

MEMORANDUM

TO: Faculty of Engineering Winter 2022 Instructors

FROM: Carolyn MacGregor, Associate Dean Teaching & Student Experience,
Dan Davison, Associate Dean Undergraduate Studies
Siva Sivoththanam, Associate Dean Graduate Studies & Post Doctoral Affairs

DATE: December 20, 2021

RE: Instructing in Winter 2022

CC: Dean of Engineering, Department Chairs/Directors, Associate Chairs/Directors,
Teaching-Learning Champions

Hello Winter 2022 Instructors,

The Associate Deans and Associate Chairs/Directors have met to discuss issues relating to course delivery in Winter 2022. We are doing a follow-up to the President's memo of December 16, 2021. Department Chairs and Program leads are doing contingency planning so that we can remain reasonably agile to pivot back to in-person when it is safe to do so. Your department may have more specific information to add to aid course delivery for academic cohorts.

This is a rather long note, but there are **MANY** important issues to address, and it is being assumed that all instructors for Winter 2022 will have read this memo and aware of the guidelines and advice included before the start of classes on January 5, 2021.

If you are short on time right now, please pay attention to the Guiding Principles, Questions A1-A6, B2, B3, B4, C1, C2 and the Summary at the end.



Faculty of Engineering Guiding Principles for Course Delivery (for Winter 2022 and beyond):

- **Put on your oxygen mask first before helping others.** Be compassionate with yourself so you can show compassion to your students and your teaching assistants.
- **Practice Compassionate Consideration** (humane and empathetic understanding when someone faces extenuating circumstance). Accommodation on grounds of disability is a legal requirement. Compassionate consideration is within your control as an instructor.
- **Remain agile.** Public health directives are not under our control.
- **Keep teaching plans simple** so that you can pivot to classroom or remote, as directed.
- **Add high-impact value through in-person time.** If time in-person is less than currently expected, identify key activities or interactions that will provide the most benefit to student learning and engagement with your course and build back a sense of community.
- **Adopt practices of [resilient design](#)** to leverage blended learning teaching approaches that are reasonable for moving between online and the classroom.
- **Include strategic slack in your course design.** Assume that there will be bumps and potholes to deal with, so build in time for you and the students to pivot or catch up as needed. Know what is essential to keep, and what can be dropped from your course.
- **Build Community with students.** Time is better spent creating positive interactions and building a sense of belonging than editing videos or slide decks to perfection.
- **Manage student expectations.** Communicate through LEARN or email in advance of the course start. Be clear on how online components will work and how you anticipate in-person to work. [See below for questions about setting and managing contingencies.]
- **Let's work together as a community.** If you have questions about how to interpret or implement any of the guiding principles, please reach out to our network of instructors. Good starting points are our department [Teaching-Learning Champions, the Associate Dean Teaching & Student Experience](#), and our [CTE Faculty Liaison](#).

The following Q&A may help with final preparations for your course in Winter 2022. Answers are based on our **knowledge as of December 19, 2021**. Questions are grouped into three categories:

- A. What do I need to know for course planning and delivery?
- B. What do I need to know about assessments?
- C. What do I need to include in my course outline and communicate to students?

A. What do I need to know for course planning and delivery in Winter 2022?

1. During the remote teaching weeks, can I teach in an empty classroom, if streaming equipment is set up?

Yes, at this time instructors are permitted to do a live stream lecture in an empty classroom. Tips from those who have done live streaming is to have someone assist with monitoring any questions or comments that may come from students using remote communication tools. Please work with your department if you want to use that option.

2. Can I reuse videos from previous course offerings if students or others appear in the videos?

The Keep Learning site includes rules and resources around [Privacy and Remote Teaching](#) and states, "Recordings may only be used for the purpose for which they were obtained or compiled as reflected in the Notice of Recording." So, recordings that include students may be reused in future classes only if the students who appear in the recording agreed to this. It all depends on the wording used in the first class of the term when the videos were created. If it was stated that the recordings might be used in future offerings of the course, then the videos can be reused. Otherwise, the recordings cannot be reused without first editing them to remove sections that show students.

3. What happens if I or someone on my teaching team must self-isolate or is too ill to teach?

As per pre-pandemic, if an instructor is ill or unable to deliver a planned lecture, then the Chair of the Department should be notified immediately. Having a contingency plan for what you can put online or what can be made asynchronous is very important with these uncertain times. Keep your TA(s) aware of your plan so that they can assist you with communicating the plan to students. If the absence of a TA means that grading or course delivery may be impacted (e.g., delay in grading), let students know how the delay will be handled and how you will provide general feedback to the class so that learning is moving forward.

