Covid-19 Continency Planning Information
March 13th, 2020

Message for Chairs and Directors:

As of today, the risk of catching the virus continues to remain low. The university community takes the health and wellness of our members seriously and we are interested in slowing the potential for spread of Covid-19. We are committed to ensuring the successful completion of the current academic term by all of our students.

The University’s focus is always clearly on our students, faculty and staff. And while the University has taken many measures to prepare and keep our community informed as the pandemic has unfolded, the university has now made a more significant decision to suspend classes at McMaster.

McMaster in-person classes and tests for undergraduate and graduate students will end at the end of day, after evening classes and tests, on Friday March 13th and no in-person exams will be held at the end of this term.

As a result, as a chair or director, you are asked to do the following:

1) On or before March 18th, connect with each course instructor to review their plan for ensuring that their course can come to an appropriate completion by the end of the current academic term. Instructors may consider some of the following instructional continuity options:
   - Providing access to teaching and learning materials for students to engage in self-directed learning
   - Continuing to provide teaching through online or alternate formats
   - Reducing the content to the minimum needed to meet the course learning outcomes or goals
   - Other options as appropriate for the course (see Instructional Continuity webpage)

Instructors may consider some of the following options for redesigning any assessments (including but not limited to presentations, reports, tests, quizzes, final exams, etc) that originally required face-to-face contact:
   - Modifying planned assessments to other formats (e.g. online quizzes/exams, virtual meetings/presentations, take-home assessments, etc)
   - Modifying due dates or test/exam dates (Note: instructors are encouraged to use the originally-scheduled final exam date and time, but in a different format than in-person, if appropriate. Modifying due dates or test dates must be done with consideration for balancing workload and dates for students across many courses in a program).
   - Adjusting and using multiple grade calculation schemes
   - Other options as appropriate for the course (see Instructional Continuity webpage)
2) On or before March 18th, ensure that a communication is prepared and distributed to all students in each course offered by your department or school.
   - A template of this communication will be provided.
   - Please have it approved by both the instructor and head of the program, and ensure that students have access to it in multiple ways (e.g. by email and posted on Avenue) by March 18th.

Please also note that:
   - McMaster continues to be committed to accessibility and the duty to accommodate. Please discuss with your instructors what impacts might need to be considered for accessibility, equity, and accommodation purposes.
   - You are asked to provide as much support and flexibility for your instructors to prepare for these changes. This may, for some instructors, mean delaying the delivery of instruction and learning materials for a couple of days to make the necessary adjustments.
   - Undergraduate thesis and research project work should be finished promptly. Graduate students should continue to attend to research in labs, studios, and other campus research facilities, however, graduate classes are suspended.

We recognize that instructors invest a great deal of thought into course design and that the university's decision will have an impact on all of our instructors. We don’t underestimate the challenge it will be for instructors to find alternate ways to finish their courses and for staff to develop and implement the changes that will be required. Guidance and resources are available to you through our new Instructional Continuity webpage, hosted at the MacPherson Institute. Consultations can be booked with staff at the MacPherson Institute.

Sincerely,
Kim Dej, Acting Vice-Provost, Faculty
Lori Goff, Director, MacPherson Institute