

The Community of Care Commitment: Resources and Pathways to Support Conflict Resolution (Fall 2021)

BACKGROUND

York is embarking on a gradual and safe return to campuses beginning in Fall 2021, with a return to full operations anticipated for Winter 2022. In recognition that returning to campus will involve a range of emotions and expectations for York students, staff, faculty, instructors, and guests, some guidance has been prepared here.

All members of the York community share in the responsibility to keep others safe on campuses. This is particularly important in indoor spaces, such as classrooms and other instructional areas, research spaces, and shared or common spaces including libraries or designated eating areas.

Committing to a [community of care](#) at York will be essential during the transition back to campus. This means that all community members have a shared responsibility for:

- observing all COVID-19 health and safety regulations while on our campuses;
- supporting community well-being through healthy personal behaviours and actions;
- maintaining compassion, kindness, and empathy towards one another amid times of uncertainty and difficulty; and
- respecting personal health and privacy in balance with the protection of public health.

PURPOSE

It is essential that respect for and the privacy of each York community member inform how we engage with each other around health and safety on our campuses. This document is designed to offer communication strategies and conflict resolution pathways for university members around how they can seek support if needed, including guidance on what to do and who to contact in their Faculty, Division or Unit in situations where conversations may be necessary or where conflict needs to be resolved.

The *Community of Care Commitment* upholds education at the heart of conflict resolution and encourages attention and sensitivity to the circumstances of the situation, the individuals involved, and the impact on others. Consider the following topics and, where necessary, conversational strategies for conflict de-escalation and resolution. These prompts are not intended to serve as scripts but rather to provoke thought about how to address a situation that may arise. Each are underpinned by a commitment to dialogue, open communication and education in the first instance when there is concern about an issue or possible conflict.

| Topic | What We Can't Do | What We Can Do | Conversational Prompt |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Personal health information | <p>No individual may request or demand personal medical information from another person including (but not limited to) inquiring about or asking for verification of their vaccination status.</p> <p>No individual can deny another individual access to a teaching, learning or research space based on assumptions about their personal health information, including vaccination status.</p> | <p>Remember and remind others that everyone has a right to keep their personal health information private.</p> <p>Consider if there are power differentials between yourself and the other individual(s). Even if the relationship is not marked by an obvious power differential (e.g., peer-to-peer, student-to-student), consider that even voluntarily disclosing your own health information (e.g., vaccination status) may lead to an unspoken expectation that the other individual(s) reciprocate where they may not want to.</p> | <p>“We all share responsibility to keep one another safe. While on-campus, we must observe health and safety regulations such as self-screening and mask wearing. I respect that your personal health information is private and confidential information. I remind you that we cannot request or demand this information from another person.”</p> |
| Masks or face coverings | <p>Outside of situations where Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is expected as part of a program or functional unit's stated requirements, no individual may inquire about or demand a rationale of someone not wearing a mask or face covering.</p> | <p>Remember and remind others that masks and/or face coverings will be required when indoors on-campus and while engaging in in-person activities, as mandated by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and Toronto Public Health. However, some may be exempt from wearing</p> | <p>“I recognize that you may not be able to wear a mask or face covering due an exemption. However, if that is not the case, I ask for your help in keeping everyone on campus safe. University policy states that, while indoors, you are required to wear a mask or face covering in observance of required</p> |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| | | <p>masks or face coverings due to medical reasons.</p> | <p>government and public health regulations. If you need a mask, they can be acquired using your YU-card at vending machines located across campus.”</p> <p>“I know wearing a mask or face covering may not be comfortable, but it’s an important way to protect us all.”</p> <p>“It is very likely that you have already experienced the need to wear masks or face coverings when you are out in your communities. By doing this on our campuses also, this practice will merely be an extension of what you have already become accustomed to in your day-to-day lives.”</p> |
| <p>Awareness of current public health guidelines</p> | <p>We cannot target individuals and/or groups in the name of public health surveillance.</p> <p>In particular, it’s important to be sensitive to ways in which unconscious bias, discrimination, and racism</p> | <p>It is appropriate to reiterate current public health guidelines, York University policy, and provincial regulations in a classroom, research, or other academic or administrative setting, so long as the manner in which the</p> | <p>“So much has changed over the course of the pandemic. But the one thing that hasn’t is that everything is changing all the time. I know it’s frustrating, but we do need to follow the health and safety regulations of the</p> |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| | <p>have interwoven in and through the pandemic and have disproportionately impacted Indigenous, racialized, and low-income groups and communities.</p> | <p>information is shared is collective in nature.</p> <p>However, there may be some situations in which it will be appropriate to have a private one-on-one conversation (e.g., between a manager and their staff member). Concerns at the individual level should be addressed according to the information below.</p> | <p>University including <i>*required regulation here*</i></p> <p>“This may be different from what you were expecting, but we are all required to follow the health and safety regulations of the University including [<i>*required regulation here.*</i>]”</p> |
| <p>Debating the validity of health and safety measures</p> | <p>Campus security services provide 24/7 support to all members of the university community. However, while it may be tempting, we should not immediately call on campus security services when or where conflict can be resolved through dialogue and communication.</p> | <p>We must understand that the return to campus is a transitional process (not singular event), that requires patience from all. It is appropriate to make clear that the University has definitive health and safety regulations, and set expectations for all those on campus with regards to observing health and safety measures.</p> | <p>“I see that you are frustrated and respect your concerns. However, these are not <i>my</i> rules, but rather those of the University, during the pandemic and while we are on campus. These rules are also required by Toronto Public Health and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. For the time being, can you please...[<i>*include desired action here*</i>]? Afterwards we can either calmly discuss this further or you can consider following up with [<i>*include first point of contact.*</i>]”</p> |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p>Creating personal health and safety rules</p> | <p>No university community member may create their own guidelines around health and safety that either conflict with public health regulations, York University policy or procedure, or provincial directives for the post-secondary sector.</p> | <p>Be aware of and observe the University's health and safety regulations at all times while on campus and while engaging in activities in-person. Remind others about the Better Together website as a one-stop source for information on what is and what is not permitted on campuses.</p> | <p>"York has defined health and safety measures that must be observed by all who come to campus and who participate in activities in-person.</p> <p>Information about COVID-19 health and safety measures can be found on the Better Together website. It is a valuable resource for understanding what is and what is not allowed on York's campuses."</p> |
|---|--|---|---|