4. Must we account for students who are in different time zones during the Jan 5-23+ period?

Within Engineering, as the University has directed us to do emergency remote teaching until at least January 24, we are asking instructors to please continue to support students who are in different time zones until we are fully back in the classrooms. With recent travel advisories and restrictions, there may be some students who will have trouble getting back to Waterloo for the start of January. Note: No instructor is expected to provide 24/7 support. Please let students know how you will be addressing time zone challenges, and when you or members of the instructional team are available to answer questions and address issues (in EST time).

5. Must we continue to provide online materials after we switch to in-person teaching?

The University's current position is that once in-person teaching commences (tentatively Jan 24), emergency remote teaching requirements to provide online asynchronous materials ends. Instructors and students are expected to be on campus. That is, W2022 instructors are not expected to run hybrid classes as was happening in Fall 2021, unless the Department makes such arrangements. Messaging from UW has been consistent that students are expected to be on campus in W2022 for in-person teaching.

This is a tricky situation for course instructors as student expectations must be carefully managed. If types of materials were provided during remote teaching and then discontinued with return to in-person teaching, explain what the types of things you will be doing through in-person that will benefit student learning. Note: It is possible that you may have a student in your course who requires online materials as part of legal accommodation (i.e., legal obligations relating to human rights requirements in Ontario to fairly address the accessibility rights of persons with disabilities). AccessAbility Services will work with instructors in such cases.

6. Can instructors or programs continue to teach courses online (with no in-person teaching) after the switch to in-person teaching?

The Faculty of Engineering's position is to resume in-person teaching on January 24 or as soon as possible after that date. When we switch to in-person teaching, it's expected that all Engineering courses (other than those normally offered online and, conceivably, certain courses identified as not being safe to return to in-person teaching) will return to in-person delivery. We have been planning for W2022 to be in-person for months, and students have been told they must be available for in-person teaching in W2022. We want to fulfill what we've been promising and honour the effort and expense students have put in to get here.

If you are purposefully using a blended learning pedagogy, you may continue to have components of your courses online in conjunction with high-value engagement components in the classroom. Blended learning is NOT online teaching. **The key is high-value engagement components in the classroom.** We have instructors within the Faculty of Engineering who use blended approaches. CTE runs workshops for instructors wanting to adopt a blended approach. [Blended Learning | Centre for Teaching Excellence | University of Waterloo \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#)

B. What do I need to know about assessments for Winter 2022?

1. When we return to in-person teaching, will classrooms and exams still be booked at full capacity?

Yes, that's the current plan. It is conceivable that this plan will change, depending on how the pandemic unfolds in January. Note that we will not be doing a full re-scheduling of the W2022 term, so anything other than a full-capacity return to campus would have to be managed informally, and simple solutions would be preferred over complicated ones. (Examples of alternative plans that are simple to implement: maybe only low-enrollment courses can return in-person at first, or perhaps courses that have enrollment less than half the room capacity, or live streaming with chat and other communication tools to engage students.) Departments have learned a lot through Fall 2021 and know what is reasonable for their types of courses, and what to avoid.

2. What about tests and exams in W2022?

Any tests in the initial Jan 5 - 23+ period will have to be held online. As per planning and communications since September, as soon as in-person teaching starts, tests and exams will be held in-person. Exceptions would be for those assessments designed and managed online prior to the pandemic. Please remember that most of our students have not written in-person exams for six (6) academic terms. Some students have never experienced in-person test or exams at the university level. Plan for preparing students for the format of assessment as well as the content. Consider including a low weight practice test/exam where feedback can be on how the students approached the assessment. Work with your Associate Chair/Director to coordinate around practice assessment opportunities.

3. With the uncertainty around the exact date of return to in-person teaching, how can I build in flexibility around the weights of course assessments and/or due dates?

There are going to be (at least) two camps of thought on this. On one side is the position that the course outline is the contract with the students and must be articulated with very specific language to minimize opportunities for grievances based on oversights or unintended loopholes. The underlying assumption is that the course can be designed and executed with reasonable precision so no need for flexibility. The benefits to the parties involved are that expectations around deliverables and due dates are clearly stated and understood to be non-negotiable such that planning, and preparations can be done accordingly.

