Covid-19 Academic Continency Planning Information  
March 20th, 2020  
Message #4

Dear colleagues:

Thank you very much for your attention to your course modifications. I have heard from across campus that our faculty, instructors, and staff have been thoughtful and timely in responding to the need for changes to remote teaching and assessment and have been understanding with our students concerns.

We now have a repository for Academic information that posts these messages as well as a growing list of Frequently Asked Questions and responses. This information is available here: https://www.mcmaster.ca/vpacademic/Academic_Contingency_Planning.html
And as a reminder, student academic facts are also shared from the Registrar’s Office here: https://registrar.mcmaster.ca/covid-19/#tab-1

The information in this update concerns next stages in our academic term including grade submission, appeals processes and accommodations.

1) Modifications to courses and student response

Again, thank you to all instructors for your thoughtful restructuring of course delivery and evaluation processes. We appreciate that some students have reacted with anxiety to these changes and have asked for further modifications. To mitigate this, a message has been shared with students on Avenue to Learn asking them to be patient as the Term unfolds. Associate Deans will be sending a similar message to students enrolled in their respective Faculty. Below is some text that you may choose to share, or some version of it, when you are communicating with your students.

McMaster University takes the academic success and the emotional health and well-being of students seriously, and we recognize that both can feel at risk during these uncertain times. Please be assured that instructors have carefully considered the revised course plans so that they are clear, equitable, and align with our shared academic expectations. The revisions were put in place to provide the best possible learning outcome in these less than ideal circumstances.

We understand and acknowledge your concern that the amended course plans don’t impact your course results. At this time, it is strongly recommended that you work toward completing the academic requirements of the course and wait to see your earned final alpha/numeric grade. As always, after receiving your grade if you have concerns, please contact your Associate Dean (Academic)/Program Office to discuss possible options available including the Student Appeals Procedures.
2) Submission of Grade Rosters for the 2020 Winter Term:
If you are concerned about an unusually low course average or a strangely-shaped grade distribution, please discuss this with your Chair/Director/Program Coordinator/Lead before submitting/authorizing your grades for approval.

As per the current practice of your Faculty, final grade rosters may be reviewed by your Chair/Director/Program Coordinator/Lead. Issues of concern will be discussed with you, prior to approval by the Associate Dean (Academic)/Program Office and release to students.

Grade Roster submission dates are established as part of the end of term processing to ensure data is received in a timely manner for the academic review of graduating and in-course students. As per current practice, grade rosters must be submitted to Mosaic within the following deadlines:

- one week after the end of classes for courses without a scheduled final exam within the exam period (by April 14th, 2020)
  or
- one week after the date of the scheduled final exam
  or
- one week after the due date of a culminating final assignment that occurs within the exam period

After grades have been released, there is an appeal process available to students. This appeal process has not changed for Winter 2020. Students are expected to initiate a preliminary inquiry by going directly to the appropriate instructor, officer or University authority whose decision/action is being questioned.

If the preliminary inquiry does not resolve the matter, students can appeal using the Senate Appeal Policy. Information on the Formal Re-Read/Re-Assessment (Form A) or the Formal Inquiry (Academic Process or Non-Academic) (Form B) is available here: https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Student-Appeal-Procedures.pdf

3) Deferred exams for Winter 2020
Deferred exams for the Winter 2020 term are tied to the academic expectations of this term. Deferred exams must be provided in the same format as in the associated term, that is online or remotely, and will be scheduled by the Registrar’s Office in the currently designated time period, Monday June 22 to Thursday June 25, 2020.
4) Requests for grade modifications from past or future terms.
Some students have expressed the belief that, given the restructured grading schemes of the 2020 Winter Term offerings, they would have achieved a higher grade had they not taken the course in a previous Term. You are asked NOT to make any such final grade modifications and instead, send the following communication to students:

Dear ----,
McMaster University takes the academic success and the emotional health and well-being of students seriously, and we recognize that both feel at risk during these uncertain times. Please be assured that instructors have carefully considered the revised course plans for the Winter 2020 courses so they are clear, equitable, and align with our shared academic expectations. The revisions were not created to disadvantage any students, but to provide the best possible learning outcome in these less than ideal circumstances. The courses taken in the 2019 Fall Term were not subject to the circumstances that we now face and therefore the grades will remain as they are. No modifications will be made.

5) SAS accommodations
Please continue to respect the Student Accommodations requests of our students. If you are unable to identify the appropriate accommodation, please contact SAS (sas@mcmaster.ca). Further detailed information on SAS accommodations will be shared early next week.

Also, given the current environment, please consider implementing extra time for completion of academic work, for all students. Some instructors are designing tests/exams that allow 48 hours for completion. This will allow students to plan their schedule and also minimizes your administrative workload to set up individual accommodations. If this, or similar processes, do not meet an individual student need, please refer students to their SAS Program Coordinators directly.

6) MSAF accommodations
This is a reminder that MSAF processes remain in place until the end of scheduled classes, April 7th, 2020, as described in the previous memo. Please continue to offer students MSAF accommodations. If you are concerned about your ability to accommodate students, please contact your Associate Dean (Academic) Office for consultation.

7) Are RISO accommodations still being considered?
Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous, and Spiritual Observations (RISO) must still be recognized in the 2020 Winter Term. This will include accommodations around dates and times for these observations. Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Please note that if there were changes to your course scheduling, that students may have new RISO requests.
For RISO accommodations, students should be directed to contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, tests, and exams.

As an instructor, if you have inquiries about accommodating term work or final exams, please contact your Faculty Associate Dean (Academic) Office.

8) A message was posted for students on Avenue to Learn. Please see the message here:  http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/

Thank you again, everyone, for your patience in this rapidly changing environment.

Sincerely,
Kim Dej, Acting Vice-Provost, Faculty