In the Presence of COVID-19: Teaching and Learning Framework for the 2021-2022 Academic Year

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Context

The COVID-19 pandemic abruptly and dramatically changed the process of teaching and learning at the University of Regina, its Federated Colleges, and other partner institutions in March 2020. From that point forward, the Winter 2020 term was completed through remote delivery - including all teaching, assignments, quizzes, labs, group work and examinations at the Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert campuses, the Federated Colleges, and at partner institutions such as Saskatchewan’s Colleges (formerly known as Regional Colleges).

Over the 2020-2021 academic year, the University undertook a gradual and carefully measured restoration of in-person coursework. The Spring/Summer 2020 term took place entirely through remote delivery of coursework. The Fall 2020 term was offered primarily through remote delivery, with a limited number of low-density in-person course components (including labs, studios and fieldwork) piloted for approximately 600 students. The Winter 2021 term is also taking place mostly through remote delivery, with an increase to approximately 1,500 students (less than 10 percent of the student population) taking in-person courses and course components. For background, the detailed 2020-2021 Teaching and Learning Framework that guided the University’s academic operations during the first year of the pandemic may be viewed here.

The framework for 2021-2022

For the 2021-2022 academic year, should circumstances permit, the University will carefully increase the amount of on-campus teaching and learning while supporting the health and safety needs of students, faculty and staff. All in-person coursework will take place with strict adherence to physical distancing and other COVID-19 health and safety measures that meet or exceed those mandated or recommended by the Chief Medical Health Officer. And the University will continue working to make the remote teaching and learning experience as positive and academically rewarding as possible for both students and teaching staff.

Guiding principles

This 2021-2022 Teaching and Learning Framework was developed by the University’s Academic Incremental Restoration Working Group (AIR – whose membership is listed at the end of this document) in consultation with Council Committee on Academic Mission (CCAM). It is congruent with the University’s COVID-19 operational and research frameworks that are also
parts of the University and Federated Colleges’ overall efforts to minimize the pandemic’s disruption to our teaching, research, service, administration, and work environment.

The Teaching and Learning Framework will also be guided by principles for the re-opening of Saskatchewan’s postsecondary sector. The Ministry of Advanced Education, in consultation with the province’s postsecondary institutions, developed these sector-wide principles in 2020.

The Ministry of Advanced Education’s guiding principles state that:

1. Student, faculty, and staff health and safety is paramount;
2. All public health guidelines and protocols will be followed;
3. Institutions will continue providing quality educational experiences for learners and make best efforts to ensure the ongoing participation of vulnerable learners;
4. Institutions will strive to ensure academic and student health and wellness support services are available to all students;
5. Priority should be given to programs that support critical areas of the labour market, such as the health sector;
6. In-person, applied, hands-on programs and research should be given priority when considering a return to campus;
7. Saskatchewan institutions will make efforts to cooperate and collaborate to enhance program delivery and support students; and
8. Institutions will communicate timely, consistent information to students, staff and the public.

In addition, the University’s Academic Incremental Restoration Working Group has established, and in developing this framework is committed to, the following related principles:

1. Providing the highest-quality education possible while meeting the learning needs of students and the teaching needs of instructors;
2. Maintaining operational flexibility in light of the fluid COVID-19 situation, including possible next waves of the pandemic and/or influenza season that could take place;
3. Recognizing that the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on our operations will continue to be a source of anxiety for many;
4. Developing plans that are consistent with the sector-wide approach in the province, but that take into account any considerations or circumstances unique to the University of Regina, the Federated Colleges, and other education partners; and
5. Ensuring that any return to in-person teaching and learning is undertaken in close concert with the University’s operational and research COVID-19 planning.
A living document

It is important to note that this framework for teaching and learning in the 2021-2022 academic year is a living document. As it is implemented in light of the rapidly developing COVID-19 situation, it will be subject to continuous evaluation and evolution. As circumstances dictate, changes to the framework will be shared with the University community (for example, via email, the University webpage, and town hall meetings). Any changes will be clearly communicated to ensure that all members of the University community are aware of and can plan for either the re-introduction or the scaling back of in-person campus academic activity. University Advancement & Communications will pay particular attention to widely, clearly, and quickly communicating any changes.

Factors that could alter this framework and its implementation include but are not limited to:

- Changing public health directives from the Chief Medical Health Officer and the Public Health Agency of Canada depending on the state of the pandemic;
- The possible surge or resurgence of COVID-19 during the academic year;
- Consultations with the Ministry of Health regarding the density of on-campus populations;
- Consultations with the University community during each term to consider strengths and limitations;
- The availability of an effective COVID-19 vaccine; and
- Safety lessons learned as the University works through each term of returning, where feasible, to in-person teaching and learning on an incremental basis.

