Hybrid Winter Term 2021
Implementation Plan

“Courageous Curiosity, Boundless Collaboration, Inspired Communities ... Safely”

September 2020
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The University the World Needs

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, USask has remained committed to its mission to be the university the world needs. Despite uncertain times and significant constraints, USask has been able to move forward on advancing its teaching, learning and research missions and fulfilling its commitment to our students and our province, as well as to many around the world. This is in large part because of the dedication of the USask community.

While the university had three days in March to move from in-person to remote delivery, staff and faculty members have been working for months to develop more fulsome plans for the successful delivery of the 2020-2021 fall and winter academic programs and safely increase activity on campus. Advances achieved to-date include:

- Extensive energy and expertise from multi-disciplinary teams have been dedicated to constructing two key websites: Remote Learning (for students) and Remote Teaching (for faculty and instructors). These sites have been populated with rich and practical material designed to position students and faculty members for success in the upcoming terms. Over the past few months colleagues have developed robust digital content for fall delivery. This work has been fully supported in both practical (e.g., technical, safe return) and creative (e.g., content development and delivery) terms by expert staff in the GMCTL, the DEU, Student Learning Services, ICT, Safety Resources and Media Production. Importantly, planning for academic program delivery in fall 2020 included decisions about requirements for necessary face-to-face delivery. While most decisions were made by colleges and confirmed by an advisory body in early June, ongoing re-assessment and additions were made throughout the summer to meet emerging pedagogical needs.

- At the outset, 165 emergency applications to undertake COVID-19 and other vital research were evaluated and approved in the weeks following the initial lockdown. Since then 712 applications to undertake research projects were developed, fully assessed and approved. These latter projects involved more than 1,675 individuals consisting of 311 faculty, 750 students and 617 staff.

- To protect our community and safely support this increased activity, 5,413 individuals have successfully completed the USask CoVID-19 Training Course to date. There has been a concurrent enhanced presence and support offered by ICT, FAC and Safety Resources staff to support increased teaching, learning and research, as well as the overall operations of the institution. Great effort by many was and continues to be expended to apply and fully benefit from various CoVID support funding programs, including for researchers, offered by governments. College Safe Return Plans were developed, and processes were established to safely move from central to unit oversight. Planning and work related to capital projects led by the Enterprise Project Management Office has also resumed.
• The Student Wellness Center has opened for student services to be booked by appointment, pharmacy curbside pick-up at Place Riel has been initiated, the Training Centre in the Education Building has opened for student athlete access, and Campus Vision has opened with appropriate measures. The three child daycare sites on campus are open, Louis' Loft is filling pick-up orders, and some Saskatoon Transit bus routes have returned to the bus mall area.

• A number of operational adjustments have been made to enhance safety and awareness, as well as streamline and simplify processes and workflow for the campus community. Safety and awareness efforts included strategic building closures, signage, cleaning protocols and traffic flows across the institution. A Safe Building Return Framework, as well as Safe and Gradual Return to Office Use documents have been designed to guide the intake process and execution of increased activity on campus.

• Student residences remain active as we maintain critical and essential housing for students who need to stay on campus due to inability to travel or to find other suitable housing (approx. 500 students remain in residence). A re-vamped system for food services (preparation and delivery) has been developed for students who require self-isolation, and for those who wish to receive culinary support.

• Contactless pickup and online shopping for retail and textbook sales have been made available to all students.

• Streamlined and simplified processes include electronic improvements made in contracting and ConnectionPoint spaces, paper-based processes moving to online workflow, improvements to monitoring and analysis of critical financial indicators, and established additional payment methods (Visa) for students.

• Additional workforce supports have been developed and provided to people leaders to help maintain staff engagement in a remote environment and assist leaders in determining how to best resource and manage their college / unit operational and priorities during the pandemic, as well as increased programming and access for employees to health and wellness (particularly mental health) supports

• A number of external outreach programs to which USask has provided support, include $10,000 of food donations to local agencies to support those in need, local partnerships to support emergency student funding, and partnership with Montreal Lake Cree Nation for the removal of 22 cabins from Emma Lake Kenderdine Campus to support critical housing needs.

