



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
OISE | ONTARIO INSTITUTE
FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

To: OISE Faculty & Staff

From: Dean Glen Jones

Time: As of March 5, 2020

Re: **Update on COVID-19**

The University of Toronto (and of course OISE) is continuing to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation and have begun preparing contingency plans. The University has established a steering group of senior administrators, including leaders who responded to the SARS crisis in 2003, to co-ordinate U of T's response across its three campuses. The University also has academic and business continuity plans that will be enacted if needed. Also, the OISE Deans and Chairs continue to review the information from the University and are prepared to coordinate our response as appropriate.

Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health continues to advise that the risk to Ontarians is low. The University has prepared answers to [some FAQ's and provided some helpful contact numbers](#). We recommend that you stay informed on the latest information about symptoms and treatment, how to protect yourself and the status of COVID-19 by reviewing the credible information sources (which are being updated regularly) listed at the bottom of this message.

The University follows the guidance of the federal and provincial authorities. We encourage you to check on destination-specific travel restrictions on the Government of Canada's [COVID-19 travel advisory website](#). Some institutions, such as our affiliated hospitals, have imposed more restrictive requirements given their clinical operational needs. Also, some of our community partners (e.g. schools and school boards) may also have particular requirements that could impact faculty, staff and students.

No one should be excluded or banned from attending classes or work. The assessment of risk should be based on travel and exposure history and not on race or ethnicity. We encourage members to reinforce messaging of the University's commitment to human rights and our values of diversity, inclusion, and respect.

We are not changing policies or practices at this time. Rather, we are asking you to consider your contingency plans for your classes and work units should there be a disruption.

For both faculty and staff, this includes:

- planning for maintaining access to any physical and electronic files you might need from your office in the event you need to work from home
- ensuring that you have appropriate IT gear to maintain your engagement with your courses and/or work from home (e.g., camera, mic, VPN, ensuring your shared drives are mapped)

Faculty should also consider:

- ensuring you have a plan for posting course materials to Quercus, Pepper or other additional platforms you may use. Please contact your local [Quercus support contact](#) should you require assistance
- being understanding if students self-quarantine, and considering ways to allow them to do so without penalty to participation marks, etc.
- beginning to think about alternative ways of designing and administering deliverables through the rest of the term, including exams
- Teaching staff may also wish to refer to [Supporting Course Resiliency: Best Practices for Teaching Staff](#)

Should there be a significant disruption due to COVID-19, courses and other University activities may be affected. For example, faculty may need to accommodate several students in your course, or staff providing support may not be available due to illness. Faculty may fall ill and require alternative means of communicating with your students and administering your course, or staff may require remote working arrangements. If there are severe disruptions to University academic continuity, decisions around altering course delivery (changing course activities and assessments; length of term, etc.) or when to alter policies regarding absences and accommodations will come from the Provost's Office, which has convened an academic continuity working group. For those organizing major events at OISE or elsewhere, it is important to monitor the relevant public health websites and resources.

As it is still influenza (flu) season, and given that students are advised to stay home if they are experiencing flu-like symptoms, we ask that you ensure that students are aware that they will not be penalized for any such absences. Doing this will also help minimize the impact of both influenza and COVID-19 on our broader community. If students feel that their academic performance or their grades are in jeopardy, it is possible that sick students will come to campus, thus putting others at risk.

Disruptions to overall academic and business continuity will be monitored and managed in accordance with the University's academic continuity policy and business continuity plan, and will be communicated accordingly. The University is working to respond effectively to COVID-19. We are preparing contingency plans should the situation change and will keep you informed if we need to alter our regular operations. Our preparations revolve around the need to ensure the health of our community, and to support the continuity of our courses and programs.

Finally, we all need to practice basic protective measures against COVID-19. Please consider these tips from [Toronto Public Health](#).

Resources:

Health

[Toronto Public Health](#)

[Ontario Ministry of Health](#)

[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

[World Health Organization](#)

Travel

[Government of Canada Travel Advice \(COVID-19\)](#)