

## COVID-19 Pandemic Disruption: Spring 2022

### Communication from the Executive Committee of Senate

The continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic that has disrupted academic activities at the University since March 2020 means that the *Senate Policy on the [Academic Implications of Disruptions or Cessations of University Business Due to Labour Disputes or Other Causes](#)* remains in force. This policy provides the framework for the Executive Committee of Senate to manage the impact on academic activities guided by the three governing principles articulated in the policy: **academic integrity, fairness to students, and timely information.**

#### Declaring When the Disruption is Ended

It is also the responsibility of Executive to declare when the disruption of academic activities has ended. The Executive Committee will consider the matter early in the Fall 2022 term.

The Executive Committee has continued to monitor the impact of the disruption on academic activities. With the circumstances of the pandemic improving in recent months, Executive has been discussing the considerations to weigh in declaring the end of the pandemic-caused disruption. The feedback provided by Senators at the April meeting on this question and the advice from the staff managing the University's response to COVID-19 indicate it is premature to declare the disruption over at this time. The Provost has advised that certain academic activities continue to be affected by the extenuating circumstances and benefit from the flexibility afforded by the Senate Disruptions Policy to be delivered in alternate formats.

The Committee will take guidance from the Senate Disruptions Policy on the criteria for determining a disruption is over. The factors that govern the assessment of whether an interruption is substantial at its outset will also guide the determination of when the disruption can be declared ended; they include:

- the availability of physical and instructional resources;
- the impact on the attendance of students, instructors, and other necessary participants;
- the impact of timing and sequence of evaluations such as examinations, practica, assignments and presentations, etc.

Equally important in the decision to declare the disruption over is confidence that the circumstances do not require adjustments to academic regulations, deadlines and schedules to preserve the obligations of Senate to:

- ensure the academic integrity of all programs; and
- provide students “immunity from penalty, reasonable alternative access to materials covered in their absence, reasonable extensions of deadlines and such other remedy as Senate deems necessary and consistent with the principle of academic integrity”.

## **Fall 2022 Planning / Approvals for Changes to the Delivery of Academic Activities Post-Disruption**

Faculties should begin preparations now for the delivery of academic activities for the Fall 2022 term under normal operations.

Through its monitoring role, Executive is learning that innovations in pedagogy and program delivery are emerging from the experiences with remote delivery over the past two years and that consideration is being given to adopting new practices and forms of delivery post-disruption. Some of the new approaches require approval through governance process, such as a revised mode of delivery for courses or thesis defenses or shift of a degree program's status from in-person to online.

Faculties and Departments that are exploring changes to curriculum and program delivery need time to develop their plans and prepare any necessary proposals for review through Faculty and/or Senate governance processes. Undertaking those preparations now will position units well for the transition to normal operations when Senate Executive declares the disruption ended, anticipated to be in the Fall. The Committee strongly encourages Faculties to turn their attention to these matters in a timely fashion, recognizing the suggestion is being made at a time when fatigue has set in after concerted efforts to manage the effects of the lengthy disruption.

Mario Roy  
Chair of Senate  
7 June 2022