyone's safety. These include rigorous testing and upgrading of ventilation systems when needed, markers throughout to ensure physical distancing, clear signage about the requirements for masking, etc. I have been on campus regularly since March 2020, and after the first few weeks of general terror, I haven't felt any serious concern for my safety.

Additional information about returning to campus can be found at: <https://www.utoronto.ca/home/faculty-staff-utogether> and Holly Yuen, Manager of Environmental Health and Safety; [holly.yuen@utoronto.ca](mailto:holly.yuen@utoronto.ca) is available to answer your questions.

If you or your Business Officer need any help with this process, please contact [Zahra Bhanji](#) and [Susan Shi](#), who are happy to offer their support.

Yours truly,



**Mary T. Silcox**

Acting Vice-Principal Academic & Dean  
Vice-Dean Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies  
Office of the Vice-Principal Academic & Dean