

## Principles for Making Decisions Regarding Undergraduate Academics during the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the University has needed to make decisions for campus research, operations and student life that prioritize the health and safety of our community. To do this, we developed a [Guiding Framework for Planning Decisions for September 2020 and Beyond](#). In addition to this Framework, we have developed a set of guiding principles to inform decision-making for academic programming during the pandemic. Like fall, the winter academic term will be online with only a few exceptions where program requirements or the need for access to specialized equipment or facilities may still require some in-person campus time. The principles we have outlined will continue to guide academic planning as this year continues to prioritize online and remote teaching and learning so that we may deliver on our shared commitments.

### Shared Commitments

- We are committed to the health and safety of our students, staff, faculty and community.
- We are committed to delivering high-quality undergraduate and graduate programming.

### Guiding Principles

- The University will place the health and wellbeing of all members of our community above all other considerations. The university's safety planning will be anchored in evidence-based health and safety guidance from municipal, provincial and federal Public Health guidance and government protocols.
- The University will continue to keep the McMaster community updated as decisions are made and the future becomes clearer.
- The University will ensure that all learning in any format is inclusive and accessible. Flexibility in learning modalities will ensure that students, staff and faculty will be able to make informed choices about their return to on-campus learning that aligns with their personal health and circumstances.
- The University will recognize and address barriers that members of our staff and instructors face in their work and students face in their studies.
- The University will continue to be aware of the privacy risks of online course instruction and we will be nimble in ensuring students are not put at a disadvantage, instructors' intellectual property is protected, and that digital tools and processes are adopted collaboratively and evaluated on their effectiveness.
- The winter academic term will be online with only a few exceptions where program requirements or the need for access to specialized equipment or facilities may still require some in-person campus time.
- The University will support and provide excellent and engaging courses to our students in a remote learning environment. Where essential on-campus course components are offered, we will be flexible to ensure that students, staff and faculty will be able to make informed choices about their return to on-campus learning that aligns with their personal health and circumstances.
  - Essential on-campus course components must demonstrate a need for specific facilities, tools and resources for the course to be considered for in-person instruction. Didactic

course components (i.e. lectures, discussion-based sessions, presentations, etc.) will be limited to online or virtual instruction.

- The University will reflect on the decisions made and changes in circumstances on a regular basis to learn from our actions and continuously improve.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

We as a campus community each have a role to apply the above principles so that we may achieve our shared commitments.

#### Everyone

- Everyone has a responsibility to follow the advice of Canadian Public Health authorities and campus health and safety protocols to protect their classmates, instructors and colleagues.
- Everyone has a responsibility to stay informed on the evolving protocols and updates from the University.

#### Faculty and Instructors

- Faculty and instructors have a responsibility to communicate expectations to students in a timely manner, accommodate students' needs and to provide a high-quality and engaging learning experience for students.

#### Students

- Students have a responsibility to engage in the course material and actively participate in classroom settings (in-person or digital) to take full advantage of learning opportunities and to communicate their needs to their instructor/TA.

#### McMaster University

- The University has a responsibility to stay informed on public health updates from the local, provincial and federal governments and other updates that impact university staff, faculty and students.
- The University has a responsibility to communicate updates in a timely manner to the campus community and to offer safe and high-quality academic and service experiences.