Subject: Tips and Information for Planning the Remainder of Winter Term

Colleagues,

In order to avoid sending a string of messages, we have gathered together some information about issues that are being raised frequently with people who are supporting instructors as they plan for the remainder of Winter Term.

- **Deadline for final marks, and avoiding INC grades whenever possible**
- **Issues about access to library resources**
- **AccessAbility advice about accommodations**
- **Timely advice from the Keep Teaching team**

Deadline for Grades:

For all courses, the deadline for final marks is May 3, **but we urge you to have your marks submitted by May 1** (or earlier if you are able)**.**

Since instructors have been asked to come up with alternatives to in person final exams, the normal requirement to have grades submitted seven days after the exam is waived for this term.

It is important to get your grades in on time. Among other things, decision about academic progression must be made within two days of the grading deadline, after which some students must make important decisions about changing programs or change their plans for the coming term. Moreover, late grades must be entered manually, creating an unnecessary extra burden on staff during one of the busiest times of year.

Finally, while we understand that INC grades are appropriate for some students in some courses every term, **it is important that the current circumstances not result in a dramatic rise in the number of INC grades.** A profusion of INC grades will prevent the progress of students through their programs and resolving them will create a marked increase in work in future terms to get those grades cleared. We suggest that instructors seek guidance from the relevant Associate Dean in their Faculties about options that can help avoid INC grades (e.g., CR/NCR grades).

Some Library Access issues you might not have considered:

- Since the library buildings are now closed, there are obviously limits to the ability of students to access print resources. You probably should be planning the completion of your courses in ways that do not require such access anyway, as many students have left Waterloo. The Academic Librarians are available to help you consider other options.

- Some instructors, in more normal times, depend on print reserve materials for use in final exams. *If you do so, you will need to adjust your usual practice as you plan for the remainder of the Winter Term.* If **according to your original course outline** students **would have** require**d** print Course Reserve items to complete their Winter 2020 courses and final exams, please contact Course Reserves staff at libreser@uwaterloo.ca or submit your requests online through the Course Reserves website. **Staff may be able to replace print content with content that is digitally available. If no electronic version is available, you will want to reconsider the requirements for completing the course.** For Course Reserves from the Witer Learning Resource Centre (WLRC) please contact Witer staff at wlrc@uwaterloo.ca

AccessAbility Issues as you move to alternative delivery and assessments:

As you plan alternatives for delivering instruction and content, and for assessments, it is important to ensure that students still have access to their accommodations. Here are a few tips about how to plan around this, and how to help AccessAbility help you and your students in more complicated situations.

Note: The cancelation of in-person tests applies to tests facilitated by AccessAbility Services. As such, the Exam Centre in AccessAbility Services is closed until further notice. So all instructors should read the information below carefully.

Step 1: As you identify how your course content and evaluations will be delivered, **please consider what is essential about course activities, and what engagement with material is necessary to the learning objectives of the course**. Such information is critical as AccessAbility helps you and the student consider what accommodations are required, and what can easily be accommodated.

You will find helpful advice about transferring to alternative delivery and assessments on the *Keep Learning* website.

Step 2: Identify the accommodation needs of your students

- Earlier in the term, you will have been emailed a Faculty Notification Letter by AccessAbility Services if a student requested a classroom or testing accommodation in your course. If you might have lost track of some of those emails, you can access a student list for each of your courses through the Faculty Module via AccessAbility Services' online system. If you would like to navigate the Faculty Module, please watch this video.
- The Faculty Module allows you to
  - Gain access to an online dashboard that will display a listing of your students and their academic accommodations for each of your courses
  - Have up-to-date access to accommodation requests. This is important as a student's eligibility may change as a result of changes to the learning environment. An Accommodation Consultant will contact you directly if this impacts you.
  - Easily navigate between sections and courses using the Advanced Search Panel option.
  - Search and export a list of students based on accommodation eligibility, such as students eligible for extra time. This will be particularly important for those transitioning to online tests facilitated through LEARN. You will be able to query a search based on extra time accommodations, such as: Extra time: 5, 10, 15 minutes per hour, etc.
  - Submit and make changes to the Alternative Testing agreement to inform us of your changes to your evaluation methods so we can best support students.

Step 3: If you opt for an online test, here's some advice on how to make online tests accessible

- If you decide to hold a test in LEARN, **you will need to adjust the student's time allotment to reflect their approved time extension.**

- Please see the LEARN Help site section [Special Access in a Quiz](#) for step-by-step instructions. If you encounter any issues putting these accommodations in place, please contact LEARNHelp, learnhelp@uwaterloo.ca for support.
- **Rather than individual adjustments, you many want to consider applying a Universal Learning Design approach, such as providing double-time for all students**. This would meet and exceed the additional time accommodation requirements and may be appropriate if timed assessments is not essential to your course.
- For online evaluations in LEARN, the following testing accommodations will likely not require the instructor to take any further action, as they would fall to the responsibility of the student to facilitate: Noise Cancelling Headphones; Spell only dictionary; Individual testing room; MS Word; Adjustable table; Full spectrum lighting; Student Writes Separate from Class, Write in Needles Hall Only.
- There are students with accommodations that may be impacted by an online evaluation environment (e.g., students who require a scribe, or alternate format of course materials). In these situations, AAS will contact the course instructors to determine a plan for these accommodations.

Tips from the Keep Teaching Team:

- **Replacing your remaining classes**
  - Keep to essential concepts and content and ensure that students know where to find new materials.
  - Consider alternatives for your material, such as pre-recorded lectures, PowerPoint presentations with voice-over, readings, and so on. **Avoid livestreaming full lectures if possible —** they reduce isolation but can introduce technical complexity.
  - If you use livestream, do so at your scheduled class time to avoid conflicts with other courses, and remember to record the presentation.

- **Keep communication channels open**
  - Keep students updated about changes to your course plans.
  - Inform students when you will be available synchronously (e.g., online office hours), and asynchronously provide an avenue for questions (e.g., chat, discussion forums).
  - If you opt for a standard-length exam (e.g., 1.5hr) be online during the exam time to answer emails or other desired method of communication.

- **Rethink assessments and exams**
  - If the course outcomes have already been adequately assessed, re-weight those to calculate a final grade
  - Consider decreasing the weighting of final assessments to limit stress for everyone.
  - **The University is strongly urging instructors to opt for alternatives to final exams.** Consider alternate assessments such as a take-home or oral exam (video assignment), or an additional assignment that replaces the final.
  - Build assessments to promote academic integrity (e.g., developing pools of similar questions), but consider online exams to be open book.
  - Build in as much flexibility as possible since students may be in different time zones or not have access to reliable internet (e.g., wider window of time in the day to start the exam, a duration time buffer in case of internet disruption).

- o Talk to your department chair and/or associate dean for direction if online assessments are not an option for your students.
- o To avoid overwhelming students, if you are offering a timed final assessment open your exam in your scheduled exam slot; untimed take-home exams ideally should be due at the end of the exam period.

Check the [Keep Learning](#) website for more detailed strategies on all of the above.

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