



## Special COVID-19 Town Hall Meeting for Faculty of Medicine Administrative and Support Staff

April 3, 2020

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### Presentation Key Takeaways + Q&A

**DEMETRA KAFANTARIS**, Executive Director, Administration & Operations, Faculty of Medicine

- This is a stressful and challenging time for all but rest assured that the University's Emergency Operations Committee meets daily and so does the Faculty Leadership (Dean's Operations Committee) to review major issues and ensure that strategies applied are in line with government and University directives. Our aim is to provide accurate, sustainable and timely responses to questions/concerns – employee safety and wellbeing is a priority.
- Managing expectations – this is not business as usual. Trying to find a balance between working, taking care of families, dealing with fears, anxieties and uncertainty, feelings of isolation, stress of not being able to work due to nature of one's work, fear of having to be on campus in order to continue working, etc. Reach out to your supervisor if you have difficulty managing or coping; there are also online resources available to you.
- Francis Desjardins, Director, Labour and Employee Relations, McGill University, is also present to answer questions.

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**DIANA COLBY**, Director of Communications, Faculty of Medicine

- In addition to government directives, primary sources of communication remain hospitals and the University.
- Impact of current situation varies widely at the local level. School and Unit-specific communication is prioritized to avoid duplication or information overload. Faculty-level support offered as needed.
- McGill University COVID-19 FAQs (primary) <https://www.mcgill.ca/coronavirus/faqs>
- Faculty COVID-19 page <https://www.mcgill.ca/medicine/about/special-notice-covid-19-updates>
- Faculty of Medicine HR FAQs: <https://www.mcgill.ca/medhr/covid-19>
- Med e-News (Weekly), Social Media
- Media requests should be directed to Jason Clement ([jason.clement@mcgill.ca](mailto:jason.clement@mcgill.ca))

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**DANIELLE DUBOIS**, Director of Building Services, Faculty of Medicine

- All buildings on campus are closed but we are managing access for those who need to retrieve essential supplies/equipment. Requests must be communicated by email to Geneviève Côté ([genevieve.cote@mcgill.ca](mailto:genevieve.cote@mcgill.ca)). Include your name, unit, current working schedule, McGill building you need to access and confirm if you live on/off the island of Montreal.
- IT equipment borrowed must be tracked (serial #s) – forms to be signed by supervisors.
- Tracking limited access to labs – priority for COVID-19 and animal-based research.

**Do you foresee there being a gradual return to campus/buildings? Are there plans in place for a gradual return?**

A: We cannot provide a definitive answer, as we are not sure what will happen beyond May 1. Timelines and strategic plans will be adjusted as the situation evolves and we have access to more information.

**Access is being limited and tracked for administrative staff. Do these regulations also apply to Faculty working on campus or needing to retrieve essential equipment from their offices?**

A: Yes, regulations apply to all Faculty and administrative staff as well students. Movements need to be tracked. Individual requests must be communicated to Geneviève Côté at [genevieve.cote@mcgill.ca](mailto:genevieve.cote@mcgill.ca).

**Do the no-access regulations also apply to off-site locations?**

A: Yes, these regulations apply to locations both on and off campus. To those who specifically require access to 5858 Côte-des-Neiges, please communicate directly with Nathalie Moragues at [nathalie.moragues@mcgill.ca](mailto:nathalie.moragues@mcgill.ca).

**Will there be additional safety measures put in place in high volume buildings such as 680/688 Sherbrooke St. West, where there are many students as well as staff? E.g., more sanitizer dispensers, regulated volume in terms of how many people are allowed in elevators, etc.**

A: Aside from some IT technicians, housekeeping staff and a limited number of administrative personnel with proper access cards, almost all building occupants are working remotely. Decisions regarding the implementation of additional security and hygiene measures will be taken once operations resume on campus.

**What is the cleaning protocol? Are buildings being cleaned and disinfected while closed?**

A: Cleaning and maintenance activities are considered an essential service and continue to be carried out. Staff is mandated to take the necessary precautions (e.g., social distancing). In addition, information gathered from tracking access to buildings is shared with Grounds Services so that garbage/recycling bins can be emptied regularly and surfaces can be disinfected.