The reality is that we remain in uncertain times. With encouragement to be agile to pivot from remote to in-person teaching comes the underlying assumption that there is flexibility in the system. When working with uncertainty, it is problematic to try to include every possible scenario in a course outline. A compromise is to set reasonable assessment types and due dates based on your knowledge of the course content and understanding of the skill level of the students, and to include a proviso for the conditions under which you may need to make revisions. To build trust and manage expectations, be prepared to explain to students when and how the proviso will be exercised by working through some hypothetical “what if x happens” with the students.

NOTE: A contingency proviso is NOT a work-around for instructors and/or students to get out of work, responsibilities, or accountabilities. As a safeguard to allow you reasonable flexibility to work with your students and departments to respond in a fair way for your course, we recommend the following proviso wording to include in course outlines:

Fair Contingencies for Emergency Remote Teaching.

We are facing unusual and challenging times. The course outline presents the instructor’s intentions for course assessments, their weights, and due dates in Winter 2022. **As best as possible, we will keep to the specified assessments, weights, and dates.** To provide contingency for unforeseen circumstances, the instructor reserves the right to modify course topics and/or assessments and/or weight and/or deadlines with **due and fair notice to students.** In the event of such challenges, **the instructor will work with the Department/Faculty to find reasonable and fair solutions that respect rights and workloads of students, staff, and faculty.**

4. I am planning for an in-person final exam. Should I change the course weighting if final exams wind up being online?

Flexible or contingency course assessment weights should be clearly stated in the course syllabus. This is to be fair to everyone. Retroactively reweighting earlier assessments can be viewed as unfair and lead to grievances. The better strategy is to know why you are including an assessment (what content and/or skills are to be assessed?), why you have set the weights (is it representing a proportion of the course or fairly reflecting an expected level of mastery?), and why you have set the timing in the course (how much time do students need to cover content and develop skills?). If you know the “whys” and use best practices in setting assessments, then it is easier to consider alternate assessment formats that will meet your course objectives, if the need arises. If you are looking for more information on assessment practices or inspiration around alternate assessment methods, contact the Centre for Teaching Excellence [Assessing students | Centre for Teaching Excellence | University of Waterloo \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#)

C. What do I need to include in my course outline and communicate to students?

1. How will students know what to do in each of their classes when they start on January 5?

Students have received the email that we are starting January online. There is no Faculty LEARN "community group" for W2022, so **each instructor will have to communicate with their students (typically be email or through LEARN) about the online plans for their course.** Be aware that LEARN courses go automatically live on 12:01am January 5, 2022.

To communicate with your class prior to January 5,

- You can use the email function in LEARN to share your expectations with the class. This is a good strategy for online situations to allow students time to plan their first week and arrange for any materials or tools they may need.
- You can use learnhelp@uwaterloo.ca to request your course be opened earlier if you want to share resources and materials in advance. If you do not want students to see all content before

January 5, you can use the “hide” function in LEARN to control when students are able to see content elements. Turn on a course announcement.

- **Highly Recommended for Week 1:** In the first week of classes, hold at least one synchronous (live) session, even if it is to say hello and help with course orientation around your ‘time slots’ in preparation for return to campus. Let’s you practice with any new remote teaching tools.

2. Do I have to specify my plan in my course outline for teaching during the remote teaching weeks, as well as plans for when in we are in person?

YES! The Registrar’s Office has stated this new guideline in the [COVID-19 guidelines for Instructional Space | Registrar Resources for Staff and Faculty | University of Waterloo \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#), Repeated from the RO site, for convenience:

- Every course outline for an in-person class should be designed with a plan that considers alternate arrangements for:
 - a short-term (e.g., one-week) cancellation of in-person classes, whether for the particular course or University-wide.
 - a longer-term cancellation of in-person meetings, whether for the particular course or University-wide.
 - cancellation of in-person (midterm or final) examinations.
- You should include as much detail as possible in your plan to make students aware of possible scenarios. Where there are program, department, or faculty-wide contingency plans in place, you should ensure that your course plans are consistent with them.
- Outlines should also describe accommodation that will be available for students who cannot attend classes due to self-isolation.

Contingency plan wording to be included in course outlines. Examples ONLY!

Get advice so that the wording for your course and pedagogy is fair for students and works within your department context. Teaching-Learning Champions and Associate Chairs are good starting points.)

Course Format. (Which pedagogy are you using?) The format of this course is ... (e.g., blended learning with explanation for the general plan for in-person sessions and types of activities students are expected to do outside of scheduled course time.).

