



McGill

School of
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Information to Students re Internships (March 25, 2020)

Dear Students in the Applied Program,

I promised to provide an update today after having had a number of meetings with groups including within the school, the university and the country to obtain information that will inform our planning to ensure that you will complete your spring practicum or summer internship. Even though these various meetings do not provide all the answers we have more information that helps us to move forward with more certainty. I will not provide the answer today but I can tell you what has changed and how it informs our decision-making process.

On March 16 you received a message from Sophie or Kelly telling you that we did not have enough information to make a decision for your spring or summer placements. We promised to get back to you on April 6 to tell you whether these placements might go ahead as planned, be delayed or be canceled. It is not yet April 6 but we now have enough information to predict with reasonable certainty that these placements will be canceled, or at any rate, delayed so far into the future that they will be held effectively in the fall 2020 term. This is the information that leads us to believe that this is most likely the case:

1. Premier Legault announced that the schools will be closed until May 1st, thus ensuring that there can be no practicums or internships in the schools.
2. McGill's Academic Planning Team has told us that the summer term courses will occur in a remote format.
3. Medical experts have indicated that the duration of social distancing required to "flatten the curve" will be "months".

Although there is still some possibility given these indicators that life could return to some semblance of normality part-way through the summer it seems unlikely that the clinical placements could be resumed without a significant delay. Therefore we find it prudent to plan as if your clinical placements may not occur until the fall.

Regarding the types of measures that might be taken to implement your spring practicum and final internship at an irregular time, we take into account the results of meetings between our professional associations, regulatory bodies, government ministries and the Chairs of all the Canadian programs in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology. In brief, these are the reports from these meetings that inform our plans:

1. All the programs in Canada are thinking about ways to move academic content to the summer in an on-line format in order to free up time during the regular academic term for additional clinical practice hours.
2. All the programs in Canada are more-or-less resigned to the likelihood of moving some or all of the final summer internship to the fall term
3. Some regulatory bodies have asked the government ministries for financial assistance to hold more onsite clinics.



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4. Some regulatory bodies are considering ways to focus more on competencies rather than number of supervised hours.
5. Some regulatory bodies are considering ways to enhance mentoring and supervision during the first year of employment for graduates in the cohort of speech-language pathologists who are graduating under these difficult circumstances.

Regarding support for you the students, everyone is well aware of your grief, your anxieties, your financial distress, and your major concerns. Notwithstanding our deep appreciation for the resilience you have shown I believe that more attention needs to be given to your particular needs. Speech-Language and Audiology Canada has asked the student representatives to communicate your concerns to them. The Chairs of the programs have talked about the importance of you all communicating with each other across the country. I strongly believe that there is a case for loud advocacy here and even though you are overwhelmed with day-to-day survival at this point I hope that you will eventually be able to take advantage of any opportunities offered to you by your associations at the school, province and national levels to let government know your needs for support and compensation.

Now finally, to the topic of your practicums and internships, the Clinical Education Team has proposed plans in consultation with me. I proposed those plans to the faculty today who responded with a heartening degree of enthusiasm. However it is necessary for us to have a formal motion and vote to select the final plan and to consult more deeply with the instructors and clinical educators who will be most directly implicated. We will then communicate the proposal to you, no more than one week from today. We will ask you for feedback and comment but with the understanding that we are all constrained by our present circumstances.

I thank you again for your patience and your resilience and also for making it to the end of this long message!

Susan Rvachew, Ph.D., S-LP(C)
Associate Dean and School Director