Throughout this time and increased activity, we are both proud and thankful to know that USask has not contributed to increased COVID-19 cases during the pandemic.
Planning Foundations

Overview

In May, the University of Saskatchewan (USask) transitioned its crisis/emergency management supports to the Pandemic Response and Recovery Team (PRT) and Advisory Hub. This transition included enhanced leadership/membership with operational areas of focus, increased engagement with numerous internal and external stakeholders, and continued accountability to the president’s executive committee (PEC).

Looking to the future—and following continued engagement with key stakeholders1, due diligence in aligning with post-secondary partners, careful consideration of updated information informing previous analysis and the current pandemic response environment—USask is planning for a continued hybrid approach to program delivery for winter term, which begins January 2021 through to at least the end of April 2021.

Similar to fall term, the hybrid delivery model will combine primarily remote online learning, with limited clinical, laboratory and other in-person instruction only where required to meet specific teaching goals and where circumstances permit, in consultation with public health and Saskatchewan’s Chief Medical Health Officer. Information on specific courses will be communicated by colleges and schools in the coming month. This direction aligns with other post-secondary sector partners in Saskatchewan and is based on consultation with key stakeholders along with the comprehensive analysis and planning work done with current pandemic knowledge and projections by the PRT and Advisory Hub. The planned direction provides the programming flexibility needed to manage the potential risks while ensuring the health and safety of students, faculty and staff. Consistent with the approach taken in fall, academic program planning and decision-making will stem from discussions within colleges followed by university level confirmation to ensure coordination.

The safety and well-being of our campus communities is our number one priority, and we will continue to work closely with public health officials as we move through the pandemic. For continued campus safety, all staff currently working remotely will continue to work remotely, until further notice. This helps ensure the health and safety for those students, staff, and faculty who are required to be on campus.

We appreciate the innovation and flexibility that has been shown over the past several months as we continue to adapt to the changes brought on by the pandemic. With thoughtfulness, responsiveness and resiliency, we will continue to work with the province to adjust our plans as necessary as we remain focused on delivering our world-class academic programming and research.

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1 Ongoing discussions regarding fall term, winter term and general pandemic planning continue with key internal stakeholders, including Dean’s Council, Associate Deans research and academic, Council and Council Chairs, students union executives, and faculty and staff via their union leadership.
Mandate

To deliver a cross-institutional plan for implementing a hybrid winter term beginning January 2021 and extending to April 2021.

Guiding Principles

*Value, protect and support our people.* We will seek and implement the best guidance possible for the health and safety of our students and employees, and to ensure the return of people to campus will be done in a conscious, careful, and methodical way. We will strive to minimize financial hardship to employees when contemplating reward and employment strategies, and ensure that all legal and regulatory obligations are fully considered.

*Deliver the academic and research mission of the University of Saskatchewan.* We continue our important academic, research, and community engagement work as the University the World Needs. Continually strive to allow as much core mission activity as possible to proceed without disruption, while respecting the necessary limits required by the evolving situation, and understanding the potential to return to stricter limits should the situation require.

*Support Student Success.* We prioritize students’ academic progress, provide them with the supports they need, and strive to minimize adverse impacts to their academic progress.

*Ensure the University of Saskatchewan’s long-term excellence and financial sustainability.* We are responsible not just for the university’s success today, but for its long-term sustainable future, and we will actively seek opportunities to improve the way we deliver on our mission. CoVID-19 will have a significant negative impact on the university’s financial situation on both a one-time basis and ongoing. Significant and immediate actions are required that support long-term cost reductions and revenue enhancements to protect the university’s longer-term financial sustainability and reputation.

*Engage and Contribute.* We will effectively contribute to the province’s efforts to respond to the rapidly shifting public health situation and the province’s recovery, while also contributing to global efforts to address the coronavirus pandemic.

*Acknowledge Impact.* We recognize and appreciate that decisions the university makes, and the actions taken may have an impact on our external communities. We are committed to factoring that impact into the ongoing decision-making on our staged approach to increasing activity.