What follows is the Teaching and Learning Framework for 2021-2022 at the University of Regina, the Federated Colleges, and other affiliated institutions that deliver University of Regina programming1.

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1 In response to the evolving circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic: (i) the University may be required to add, delete or change course or program requirements; (ii) academic activities (including courses, seminars, graduate supervision, labs, experiential learning, practica, fieldwork, placements, etc.), may be affected or altered; and (iii) co-curricular opportunities, programs and services, and the manner of delivery of courses, are all subject to change. As well, the University may, from time to time, impose additional rules, procedures and protocols as it deems necessary or as it may be required to do by public authorities to mitigate against the risk of the spread and/or transmission of infectious disease, including COVID-19, on the University campus, and students will be expected to comply with all such rules, procedures, and protocols (including any measures related to preventing or mitigating the spread of infectious disease or quarantining if a student is suspected of carrying an infectious disease). While the University is committed to providing appropriate instructional and supervisory support and services to students, students are not guaranteed the same learning approaches or “university experience,” or non-academic activities and services, they would have received in the absence of this health emergency. The University thanks its students, faculty, and staff for their understanding and flexibility during these challenging times as we work together to maintain the standards of excellence that are the hallmark of the University of Regina.
Spring/Summer 2021
Primarily remote teaching and learning with a limited number of low-density in-person course components

General Approach
Spring/Summer 2021 term will be much like the Winter 2021 term. Courses will be delivered remotely with the exception of a limited number of low-density in-person classes, labs, studios and practica placements.

With that in mind, the approach to teaching and learning will be contingent on several factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic situation in the province, its impact on public health guidelines, the potential wide distribution and uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine, and the success of the Winter 2021 term that will offer a limited low-density in-person teaching and learning approach.

Spring/Summer 2021 remote teaching and learning: an overview
Remote teaching and learning includes several modalities that typically occur along a continuum between primarily synchronous (virtual real-time classes) and primarily asynchronous (web-based). The University of Regina uses Zoom for synchronous course delivery and UR Courses for asynchronous course delivery. Most Spring/Summer remote course delivery will take place somewhere on this synchronous-asynchronous continuum:

Primarily synchronous teaching (Zoom-based)
RLDS [Remote Learning Delivery Special] scheduling code
Zoom enables virtual face-to-face approaches to teaching and learning. These classes are “live”; that is, faculty and students gather together virtually to teach and learn in Zoom classrooms. These courses are offered on specific days/times as scheduled by the Registrar’s Office. The date/time of the class cannot be changed because students are organizing their lives around these teaching times.

It is anticipated that over 90% of class sections taking place in Spring/Summer 2021 will be delivered remotely; thus, these courses will be the mainstay of teaching and learning at the University, Federated Colleges, and partners such as Saskatchewan’s Colleges. As course instructors deliver their Zoom-based courses, they are also encouraged to incorporate some asynchronous components (UR Courses) into their courses, the extent of which is best decided by the instructor. For example, they can post teaching materials and links to relevant online resources on their UR Courses page that can be accessed at any time by the students in the
class. The UR Courses platform also provides course instructors with the emailing list of students in the class; the UR Courses emailing tool is a convenient way of communicating with students and accepting student assignments. UR Courses now features integrated Zoom and Proctortrack capability; thus, course instructors and students can easily access Zoom and Proctortrack in UR Courses.

Course instructors may wish to augment their primarily Zoom-based courses with UR Courses-based asynchronous elements, since engaging in teaching and learning through a 3-hour Zoom class can be challenging. For example, Zoom classes may be taught for 1.5 hours and then faculty can have students engage in asynchronous learning that is essentially equivalent to an additional 1.5 hours of teaching/learning.

**Asynchronous courses (UR Courses-based) RLWS [Remote Learning Web Special] scheduling code**

In response to the need to teach remotely because of the COVID-19 pandemic, some courses may be delivered in an asynchronous format using the UR Courses platform, subject to the applicable Faculty/unit policy or decision-making processes and approvals. However, such courses may not have benefited from the assistance of the Centre for Continuing Education’s Instructional Design team. The need to ensure a quality learning experience is paramount and it is vital that UR Courses-based asynchronous courses reflect best practices in teaching and learning in an asynchronous context.

