

COVID-19 Update: Student Fall Term

September 3, 2020

Dear Students,

Thanks for your patience over the past month as we worked diligently to create the virtual infrastructure needed to support our collective, continued transition to remote and hybrid learning for the fall term. We have focused our efforts on identifying and implementing concrete ways to create stability and certainty for the fall term during this very uncertain time. I'd like to share these updates so you can make decisions as you plan for the fall as well.

Fall Term:

[UTogether2020: A Roadmap for the University of Toronto](#) is a guide to the process of returning to research, course instruction and other activities in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Students may also be interested in what the [Vice Provost, Students has to say about COVID-19 Information](#) for University of Toronto Students.

The [School of Graduate Studies](#) offers a well-organized and very comprehensive look ahead to the Fall Term that should answer a lot of your questions.

DLSPH Courses

DLSPH Instructors are redesigning courses for the fall to ensure high quality education, a supportive learning environment, and a positive student experience. Instructors will decide if their courses are offered using remote only or hybrid designs. Hybrid courses will offer a combination of remote and in-person teaching structured in a highly flexible way to accommodate in-person meeting, should it become available. The University is committed to providing as much in-person time with peers and instructors as possible.

Key points to note:

- A remote option will be available for all courses, recognizing that students may not be able to attend in-person sessions for a variety of reasons.
- In-person meeting time will be prioritized for:
 - o Classroom activities that can only be conducted in person, such as laboratory exercises
 - o High-stakes evaluations (e.g. in-person exams, presentations)
 - o Community building activities (e.g. student group work, course office hours, small social gatherings)

- The nature of all in-person activities will be informed by public health safety requirements.

Course Redesign

We are building infrastructure to support faculty and instructors as they redesign their courses and prepare for the fall. Instructors may offer remote courses using [synchronous or asynchronous](#) strategies and web-based learning technologies, such as pre-recordings, video-conferencing, online collaboration tools, or self-directed learning modules.

For instance, the Introduction to Public Health Sciences course is being redesigned to accommodate a large class using a condensed (5-day), remote format. This course is critical for welcoming the incoming cohort, and introducing new students to our School's values, culture and the community, so it will also prioritize rapport building activities and linking students to new and existing supports and resources.

Directed Reading and Direct Research Courses

A number of critical issues have emerged in recent weeks and months that have a significant impact on public health not only in Canada, but globally. The COVID-19 pandemic, anti-Black racism, and economic recovery are three important areas that many learners may wish to study. We do not have existing courses on these topics; however, interested students can work with a faculty member to design a reading course or research course. [Click here](#) to read the guidelines for reading and research courses.

Student Workload

We know many students are experiencing disruptions to their work-life environment, including caring for children or other family members. To support students, we are adjusting coursework by:

- Asking instructors to think about student workload as they redesign their courses.
- Providing a remote option for every required course offered this fall.
- Adapting courses that rely heavily on in-person class time to be responsive to public health requirements.
- Recording synchronous class time so learners can re-watch lectures on their own time.

We also encourage students to develop a work rhythm and workload that is realistic and sustainable for their individual context. DLSPH is committed to student success and providing appropriate supports when possible.

Student Supports:

Just as faculty need supports and training on new methods of delivery, so do students. We know that many students are coming into DLSPH without recent exposure (or with limited exposure) to online learning environments so we have created two supports:

1. DLSPH Helpdesk

The DLSPH helpdesk is available to answer IT and educational technology questions. Students can send an email describing their issue and requesting help to helpdesk.dlsph@utoronto.ca.

1. Student Focused Online Trainings

Starting in August, DLSPH will offer students focused online training sessions on topics such as:

- o Tips for Effective Online Learning
- o Introduction to Zoom
- o Introduction to Blackboard Collaborate
- o Introduction to Teams
- o Effective group work - virtually
- o What is turn-it-in and ways to prevent academic integrity problems
- o Participating online

We are also building a student-focused online learning website to provide supports for incoming students. It will include information, such as: technical support, helpdesk, student training calendar, forms, etc.

Accessibility and Student Accommodations

Students with temporary or on-going disability should connect with the [U of T Student Life Office](#) as soon as possible to ensure accessibility adjustments are in place before the fall term begins. Accessibility Services provides services and supports for learning, problem solving and inclusion.

International Students

U of T is working closely with the Government to ensure that international students can study even if they are not able to make it to Toronto for the fall term. International students are encouraged to contact and work with experts at the [Centre for International Experience](#).

Tuition & Financial Support

U of T has reduced non-tuition incidental fees that go to student services and recreation programs for the summer session and will consider similar reductions for the fall. No changes have been made to planned tuition levels as academic programs continue to be delivered through alternative means.

Students facing financial hardship are encouraged to visit U of T's [Funding Opportunity Directory](#). The School of Graduate Studies also has information on what to expect this fall and links to [financial support programs](#).

Identify, Assist, Refer

The [Identify, Assist, Refer module](#) is a 30-minute training module designed to help students, faculty, and staff be better helpers to individuals experiencing mental health challenges. This online module was created to strengthen U of T's systems of support for student mental health and was informed by the [University of Toronto Student Mental Health Strategy and Framework](#). We are encouraging all students, faculty and staff to take this training.

Mental Health and Well-being Resources

We are intimately aware of how physical distancing, the barrage of anxiety-inducing headlines, and working remotely can have a significant impact on mental health and well-being.

We understand that many students are experiencing a heightened level of stress and anxiety and many students are also managing the additional strain of providing emotional support for others and correcting misinformation. It's important for everyone to acknowledge that we are all doing our best to be productive under these conditions. With this in mind, we have posted practical suggestions and resources to support our community during this time on our DLSPH "Staying Well" on the [Live Updates on COVID-19 from DLSPH](#) page.

This message is just a start and we will be communicating more with you in the coming weeks. Please visit our [Student FAQ website](#) for the most up-to-date information. All new and returning students are invited to reach out with comments and suggestions to: adaa.dlsph@utoronto.ca.

Sincerely,

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Associate Dean, Academic Affairs
Dalla Lana School of Public Health

UofT GUIDES FOR STUDENTS

- - [COVID-19 Information for University of Toronto Students \(FAQ\)](#)
 - [Quercus Student Guide](#)
 - [Student Guide to Other Tools](#)
 - Getting ready to be an online learner: <https://onlinelearning.utoronto.ca/getting-ready-for-online/>
 - Academic success resources: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/program/academic-success-resources/>