*Communicate and consult with our community.* We will share and seek input regarding our CoVID-19 status, plans, and actions around increased activity with internal and external stakeholders to ensure transparency and timeliness.
Criteria

The following criteria are intended to inform and guide decision-making, such that any intended action or decision:

- Is fully aligned with the principles listed above.
- Evaluates communication that may be necessary and ensures that any such action/decision is discussed with PEC and Communications.
- Empowers colleges and units to function effectively within defined parameters that provide sufficient guidance, mitigate risk, and ensure alignment.
- Ensures sound financial management practices are maintained throughout the recovery period.
- Adheres to all public health directives and the Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan regarding allowable timelines for lifted restriction for specific services
  - Directives became more restrictive over time when they were implemented, and we can expect the loosening will look similar in reverse.
- Allows adjustment of activity, while respecting the limits required by the evolving situation and the potential to return to stricter limits should the situation require. Work that can be done from a distance should be, to protect the health and safety of those required to come onto campus.
- Protects the physical, mental, and emotional health and safety of our workforce by minimizing risk and potential exposure for all workers on site. Toward that end:
  - The PRT and Crisis Operations Team (COT) must be made aware of all activities within on-site university spaces.
  - Safety must be rigorously maintained, with adequate access and training for use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other safety-related supplies.
  - People Leaders must identify whom amongst their workforce are considered essential to remain on campus and must take the necessary measures to protect the health and ensure the safety and well-being of the workforce.
  - Faculty and staff who feel uncomfortable about their work situation, for whatever reasons, need to know that they can report their concerns to Safety Resources (safetyresources@usask.ca or 306-966-4675) or call our confidential safe disclosure line.
  - Contractors and other external workers on site should be coordinated through the EPMO and Safety Resources. All contractors must complete the Contractor Safety Orientation prior to beginning any work, registration available at safetyresources.usask.ca
- Maintains a priority focus on students, both graduate and undergraduate.
- Factors the impact on our external communities of decisions the university makes.
- Ensures the process for approving increased activity is informed, fair and transparent (Stages of recovery and increasing activity in university spaces).
Hybrid Winter Term Description

The winter term hybrid scenario recognizes that:

- Academic course delivery will be complex and multi-layered, focusing on four academic program areas: (1) Direct entry, (2) Health sciences, (3) Law, and (4) Graduate programs. Classes will be "binned" into one of three categories:
  - Offered in fully remote mode for winter 2021
  - Delivered (at least partly) using a face-to-face mode
  - Delayed/not offered – in cases where a course could not be mobilized for the fall of 2020 or the winter of 2021, the offering would be delayed if feasible

- Specific courses are identified for in-person delivery having met the threshold that it is not possible to achieve the required learning outcomes in a remote environment (e.g., clinical skill development). A logistics plan will be developed to ensure safety and adherence to all necessary public health guidelines.

- Research will occur with defined criteria and approval processes, and a staged approach with stringent mitigation measures will allow for onsite research activities to increase. Further increases in research activity, both onsite and off-site, will depend on public health directives, COVID-19 cases remaining low, sufficient resources and other factors.

- Necessary staff will be onsite to support the delivery of critical teaching and learning and research work, as well as to support the remaining student body. Staff not essential to on-campus activity will continue to work remotely.

- Administrative units will be required to support remote delivery and the new learning management system (LMS) system implementation will continue to be fast-tracked.
• Comprehensive analysis of overall budget projections based on student enrolments and changes to revenue streams, as well as additional one-time costs and longer-term impacts, will continue.

• Approvals of all related expenditures to support the hybrid implementation will follow established approval processes.

• Safety resources staff will be on-site and engaged in all aspects of preparedness to support the hybrid scenario.

• Safety and wellbeing of faculty, staff and students will be embedded within all aspects of the plan.

• Operations will strategically open buildings, but not full access; and provide space configuration to ensure appropriate physical distancing and ability to disinfect and clean.

