

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 starting in Fall 2021, with a return to full operations anticipated for Winter 2022. We recognize that returning to campus will be weighted with a range of emotions and expectations for York students, staff, faculty, instructors, and guests.

All members of the York community share in the responsibility of keeping others safe on campuses. This is particularly important in our indoor spaces such as classrooms and other instructional areas, research spaces, and shared or common spaces such as 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 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 those 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. The prompts are not intended to serve as scripts per se, but rather to provoke thought about how to address a situation. They are all underpinned by a commitment to dialogue, open communication and education in the first instance when there is concern or possible conflict.

Topic	What We Can't Do	What We Can Do	Conversational Prompt
Personal health information	No individual may request or demand personal medical	Remember and remind others that everyone has a	"We all share s responsibility to keep each other safe.

	<p>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>right to keep their personal health information private.</p> <p>Consider if there are power differentials between yourself and 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>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>
<p>Masks or face coverings</p>	<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 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 masks due to medical reasons.</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 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 covering as you are out in your communities. By including our campuses, this practice will merely be an extension to 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, we must be sensitive to ways in which unconscious bias, discrimination, and racism have interwoven in and through the pandemic and have disproportionately impacted Indigenous, racialized, and low-income groups and communities.</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 information is shared is collective in nature.</p> <p>That said, 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</p>	<p>“So much has changed over the course of the pandemic. But the one thing that hasn’t is that things constantly change. I know it’s frustrating, but we do need to follow the health and safety regulations of the 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</p>

		member). Concerns at the individual level should be addressed according to the information below.	including [<i>*required regulation here</i>].”
Debating the validity of health and safety measures	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.	We must understand the return to campus as a transitional process (not singular event), requiring 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.	“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 on campus. These rules are as required by Toronto Public Health and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. For the time being, can you please... [<i>*desired action here</i>]? Afterwards we can either calmly discuss this further or you can consider following up with [<i>*first point of contact</i>].”
Creating personal health and safety rules	No university community member may create their own guidelines around health and safety that conflict with public health regulations, York University policy or procedure, or provincial directives for the post-secondary sector.	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 of the Better Together website as a one-stop source for information on what is and what is not permitted on campuses.	“York has defined health and safety measures that must be observed by all who come to campus and who participate in activities in-person. 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 permitted on campuses.”

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. The Better Together website is a useful primary resource to help prevent and/or ease conflict if it arises.

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 Research 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 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](#)
- [York International](#)
- [Health, Safety and Employee Well-being](#)
- [Centre for Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion](#)
- [Student Counselling, Health & Well-being](#)
- [Deans' Offices](#)
- [Office of the Ombudsperson](#)
- 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: hrlern@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
- 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 covering that completely covers 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.