As they begin developing their remote courses (UR Courses and Zoom), Course instructors are encouraged to consult the remote teaching and learning resources currently provided on the [remote teaching site](#). These resources will be updated as necessary for Spring/Summer 2021.

It is important to note that asynchronous courses are typically delivered such that students are able to manage them on their own schedule rather than attend class on a specific date/time. If course instructors wish to include some synchronous events or sessions as part of their UR Courses-based asynchronous courses, they need to be very cautious about the extent of such synchronous components. When a course is scheduled as web-based asynchronous, students will be registering in the course on the understanding that they are not expected to attend virtual real-time class meetings. Limited synchronous elements in an asynchronous course might, for example, include: a class session on clarifying major course concepts or reviewing some more difficult topics; a class meeting to go over course assignment requirements; or check-ins with students.

When Spring/Summer courses are scheduled, if a Spring/Summer course that was originally scheduled for face-to-face, on-campus delivery is converted to a web-based asynchronous
course, subject to the applicable Faculty policy or decision-making processes and approvals, any synchronous (virtual live) elements of such asynchronous course must be offered within the original class time as scheduled by the Registrar’s Office (virtual real-time office hours are exempt from this rule). This is to avoid creating class-schedule conflicts for those students already registered in Spring/Summer courses. Furthermore, the virtual live elements of such asynchronous courses need to be communicated to students well in advance of the start of the Spring/Summer term so students can select their courses and organize their time and lives accordingly.

Therefore, the date/time of virtual live class meetings or events in an asynchronous course must be entered in the Section Long Text of SSATEXT in Banner by **February 15, 2021 at the latest**. Faculties, Federated Colleges, and academic units are responsible for their own SSATEXT entries. The date/time of virtual live sessions must be also included in the course syllabus and/or the UR Courses page.

**WEB-delivered and LIVE-streamed courses**

There are two other types of remote delivery courses. These courses (few in number) predate the University’s decision to teach most courses remotely because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **WEB-delivered courses** are UR Courses-based asynchronous courses like RLWS courses. Distinct from RLWS courses, which were developed by course instructors as special delivery for the Spring/Summer 2021 term, courses coded “WEB-delivered” have been developed with the aid of Instructional Design teams and are regularly offered as WEB-delivered courses.
- Similar to RLDS courses, **LIVE-streamed courses** are streamed over the Internet, using Zoom or other similar platforms, and delivered in partnership with the Regional Colleges. Most LIVE-streamed courses were created prior to the University’s transition to remote teaching and learning as a result of COVID-19, and thus, they are regularly scheduled as LIVE-streamed.
- Courses scheduled for Spring/Summer 2021 as fully WEB-delivered or LIVE-streamed and developed through the Centre for Continuing Education or elsewhere will remain as scheduled.

**Academic supports for students and teaching staff**

- Recognizing that the teaching and learning experience must be of the highest quality possible both for students and for instructors, the University is developing and updating enhanced resources to support both students, faculty and staff. These resources can be found [here](#).
• Should the circumstances of the pandemic permit, the University Library will continue to have some in-person supports for Spring/Summer 2021. These would include curb-side pick-up and drop-off of resource materials, as well as appointment-based access for main floor computers, main floor single-person study spaces, and rooms with computers that students may use for accommodation purposes or write remotely proctored examinations with Proctortrack. The majority of the Library’s services and resources will be accessed at a distance. The Library’s plans for service are updated as needed here, and this information will be communicated to campus before the end of the current term.

• The Campus Bookstore is poised to change management as of March 2021. Information regarding services will be communicated to all members of the campus community early in Winter 2021.

• For Spring/Summer 2021, Facilities Management will assess whether the 166 single-table/single-chair student study stations (open access) currently available throughout the University are meeting demand.

• Other student academic supports – tutoring, workshops, academic advising, and personal counselling, for example – will continue to be offered at a distance, primarily via Zoom.

Spring/Summer 2021 in-person teaching and learning: an overview
The University will continue to offer a limited number of low-density in-person courses and course components (including, for example, labs, studios, undergraduate and graduate seminars, creative writing courses) of up to 29 students (per the current phase 4 of the Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan) at the main and College Avenue campuses as well as the Federated Colleges and Saskatchewan Colleges. In-person enrolment at the University will be capped at 1,500 – less than 10% of the overall student population (as of Fall 2020). Restricting in-person student numbers at 1,500 or fewer will guarantee the University’s ability to maintain a low density of students and faculty at any given time or place on our campuses. The principle of maintaining a low-density in-person presence of students on campus for reasons of health and safety continues to guide all decisions.

