
Union Guidelines for Preparations for Fall 2020

May 26, 2020

It is now official: the Fall 2020 session will take place in a hybrid format combining distance teaching and in-person teaching at colleges.

On Friday 8 May, a meeting took place between unions representing teachers (including our union, FNEEQ-CSN), student unions, the *Fédération* of cégeps (representing College administrations) and the Ministry of Education to discuss respective positions regarding preparations for the Fall. During this meeting, the FNEEQ presented its statements of principles:

1. Guarantee work-place safety in educational establishments, paying particular attention to the physical and psychological well-being of all members, by respecting in particular the conditions that the World Health Organisation have proposed as necessary for relaxing restrictions
2. Privilege stability and, as much as possible, predictability in planning for Fall 2020 teaching activities
3. Agree with unions on provincial frameworks and local protocols in preparation for the return and continuation of the semester
4. Ensure equity between students, between teachers, and between Cegeps
5. Respect the autonomy and professional judgment of teachers
6. Improve the funding of the education network. Remunerate the additional work required to adapt to distance teaching

FNEEQ also requested that the relocation process for MEDs within the Cegep network be suspended for 2020-2021 and that additional financial resources be provided to cover the numerous adjustments necessary to prepare for a Fall semester that will take place in a hybrid format and in the context of a pandemic.

Unfortunately, while Cegeps have already started to prepare for the Fall, the government has been slow to announce what additional financial resources will be provided to support Cegeps and teachers in the task of transitioning to distance education at short notice. There is no longer time to delay; the next month is crucial for preparations for Fall.

Several concerns have been communicated to us by local unions and so, while there remains much that is unknown, we have produced this document to support local unions in their discussions with their College administrations.

Given the distinct realities of each Cegep, we do not consider it appropriate to promote a singular approach for the entire network. Colleges located in regions that have been relatively unaffected by the virus and with a small student population could be in a position to resume in-person teaching for all courses while respecting public health directives. This is not the case for the majority of Cegeps within the Montreal region. We judge it equally unrealistic to establish similar frameworks to those developed to allow for the Winter 2020 semester to be concluded, as the situation for Fall remains unclear at the moment.

So, we have opted for a checklist identifying elements to consider in discussions with local administrations regarding planning for Fall. This document identifies the principal concerns communicated to legal councillors by local unions and proposes some possible solutions.

1. Workload Fall 2020

a) Determining which courses will be given in person and which via distance education

- Respect the autonomy and professional judgement of teachers regarding the selection of pedagogical and evaluation methods adapted to the current context. To do this, ensure that distance education is not imposed and that teachers are given flexibility
- Ensure that departments have the final say on whether competencies can be attained via distance education or require the organisation of in-person activities
- Avoid situations in which theoretical courses are given completely via distance education to allow for the development of the pedagogical relationship, to preserve the quality of the teaching, and to promote educational success. In light of this, consider, with the agreement of the teacher, dividing a group into two or three “sub-groups” and each week have an in-person course for one sub-group, which alternates, while the other sub-groups follow the course online via a camera installed in the classroom
- Prioritise the following activities for in-person teaching: laboratories and workshops, *stages*, evaluations, first-year students and remedial courses for students coming from high school

b) Format of distance courses

- The principles adopted by the FNEEQ state that distance education should take place in synchronous formats to preserve the quality of teaching and to most closely resemble the format of in-person teaching. However, in light of the challenges in work-family balance brought about by the current crisis, for both students and teachers, flexibility is needed and teaching formats other than synchronous could be considered

c) Scheduling

- Favour the creation of schedules that would allow for the resumption of in-person teaching at any moment during the semester
- Take into account work-life balance in the creation of schedules, particularly if the inclusion of evening courses is considered necessary to respect health measures related to Covid-19

d) Academic Calendar

- It is expected that the application of the College Education Regulations (RREC) will be eased to allow for teaching activities that take place outside of class to be included in the calculation of contact hours. Thus, the length of an online course could be reduced in relation to the usual ponderation
- Similarly, it may be necessary to ease the application of the College Education Regulations (RREC) with regard to the length of the Fall semester. On the one hand, this would allow for winter activities and remedial activities to take place at the beginning of the Fall; on the other hand it would allow teachers to benefit from an additional week or two of preparation at the beginning of the semester
- Consider the possibility of moving the study break to the beginning of the semester as preparation time
- Develop the calendar to allow for a second week of correction at the end of the semester, given that correcting online takes more time

