



## **Pandemic Disruption: Winter 2022 Term Academic Plans**

### **Communication from the Executive Committee of Senate**

**7 October 2021**

In March 2020 the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak to be a pandemic. At that time the University took immediate steps to ensure the safety and well-being of the York community and to preserve the continuity of our academic programs. The Senate Executive Committee determined that the circumstances constituted a disruption as defined by the Senate [\*Policy on the Academic Implications of Disruptions or Cessations of University Business Due to Labour Disputes or Other Causes\*](#) (the Disruptions Policy), and the Policy remains in force. Senate Executive continues to monitor the impact of the disruption and work with the Provost and Vice-President Academic to respond to emerging issues and engage in planning for academic continuity.

To this point, the most recent activity of Senate Executive was the establishment of [\*Principles to Guide 2021-2022 Course Planning\*](#) (the “Principles”) for the FW 2021-2022 academic year. The final version of the *Principles* were communicated to Senate and the University community on 6 May 2021.

### **Winter Term 2022 Plans**

In focus currently are plans for the delivery of courses in the Winter 2022 term. The mode of delivery of academic programming in Winter 2022 needs to be confirmed at this time to allow faculty members, instructors, students and University staff to plan and prepare their respective arrangements. As announced in May, the *Principles* anticipated a full return to campuses in Winter 2022, as follows:

#### **“Winter 2022 – Expected Full Return to Campuses**

A full return to campuses is expected to be possible for Winter 2022, such that all courses (including full-year 2021-2022 courses) should be planned on the assumption they will revert to their pre-pandemic mode of delivery by default, subject to agreement with the Dean’s/ Principal’s Office for a course to be delivered in a different manner such as remotely or in a blended format, during the Winter 2022 term. Dean’s and Principal’s Offices will work with units / programs to determine an appropriate balance of delivery modes in Winter 2022, given that this will still be a transitional term in which some students may be delayed in travelling to Toronto.”

Upon the recommendation of the Provost and Vice-President Academic, Senate Executive finds that, together, the extensive planning, the comprehensive measures implemented and continuing to be implemented to enable a safe return to campuses, and the optimistic public health indicators and forecasts on pandemic trends, provide a level of assurance that **the University can proceed with the planned full return to on-campus academic activities for Winter 2022 as assumed in the *Principles to Guide 2021-2022 Course Planning*.**

This does not mean that all courses will be offered in-person on our campuses as of January 2022. Many programs offered several online courses prior to the pandemic, and during the transition back to campuses there may need to be a modest offering of online courses for reasons related to student learning outcomes, specifically those courses:

- a. with a relatively high percentage of international or out of province students who face challenges relocating to Toronto in time for the Winter term;
- b. required for graduation, where alternative courses are not available and offering the course only in person may delay the ability of students to graduate; or
- c. in which colleagues are piloting unique new e-learning methodologies that the academic unit is evaluating for possible longer term adoption.

These factors may result in some units / programs offering up to 15% more online courses than they did prior to the pandemic, on a transitional basis (so long as this is not prohibited by an external accreditation body). Deans' and Principal's Offices should be *consulted* regarding any plans to offer online courses above the levels originally approved for the program – that is prior to the pandemic - and as currently described in the course calendar. The *agreement* of a Dean / Principal (or designate) will be needed for any temporarily elevated levels of online delivery that exceed an increase of 15% relative to those offered by the unit or program prior to the pandemic.

Some decanal offices have already begun to collaborate with colleagues at the unit and program level to identify courses that need to continue to be delivered remotely this Winter for reasons related to student learning outcomes, as outlined above. As noted, we are reaching a critical juncture to complete Winter term planning to communicate clearly to students whether any of their selected courses will have a different delivery mode than currently indicated in the course calendar, and to confirm for instructors the planned mode of delivery for their courses.