CONFLICT RESOLUTION PATHWAYS

The [Better Together](#) website offers comprehensive information on a range of COVID-19 and return-to-campus issues, including an extensive [FAQs](#) section. Conflict can arise from a lack of information or from misinformation and the site can be a useful primary resource to help prevent and/or ease conflict, if it may arise.

If conflict does arise, it should be resolved as close to the source as possible. Members of the community are encouraged to address any issues promptly and informally as appropriate and respecting rights and privacy of all parties. Should informal attempts at resolution be unsuccessful or inappropriate and conflicts continue to persist, the parties should seek the advice and/or support of the contact person in their Department or Faculty who is responsible for responding to questions and concerns related to return-to-campus issues. These contacts are meant to extend processes currently followed at York to seek information and support in resolving issues.

York Security Services should only be contacted in situations where there is an immediate threat to personal safety that cannot be resolved with the assistance of the contact person listed below and requires an immediate intervention by York Security Services.

| Community Member | First Point of Contact for Questions or Concerns |
|--|--|
| Undergraduate students | Undergraduate Program Director (UPD) or designate in your unit's Undergraduate Program office |
| Graduate students | Graduate Program Director (GPD) or designate in your unit's Graduate Program Office |
| Postdoctoral Visitors/Fellows | Supervisor or Dean's/Principal's Office |
| Faculty members / Instructors | Department Chair or Director of School or Dean's /Principal's office as appropriate |
| Teaching Assistants | Course Director |
| Administrative Staff | Direct Manager |
| Research Staff | Direct Manager or Principal Investigator |
| Academic Visitors | Dean's/Principal's Office |
| Non-York Resaerch Project Participants | The designated primary point of contact for all communications with York University (e.g., the Principal Investigator or Research Project Manager) |
| All Community Members | Questions or concerns can be submitted through the Better Together website at: https://www.yorku.ca/bettertogether/contact/ |
| Vendors and External Partners | The designated primary point of contact for all communications with York University |

