Covid-19 Continency Planning Information
March 13th, 2020

Message for Instructors:

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 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 the day on Friday March 13th (after evening classes and tests conclude) and no in-person exams will be held at the end of this term.

We recognize that instructors invest a great deal of thought into course design and we do not take this decision lightly. We don’t underestimate the challenge it will be for instructors to find alternate ways to finish their course programs 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 booked with staff at the MacPherson Institute.

All instructors are asked to immediately consider the following to continue teaching:

- How can you best cover the core material you had planned for the remaining weeks of term?
- What needs to be considered for student equity, accessibility, and accommodations for your course?
- Could you provide access to teaching and learning materials for students to engage in self-directed learning?
- Could you continue to provide instruction through online or alternate formats?
- Could you reduce the content to the minimum needed to meet the course learning outcomes or goals?
- Can you adjust your office hours to a virtual format?
- Are there other options that are appropriate for your course? (Please see the Instructional Continuity webpage for ideas and resources)
All instructors are asked to immediately consider the following for assessing students this term:

- How can you best revise your originally-planned assessments (e.g. presentations, reports, tests, quizzes, final exams, etc) so that there is no need for in-person or face-to-face contact?
- What needs to be considered for student equity, accessibility, and accommodations for your course?
- Could you modify planned assessments to other formats (e.g. online quizzes/exams, virtual meetings/presentations, take-home assessments, etc)?
- Could you modify 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. Modifying due dates or test dates must be done in consultation with the chair/director with consideration for balancing workload and dates for students across many courses in a program).
- Could you adjust your final grade calculation scheme and provide multiple ways of calculating the final grade, ensuring the best outcome for students?
- Are there other options that are appropriate for the course? (Please see the Instructional Continuity webpage)

Discuss all changes needed for your course with your chair or director and communicate the changes to students on or before March 18th

Consider the following guidelines:

- Assessments that were originally planned to be submitted through Avenue to Learn may continue
- Any in-person tests or quizzes that were originally planned may occur if the format is adapted to a take-home version or to an online version (e.g. Avenue to Learn quizzes)
- Any student group work that is required to complete assignments may continue to occur in online formats
- Any in-class presentations that were planned may continue to occur in a virtual format
- Any in-person final exams must be changed. Some options include: preparing final assessments as take-home exams, online exams (e.g. Avenue to Learn quizzes), or changing the type of assessment (e.g. end-of-term assignment). The exam date or due date can be scheduled on or around the currently scheduled exam time.
- The difficulty of the alternate exam should not exceed a typical exam in the course.
- Final grade calculation schemes, if adjusted, should be adjusted judiciously. Offer multiple ways in which finals grades can be calculated based upon all course assessments and use the grade that is to the benefit of the student.
- Students registered with SAS will still need to be accommodated with extended writing times for online and take-home tests.

Please also note that:

- Undergraduate thesis and research project work should be finished promptly. Capstone research and thesis symposia presentations, both posters and oral, may continue to occur in a virtual format
- Graduate students should continue to attend to research in labs, studios, and other campus research facilities, however, graduate classes are suspended.

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