

Memo



COVID Memo #3: Update from the Union

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES NECESSARY TO CONDUCT CLASSES FROM HOME

We are concerned that there does not seem to have been a process put in place to systematically distribute equipment to those teachers who are not set up at home and the College has given the directive that courses resume online in the first scheduled lecture block next week, at the latest.

Several teachers are not equipped for teaching from home and require additional equipment. We do not believe that teachers should be covering these expenses out-of-pocket, but we know that several have been due to the lack of a timely response from the College. Furthermore, a large number of teachers are also unfamiliar with what they may need in order to be properly set up for teaching from home; they have asked for guidance as to what would be absolutely necessary equipment. To date, the College has not provided this information, nor has the College provided a list of what is already available for teachers.

Given the difficulty of coordinating the purchase of equipment for teachers in such a short time frame, **we proposed that the College develop a rapid approval system that would allow teachers to purchase some of their own equipment and supplies.** We felt this was the most expedient way to make sure that teachers had the equipment that met their specific needs, especially given that equipment needs vary widely from teacher to teacher depending on their home office set-ups.

To date, the College appears to have been operating on a case-by-case basis. Today, in our meeting with the College administration, they have agreed that teachers should not be incurring expenses in order to be able to work from home. The College committed to sending out directives to teachers within the next 24 hours outlining the specific process for acquiring necessary equipment.

Please make sure to document any reasonable expenses that you incur as a result of the shift to working from home, this may include printing costs, upgrades to internet bandwidth, purchase of equipment, etc.

Until further notice, if you do not have the equipment you need to be able to teach your courses online, we advise you to e-mail the Help Desk and copy the Sector Dean's office as soon as possible.

DELIVERY OF EQUIPMENT

We have asked that the College set up procedures to have equipment delivered to teachers' homes to avoid them having to collect it from the College. Several of our members whose health is more fragile have been especially concerned with having to go to the College in person. The College recognises these concerns and is seeking to find solutions on a case-by-case basis.

USE OF ZOOM (LICENSES AND PRIVACY CONCERNS)

The College has recommended that teachers use Zoom for classes and meetings that must take place online. Initially, the College had obtained approximately 100 Zoom Professional licenses that were distributed to department and program coordinators. The College has subsequently obtained significantly more Zoom Professional licenses. **If you require a license to meet with your students online, you can send a request to helpdesk@dawsoncollege.qc.ca.** You should also contact the helpdesk if you require any technical support in moving your course online.

Several teachers have raised concerns about privacy and recording of Zoom - both for teachers and students. We are aware of these concerns and will be discussing them with the College. However, we would like to take this opportunity to inform teachers that Zoom sessions can be recorded; even if students are unable to record directly from Zoom, there are a variety of screen capture applications that can be used. We advise you to work with the assumption that all online synchronous activities are potentially being recorded by an online participant. It is **not necessary** for you to record your Zoom sessions for students to view at a later time; however, if you decide to do so, we advise you to seek permission from the students involved in the class as they may have legitimate concerns about their privacy.

REVISED COURSE OUTLINES

The College has asked that teachers update their course outlines and submit them to the Sector Dean's office, in line with the usual procedure followed at the start of semester. Clearly, we are not in usual times. Given that teachers are being asked to move their courses online in such a short time-frame and with such limited support, we recommend that you focus on your teaching. Obviously, you should make sure to clearly communicate any modifications to your course outline to your students; **we recommend that you prepare a list of modifications for your students and simply forward that information to your Sector Dean's office, rather than recreating and reformatting a formal revised course outline.**

A reminder that the outline need not be approved by your department coordinator but must follow the guidelines set out by the College and by the Department.

OTHER "NON-ESSENTIAL" COLLEGE ACTIVITIES

While we are all busy with moving our courses online, some sectors of the College seem to be continuing with other activities that usually occur at this time. In particular, this is the staffing period which requires a lot of work from coordinators/staffers, even at the best of times. We have asked the College to postpone the staffing process to allow coordinators to focus on supporting their departments and programs. We also believe that the process should be suspended as there remain several unanswered questions about how the remainder of the semester will proceed, which may have an impact on student numbers and thus staffing.

Essentially, we believe that in proceeding with the staffing process on the usual schedule, the College is placing undue pressure on coordinators and asking them to undertake work which might have to be substantially redone at a later date. The College has responded that it prefers to maintain the original staffing schedule, regardless of the adjustments that may be required at a later date, but that they are willing to provide an extension to any coordinator who requests one.

In addition to staffing, teachers are often involved in committee work throughout the semester. **We have asked the College to postpone all non-essential committee work to allow teachers to focus on their teaching. The College has agreed and asked that we inform them of any committees that are convened at this time.** Please let us know if you are convened to any committees that you consider non-essential.

PASS/FAIL OPTION FOR CERTAIN COURSES

As you may have read, the Government has introduced changes to the rules governing cegeps to allow for a Pass/Fail (EQ/INC) option. In the College's memo of March 29th, it asked that departments take a position as to the courses for which a numerical grade cannot be provided.

We remind departments that this decision may depend on certain factors, such as whether or not there is the possibility of students returning to the College for in-person assessments. Department decisions regarding requesting a pass/fail option can be contingent on whether or not an assessment can take place in a way that favours academic integrity. If departments believe that they require more time in order to assess their grading options (such as a trial online-teaching period), they should inform the Sector Dean.

PRECARITY AND INCOME INSECURITY

Finally, we want to highlight the difficulties experienced by Continuing Education and part-time teachers who are not earning full-time salaries. The anxiety caused by precarity is even more pronounced during the current situation. In addition, the tremendous amount of additional work necessary for moving courses online, in particular providing additional support to students, adapting courses, and participating in department meetings, goes unpaid for Continuing Education teachers. We will be raising this issue with the College and requesting that additional funds be provided for non-contractual tasks that Continuing Education teachers will necessarily be undertaking in order to complete the semester. We suggest that you keep track of any additional work that you are undertaking as a result of this crisis so that we can have an idea of associated costs.

Part-time teachers have pointed out that income earned from the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit would far exceed their current earnings, but that their current employment status makes them ineligible for any financial assistance. Our understanding is that both the Federal and Provincial Governments are looking into ways to assist part-time workers. An announcement is expected on April 6th which should hopefully address some of the income insecurity currently being felt by several of our members. We advise teachers to wait until this date and subsequent analyses of the government announcement before making any decisions regarding their current employment situation.