• Continued robust government relations and communications plan that will support fluid channels of information to students, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders.

• Governing bodies will continue to meet through video conferencing channels and decision-making responsibilities will be carried out remotely.

• We will encourage enrolment; however, we can foresee that graduate enrolment numbers (particularly international) may be lower during the 2020-21 academic year.

• The size of gatherings and number of people occupying a public space will adhere to provincial public health directives.

Planning Assumptions

• Any increase or return of activities will continue to be done in a conscious, careful, and methodical way based on the Implementation Plan approved by PEC and supported by colleges and units, and in alignment with provincial public health directives and the Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan. As we increase activity in certain areas we will be intentional in observing a pause to assess the impact of those increases, and to determine potentially whether and when the next step to advance can be taken

• Efforts to construct an Implementation Plan will be purposely complemented and further refined by internal and external consultation that is both genuine and fully informed.

• While it is understood that consideration and approval for activities will be undertaken individually, there will be a need for effective and over-riding institutional coordination, and practical consideration of capabilities, resources, and priorities.

• We need to be prepared for a lengthy and difficult pandemic. Multiple waves and variable risks of transmission have occurred and are still possible, if not likely, and the winter could be worse than the current risk, necessitating a re-tightening of restrictions.

• Despite the many uncertainties, USask remains determined to achieve its strategic plan and realize its goals, and even use this experience as an opportunity to drive positive, long-term change. In doing so, we will need to facilitate and encourage research activity and impact, excellence in teaching and learning, student enrolment and engagement, and community engagement.
• It must be appreciated there will be varied and differing responses and reactions to the pandemic amongst students (undergraduate, graduate and post-doctoral fellows), staff and faculty. A menu of meaningful and accessible supports, practices and programs will be required to assist our community during difficult and uncertain times.

• Cultural, athletic, recreational, artistic and other facets of an all-encompassing university community have also been significantly impacted. Efforts to enable members of our university, as well as the broader local, Indigenous, and provincial community, to continue to benefit from these endeavors will need to be employed.

• The impact of the pandemic will disproportionately affect international graduate student enrolment, student and faculty exchange, and international research and partnership activities. We will nevertheless find creative ways to advance our internationalization goals.

• Faculty, staff and student absences are possible due to illness, for themselves or their families. We must anticipate and plan appropriate backups, as well as maximum flexibility and potential support.

• There may be government support programs, some directed to specific initiatives or with directed restrictions, that may become accessible to support the university in response to the pandemic. We will need to be aware and responsive to benefit from these programs.

• It is unlikely all institutional areas will move forward with the Implementation Plan at the same rate, along the same path. This realistic flexibility must be acknowledged, and permitted, as external influences and necessary conditions to allow progression may differ between areas.

• It may be expected (most likely within the provincial context), and beneficial that USask announces and implements decisions in a unified fashion across the sector.
Key Areas for Implementation Planning

The following section features seven key areas for winter implementation planning. These areas include Academic (Teaching & Learning); Research; Governance; Operations, Services and Facilities; Technology; and People and Resources; and Communications and Engagement.

Academic (Teaching & Learning)

Introduction

There continues to be complexity in working through the best course of action for academic programming in the winter of 2021 and yet notably, there has been much hard work and dedication on the part of all those involved. What was initially struck as an Academic Planning Task Force led to the development of four sub-group clusters of planning activity: (1) Health Sciences, (2) Direct Entry, (3) Graduate programming, and (4) Law. Each of these sub-groups is chaired by Vice-Provost Patti McDougall, with the graduate programming group co-chaired with CGPS Dean Debby Burshtyn. Membership on subgroups 1, 2, and 4 has included associate deans academic/students with resource personnel. Subgroup 3 includes associate deans research/graduate studies plus some graduate chairs and faculty members.

A key activity of the planning process has been to identify what program aspects can be delivered remotely and what programming elements require consideration and necessary logistical planning for delivery in-person. Decision-making in this regard follows the Stages of recovery and increasing activity in university spaces framework.

