

At the most recent meetings between the Ministry and the Unions, discussions have been focusing more on the Fall semester. Given that many of our members have expressed interest in knowing what is being discussed in terms of Fall, the DTU has prepared a brief summary and translation of the relevant points that were discussed, based on notes provided by FNEEQ.

## **Summary of the meeting on 8th May**

### **General Orientations Regarding Fall 2020:**

FNEEQ presented six principles (adopted by the Bureau Federal) that should be respected in the resumption of Cegep teaching in Fall 2020:

- Guarantee the safety and security of educational institutions, particularly in terms of the physical and psychological well-being of all their members and respecting the conditions of the World Health Organisation (WHO)
  - The Ministry responded that it is only ever possible to guarantee a safe environment and that this is the responsibility of individual administrations
- Plans for Fall 2020 should prioritise stability and the ability to predict teaching activities until December
- Come to an agreement with Unions regarding the development of provincial frameworks and local protocols relating to the new semester
- Ensure equity between students, between teachers, and between Cegeps
- Respect the autonomy and professional judgment of teachers
- Improve the funding of the education network so as to remunerate the work required to adapt to distance teaching

### **Reflections on distance education**

- There is much anxiety among teachers who are uneasy with continuing to teach online in Fall. These anxieties are not solely to do with a lack of training, but also the lack of human connection in online teaching. We expect that there will be an increase in leave requests, burnouts, and retirements.
  - The Ministry responded that the training provided by TELUQ is of a high quality but is only intended to be an introduction so teachers can start to familiarise themselves with online teaching. Regardless of the scenario, it is necessary to train people who are interested

- The Ministry noted that while we talk of social distancing, it should really be physical distancing - we shouldn't remain socially isolated from others; it's a question of mental health
- Teaching online involves an increase in workload; activities related to program revision or evaluation should be put on hold.
- It is necessary to consider temporarily revising the CI calculation to avoid workloads that are unreasonable
- Regardless of the scenario for Fall, there will be a need for additional resources: to reduce the student-teacher ratio for face-to-face classes, to adapt courses for online delivery, to help bring support students who missed elements in winter 2020, to remunerate Cont Ed teachers for the work of adapting their courses and supporting their students, to compensate for the decrease in registrations (particularly as a result of the lower number of international students), to take into account smaller ratios in stages and the need to find solutions to the lack of available places for stages in nursing and other programs in health and social services
  - The Ministry stated that we need to be careful and rely on clarity and pragmatism. Based on what we know, there will be no vaccine before 12 or 18 months.
  - The Ministry stated that it doesn't envisage a scenario of total confinement, nor a scenario of complete opening, for the Fall. The most likely scenario will be somewhere between the two.
  - The Ministry stated that there are several parameters guiding the planning not only for Fall, but also winter:
    - The principal parameter is that of social distancing; we are aiming at a maximum overall capacity of 25% for in-person activities
    - There will presumably be a lot of distance teaching, but not everything will be done that way. We are planning so that activities which absolutely must be done face-to-face can be
    - It is difficult to establish a rapport with distance teaching, so we should imagine a hybrid scenario with some weeks in person, depending on the particular requirements
- It will again be necessary to relax some of the regulations of the RREC, particularly as regards number of weeks for courses, institutional policies, evaluations

- The Ministry noted that there will need to be flexibility in terms of the schedule and the calendar, and this will necessitate relaxations of the RREC
- On the other hand, the Ministry noted that there is a need to reinforce the skills of teachers in distance education and redevelop student support
- We need to make sure that the conditions under which evaluations take place are as equitable as possible for students from different groups and different cegeps. Re-establishing the R-score depends on such equity. It is also necessary to consider the Exit Exam: can this be held and if yes, in what form?
  - The Ministry stated that for the Exit Exam, it would not go beyond the decision already taken
  - For the R-Score, the Ministry stated that we need to make sure that the level of distance education allows for a realistic R-score
- When there are physical classes taking place, we need to make sure that they are well-equipped and that it is clear who has access. Is it envisaged that there will be problems with access to cegeps for students if there is a domino effect (i.e. secondary schools being used for primary education, and colleges being used for secondary education)?
  - The Ministry responded that the scenario for primary-secondary education in Fall is 100% physical, so there will not be any domino effect

### **Summary of the meeting on 15th May**

The discussions focused on the planning for the Fall semester. There was an indication that provincial frameworks will be established by Ministry within the next few weeks.

### **FNEEQ**

- Reiterate the need to consult with Unions about the modes of distance education
- Inject additional resources for both regular and continuing education teachers to recognise the additional work required to adapt courses to distance education modes
  - The Ministry responded that it was aware of the financial needs and were looking into it, but that no decisions had been made as yet. The Minister of Education, Minister Roberge, has announced that deadlines related to financing will be delayed
- Relax the regulations related to Cegep education (RREC) in terms of the calendar, evaluations, ISEP, and the Exit Exam

- The Ministry responded that it was currently reflecting on the question of relaxing the RREC for the Fall session and that decisions will be made shortly.
- Postpone all non urgent institutional work, such as program evaluations and revisions, strategic plan
  - The Ministry responded that while it was to be expected that the pace of program revisions would be slower, it was necessary to continue the work as several programs need to be “modernised”
- Provide teachers and students with the technology and equipment necessary for distance education
- Respect the vacation of those employees who have been redeployed in the health sector

The Federation des Cegeps noted that they were concerned with the student drop-out rates and suggested that a ministerial campaign promoting higher education could be a good idea.

The Ministry stated that it wanted to make sure that the next session goes well, even if public health guidelines means the conditions are not normal. The most realistic solution seems to be a “hybrid” format (with a combination of in-person and distance elements).

### **Organisation of in-person activities to complete the Winter session**

Given the recent announcement that schools in the Montreal region will remain closed until the end of the Summer, and the consequently in-person activities for professional training could not take place, what are the implications for higher education? Is it still possible to resume the planned in-person activities in Cegeps within the Montreal region after May 25th?

The Ministry stated that there has been no alteration to the directives for Cegeps in Montreal or elsewhere in the province. Cegeps are “closed except for certain practical activities which cannot be done remotely and which are necessary for students to advance in their program. Each institution must evaluate which activities are absolutely necessary and make arrangements for them that respect the public health directives of the region.