

# Students' Concerns on Workload

Students have discussed concerns about elevated workload and feeling overwhelmed by coursework at in-person discussions at Students' Council and online discussions on Reddit. Concerns are coming from students in all faculties with significant concerns from students in the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Mathematics. Students appreciate the efforts instructors have put into transitioning their courses online. Overall, the changes in course structure, shifting from heavy-weighted final exams to other assessment methods throughout the term, has been received positively. However, as a result of efforts to deliver high-quality courses, it appears that students' mental health and wellbeing has been negatively impacted.

Students identified several reasons for experiencing a higher workload,

- Decreased availability of support from professors and TAs
  - Concerns about the quantity of office hours and their timing were raised
  - Some students reported instructors not responding promptly to emails or message boards
- Ineffective content delivery (ex. Posting slides without supporting documentation)
  - Posting notes or recorded lectures means that students can't ask clarifying questions on-the-spot. This results in students spending 2-3 times longer on understanding lecture content than might be expected
- Larger quantity of assessments
  - Many courses are employing weekly assignments or quizzes, occasionally resulting in multiple assessments per week
- One student noted that the instructor was exceeding the scheduled 3 hours of lecture content per week

Students also raised a number of suggestions based on helpful tactics some instructors have employed,

- Posting content and assessments on a regular schedule
- Holding live lectures that are recorded and posted afterwards
  - One student described a particularly effective method, for them: posting the notes ahead of time, working through and annotating the notes in a live lecture while answering questions and posting a recording of the lecture
- Posting shorter recorded lectures (~30 minutes), so students can digest the content and take breaks easily
- Providing a weekly summary of deliverables or expected progress on larger assessments
- Posting summary slides listing key topics for each week

- Allowing students to miss 1-2 of the weekly assessments, so students can skip one if they have a heavy week
- Employing flexible due dates, to avoid overlapping with other courses' work
- Assigning shorter assignments and following them up with discussions to reinforce the concepts
- Holding a variety of office hours that allow students in any time zone to access instructor support
- Allowing more than 24 hours for take-home exams, so students can dedicate time to each assessment

As always, I am happy to chat about students' concerns and work together to address them. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Best regards,

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