

From: FAFA on behalf of [FA President](#)
To: fafa@lists.uvic.ca
Subject: [Fafa] Flexibility in the Return to Face-to-Face Teaching
Date: January 17, 2022 10:04:07 AM
Attachments: ATT00001.txt



Dear Colleagues,

As promised in my earlier email, I have some additional information regarding the return to in person teaching, although we are awaiting further decisions from VPAC before there will be full clarity on these matters.

The One Third Issue and Levels of Flexibility for the Rest of Term

The Association has been advocating for as much flexibility as possible for members in how they deliver their courses in the upcoming term. It was our understanding that faculty members had flexibility and autonomy to offer a third of their courses online, and that has been the understanding of many of you, as discussed in our recent Council meeting. This understanding was both nuanced and reinforced by the Provost's email on Friday, in which she noted that:

As you review Teach Anywhere, please note the existing flexibility within the Senate-approved guidelines for you to offer up to 1/3 of your course online with the approval of your chair, director or associate dean. Even with our first two weeks online this term, there is still scope within those guidelines to support more blended delivery in the term.

This email does suggest that for those now planning to use some of the flexibility that the Provost is advising you about, that the two weeks we are currently online do count within this one third provision.

The LTSI Teach Anywhere site has further useful information regarding how to manage the rest of this term, given expected high levels of absenteeism, including very useful information and examples of blended strategies (with some classes online, some in person) for an average teaching week. <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/TeachAnywhere/2022/01/13/blended-strategies/>

The site also notes that:

In planning for the resumption of in-person instruction on January 24, instructors are advised to incorporate blended strategies into their in-person courses to address absenteeism and support accessibility.

We have recently been told that if you had planned for one third of your course to be online before the beginning of term, for pedagogical reasons, and had received approval of your Chair to do so, that the first two weeks online do not count in assessing the one third online component.

We are also hearing, however, that decisions made late on Friday by the Administration may now be removing any flexibility to teach up to one third of their class online that faculty members had previously been told that they had, in the Provost's email, from some of their Deans and in earlier iterations of the LTSI website. It is now being suggested that there may be no such flexibility unless instructors had made plans for a one third online component in their courses before the beginning of term. The Association very much hopes that this is not the case, and is strongly advocating that the Administration recognize the crucial need to allow instructors some autonomy in determining the online or blended components of their courses.

We recognize that since the University has announced that classes will now be face to face, that this must be the case in the majority of classes. However, our members are professionals who are best able to assess the needs of particular classes and students, and we hope that the University will maintain previously understood levels of flexibility at this difficult time.

As I noted, we are still waiting for final decisions by the Administration, but we have heard that new directives may now indicate that the only reason instructors may be able to take their classes online would be separate from the one third option, and would be short term pivots, in cases of excessive student absences, or an instructor's mild illness, need to self-isolate as required by [BCCDC guidance](#) or emergency family care issues (such as schools closing suddenly, due to COVID). In such cases, instructors would need to get permission from Chairs/Directors to go online, or Chairs may choose to find temporary replacement instructors instead, if available.

Permission of Chairs/Directors

It is reasonable to inform one's Chair or Director if one needs to go online temporarily for one of the reasons above. It has generally been common practice to inform one's Chair if one is ill and has to cancel a class or find a replacement. However, the Association has informed the Administration that we believe that requiring members to seek the approval of their Chairs/Directors in all such cases again does not respect the judgement or autonomy of our members, and slows down processes when decisions (about going online, etc.) may need to

be made quickly, and communicated quickly to students. We are also concerned that requiring approval from Chairs/Directors in all of these situations will significantly increase the workload of Chairs/Directors, who are also our members, at an already difficult time.

Seeking Medical or Family Status Accommodations

If you have longer-term health concerns for yourself or your family members related to teaching face-to-face, you might want to consider requesting a medical or family status accommodation to teach online for much or all of the rest of the term. We encourage you to seek Association assistance in seeking such an accommodation. Information about how to request such accommodations was provided in the email I sent to members on Thursday, January 14th.

Additional TA supports

We are grateful that as the Provost noted in her email on Friday, she “will work with deans to provide additional resources to support teaching, grading and other aspects of course delivery, should they be needed.” It is our understanding that for units where TAs are available, that TA support will be provided if you choose to follow the Provost’s recommendation to record and post your lectures. I remind you that the Association’s position is that Association members cannot be required to provide hybrid instruction, but we appreciate the additional TA support being provided to assist instructors who choose to do so to accommodate students who are ill, isolating or have CAL accommodations.

Rapid Testing

Some of you had asked about access to rapid testing. It is my understanding that the administration is working with the provincial government to gain access to rapid tests for the university community, but a timeline on this matter is not yet available.

Concluding Comments

Given the likelihood of absences of 30 per cent or more, this term is going to be far from perfect for everyone, and we need to recognize that, and do what we can for our students, without further overworking ourselves, or teaching when we should be resting and recovering from illness.

As noted above, the Administration is still finalizing its decision-making on various matters related to the return to in-person teaching, and will be communicating its decisions at that time. I will also provide more information when I have it, both about Administration decisions and Association advocacy to provide you with as much flexibility as possible at this difficult time.

In the meantime, if you have questions, or are seeking clarification regarding any of the issues noted above, I would encourage you to contact your Chair or Dean. If you have concerns

about any of these issues, you may wish to raise them with your Dean. The Association would also be pleased to anonymously forward any concerns you might have to the Administration.

All the very best,

Lynne

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We recognize with respect the WSÁNEĆ (Saanich), Wyomilth (Esquimalt), and Lkwungen (Songhees) peoples on whose territories the University of Victoria stands, and whose relationships with this land remain profound today.

We acknowledge the devastation that government-created residential schools and Indian hospitals has inflicted on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples and the ongoing effects of concentric trauma that continue to this day.