Determining what in-person, on-campus courses and course components could be offered
The process for determining in-person, on-campus courses and course components will be offered is as follows:
• AIR approves and circulates a criteria document, timeline, and submission template to Deans/directors.
• Deans/directors submit their **Faculty’s prioritized list** of in-person courses and course components to the In-Person Course Assessment Team (IPCAT).
• IPCAT, will consider the following factors: the maximum overall in-person on-campus enrolment of 1,500 students; the assessed ventilation rates on campus; space capacity given the need for physical distancing; the entry and exit doors closest to classrooms/labs/studios; the one-way movement of students through space (hallways and stairwells, for example); the need to coordinate facility sanitization and disinfection; the use of elevators and washrooms; and, the mandatory use of masks. IPCAT will then aggregate and evaluate the submitted lists and recommend to AIR the courses and course components to be offered in person.
• AIR will approve the final list of in-person, on-campus courses to be offered in Spring/Summer 2021.

The Deans/directors will be afforded the maximum possible discretion in proposing in-person courses and course components for IPCAT’s consideration. In prioritizing the in-person course or course components, however, the following seven criteria **must** be met:

1. For Spring/Summer 2021, section enrolment of any number up to 30 people in a teaching/learning space for courses and course components (this includes students and instructors, in accordance with Phase 4 of the Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan). However, classes and course components of less than 30 people are certainly possible.
2. An instructor must be identified as available, willing, and able to teach the section in-person;
3. The Faculty/unit or College must commit to contacting prospective or registered students as appropriate to confirm that: they are geographically proximal to the University; they have no health conditions that would preclude them from attending in-person instruction; and their Spring/Summer 2021 schedules permit ready access to on-campus attendance. Note: Students are not required to reveal their specific health conditions;
4. The Faculty/unit or College must commit to addressing any student scheduling conflicts that might arise should the scheduling of in-person coursework necessitate a change to the time that coursework was originally to be offered;
5. The Faculty/unit or College must commit to having a contingency plan in place should the pandemic necessitate reverting to remote teaching and learning;
6. The Faculty/unit or College must provide the specific building and room number of any proposed instruction space to ensure that, if it has not yet been done, a COVID-19 space
assessment may be undertaken to ensure physical distancing and other COVID-19 health and safety requirements; and

7. The Faculty/unit or College must confirm that COVID-19 safety plans will be in place for all in-person course and course component offerings (a HSW representative will be assigned to work with course instructor on a course specific COVID-19 safety plan).

The following conditions should be carefully considered by Deans/directors when developing proposed priority lists of in-person courses and course components. Preference should be given to proposing in-person courses that:

- Require specialized equipment, space, or software that is available only on campus;
- Resist remote delivery but are required for students to continue progress in their program/degree;
- Would be especially challenging to convert to a virtual environment;
- Are offered infrequently and thus are required by students to progress in their programs; and
- Are deemed a priority by the Dean/director/unit.

Once an in-person course or course component is evaluated by IPCAT and approved by AIR, an additional consideration for its delivery will be equity. Deans/directors and the Colleges are advised to contact all prospective or registered students (per criterion #3 above). Students will not be disadvantaged if for geographic or other reasons they cannot attend on-campus courses or course components. They should be encouraged to contact their instructor or academic advisor regarding alternative registration options.

Student practica, Co-op placements, and other field-based learning

A process was developed in the 2020-2021 academic year to allow student practica, Co-operative Education placements and other field-based learning to take place in person both on- and off-campus. Students were placed only with employers and other organizations that committed to following the applicable jurisdiction’s COVID-19 health precautions. IPCAT will oversee a similar process for students in Spring/Summer 2021.

It should be noted that just as with any on-campus in-person courses or course components, individual field-based learning opportunities may also be altered in light of COVID-19.
Health and safety protocols

All on-campus activities must continue to adhere to COVID-19-related health and safety protocols initiated under the guidance of the University’s Health, Safety & Wellness team and supported by Facilities Management personnel.

These protocols are currently being strictly applied to all in-person teaching and learning for Winter 2021, and will be enacted with equal rigour to any in-person teaching and learning in Spring/Summer 2021.

