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

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

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. The Winter 2021 term is also taking place mostly through remote delivery, with approximately 600 discrete students 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.

Postscript: A dramatic surge in the number of “variants of concern” infections in Regina necessitated that all in-person courses transition to remote instruction on March 29, 2021.

The framework for 2021-2022
For the 2021-2022 academic year, should circumstances permit, the University will increase the presence 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 COVID-19 health and safety measures in place as 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 postsecondary environment and experiences.
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.
9. If there is a conflict between this guide and the Public Health Orders, the requirements under the Public Health Order are to be followed.

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 and 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 changes affecting 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;
- Consultations with the Ministry of Advanced Education and the support for a sector response to the changing pandemic;
- The availability of effective COVID-19 vaccines; and
- Lessons learned as the University works through each term of incremental return, where feasible, to in-person teaching and learning.

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 programming\(^1\).

\(^1\) 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. All University members (including students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors) 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, including, but not limited to, quarantining. 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

Spring-Summer 2021 teaching and learning: an overview

The 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 practicum placements. This cautious plan for Spring/Summer 2021 is consistent with the sector approach developed in consultation with the Ministry of Advanced Education and other Saskatchewan postsecondary institutions.

During Spring/Summer 2021, a limited number of low-density in-person course components will be held. These include courses and course components (maximum section enrolment of 29) for approximately 300 students. In addition, student practica, Co-operative Education placements, and other field-based and experiential learning experiences are taking place, primarily off campus. Any out-of-province student placements will be required to adhere to the public health directives of the relevant jurisdiction.

The criteria and process by which in-person course components were selected for delivery were overseen by AIR and informed by experience gained since March 2020.

For Spring/Summer 2021, in-person course components on the University’s main campus are spread out in space and time across seven buildings, during the teaching day, from Monday through to Friday. Some courses are also offered through the Centre for Continuing Education after hours and on weekends.

All assigned learning spaces (e.g. classrooms and laboratories) have been assessed and modified, when necessary, according to strict COVID-19 health and safety protocols; all in-person activities must adhere to these protocols throughout the term. Faculties are also required to have contingency plans for all in-person course offerings should the circumstances of the pandemic require a complete return to remote teaching and learning during the semester.

Other academic supports for limited in-person student presence on campus have been carefully considered and are being implemented in Spring/Summer 2021. These include: curbside pick-up from the Campus Store (Follett) for the duration of the term; the continued configuration of single-table/single-chair student study stations on campus; and in the University library, appointment-only access to computers and single-table/single-chair student
Fall 2021: Transition Term

Transitioning to an increased presence of in-person courses and a managed re-opening of the University

Fall 2021 teaching and learning: an overview

A sector approach to the Fall 2021 term has not yet been announced, but transitioning to an increased number of in-person courses and course components at the University, Federated Colleges, and partners such as Saskatchewan’s Colleges is planned. A managed re-opening of the University is anticipated. The Academic Scenario Planning, Implementation, Restoration, and Envisioning group (ASPIRE – a sub-committee of AIR) is developing scenarios for Fall 2021 and beyond.

Per ASPIRE’s planning, the increased in-person courses and course components will include, for example, labs, studios, and courses, both undergraduate and graduate. The Registrar’s Office confirms that:

- These students will be spread out across seven buildings, engaged in their classes at different times throughout the teaching day, and taking those classes across the entire week;
- The Registrar will modify the Fall 2021 schedule, as needed, such that students are in different buildings and are not scheduled to gather in large numbers at the start/end of classes; and
- As was the case in Winter 2021 (with 600 discrete students attending on-campus courses), the density of people on our campuses will be managed while ensuring that the appropriate resources are in place to support teaching and learning.

Fall 2021 is a transitional term. It is the possibility of vaccines that permits us to increase the presence of people on campus and to engage in a managed re-opening of the University. We anticipate the following changes:

- Elimination of access points;
- Opening of computer labs;
- Increased access to the Library;
- Increased access to recreation and athletic facilities;
- Student supportive study spaces throughout the campus; and
• Food services (limited) on campus, eg., URSU tenants, Luther Cafeteria.