The fundamental principle has been that if a class or program element can be delivered remotely, it should be delivered remotely. Any recommendations for face-to-face delivery were questioned and tested to establish the exceptional nature of recommendation (Appendix A). The bar for face-to-face delivery was deliberately set very high to remain aligned with relevant public health directives and to acknowledge that in-person delivery will necessitate extensive logistical coordination around adherence to safety protocols (e.g., required PPE, social distancing, hand washing, space usage, etc.). Face-to-face delivery will only be possible in a limited fashion.

With regard to academic programming being offered through remote delivery, additional consideration and planning has been invested into such things as: (1) good practice guidelines (see Appendix B); (2) facilitating needed technology and accessibility; and (3) needed support for faculty and instructors as they develop learning resources for their class offering. As a lead in to the fall of 2020, staff and faculty colleagues worked extensively to prepare for remote delivery including, for example, revamping the “remote learning” and “remote teaching” websites, over 1,000 people participating in sessions on how to enhance delivery in a remote environment, and over 1,000 people learning how to use the new LMS – Canvas. In spring and summer, the university’s investment of funding to support graduate students in financial need resulted in significant marking support to help complete the winter term but also produced 82 projects across the university where supports were sought to aid in the development of content and the redesign of courses for remote delivery. The re-visioning of orientation resulted in a
highly successful series of virtual events with over 3,500 students in attendance. Student supports and services for graduate and undergraduates continue to be enhanced in creative and accessible ways. With the goal of building the confidence of incoming students, a cross-college and multi-disciplinary team successfully implemented a summer “prep” program in the areas of math, physics, biology and chemistry with over 350 participants.

Goal(s)

The University of Saskatchewan seeks to offer engaging and robust learning experiences across all our colleges and schools for undergraduate, graduate and non-credit students while maintaining the safety and security of all university members. The desire to optimize and elevate student achievement and student success is a key driver in our decision-making.

Resources/Supports

There are numerous people and units supporting the implementation plan for academic programming.

- TLSE units (including but not limited to Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching and Learning, Distance Education Unit, Media Production, Strategic Enrolment Management)
  - Extensive web-based resources are available to support faculty, instructors with development and delivery, and to support students in their learning and development.
- Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
- Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement (and Office)
- Vice-Provost, Faculty Relations
- University Library (including Student Learning Services)
- Residences (and other ancillary services including but not limited to the Bookstore)
- Procurement
- Student Leaders
- Facilities (Services)
- Safety Resources

This planning work is being done with strong connection to the PRT, the Advisory Hub, and the COT. Another valuable resource has been financial donations received in support of student crisis aid, namely the redeployment of APEF and DSAE funds that colleagues have directed to fund those students in financial need. In addition, students have benefited from external donor funds made in support of crisis aid.

Roles and Responsibilities

In the “Process” section of the University’s Framework for Increased Activity, there is clear insight about how decisions are made that are relevant to the implementation planning (see Appendix B of the Framework for decisions around mode of class delivery). Specifically, decisions about the delivery mode of course offerings continue to be made within colleges and schools by college leaders in consultation with faculty members and department heads. Roles and responsibilities are as follows:

- Vice-Provost, Teaching, Learning, and the Student Experience (VP-TLSE) serves as the Provost’s designate in leading the academic planning for the winter of 2021.
The VP-TLSE is also responsible for organizing and mobilizing any and all needed supports from within the TLSE. Consistent with the mandate of the portfolio, members of the TLSE are responsible for supporting faculty and graduate students in the delivery of the academic program as well as providing support services to graduate and undergraduate students.

