

**Communication from the Executive Committee of Senate**

**14 October 2020**

Seven months following the World Health Organization's declaration that the coronavirus outbreak is a pandemic, the University remains in a disruption due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic on academic activities at the University. As a result, the *Senate Policy on Academic Implications of Disruptions or Cessations of University Business Due to Labour Disputes or Other Causes* (the Disruptions Policy) remains in force. 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.

At the outset of the pandemic in March 2020 immediate steps were guided by the need to ensure the safety and well-being of our community and to preserve the continuity of our academic programs. The decision was taken to cease in-person teaching for the remainder of the F/W 2019-2020 and W 2020 academic terms, with course delivery occurring through online formats for the remainder of those academic terms. Additionally, the decision was taken by the University to cancel all in-person exams during the formal winter exam period in April 2020 in accordance with the Government of Canada community-based measures and the decisions made at other Ontario institutions to stop the community-based spread of the virus and stop large gatherings.

Several forms of academic accommodations were authorized by Executive to aid the successful completion of the F/W and Winter term courses that were in progress; most students successfully completed the term. Deferring final exams from the Winter 2020 term was not a recommended course of action due to the uncertainty of the duration of the pandemic. Not unexpectedly, some students were accommodated with deferred standing due to a range of extenuating circumstances. The continuation of the pandemic and the provincial health and safety regulations restricting campus operations means that deferred, in-person exams for groups of students are not an equitable, safe, or viable, option for course completion at this time.

It is the decision of the Senate Executive Committee that **all outstanding final exams or assessments from the FW 2019-2020 must be brought to completion** using online or other remote means, including but not limited to, online exams with or without proctoring services, the quizzes function in Moodle, take-home exams, etc. Further options are being made available to bring the F/W 2019-2020 deferred standing cases to completion as follows:

- a deferred virtual exam period will be held on the days of 17 and 24 January 2021, which will be centrally managed by the Office of the University Registrar to ensure a conflict-free schedule for students.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The virtual exam period would not apply to the JD program at Osgoode; in accordance with its Faculty academic rules and procedures, the Law School administered a deferral period immediately following the regular exam period in Spring 2020 and there are no outstanding deferred exams.

- Course directors who gave students the option of a revised grading scheme of a course - including the option of an assessed grade - as a form of accommodation (made available by Executive on [16 March 2020](#)) are authorized to make that option available again to students with deferred standing who originally chose not to accept that alternative measure in the winter 2020 term; those students have a new deadline of 8 December 2020 to choose this option.
- Extension to 5 February 2021 of the deadline to drop a FW 2019-2020 course without receiving a grade (without a W notation) for students granted deferred standing in the Winter 2020 term who do not complete their deferred exam / assessment by 31 January 2021.
- Deans' Offices are authorized to approve in-person assessments in extenuating circumstances where they cannot reasonably be completed virtually or remotely, including performance or other hands-on demonstration forms of course assessment, subject to compliance with health and safety protocols.
- Continuation of the temporary suspension of the *Senate Policy on Pass/Fail Grades* for students with deferred standing in FW 2019-2020 courses, or who completed their deferred exam / assessment in such courses prior to September 1, 2020, as follows:
  - The number of credits for which pass/fail is chosen for the FW'19-20 and W'20 will not be added to a student's total number of pass / fail credits
  - BEd, JD, BScN and Nurse Practitioner (PHCNP) MScN courses continue to be exceptions to the Pass / Fail Grades Policy
  - The new deadline for students to choose the pass / fail grading option is 5 February 2021.

As a reminder, in accordance with the *Principles to Guide Fall 2020 Graduate and Undergraduate Course Planning*, most courses this term are being offered through online / remote delivery with a small number of courses with mandatory or optional in-person components proceeding. The same *Principles to Guide Graduate and Undergraduate Course Planning* were extended to govern the Winter 2021 term. The full set of principles were articulated in communications from Senate Executive on [May 6, 2020](#) and [August 11, 2020](#) respectively.

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. 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.

Members of the community are urged 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>

Mario Roy,  
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