**If an employee needs to retrieve essential items from the office in order to perform tasks, is it still possible to go after having contacted Geneviève Côté?**

A: The April 2 MRO Communication clearly states that no one is allowed to access McGill buildings to retrieve personal belongings. Strictly essential access will be granted. Requests to Geneviève Côté ([genevieve.cote@mcgill.ca](mailto:genevieve.cote@mcgill.ca)) will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

**Will the power in buildings stay on, as I am connecting remotely to my laptop located at 2001 McGill College?**

A: The University is trying to gauge the usage of each building to determine the basic level of maintenance required (e.g., power, heating, security). At the moment, the power remains on.

**Are you aware that some students are being pressured to go to the lab in order to graduate?**

A: Dr. Shari Baum, Vice-Dean, Life Sciences and Dr. Aimee Ryan, Associate Dean, Biomedical BSc, Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs, are well aware of these unfortunate circumstances. They have made it very clear that this is unacceptable. If you know of a specific case, please communicate with your supervisor or directly with Dr. Baum ([shari.baum@mcgill.ca](mailto:shari.baum@mcgill.ca)) or Dr. Ryan ([aimee.ryan@mcgill.ca](mailto:aimee.ryan@mcgill.ca)) with either the name of the person or the department/unit/lab with whom the leadership should focus their efforts on. These communications will be escalated anonymously.

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**BATCHIMEG ZUEND, Director of Finance, Faculty of Medicine**

- Finance teams are committed to maintaining financial operations during this shut down and are relatively well equipped to continue providing support. For specific questions or concerns, please communicate with your respective Finance teams. Issues that cannot be resolved internally at a Faculty level will be escalated to Central Financial Services as warranted.
- The University has accepted the use of electronic signatures and email approvals on financial forms. It is important, however, to be extra vigilant and rigorous when managing electronic approvals
- All COVID-19 related expenses and loss of revenues must be appropriately tracked. A template has been shared with all Finance teams for this purpose.

**If McGill administrative staff have to go to the hospital to work, will their parking be reimbursed, given that on-campus parking is currently free?**

A: Employees should keep track of these COVID-19 parking expenses and their receipts so that these costs can be addressed when this situation is over. Any submission of expenses for potential reimbursement must be pre-approved by the employee's supervisor.

**If McGill administrative staff have to incur expenses as a result of COVID-19 situation, will they be reimbursed?**

A: Specific requests should be sent to your supervisor prior to the purchase for approval. Supervisors will escalate these requests to the Executive Director of the Faculty to find a proactive, collective and consistent approach in handling such requests.

**Can a remaining balance on the 1A Operating Funds be carried over to FY20-21?**

A: No, Central Budget Office has confirmed that balances cannot be carried over into the next fiscal year.

**Can we spend down any balances in the 1A or any other type of allocated funds that have an end date?**

A: No, we should not spend down any balances. Given the special circumstances and a potential increase in incremental costs related to COVID-19, we must be thoughtful and socially generous when it comes to these funds. Please share this message with your respective teams.

**Residents are allotted a given amount per year to attend conferences. Since the more recent conferences have now been canceled, there has been a request to be granted a greater amount for the conferences attended in order to make up for lost funding. Can we resubmit this expense?**

A: University policy states that we cannot reopen past expense reports and there should only be one expense report per trip. Central Finance confirmed that this policy should be adhered to. We also have to be mindful of spending down balances as the financial impact of this situation on the University and the Faculty is still unknown. Specific requests should be communicated to your Supervisor or a member of your Finance Team.

**Will year-end deadlines for accounting be affected by the current situation?**

A: At the moment, the fiscal year-end remains April 30, 2020. For specific questions or concerns, please communicate with your Finance teams.

