



Memorandum

Office of the Provost & VP(Academic)
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TO: Senate

FROM: Professor Chris Buddle (Associate Provost, Teaching and Academic Programs)
Professor Angela Campbell (Associate Provost, Equity & Academic Policies)

SUBJECT: Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on COVID Academic Planning and Policies
Monthly Report

DATE: 16 February 2022

DOCUMENT #: D21-36

ACTION REQUIRED: INFORMATION APPROVAL/DECISION

ISSUE A monthly report of Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on COVID Academic Planning and Policies (“Committee”) is presented to Senate for information.

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE At its regular September meeting this year (22 September 2021), Senate approved a motion to establish the Committee. Its terms of reference and membership were approved at a special meeting of Senate held on 4 October 2021, via the Nominating Committee of Senate.

The Committee’s mandate stipulates the following:

The Advisory Committee shall meet weekly throughout AY2021/22 and shall report to Senate throughout AY2021/22 through a standing agenda item for information.

The minutes of the Committee’s monthly meetings are viewable [here](#).

PRIOR CONSULTATION n/a

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS n/a

IMPACT OF DECISION AND NEXT STEPS

- Ideas and feedback generated within the Senate discussion will be taken back to the Committee for review and development of recommendations.
- Continued reporting to Senate each month.

MOTION OR RESOLUTION FOR APPROVAL n/a

APPENDICES Appendix A – Memo to PVPA

memo

To: Christopher Manfredi, Provost & Vice-Principal Academic

From: Senate Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on COVID Academic Planning and Policies
("Committee")

Date: 31 January 2022

Re: Student Accommodations and the Question of Mandating Recording & Online Synchronous Learning

The Committee writes to offer advice on a question that is the current subject of some debate on campus, namely, whether instructors should be mandated to record or offer online synchronous participation¹ for their classes this term. This question is of eminent importance this term, given that the ongoing pandemic may result in more frequent absences than usual among students and instructors.

We note that students have an acute interest in ensuring that their instructors take measures to provide accommodations, wherever possible, for students who must miss class for reasons related to COVID-19. Students are deeply appreciative of efforts instructors have made on this front over the course of the pandemic.

At the same time, the Committee notes instructors' preoccupations about a decision that would mandate recording or online synchronous delivery of their courses. While many instructors are open to integrating – and have integrated – these measures into their classes, some may decide against doing so. A range of valid reasons might explain why instructors do not record or offer online synchronous participation in their classes. Instructors might have concerns about privacy, copyright, incompatibility with their pedagogical modes and goals, and the possible inhibition of students' and instructors' free expression in the classroom. Further, some classroom activities simply cannot be recorded due to the nature of the content, the discipline, or the competencies being taught. This is not an exhaustive list of the reasons underlying an instructor's decision not to record or offer online synchronous delivery of their classes.

In view of the foregoing, the Committee recommends that the University:

- Continue to encourage all instructors to record or offer online synchronous participation in their courses this term (W22).

¹ Online synchronous participation refers to the option of having students attend class online and participate in activities (e.g., discussions, polls, brainstorming, debates) during scheduled class time.

- Offer ongoing support for instructors who choose to record or offer online synchronous participation in their courses this term (W22), notably to facilitate the technological aspects of such measures.
- Not mandate instructors to record or offer online synchronous participation in their courses.
- Ensure that instructors understand that if they do not record or offer online synchronous participation in their classes, they must, subject to the bullet point that immediately follows, find reasonable alternate ways to accommodate a student who misses class due to absence related to COVID-19.
- Ensure clarity about the process to follow in the limited number of cases where it is not possible to reasonably accommodate a student who misses class due to absence related to COVID-19. This may be the case where in-person attendance is essential to pre-established learning objectives, as determined by course or program requirements, or where competencies essential to a course or program can only be developed and attained in person. In these situations, it might not be possible to substitute in-person learning through alternate learning activities or formats. An instructor alone will not determine that a reasonable accommodation for a student is unworkable. Rather, they will confer with the Dean of Students, the relevant Program Director, and Department Chair to determine: (a) whether it is indeed the case that no reasonable accommodation is possible in the circumstances, and (b) the best path forward for the student concerned. The student whose situation is under consideration is to be kept apprised and consulted in the decision-making.

We hope you will find this advice helpful and acceptable and, if so, that it will be communicated widely with a view to relaying this position campus-wide.