

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and Planning for Completion of the Academic Term

Communication from the Executive Committee of Senate

13 March 2020

The University has been actively monitoring developments on the global COVID-19 infection since January and has developed comprehensive plans in preparation for the scenario that the coronavirus would significantly disrupt academic activities on our campuses. The World Health Organization has declared that the coronavirus outbreak is a pandemic. As announced this morning by President Lenton, the University has determined that immediate steps are necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of our community, and preserve the continuity of our academic programs.

- Specifically, no in-person classes will be held for the remainder of the F/W 2019-2020 and W 2020 academic terms effective Monday, March 16th, 2020.
- Courses will continue through online delivery formats for the remainder of the F/W 2019-2020 and W 2020 academic terms effective Monday, March 16th, 2020.

This step constitutes a disruption as defined by the Senate *Policy on the Academic Implications of Disruptions or Cessations of University Business Due to Labour Disputes or Other Causes* (the Disruptions Policy). The Senate policy provides the framework for the Executive Committee of Senate to invoke adjustments to academic regulations, deadlines and schedules to manage the impact on academic activities caused by the disruption.

The three governing principles of this policy are *academic integrity, fairness to students, and timely information*. These are described in detail in the policy.

No reduction in the length of the term is being taken.

Senate Executive has received advice from the Provost and Vice-President Academic and is providing the following options to accommodate students impacted by COVID-19 related circumstances, and to help instructors successfully complete courses:

- While many courses already have an online component, it is recognized that the shift to e-delivery will take different forms and will be more challenging for some courses. Further information about implementation and faculty supports for moving classes online will be forthcoming from the Provost and Vice President Academic (and respective Deans).¹
- Course Directors are permitted to reduce the number of assignments, and make changes to the kind and weight of assignments (including tests and examinations) provided the changes do not disadvantage students, and preserve academic integrity and, where relevant, accreditation requirements.
- Where a course has a sit-down final test or examination, instructors are encouraged wherever possible to allow alternate formats, such as take-home exams or assignments. Students must have the choice to continue with the original evaluation scheme if they prefer, subject to necessary adjustments to the format or timing of evaluations.²

1 A specific example of an exceptional circumstance refers to classes that have a public component, or involve studio or performance pedagogies that bring participants into direct physical contact.

2 This section does not apply to Osgoode Hall Law School which will administer its own rules for allowing flexibility in evaluations.

- Until further notice, students will not be required to submit an Attending Physician's Statement in support of requests for deferred standing or petitions.
- The deadline for students to opt in or out of the Pass/Fail grading option is extended to the last day of the final examination period, April 25, 2020.

Senate Executive will continue to meet as needed to assess the academic implications of the disruption in conjunction with the Provost and Vice-President Academic. **A decision will be made and communicated in the coming days on the status of the final examination period scheduled for April 7 – 25, 2020.** Further adjustments to regulations, schedules and deadlines may also be made in response to evolving circumstances and any further decisions deemed necessary by the University to ensure the safety of all community members.

Senate Executive urges members of the community to familiarize themselves with the Senate Policy, and to watch the University and Senate websites for frequent updates.

Senate “Disruptions Policy”

<http://secretariat-policies.info.yorku.ca/policies/academic-implications-of-disruptions-or-cessations-of-university-business-due-to-labour-disputes-or-other-causes-senate-policy-on-the>

Disponible en français

<https://secretariat-policies.info.yorku.ca/policies/reglement-du-senat-concernant-les-consequences-sur-les-etudes-des-perturbations-ou-interruptions-des-activites-de-luniversite-par-des-conflits-de-travail-ou-par-dautres-causes/>

Alison Macpherson
Chair of Senate
13 March 2020