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**LUIS SILES**, Director of Information Technology, Faculty of Medicine

- The MedIT Helpdesk is open from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm and can be reached by email [help.medit@mcgill.ca](mailto:help.medit@mcgill.ca) or by phone at 514-398-2001. Email is the preferred method of communication and will ensure a more timely response. Phone calls should be limited to emergencies due to the fact that it can take up to an hour for the ticketing system to process an email. Please avoid emailing individual technicians directly.
- NCS has added several VPN boxes to deal with the increasing demand for VPN access and remote connection. An important reminder that most tasks such as writing emails, using Zoom, Webex, MS Teams can be performed without connecting to your desktop or the VPN.
- Mandatory Two-Factor Authentication (2FA) must be applied on personal McGill email addresses, not on resource accounts or you may be locked out of the network. Note that McGill IT Services has postponed the mandatory implementation of Two-Factor Authentication (2FA) for Virtual Private Network (VPN) access until May 5. But do it now!
- Zoom currently has a security vulnerability. An update was recently issued – please ensure that your software is updated. It is also important to keep your local computers up to date with the latest antivirus software, software patches and operating system patches.

**I am connecting remotely to my office PC so it needs to stay on. What happens if it somehow turns off?**

A: MedIT is exploring ways to remotely turn on computers. However, there should be no need to connect to your remote desktop unless it is to access specialized software. Most tasks such as writing emails, using Zoom, Webex, MS Teams can be performed without connecting to your desktop or the VPN. You may also map your drives to your local computer. For additional assistance, please communicate with the MedIT Helpdesk at [help.medit@mcgill.ca](mailto:help.medit@mcgill.ca) or by phone at 514-398-2001.

**Can we get Adobe Acrobat on our home computers? One of the reasons I remote connect to my desktop is to use this software. The temporary solution for me is to use the MUHC remote access.**

A: One Adobe licence allows Adobe to be installed on a maximum of two computers. For instance, if you only have a desktop computer at work and a laptop at home, then the licence can be added to your home laptop. Please submit a request to the MedIT Helpdesk by email at [help.medit@mcgill.ca](mailto:help.medit@mcgill.ca).

**I am concerned about having access to Crystal Reports, SQL or being able to run high-level statistics if I cannot connect remotely or if there is a power outage.**

A: These types of situations are addressed on a case-by-case basis. Please communicate with the MedIT Helpdesk at [help.medit@mcgill.ca](mailto:help.medit@mcgill.ca) or by phone at 514-398-2001.

**I have a question regarding One45**

A: Please send an email to [one45.med@mcgill.ca](mailto:one45.med@mcgill.ca).

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**CHRISTINE DOLDEN**, Director of Administration, Academic Affairs, Faculty of Medicine

- The Academic Affairs Office (AAO) continues to provide full support for all usual activities including Academic Salary Policy, promotions, tenure appointments and compensation, etc.
- AAO is sensitive to the clinical departments whose priorities have shifted due to the current situation and whose activities may have an impact on administrative processes.
- For specific questions or challenges, please communicate with a member of the AAO team.

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**MARTIN ROY**, Director of Human Resources, Faculty of Medicine

- There has been a slight decrease in volume of activities related to labour and staffing.
- Central HR has come to an agreement with most Unions; the details will be communicated shortly. Specific arrangements are being made with respect to certain delays outlined in collective agreements (e.g., disciplinary measures, arbitration, grievances), but timelines for **probation/trial** periods remain the same. Managers are still able to evaluate an employee's performance remotely.
- Encourage managers to find creative ways to onboard new hires remotely when feasible.
- Annual Salary Review progressing as per schedule.

## **VACATION**

### **Can employees who have scheduled vacations during the current isolation period defer their vacation until we return to our regular working environments?**

A: The reference period for vacation remains unchanged and still runs from June 1, 2019 to May 31, 2020. Outstanding vacation days should be taken as follows:

1. Employees who continue to perform their duties, whether on campus or from home, are requested to take any outstanding vacation days before the end of the reference year. Exceptionally and with the Unit Head's approval, employees who are unable to use all of their vacation prior to May 31 will be permitted to carry over up to five (5) vacation days into the next reference year.
2. Employees who are at home during the closure period and who are unable to perform their duties due to the nature of their tasks, the need to care for children, etc. will be required to take any outstanding vacation days before the end of the reference year. Carryover of unused vacation will not be allowed. This does not apply to employees on sick leave or any other type of paid or unpaid leave, such as maternity leave, parental leave, etc., for which the relevant policies and collective agreements' articles will apply.

