

To faculty and instructors:

In addition to the details I sent to all faculty, staff and students, I wanted to contact instructors with some additional topics.

If you are experiencing difficulties with transitioning to online teaching, please contact Richard Carter or Manda Vrkljan in the Kelly Library for assistance with Quercus. Diana can provide support for Zoom. Also note that if you have a sat exam in your course's assessment, please create an alternative assessment. Quercus has a testing/exam module but take-home exams may be the easiest alternative.

Please show patience with students as they adjust to these unusual circumstances. We may need to be more open to providing extensions, SDFs, etc., for coursework. Grades are due 16 April.

#### **Guidelines from TST (from Pamela Couture, TST Director)**

The following notes were shared with TST heads of Colleges with permission to share with faculty. They come out of a meeting the TST Director attended at the Provost's Office.

- 1) We probably don't have online final exams in a survey rather than essay format, but if we do: please avoid. The university is expecting logistical problems with the online multiple choice format.
- 2) To reduce the need for final exams, faculty may either change the weighting through a vote to make earlier assignments worth more. (See best practices for a class vote online, below).
- 3) To reduce the need for final exams, faculty may add an extra assignment during exam week but it must be due no later than the due date of the final exam. (See best practices for a class vote online, below).
- 4) The period of instruction of the class must stay the same. There should be no new material introduced after April 3.
- 5) Faculty may change assignments to credit/no credit, but may not change a full course to credit/no credit without declaring a course disruption (this is a very specific term: see <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/sites/default/files/2020-01/policy%20on%20academic%20continuity.pdf>). All disruptions must be sent to Provost Cheryl Regehr for approval. If the whole grading scheme of a class is changed, a disruption must be declared and that decision must be approved by Provost Cheryl Regehr. The protocol for declaring a disruption: the declaration must be sent to the TST Director and then sent from TST to the Provost. We would like to avoid this by using the "alternative weighting/assignment option."

6) Best practices for a class vote online: if an instructor wants to change the assignments or weighting of a course, the instructor posts what they want to do on Quercus and produces an option to vote through the Quercus quiz page (just make the quiz no credit). Post clearly what is being proposed, what changes there are to the assessment rating. Voting should have an end date of the next scheduled face-to-face class. Once voting has occurred, a simple majority of the students who have voted carries the change.

Finally, the following came from Michelle Voss-Roberts, and I thought I would share it with you:

1. Be kind to yourself and your students. Everyone is stressed, even if they're playing cool. That includes faculty. And that's OK.
2. Let's acknowledge that the quality of education will not be as good in alternative formats as it is in the pedagogical model we've actually planned for. That's OK as well—we're just trying to survive.
3. Do not read on best practices for distance learning. That's not the situation we're in. We're in triage. Distance learning, when planned, can be really excellent. That's not what this is. Do what you absolutely have to and ditch what you can. Thinking you can manage best practices in a day or a week will lead to feeling like you've failed.
4. You will not recreate your classroom, and you cannot hold yourself to that standard. Moving a class to a distance learning model in a day's time excludes the possibility of excellence. Give yourself a break.
5. Prioritize: what do students really need to know for the next few weeks? This is really difficult, and, once again, it means that the quality of teaching and learning will suffer. But these are not normal circumstances.
6. Stay in contact with students, and stay transparent. Talk to them about why you're prioritizing certain things or asking them to read or do certain things. Most of us do that in our face-to-face teaching anyway, and it improves student buy-in because they know content and delivery are purposeful.
7. Many universities have a considerable number of pedagogical experts on academic technology that we have only been dimly aware of until yesterday. Be kind to these colleagues. They are suddenly very slammed.
8. If you're making videos, student viewership drops off precipitously at five minutes. Make them capsule videos if you make them. And consider uploading to Youtube because it transcribes for you. Do not assume your audio is good enough or that students can understand without transcription. This is like using a microphone at meetings—it doesn't matter if you don't need it; someone else does and they don't want to ask. At the same time, of course, think

about intellectual property and what you're willing to release to a wide audience.

9. Make assignments lower or no stakes if you're using a new platform. Get students used to just using the platform. Then you can do something higher stakes. Do not ask students to do a high stakes exam or assignment on a new platform.

10. Be particularly kind to your graduating students. They're already panicking, and this isn't going to help.

Dr James R. Ginther, PhD  
Professor & Dean,  
Faculty of Theology,  
and Sisters of St Joseph of Toronto Chair in Theology