Conflicts related to COVID-19 and the safe return to York campuses may connect to, or be informed by, many existing university policies and procedures. For example – and this is not an exhaustive list – the following existing University policies are available resources for community members: the [Code of Students Rights and Responsibilities](#), the [Senate Policy on Disruptive or Harassing Behaviour in Academic Situations](#), and the [Healthy Workplace Policy](#). In all instances, these policies are supported by specific [guidelines](#) and programs.

Depending on the nature of the concern, other university and provincial regulations may apply. Parties to a conflict are encouraged to identify and follow the appropriate university and external policies and seek out support from university offices as those policies are applied. These offices include, but are not limited to:

- Office of Student Community Relations – <http://oscr.students.uit.yorku.ca/>
- York International – <https://yorkinternational.yorku.ca/>

- Health, Safety and Employee Well-being – <https://hr.info.yorku.ca/health-safety-employee-well-being/>
- Centre for Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion – <http://rights.info.yorku.ca/>
- Student Counselling, Health & Well-being – <https://counselling.students.yorku.ca/>
- Deans' Offices – <https://atlas.cookie.uit.yorku.ca/atlas/servlet/atlas/>
- Office of the Ombudsperson – <http://ombuds.info.yorku.ca/>
- York Security Services – For emergencies call [416-736-5333](tel:416-736-5333), or from your office phone at extension **33333**, or for TTY at **416-736-5470**

York University administrative employees are also encouraged to participate in “A Resilient Return to Campus: An Employee Learning and Development Series” featuring the following sessions: “A Resilient Return to Campus: A Well-being Toolkit for Managers” for managers and HR professionals (August 12 and September 20 via Zoom); “Managing Remote and Hybrid Teams” for managers and HR professionals (September 24 and October 1 via Zoom); “A Resilient Return to Campus for Staff: Leveraging Your Strengths” for employees (October 5 and October 12 via Zoom). York’s Human Resources team has also partnered with ARETE Training, Canada's leading experts in workplace conflict and violence prevention, to provide employees with access to an online learning module called “COVID-19 Issues Management” to help Managers and/or employees experiencing increased or escalated challenges around COVID-19 related issues. For more information, please contact hrlearn@yorku.ca.

SUGGESTED HEALTH AND SAFETY LANGUAGE FOR COURSE SYLLABI

Faculty and instructors teaching on-campus and in-person are encouraged to include a statement on health and safety in their syllabi in efforts to help set expectations on and remind all participants of the health and safety measures that need to be observed while on campus.

Faculty and instructors are expected to observe the [Course Outline Guidelines](#) established by the Senate Committee on Academic Standards, Curriculum & Pedagogy (ASCP). The language below is not obligatory for inclusion in course syllabi, and is offered for consideration:

As part of York’s [Community of Care Commitment](#), all members of the York community share in the responsibility of keeping others safe on campuses. In this class, as elsewhere on campus, students must comply with all University health and safety protocols, including:

- Self-screening using the *YU Screen** tool prior to coming to campus for any in-person activities ***Tool launches on August 16 and link will be provided.**
- Not attending in-person activities at any of York University’s campuses/locations when you are feeling unwell or if you answer YES to any of the screening questions.

- Wearing masks or face coverings that completely cover the mouth, nose and chin while on campus
- Avoiding eating and drinking in classrooms, research and in shared spaces, where eating is explicitly not permitted (e.g., Libraries)
- Engaging in good hand hygiene
- Following instructions in designated spaces, as they pertain to giving space to one another and/or protocols for entry to and exit from classrooms, instructional and other shared spaces (e.g., Libraries), when applicable.

Information about COVID-19 health and safety measures can be found on the [Better Together](#) website. The Senate Executive Committee's [Principles to Guide 2021-2022 Course Planning](#) encourage us to uphold compassion, kindness, empathy, and a sense of responsibility towards one another. We all have a duty to uphold professional and respectful interactions with one another.