### **Would McGill consider paying staff for unused vacation days during these unusual circumstances?**

A: Unused vacation days will not be paid out. Vacation days should be taken as per the directives stated on the Central FAQ page.

### **What happens to banked hours?**

A: The management of banked hours varies by Faculties and Units. The recommendation by the Faculty's HR team is to follow the current practice. Banked hours should be taken by May 31, 2020, with the approval of your supervisor.

## **JOB SECURITY**

### **Will this situation affect employees' job security?**

A: No. The current situation does not affect employees' job security.

### **Does McGill plan to lay off employees so they can then collect unemployment insurance?**

A: The University remains operational and no layoffs are currently envisioned.

### **What is the status of people who are not working physically at McGill and whose work cannot be done remotely? Will they be paid? Will there be solutions in place to reassign them?**

A: As per clarifications from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the University confirms that regular McGill academic and administrative staff—including contract employees whose contracts are valid during the extended suspension period lasting until May 1—will be paid. Casual and work study employees who were scheduled to work during the suspension period will also be paid.

**Will the University continue to pay regular employees after May 1 or is that to be determined later?**

A: The University continues to follow government guidelines and recommendations. The situation is evolving on a daily basis so we cannot predict what will happen beyond May 1. To reiterate, at this point in time, the University does not envisage layoffs.

**Is HR negotiating with labor unions for the renewal of collective agreements?**

A: Negotiations for Course Lecturers and TAs were underway prior to the COVID-19 situation. The University made a final offer to the Unions but due to the crisis, the Unions were unable to reach their members for a vote. The process will continue remotely.

Negotiations are currently underway for the Trades (SEU).

The University is preparing for upcoming negotiations with MUNACA.

**WORKING FROM HOME**

**In response to the Quebec government's directives that all universities are to remain closed until May 1, what should we expect from this urgent measure? Are employees expected to be working from home until May 1?**

A: Yes, those who are able to work from home are expected to continue doing so until May 1.

**What could be the solutions for parents in the next few weeks, particularly single parents, on how to handle young kids and work at the same time?**

A: Managers are expected to be flexible under those circumstances. Employees should not feel pressured to deliver their normal workload. Following a discussion between the manager and the employee, work priorities should be established to ensure that operational needs are met.

**Will working from home be extended beyond May 1?**

A: We don't know yet. We cannot predict what will happen beyond May 1.

**What is the current process for probation and trial periods? How will performance during probation be evaluated? Would the end of probation meeting be held by Zoom?**

A: If work is still being carried out, then performance can still be evaluated. It is up to the manager and employee to have an open dialogue (by phone, Zoom, WebEx, MS Teams) so that objectives and expectations can be set and feedback can be provided.

**How can a signature be provided on the probation/trial form? Are digital signatures acceptable on casual contracts?**

A: Email approval, scanning applications or electronic/digital signatures are acceptable methods.

**What is the payment formula for unscheduled casual employees who are no longer able to work due to the current situation? Will they still be paid the average of the last four weeks?**

A: The four-week average formula was only used for the first two weeks of the University's closure. Please contact the Faculty of Medicine HR Team to know more about compensation guidelines.

**Fall recruitment for Teaching Assistants begins in the summer. Do we proceed as usual until we hear from Central or do we put activities on hold?**

A: We hope to have more information in the next few weeks.

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***IMPORTANT:** Because the situation continues to evolve daily, information captured here may change; it is important you stay up-to-date by frequently consulting the sources available.*

*Important Faculty and University sources of information:*

- [McGill Coronavirus Updates](#), including University-wide [FAQs](#)
- [McGill Faculty of Medicine COVID-19 Updates](#), including links to schools' and unit updates.

*Other:*

- [Santé Québec](#)
- [Info-Santé](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada \(PHAC\)](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada \(PHAC\) – COVID-19 for Health Professionals](#)
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)