

MEMORANDUM

TO: Faculty of Engineering Spring 2022 Instructors

FROM: Carolyn MacGregor, Associate Dean Teaching & Student Experience,
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DATE: April 12, 2022

RE: Instructing in Spring 2022

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

Hello Spring 2022 Instructors,

With the declared 6th wave of COVID-19 and rising number of cases within our community based on [wastewater counts](#), the Faculty of Engineering wants to be proactive around contingency planning for Spring 2022 so that we can remain reasonably agile to pivot between in-person and remote if needed. Those who taught in the Winter 2022 term understand that pivots can mean a directive from the University that all courses are in-person (or remote), as well as localized pivots when a cohort needs to be moved from in-person to remote due to high incidents of COVID-19. **Your department may have more specific information to add to aid course delivery for academic cohorts.**

This is a rather long memo, but there are **MANY** important issues to address, and it is being assumed that all instructors for Spring 2022 will have read this memo and aware of the guidelines and advice included **before the start of classes on Monday, May 2, 2022.**

If you are short on time right now, please pay attention to the Guiding Principles, Questions A1, A2, B1, B2, and C1. As per the [President's memo of April 11, 2022](#), we encourage all instructors to also refer to [COVID-19 Information - Instructor information and resources](#).



Faculty of Engineering Guiding Principles for Course Delivery (for Spring 2022 and beyond).

Please keep in mind that Fall 2021 was a hybrid term, so many S2022 students have not had in-person classes since the pandemic started.

- **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 from classroom to 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.** Take time during the first weeks of classes to go over your expectations for how the instructional team will manage course delivery, contingency plans if needed, and methods of communication so that all students feel included and welcomed.
- **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 Spring 2022. **Answers are based on our knowledge as of April 12, 2022.** 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 for preparing 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 Spring 2022?

1. If we are teaching in the classroom, why do I need to have contingencies for teaching remote?

Following the return to classroom teaching in Winter 2022, all Spring 2022 instructors and students are expected to be back in the classroom for lectures, tutorials, labs, and regular activities. Being practical, instructors should do course planning that allows for quick pivots to remote teaching-learning if needed.

Back in Fall 2021, we were planning for an entirely in-person Winter 2022 ... and then we got the Provost's memo on December 16, 2021 directing that all courses would start under remote emergency teaching conditions (again). Winter 2022 instructors had to pivot from their plans for in-person to remote for the first weeks of the term, then pivot again to in-person starting on February 7, 2022 ... then some had to pivot to remote again when the COVID cases among student rose to the point where some cohorts had to switch to remote learning.

Here we are at the beginning of April 2022 with COVID cases rising in Ontario. Spring 2022 instructors would be wise to have general plans for contingencies and include those plans in the course syllabus. (See B-1 and C-1 for recommendations and tips for course syllabus wording).

2. Can we require students to wear masks in the classroom?

The short answer is "no". As per the [Provost's memo of March 22, 2022](#), effective May 1, 2022, the University of Waterloo is suspending mask and proof of vaccination requirements. The memo goes on to say "If the situation changes, it may become necessary to bring back requirements for mask wearing and proof of vaccination on short notice. To ensure we can minimize any disruption to work and learning if this happens, we will maintain a requirement for all members of our community to provide information on their up-to-date vaccination status."

Instructors may continue to wear masks in the classroom if they so choose. Instructors may ask students to continue to wear masks in the classroom but cannot mandate mask wearing without direction from the Provost.

3. How will I know if a student in my course is self-isolating?

Throughout Spring 2022, the Faculty of Engineering will continue to allow students to use the Self-Declared Verification of Illness (VIF) through Quest. The system is designed to send an automatic message to the student's instructors and Associate Chair; the messages appear in your inbox as being sent to you from "VIF NOREPLY"

The Faculty of Engineering will reinforce messaging to its community that if they are experiencing COVID-like symptoms or have been in direct exposure to someone testing positive for COVID, they should stay home and self-declare using the appropriate forms.

Self-declaration instructions for students and TAs (as graduate students):

Complete two (2) forms as part of the self-declaration if they are experiencing COVID-like illness:

- **Self-Declared Verification of Illness Form (VIF) on Quest.** This system sends an automated VIF message to instructors about expected absences. [How do I self-declare my illness or isolation? | Quest - Student Information System | University of Waterloo \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#).
- **COVID Tracking within our UW Community.** If test positive for COVID-19 or need advice, complete the Campus Wellness form [COVID-19 Support and Advice | Campus Wellness | University of Waterloo \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#).

4. 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.

Instructors (as employees) experiencing COVID-19 symptoms: Employees should contact [Occupational Health](#) for reporting and contact tracing of employee cases of COVID-19.