2. Health and Safety at Work

a) Physical Health

- Provide necessary personal protective equipment
- Offer training, if necessary, to ensure equipment is used correctly
- Control access to the building
- Have a clear protocol if someone with Covid-19 related symptoms has been on campus that addresses disinfecting areas the person visited, informing those who have been in contact with them of the precautions to take, etc
- Ensure that the protocol clearly indicates the obligation to complete a report since any subsequent request to CNESST by teachers will need to prove that they contracted Covid-19 at the College
- Provide teachers with access to ergonomic office equipment (chairs, screens, keyboards, mouse etc) and advice about ergonomics for working at home

b) Psychological Health

- Propose resources for assistance with psychological health and, in particular, consider improving the Employee Assistance Program to offer more free sessions for psychological support

3. Layout of space for work and study

a) Adjustments to classrooms

- Arrange the desks in classrooms to be two metres apart and ensure that each desk is disinfected before and after each class

b) Adjustments to Offices

- Arrange offices so that faculty can perform their duties while respecting physical distancing. Whenever this is not possible, ensure that the College provides faculty with access to spaces that have the necessary equipment to give their courses at a distance This could be gymnasiums, ordinary classrooms, unused laboratories, etc
- Ensure that teachers have access to their office during their hours of availability
- Ensure that teachers who do not have enough time to travel between work and home to give a course in person and one at a distance in the same day have access to the equipment necessary to give a course at a distance in their offices
- Ensure that teachers who do not have the necessary equipment at home to give their courses via distance education (faulty internet connection, lack of required software, etc) have access to all required equipment in their offices to allow them to give their distance courses from the College

c) Layout of study spaces

- Consult student associations to evaluate the needs of students in terms of places to do online activities on campus and places to study when they do not have an appropriate place at home

4. Measures to be funded to allow for necessary adaptations

Call on local administrations to insist on funding for the following measures:

- Recognise and compensate the additional time for preparation and student support required to adapt in-person courses to distance courses, for both regular and Continuing Education teachers
- Reimburse teachers for expenses related to equipment necessary to teach remotely (tablet, stylus, chairs, headphones, screens, internet connection, etc)
- Provide teachers with T2200 Forms so they can claim deductions for expenses incurred in relation to teaching from home (internet fees, electricity, office equipment, etc)
- Finance measures to support student populations likely to dropout and to overcome the lack of motivation generated by non face-to-face teaching
- Reduce the size of groups for courses that are to be given in person
- Maintain the same number of students per group for courses given at a distance as currently

- Finish the Winter 2020 session at the beginning of the Fall semester, if needed, based on evaluations made by each department
- Allow for remedial activities at the beginning of the Fall semester for courses which require them, based on evaluations made by departments
- In programs requiring *stages*, ensure that teachers have the necessary time to plan for the Fall semester (find new places for *stages*, undertake training on new protocols in these places, etc) before declaring them available to be redeployed in the health sector
- Finance the salaries of teachers who have to return from vacation early to undertake pre-semester duties
- Ensure teachers have training in technology and remunerate them for this training
- Ensure that additional expenses incurred for transitioning to distance education for 2020-2021 do not lead to over-hiring which could jeopardize the resources available for future student cohorts
- Provide training to all students regarding the specifics of online learning (netiquette, difficulties of distance learning, methodologies of academic work, IT tools, etc)
- Provide resources to replace teachers who will be unable to work due to the pandemic (sick or unpaid leaves, for family reasons, Voluntary Workload Reduction, etc), the number of which is expected to be greater than usual

Some ideas that could be negotiated locally to free-up resources or compensate teachers to adapt their courses for distance education, include:

- End the reporting mechanisms for Quality Assurance
- Identify the savings made as a result of distance education (heating, departmental budgets for invited speakers, photocopies, etc) and redirect the resources towards pedagogical resources
- Consult teachers on which research projects need to be maintained and which could be suspended to free-up resources in *Volet 3* and *Colonne D* that could be injected into *Volet 1*

5. Equity between students, teachers, and Cegeps

- Respect personal constraints (health, childcare, work-family-study balance, etc) while ensuring that these accommodations do not lead to excessive workloads for other faculty
- Ensure equal access to technology
- Ensure that assessments are done face-to-face to ensure academic integrity and reduce plagiarism
- Denounce measures that would cause competition between Cegeps
- Ensure a representative R-score taking into account the current situation

6. Other Working Conditions

- Ensure that the current situation is not used to create precedents that negatively affect the working conditions of teachers in the long term
- Continue to suspend evaluations of teachers who give courses via distance education, as was done during Winter 2020
- Ensure that copyright of teachers over all pedagogical material developed for distance teaching is protected
- In collaboration with student associations, develop and make available to students training intended to familiarise them with the tools of distance learning
- Ensure that Cegeps put in place adequate preventative measures to provide a healthy work and study environment in virtual spaces, for example by developing a code of conduct