Programs / units will therefore be asked to submit any further proposals to deliver select courses remotely in the Winter term, as well as their rationale to do so, to their respective Office of the Dean / Principal, by no later than **Wednesday, 27 October 2021**.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, units / programs will need to develop and communicate to their instructors a contingency plan to switch on-campus elements to online if necessary for health and safety reasons, either temporarily, or for the remainder of the course.

## **Winter 2022 Implementation Guide**

An updated implementation guide to facilitate the operationalization and logistical requirements of the *Principles* for the Winter 2022 term will be distributed in the coming days by the Provost and Academic Vice-President to Deans and Principal.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that Osgoode Hall Law School courses do not appear in the York University course calendar.

## Planning Assumptions Informing the Winter 2022 Return to Campuses

The Executive Committee is aware of the importance of the decision to resume on campus academic activities as of January 2022 and approached its role in the decision with assiduousness. Members engaged the Provost in a thorough discussion of the recommendation to proceed with the on-campus Winter term plans, in which they shared candid views and advice in keeping with the spirit of the Committee's responsibility for oversight of academic continuity during a long disruption. The careful health and safety and operational planning and the comprehensive actions taken and to be taken in the coming weeks – together with the commitment to address concerns raised – gave the Executive Committee confidence that the University has capably set the stage for a safe return in January. The core planning assumptions are set out below for transparency and the community's reassurance.

### *i. Health and Safety Measures at the University*

Preserving the health and safety of the University community has been given primacy in all planning. Coincident with the decision for a gradual return to in-person activities this Fall and preparation for the full return this coming Winter, the University has undertaken extensive planning to enable and sustain a safe return to campuses. Specific measures taken to date include:

- establishment of a [Vaccine Mandate](#) requiring all University Community Members who seek access to campus to submit Proof of Vaccination (subject to narrow exemptions) which will continue to apply in the Winter 2022 term. Accordingly, as of October 5, all staff, faculty and instructors of the University are required to have disclosed their vaccination status, regardless of whether they are currently seeking access to the campuses. Students are also required to do so unless they do not seek access to campus or attend in-person activities.
- a concerted educational and compliance campaign, and sponsoring of regular vaccination clinics on or near our campuses to achieve full vaccination rates; as of early October, full vaccination has been achieved in 96% of those who have so far disclosed their status, with another 2-3% of individuals indicating they are partially vaccinated; see Vaccination Status Update, Appendix A.
- implementation of complementary health and safety strategies such as proactive case and contact management by trained professional staff, a daily screening requirement, masking protocols, upgraded ventilation, improved cleaning, ready access to hand sanitizer, on-campus testing clinics (offering free of charge rapid testing and PCR testing for those who have positive test results) and updated signage.

Moreover, during the vaccination bridging period of 7 September to 18 October, efforts continue to focus on several fronts including:

- supporting vaccine access for community members who are not yet fully vaccinated
- working directly with any individual who submits a failed screening result, to support them and determine when they can be cleared to come to campus

- expanding options for rapid testing beyond just the on-campus clinics (anticipated launch date of a take-home testing program is October 14, 2021)
- verifying and supporting early compliance among particular groups such as students in residence, varsity athletes, nursing students in clinical placements, and newly arriving international students
- cross-checking data from the YU Screen tool, with other records including course enrolments, staff return-to-campus schedules, teaching assignments, and door access data, to identify and follow up in potential cases of non-compliance (all data is being handled carefully in compliance with privacy and information security requirements)
- active steps to follow-up with community members who may not have uploaded their information and to address any remaining cases of non-compliance to achieve full implementation of our Vaccination Mandate over the next number of weeks.
- reviewing the approximately 200 exemption requests against strict eligibility criteria informed by the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

ii. *Successful Gradual Fall Return to Campuses*

The University moved successfully from teaching approximately 5% of courses in-person in Summer 2021, to a current state of approximately 33% of courses having in-person components. All buildings on the Glendon and Keele campuses are now open, and office and research spaces may be used at will subject to adherence to defined health and safety protocols for those spaces. Libraries are open with designated, bookable spaces for quiet study, attending online classes, and group work. Student and community services are available in-person as well as virtually. Food services, athletics, and co-curricular spaces are operating in line with current public health requirements. More than 2,000 students are living in residence on our campuses. Regular updates and health and safety information for the community are being circulated by email, social media, and posted on the [Better Together](#) website.