5. If we might pivot to remote in Spring 2022, does this mean that I must prepare a hybrid course?

The short answer is “no”. A hybrid course is when the instructor is expected to simultaneously teach to students in the classroom as well as those students who are learning remotely. The University’s current position is that once in-person teaching recommenced (February 7, 2022), emergency remote teaching requirements to provide online asynchronous materials ended. Instructors and students are expected to be on campus. Messaging from UW has been consistent that students are expected to be on campus in Spring 2022 for in-person teaching and assessments.

Note 1: Students are expected to attend in-person. We have been advised by the Director of AccessAbility Services that there may be **rare cases** when a student in your course 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). In such rare cases, AccessAbility Services will work with instructors.

Note 2: If instructors are directed to pivot to remote teaching, the general expectation would be that students would be accessing learning remotely with the same weekly course schedule. In Winter 2022, some instructors came to campus to use technology to stream their lectures as live sessions during their scheduled course times. Speak with your department around technology available to help with remote course delivery if it is needed. Alternatively, instructors can provide asynchronous online content.

Note 3: 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 \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#)

6. If we want to maintain community wellness, what are strategies that can be used to encourage students who are well to attend classes and at the same time support students with illness or symptoms to self-isolate?

Based on teaching experiences in Winter 2022, many of the support strategies used in pre-pandemic times were still effective. Here are some common strategies:

- Post lecture slides or course notes on LEARN.
- Stream live sessions through MS Teams if the classroom technology supports.
- Hold virtual office hours to allow students self-isolating to participate.
- Provide grace days or compassionate consideration around deadlines for assignments and projects.
- Use a “best x out of y” scheme for quizzes, tests, or assignments.
- Provide alternate assessments to midterms and final exams (e.g., projects, virtual presentations).

7. If I want to provide supplemental materials to support learning, 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 Learning](#) 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 showing students.

B. What do I need to know for preparing assessments in Spring 2022?

1. Will tests and exams be held in-person in Spring 2022?

The expectation is that all test and exams will be held in-person. Please remember that most of our students in the Spring term have not written in-person exams since Winter 2020. 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.

2. Can I, as the instructor, cancel an in-person class, or move an in-person class online, if I feel the in-person classroom situation is not safe? [The question and answer are taken directly from the University of Waterloo's [COVID-19 guidelines for Instructor information and resources- FAQ – last question.](#)]

“This is NOT a decision to be made unilaterally by a course instructor. If you have health and safety concerns specifically about the instructional space or class behaviour, your first step should be to discuss them with your department chair, who may consult offices that have influence over operations or the conduct that is causing concern. **If this does not resolve the situation:** Instructors or TAs may also contact a worker rep of the [Joint Health & Safety Committee \(JHSC\)](#) for advice, or to request further consultation from the Safety Office. The University has a [work refusal process](#) to address *unresolved* concerns where work is thought to be unsafe after consulting with the chair.”

The Engineering Undergraduate Office will be daily monitoring self-declaration trends for all Engineering undergraduate cohorts. If a cohort needs to be moved online temporarily, all the core courses taken by students in that cohort will be moved online together. Individual courses will normally not be moved online.

3. How will deferred exams work in Spring 2022?

Deferred exams are to be written in-person (for courses that have in-person exams). The University and Faculty are strongly encouraging instructors to have a second exam ready so that students can write deferred exams as soon as possible after the normally scheduled exam. Building on our experience from W2022, there is expected to be central coordination (at the Department, Faculty, or maybe even University level) for special “make-up” exam days for S2022 deferred exams.

4. Creating a second exam for a deferred exam is a lot of work. What are options for instructors?

Even prior to the pandemic, with our large cohorts in Engineering, we have been encouraging instructors to have a second exam ready. You likely don't have to put the same effort into preparing the deferred exam that you put into preparing the original exam. For example, an instructor might use a final exam from a previous course offering and remove or modify questions based on materials presented to the current cohort. The important thing is that the deferred exam should assess key concepts, applications, and/or skills that fairly reflect the materials presented to the cohort.

5. Why should I include a contingency proviso for course deliverables in my course syllabus?

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 in-person to remote 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 **Spring 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.**

6. 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. Do I have to specify my plan in my course outline for teaching during in-person weeks as well as plans for when we might be teaching remotely?

YES! The University has stated this guideline in the [COVID-19 guidelines for Instructor information and resources - Course outline requirements](#). Repeated from this website, 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 course or University-wide.
 - a longer-term cancellation of in-person meetings, whether for the 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. (Is 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).

In addition, if you test positive for COVID, experience COVID-like illness, or need to self-isolate, you should complete two (2) forms:

- [Self-Declared Verification of Illness Form \(VIF\) on Quest](#)
- [Campus Wellness COVID Tracking Form](#)

2. Where will I find more information relating to COVID-19 and Spring 2022 plans?

- Reminder, as per the [President's memo of April 11, 2022](#), information for Spring 2022 relevant to instructors will be posted on [COVID-19 Information - Instructor information and resources](#).

Summary and a Thank you.

If we learned anything from Winter 2022 it is to be adaptable.
Thank you for reading our memo and working together as a community.

Carolyn, Dan, and Siva