

ACADEMIC CONTINUITY

March 27, 2020

Message sent on behalf of Professor Dionne Gesink, Acting Associate Dean, Academic Affairs

Dear Faculty,

Thank you for continuing to adapt to, and with, the sudden changes within our School as we respond to the rapidly evolving COVID19 pandemic. Below, I provide an update on changes that have happened over the past week and resources. Some of you may be feeling overwhelmed, and this is normal. Please ask for help when you need it. I also provide information on mental health and well-being resources for faculty and staff at the end of this message.

Thank you for physical distancing, and for your part in the response to this historic global event,

Dionne

Changes to Methods of Evaluation in Courses:

The University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy (UAGPP) establishes a process for instructors to hold a vote to make changes to the marking scheme when instructors judge this to be necessary.

Credit/no-credit:

At the graduate level, at this time, credit/no-credit must be course-wide, not individually decided by students. The final grades assigned in a graduate course must all be from the same scale. Instructors can work with the Dean's Office to request a disruption from the Provost to change the course grade scale to CR/NCR for all students in the course.

Extensions:

Students are stressed out and may not be coping well with competing priorities and constant change. Please be compassionate and accommodating. Two options exist for everyone:

1. Short coursework extensions – please check with the specific Course Directors re: the coursework and what possibility exists for short extensions. This is dependent on Course Directors being able to complete the marking and submit the grades in advance of specific deadlines.
2. Course Extensions into the Summer Term. This will require a formal request for an extension (easily done) and a deferred grade for now (form attached). The grade is changed when the coursework is submitted, and the grade goes through the system by end of the Summer term. Requests for coursework extensions are required for each individual course, so you'd need to do one for each course in which you wish to hold off on submitting.

- a. For student completing the entire program this term, right now, this means graduation will be in November, rather than June.

Course Drop Date:

The course drop date has been reopened and extended to April 25, 2020 to support students who are struggling academically. Please discuss with students their reason(s) for dropping before they drop, to verify that there are no alternatives to successfully completing the course. Please also remind students the following so they can make a fully informed decision:

Students will not get a refund on tuition or fees if they drop between now and before April 25
Dropping may extend student time to completion and thus graduation and may result in additional tuition and fees if they extend into the 20/21 academic year

Students may have to wait until Winter 2021 to take the course they dropped again

Students might be able to earn missing credits by completing a Summer 2020 course, but that will depend on the Summer 2020 course offerings

Students expecting to graduate in June are encouraged not to drop courses, unless the course under consideration is extra credit, so they can complete on time

Grade Submission Deadline:

The deadline for grade submissions for individual courses has been extended until May 15 with the expectation that tentative degree recommendations will be submitted on the current deadline date of April 17. Students will not be able to receive confirmation of degree letters until their degree requirements are confirmed.

Doctoral Research:

The U of T Health Sciences Research Ethics Board (REB) has suspended all research involving in-person contact with human subjects and all laboratory-based research. Hospitals have suspended non-essential research unless it can be conducted remotely. The RDC is closed. IC/ES is working on remote access to datasets. Depending on the nature and stage of dissertation, these changes will affect some candidates dramatically, slightly, or not at all.

- Supervisors – Please check on the mental and academic wellbeing of your doctoral students. Students will be asked to discuss the status of their research with their supervisor.
- Doctoral students/candidates have maximum flexibility to revise dissertation protocols with their Supervisor and Committee to adapt to the changing research environment. Please work together to devise a Plan B as needed.
- An amendment describing how research activities will be revised to prevent in-person contact with participants can be submitted to the REB to restart previously approved research.

Final Oral Exams for Doctoral Candidates:

SGS has updated guidelines for remote completion and sent a message to faculty and students (attached). In brief, all scheduled Final Oral Exams will be conducted remotely. A candidate wanting an in-person final oral exam will need to postpone their exam until in-person meetings/gatherings resume.

Graduation:

The University has made the difficult decision not to hold Convocation ceremonies in June 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the directives of public health authorities regarding social distancing and against large gatherings. Students who complete their degree requirements will still graduate and receive their degrees and parchments. We are currently exploring possible alternative means of celebrating graduation.

Please visit the Office of Convocation website for further information and updates:

<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/covid-19-and-spring-convocation-faqs>

Faculty Questions:

Course Support – The Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation has many online resources to help you respond to COVID19 teaching related changes: <https://teaching.utoronto.ca/>

Technical Teaching Support? Obadiah George (obadiah.george@utoronto.ca).

Program Support – please contact your Program Director:

PHS: <http://www.dlsph.utoronto.ca/divisions/division-heads-and-program-leaders/>

IHPME:

HSR: Audrey Laporte audrey.laporte@utoronto.ca

Clinical Epidemiology: Rob Fowler rob.fowler@sunnybrook.ca; Jill Tinmouth

jill.tinmouth@sunnybrook.ca

MHSc: Tina Smith tina.smith@utoronto.ca

SLI: Abi Sriharan abi.sriharan@utoronto.ca

MHI: Julia Zarb julia.zarb@utoronto.ca

QIPS: Christine Shea christine.shea@utoronto.ca

Mental Health Resources for Faculty & Staff

Appointed faculty and staff have access to the Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP), offered through Homewood Health, online and by phone at 1-800-663-1142.

Supporting Others – Mental Health Training for Faculty & Staff

U of T online module in support of student mental health: <https://iar.utoronto.ca/main/>

How to Support Employee Well-Being While Working Remotely:

<http://www.hrandequity.utoronto.ca/news/how-to-support%e2%80%afemployee%e2%80%afwell-being-while-working-remotely%e2%80%af%e2%80%af/>