Academic units will be provided with the necessary tools, consultations, and supports to develop a health and safety plan for each in-person course component they offer. Common to these safety plans are the following:

- Requiring that all instructors and students view the COVID-19 health and safety orientation session (module; power point) prior to attending their first in-person course component. Instructors are encouraged to post the orientation session in UR Courses;
- Requiring students and instructors to carefully self-monitor their health throughout the term using Health Canada’s COVID app located here;
- Determining what personal protective equipment or other COVID-19 health and safety measures will be required by students and instructors;
- Ensuring that proper physical distancing and wearing of masks/face coverings are maintained on campus, including in classroom, laboratory and studio spaces;
- Ensuring that handwashing and hand sanitizing stations are appropriately placed and marked; and
- Providing students and instructors with a detailed document that outlines expectations, recommendations, and any restrictions related to being on campus for in-person coursework.

Should COVID-19 surge or re-emerge during the Spring/Summer 2021 term, or if a positive case/exposure/transmission is confirmed on one of our campuses, the University – through our Health, Safety, and Wellness team - will work directly with provincial public health officials to determine the best course of action depending on the specific circumstances. The University’s COVID-19 Response plans can be found here.

Communicating the list of in-person courses and course components

When finalized, the list of in-person course components to be offered for Spring/Summer 2021 will be provided to all academic units, entered into the University’s course registration system, and posted on the University’s website.
All in-person courses or course components will have plans in place to manage a localized outbreak of COVID-19 during the Spring/Summer 2021 term.

Communicating with the University and larger communities
University Advancement & Communications will roll out a clear communication plan for the Spring/Summer 2021 term to keep the University and the larger community well-informed both prior to and during the term.

Fall 2021

At the time this document is published, several factors prevent the University from determining a precise approach to teaching and learning for the Fall 2021 term. They include:

- The trajectory of the pandemic in the province over the next few months;
- The success of the University’s efforts to safely deliver in-person coursework in Winter 2021 and Spring/Summer 2021 terms;
- The as-yet-undetermined schedule for the distribution of an effective COVID-19 vaccine and the impact of a COVID-19 vaccine on the operations of the University; and,
- The development of a postsecondary sector approach for Fall 2021.

Attending to the points noted above, the University will shortly begin developing a plan for Fall 2021 through a consultative process as was used for previous terms.

Moving forward safely, carefully, and consultatively
This framework provides guidance for teaching and learning in the 2021-2022 academic year at the University of Regina, Federated Colleges and partner institutions in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. It does so, however, with the understanding that the uncertain nature of the pandemic will require the institutions to continuously assess and periodically revise their coordinated approach. At all times, this planning will be done carefully, taking into account the important perspectives as well as the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff.
Teaching and Learning Working Group: Academic Incremental Restoration (AIR)

- (Chair) Dr. David Gregory, Interim Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
- Lee Aument, Faculty Administrator, Science
- Rose-Marie Bouvier, Faculty Administrator, Arts
- Dr. Andrew Cameron, Faculty of Science, URP-G Chair
- Jayveer Chadva, University of Regina Graduate Students’ Association
- Darren Cherway, Director, Health, Safety and Wellness
- Dr. Alec Couros, Faculty of Education and Director, CTL
- Doug Cripps, Associate Dean, Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies
- James D'Arcy, University Registrar
- Art Exner, Associate Vice-President Information Services
- Dr. Jim Farney, Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy
- Dr. Amanda Gebhard, Faculty of Social Work
- Amy Hunter, Special Projects Administrator
- Melissa Hrebenik, Instructor, Faculty of Nursing
- Dr. Bob Kayseas, Interim President, First Nations University of Canada
- Dr. Stephen King, Senior Researcher to the President
- Gurjinder Singh Lehal, University of Regina Students’ Union
- Lisa Mitchell, Associate Vice-President University Advancement and Communications
- Dr. Nilgün Önder, Associate Vice-President (Academic)
- Neil Paskewitz, Associate Vice-President Facilities Management
- Pat Patton, Director, Security and Operations
- Dr. Yvonne Petry, Dean, Luther College
- Dr. Tom Phenix, Dean, Campion College
- Christie Schultz, Director, Centre for Continuing Education
- Regan Seidler, Coordinator, Enterprise Risk Management
- Glenys Sylvestre, Executive Director University Governance and University Secretary
- Dr. Lisa Watson, Associate Dean Research & Graduate Programs, Faculty of Business Administration
- Brett Waytuck, University Librarian
- Christina Winter, Copyright and Scholarly Communications Librarian, CCAM Chair
In-Person Course Assessment Team (IPCAT)

- (Chair) Dr. David Gregory, Interim Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
- Darren Cherwaty, Director, Health, Safety and Wellness
- James D’Arcy, University Registrar
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- Dr. Stephen King, Senior Researcher to the President
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