

# UPDATE: SUMMER 2020

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

Dear Students,

Congratulations! You've made it to the end of term during a pandemic. That is no small accomplishment. I'd like to update you on what's been happening and what is in the works for the Summer 2020 term:

## **Extended Drop Date for Winter Term Courses:**

Please note that the drop date for Winter Term courses has been extended to April 25 in light of the COVID-19 situation.

## **Extensions:**

We understand that students are still struggling with competing priorities, new working conditions, and restrictive public health interventions. Instructors are being asked to be compassionate and accommodating. Two options exist for everyone if needed:

1. Short coursework extensions: Please check with the specific Course Directors regarding coursework and what possibility exists for short extensions. This is dependent on Course Directors being able to complete their marking and submit 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 coursework is submitted, and a final 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. For student completing the entire program this term, right now, this means that you will graduate in November, rather than June. For more information see: <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/policies-guidelines/coursework-extensions/>

## **Grades:**

The deadline for grade submissions for individual courses has been extended to 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.

## **Convocation:**

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

Students who complete their degree requirements will still graduate and receive their degrees and parchments. As you all undoubtedly know, our President has recently announced that a virtual ceremony will take place for all U of T graduates: <https://www.utoronto.ca/message-from-the-university-regarding-the-coronavirus>.

We acknowledge the importance of Convocation to DLSPH graduates and their families, and to your “academic families” – faculty and staff with whom you have interacted over the course of your programs. We intend to celebrate your accomplishments, in the future when it is safe to do so, through in-person event(s) organized by Program Directors.

### **Summer Practicum Placements:**

- **All remote (work from home) placements can continue forward as planned.**
- **All in-person practicum placements have been suspended until at least July 6, 2020** to align with the TAHSN system and the School of Medicine. Please talk with your supervisor about work continuity and whether your in-person placement can be converted to remote participation. There are two situations where this an exception can be made to the suspension:
  - In-Person Practicum Placements with “Essential Research” at the University or TAHSN hospitals are permitted to continue in-person research projects if the student agrees and with permission from the Associate Dean Academic Affairs
- Please note that “essential research” refers to COVID-19 projects that have been specifically approved as such by the hospitals or University.
- Research is not deemed essential only by virtue of it occurring at sites that are considered “essential service providers.”
  - Students with paid in-person placements who want to participate in-person can request an exception from the suspension.
  - Please complete the in-person practicum placement exception form to request a review of your placement and send to Dionne Gesink ().
- **International Placements:** The University has cancelled student activities outside of Canada until August 14, 2020.

Fortunately, many students are able to complete placements this summer, remotely. However, many students will be in the situation where their practicum placement has been suspended or cancelled and they have not yet been able to secure practicum. Please note that new practicum opportunities are appearing daily.

**We have also come up with a three-pronged strategy to address precarious practicum placements:**

#### **1. An Interdisciplinary Practicum focused on Learning from COVID-19:**

Questions around the COVID 19 pandemic are forming faster than we can answer them, and not only surrounding its emergence and ensuing public health and health systems response, but also at multiple levels and intersecting disciplines. The scope of this event is too large for any one team to conceptualize and will require interdisciplinary teams to map this juggernaut. To address these questions, we would like to provide the opportunity to engage students from across disciplines mentored by faculty to map issues and needs; conduct systematic reviews; scoping reviews; situation analyses; gather data from public sources; build datasets from existing data; identify, inventory and create relevant survey instruments to collect new data; conduct analyses; help develop communication strategies and materials; build evaluation frameworks; and help develop research proposals.

To ensure that we capture students from across the School, we would organize this effort under the guidance of an advisory board of faculty drawn from across the School. This board would have three key jobs: (1) to articulate a strategy including foci and goals for answering the questions noted above that can also function as a new inter-disciplinary research cluster, (2) to provide a point of contact for all faculty on how to engage with this initiative, (3) to ensure appropriate student mentorship and oversight for each project that sits under this strategy.

This practicum is unpaid and will be worth 1 credit. Please contact your program director to express your interest in the Interdisciplinary Practicum.

### **1. National COVID-19 Volunteer Recruitment Campaign:**

The Government of Canada is working with provincial and territorial governments to respond to COVID-19. They are seeking volunteers to help in the following areas: 1. Case tracking and contact tracing; 2. Health system surge capacity; 3. Case data collection and reporting.

- Students can apply online at: <https://emploisfp-psjobs.cfp-psc.gc.ca/psrs-srfp/applicant/page1800?toggleLanguage=en&poster=1437722>
- Students who are able to arrange volunteering in more substantial ways can apply for their participation to count as a 1 credit practicum. To qualify, the experience must include:
  - o Min days = 40
  - o An assessment of competencies relevant to the student's program
  - o At least 2 mentorship sessions
  - o Submission of a reflective piece

### **1. Summer coursework:**

We are conducting a situation analysis to determine whether additional courses need to be offered this summer to compensate for practicum placement credit deficits. Any additional elective courses will be posted and advertised by April 20, 2020 so students have time to learn about the course and enrol. Dates to remember:

April 20, 2020: All summer courses will be posted and open for registration.

May 4, 2020 – Final date to enrol in May-to-June or May-to-August session courses.

July 6, 2020 – Final date to enrol in July-August courses.

**Mental Health and Well-Being:**

Please know that supports continue to be available to you including:

- My Student Support Program ([My SSP](#)) and
- [Good2Talk Student Helpline \(1-866-925-5454\)](#).
- **Please consider bookmarking the UofT StudentLife website that provides links to [other resources](#).**
- The DLSPH [Staying Well](#) website (scroll down to bottom menu)

For more information please consult your program  
contact: <http://www.dlsph.utoronto.ca/divisions/division-heads-and-program-leaders/>