In-person schedule. specify scheduled course day(s) of week and time(s), on-campus location. **(What is expectation around attendance?)** Attendance and participation in all in-class sessions are expected for learning and skill development. **(What are typical learning aids that will be provide and when?)** Slide decks will be provided at the start of the in-person session time to aid notetaking. Relevant readings or worksheets will be posted on LEARN.

Covid-19 Emergency Remote Teaching-Learning Contingency for In-Class Sessions. (How will you handle or replace scheduled in-person sessions?) Live Sessions will be held on MS Teams for Course XXX, during scheduled course times. Attendance and participation in all live sessions are expected for learning and skill development. **(Will you be recording live sessions?)** To allow students to ask questions and participate freely, live sessions are not recorded; however, slide decks will be provided at the start of the in-person session time to aid notetaking. Relevant readings or worksheets will be posted on LEARN. **(Do you have compassionate direction to students who are unable to attend?)** Contact Prof X If you are unable to attend.

Covid-19 Emergency Remote Teaching-Learning Contingency for Assessments. (Are any planned assessment vulnerable to major disruption if needing to move online?) If we are unable to hold the midterm/final exam in-person, we will ... **(what is the alternate format, time frame, any restrictions, or other considerations?)**

Covid-19 Emergency Self-Isolation. (Do you have compassionate consideration or direction to students who are unable to attend?) If you are unable to attend a session or meet a deliverable deadline, please let Prof. XX know immediately. If you are facing challenges that are affecting more than one course, please contact your Associate Chair or Director of your program. They will review your case and coordinate a reasonable and fair plan in consultation with appropriate others (for example: instructors, Department Undergraduate Studies Committee, Chair, AccessAbility Services, Engineering Counselling services, Registrar's Office).

3. **Is the University's vaccine mandate going to be expanded to require a booster shot?**

Unknown. Please encourage people to get a booster if they are eligible.

4. **What messaging have students seen?**

On December 16, students received an email from the President, very similar to the one sent to employees (faculty & staff). See [Provost Email to Students for Starting Winter 2022](#).

5. **What about the public website that tells everyone about W2022 plans?**

The website <https://uwaterloo.ca/coronavirus/academic-information/undergraduate-student-information#winter-2022> is currently being updated. The Faculty of Engineering subsection has been revised to read:

(Updated Dec 16, 2021) Some labs in some Engineering courses will run in-person during the initial on-line portion of the W2022 term; students in these courses will be contacted by their academic department. Once in-person teaching resumes, all Engineering students are expected to be on campus for classes and to write tests and exams in person.

6. **Which on-campus resources are expected to be open for students in January?**

For now, this is not a full lockdown like we had in March 2020. As indicated in various memos, buildings will still be open. Residences will be open. The library will be open, but the stacks will not be available, like Fall 2021. Some study space will be available. Athletics and food services will still be open. Of course, everything is subject to appropriate safety measures, and public health directives.

7. **What about in-person advising or meeting with students?**

First-year engineering and Counselling will be sticking to online meetings with students until we return to in-person teaching. As far as we know, in-person advising can still occur (subject to social distancing and masking); however, it is wisest if we stick with online advising until classes return to campus.

Summary and a Thank you.

Thank you for reading our memo. We know that pivoting to remote teaching on short notice and uncertainty is not how we thought we would be heading into Winter 2022. We also know the reality is that many of us will be working over the holidays. We sincerely mean "Be kind to yourself, so you can be kind to others". Take time to step away from the computer, even if you don't think you should. We need to find ways to recharge and restore our compassion. We also need to work together as a community.

If you have questions or are looking for advice over the holidays when the University of Waterloo is closed, send a message to: engtl@uwaterloo.ca. Carolyn, as Associate Dean Teaching & Student Experience, will be monitoring the ENGTL email account between December 24 – January 3, 2022. As we tell our students, "Asking questions isn't bothering, it is community building."

Rather than hiding a \$50 bill in a locker somewhere, we will treat you to a coffee/tea/hot beverage at the EngSoc C&D when we can be back on campus with services up and running. If you want to take us up on the coffee offer or just to let us know that you took the time to read the memo, send an email to engtl@uwaterloo.ca.

Carolyn, Dan, and Siva

(with much appreciated help from Carol Hulls, Ken McKay, and Andrea Scott, and the Associate Chairs/Directors asking the tough questions.)