iii. *Responding to the Experiences from Fall 2021*

The Executive Committee's planning discussion with the Provost provided an opportunity for members to share reflections on the experience of program delivery this term with the gradual return to in-person academic activities. That dialogue identified several issues that require follow-up to be facilitated by the Provost, including:

- adequate study spaces for students including suitable spaces to attend an online course when they must be on campus for in-person course components or other reasons
- the need for continued efforts to communicate, in new and creative ways, why masks are an essential means for all of us to protect each other, especially indoors or where 2-metre distances cannot be maintained
- a review of the sufficiency of HyFlex classrooms to meet instruction and learning needs and / or other technology resources to support instructors' teaching
- additional teaching supports for faculty members

iv. *Pandemic Indicators and Forecasts*

Recent data from the Ontario COVID-19 Science Table highlight that rising rates of vaccination across the province, along with the maintenance of key public health measures (e.g., mask mandates), have helped to contain the number of serious illnesses, hospitalizations and deaths occurring, even as K-12 schools and post-secondary institutions have re-opened. The introduction of a provincial vaccine passport system, the prospect of even more efficacious medication to combat severe illness (Molnupiravir), as well as Pfizer's submission of trial data and soon full application for authorization of vaccines for children between 5 - 12 years of age, promise to further hasten the end of the pandemic as we are currently experiencing it.

By January 2022, the University expects to have comprehensive information on the state of the pandemic. In the interim, it will continue to actively monitor compliance, so that the chances of encountering an unvaccinated individual on our campuses will be low. The University will also continue to work with its partners at Toronto Public Health and / or Humber River Hospital to ensure access to vaccines for all community. This will be especially important for international students who are not yet able to access vaccines in their countries of origin. At this time, we expect our mask/face covering mandate to remain in place. Heightened attention to ventilation, hand sanitization, and other health and safety measures will also be sustained at this time. Collectively these conditions allow the University to schedule courses in the normal fashion, without class size caps or temporal gaps between classes.

Finally, in its oversight role in response to the impact of the pandemic on academic activities, the Senate Executive Committee continues to apply the governing principles of *Academic Integrity, Fairness to Students*, and *Timely Information* as established in the Senate Disruptions policy.

Mario Roy  
Chair of Senate  
7 October 2021

## Appendix A

### Vaccination Status Update: as of Oct 1, 2021

	Living-on Campus	% breakdown for students living on campus	Coming-in Person	% breakdown for students coming in person	Staff	% breakdown for staff	Faculty	% breakdown for faculty	TOTAL PER VACCINATION STATUS	TOTAL % PER VACCINATION STATUS
Unvaccinated	2	0.07%	78	0.36%	11	0.36%	2	0.10%	93	0.31%
Partially Vaccinated	81	2.73%	602	2.74%	41	1.32%	7	0.33%	731	2.43%
Fully Vaccinated	2874	96.77%	21116	96.15%	3027	97.74%	2078	99.43%	29095	96.60%
Exempted	13	0.44%	166	0.76%	18	0.58%	3	0.14%	200	0.66%
<b>TOTAL SUBMISSIONS</b>	<b>2970</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>21962</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>3097</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>2090</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>30119*</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Breakdown by Exemption	Living-on Campus	Coming-in Person	Staff	Faculty
Medical	3	37	3	3
Creed	10	129	15	0
<b>TOTAL SUBMISSIONS</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>

\* 35,438 members of the York community originally intended to be on a campus at some point in the Fall term. Some of these members may have since changed their plans.