Please note that the following COVID-19 protocols and guidelines will continue to be implemented in Fall 2021 for on campus attendance of courses and/or course components:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mask guidelines &amp; hand hygiene</th>
<th>Ongoing evaluations of ventilation rates &amp; air exchanges</th>
<th>Improved filtration through upgraded air filters</th>
<th>Daily self-monitoring for COVID symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical distancing &amp; low density</td>
<td>Online e-training</td>
<td>Approvals by Deans</td>
<td>IPCAT-approved room assignments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note: All individuals on campus are expected to be vaccinated against COVID-19

A broad range of teaching and learning approaches
Both in-person and remote teaching and learning for Fall 2021 will take place via numerous modalities that occur within a broad synchronous–asynchronous range (ie. from in-person or online at a scheduled time (zoom) to online anytime (web-based) or a mixed delivery).

Instructors, in consultation with their Department Heads and Deans, will confirm the modality of teaching/learning.

As instructors begin developing their courses, they are encouraged to consult the remote teaching and learning resources currently provided on the remote teaching site. There are a variety of approaches which instructors may employ in both in-person and remote teaching.

Possible examples include (but are not limited to):
The Registrar’s Office will confirm course delivery codes based on what an instructor identifies as their primary modality for teaching. An explanation of the different scheduling codes may be found [here](#) under the “What do the different course delivery codes mean?” tab.

To allow students to make informed decisions about their course schedules as they register for the Fall term, Faculties must enter course information in the Section Long Text of SSATEXT of Banner by April 30, 2021 at the latest. Faculties, Federated Colleges, and academic units are responsible for their own SSATEXT entries. The date/time of any online at a scheduled time (synchronous) sessions must also be included in the course syllabus and/or the UR Courses page. Additionally, instructors are asked to activate their UR Courses pages and fill out the ‘Course Summary’ section (deadline August 3, 2021) to ensure that students have access to some key information about the course (such as what teaching modalities you will use, date/times of any live sessions, if Proctortrack will be used for exam invigilation, where students can find course material, etc.)

As in past terms, the University is developing and updating enhanced resources to support students, faculty and staff. These resources can be found [here](#) and [here](#). As they begin developing their remote courses (UR Courses and Zoom), instructors are advised to consult the remote teaching and learning resources currently provided on the [remote teaching site](#). These resources will be updated as necessary for Fall 2021. The Centre for Teaching and Learning and the Flexible Learning Division of the Centre for Continuing Education may also provide guidance as instructors develop remote and hybrid or blended courses or look to incorporate online elements into UR Courses to augment in-person teaching.

Other student academic supports – tutoring, workshops, academic advising, and personal counselling, for example – will continue to be offered primarily via Zoom, but may be supplemented with some face-to-face opportunities.

**Determining what in-person, on-campus courses and course components will be offered**

The In-Person Course Assessment Team (IPCAT) has previously prescribed criteria, guidelines, and deadlines for Deans/Directors in managing in-person course activity. For Fall 2021, in light of the vaccine developments, IPCAT will no longer be assessing in-person academic activity. This responsibility will transfer to the Deans/Directors. Deans/Directors are asked to work with ADAs, Faculty Administrators, and instructors to determine by which modality each course will be offered in Fall 2021.
Communicating the list of in-person courses and course components
When finalized, the list of in-person course components to be offered for Fall 2021 will be provided to all academic units, entered into the University’s course registration system, and posted on the University’s website.

Student practica, Co-op placements, and other experiential 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 Fall 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 restrictions in Saskatchewan or the relevant jurisdiction in which the student has a placement.

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

Winter 2022
A full return to in-person teaching and learning
Circumstances permitting, the Winter 2022 term will constitute the full re-opening of the University, including face-to-face and remote course offerings. Given the re-opening of the campus, including the presence of in-person courses, students and faculty are expected to be geographically proximal to the University as appropriate.
Teaching and Learning Working Group: Academic Incremental Restoration (AIR)

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• Lee Aument, Faculty Administrator, Science
• Rose-Marie Bouvier, Faculty Administrator, Arts
• Dr. Andrew Cameron, Faculty of Science, URP-G Chair
• Jayveer Chavda, University of Regina Graduate Students’ Association
• Darren Cherwaty, Director, Health, Safety and Wellness
• Dr. Alec Couros, Faculty of Education and Director, CTL
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• Pat Patton, Director, Security and Operations
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• 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
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• Christina Winter, Copyright and Scholarly Communications Librarian, CCAM Chair
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