- Planning sub-groups (Associate Deans Academic/Students; Associate Deans Research/Graduate Studies; some graduate chairs/faculty members)
  - Have been following principles approved by PEC within the COVID-19 Phase II Task Force recommendations and now included within the Implementation Plan
  - Provided advice on how decisions about class delivery should be made
  - Collect and represent information on program requirements for 2020-21 with a particular focus on identifying classes offered remotely versus classes where the recommendation for consideration by the dean (or designate) is for in-person delivery
  - Assist in developing elements of the logistics plan where courses are recommended to be delivered in-person
  - Identify and facilitate supports needed for faculty and instructors in the development of learning resources

- On the basis of recommendations from department heads, deans (or designates) make decisions regarding the delivery mode of classes for the winter of 2021.
- COT representatives provide logistical guidance related to the delivery of classes in a face-to-face format.
- PRT provides advice to the VP-TLSE on all matters related to the Implementation Plan and a representative from PRT will provide direct input into the Academic Advisory group that looks at consistency, coordination and logistics for face-to-face delivery.
- USSU and GSA executive members provide insights and guidance and have participated in task groups that emerge from the Implementation Plan and were active in the lead up to fall 2020.

**Key Assumptions**

- Enhanced learning experiences and a richness in student life is possible in the current environment
- The University of Saskatchewan will achieve a high quality of learning experience through remote delivery and it is entirely possible to deliver diverse learning outcomes, including experiential learning, through virtual channels. Creativity, solution-finding and new energy are required at this time.
- We continue to watch the Canadian and North American post-secondary landscape to identify high impact practices that benefit our students as well as to recognize practices and behaviours that result in increasing risk on a university campus.
- For the winter of 2021, remote delivery is the safest approach and as such where we can deliver programming remotely, we should be delivering remotely.
  - Perceptions of safety on campus during the pandemic are a key decision driver for students and for parents (as seen in national survey data)
We acknowledge the voices of those students and parents who are anxious to see the fulsome return of students to in-person delivery.

- For winter 2021, in-person delivery will only be approved and implemented when necessary and only when safeguards can be guaranteed. Our processes for implementing face-to-face classes will need to adhere to provincial public health guidelines.
  - Decisions to offer classes in a face-to-face format must focus on the learning outcomes and the type of learning and will not be based on class size.
  - Different types of learning are considered as possible candidates for face-to-face delivery but are not automatically granted in-person delivery standing given other necessary considerations (e.g., space needs, logistical feasibility). These types include:
    - hands on use of specialist equipment or artefacts, (e.g., lab)
    - use of specialist software
    - direct interaction with people/animals (e.g., performance, lab)
    - experience in purpose-dedicated space (e.g., performance related, studio)
    - experience in specialist location (e.g., field)

- Some of the decisions about learning opportunities are outside the university’s control (e.g., clinical placement in and outside the hospital, school practicum).

- Entering the winter term of the academic year, there is recognition that some courses that may be required for degree completion were postponed from fall to winter term with the hope of better circumstances in the winter. It is possible that at least some of these classes may need to be prioritized for in-person delivery in the winter term to meet student need.

- Communication with stakeholders, generally and with students in particular, is critical. The sooner the university can share information about how the winter will look in detail, the better off we will be in terms of encouraging enrolment and reducing anxieties. Given that remote delivery does not require permission, it makes sense to share what we know when we can.
  - This communications work will be undertaken through a variety of sources and channels including the TLSE and central communications, as well as colleges and the Office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement.

- We will not shift strategies in the middle of the term from remote to in-person delivery thereby requiring students to move to Saskatoon (or another USask campus) without appropriate time for students to plan.

- As we consider and predict enrolment, we must put renewed energy into activities and initiatives that encourage enrolment. As we have throughout the summer, senior leaders and those in positions tied to the international work of the university will continue to seek opportunities to advocate for immigration decisions and regulations that support the return, the health and safety, and the success of our international students.

- Using the principles of the student learning and development cycle we assume that different students will need different things from us for the winter, and this period of a pandemic is no exception. Separate and focused working groups continue to focus their attention on:
  - Students will require new types of supports from us and will need to receive these supports in both old and new ways.
Groups of students, including but not limited to Indigenous and international students, will need continued attention to ensure they receive the right supports at the right times.

- We work in partnership with student leaders and associations when it comes to building robust student life. The USSU and GSA is actively engaged in discussions on student life and addressing potential challenges for students.

- Regardless of the plan for academic programming in the winter, we will need to be ready just as we are in the fall to step back from some or all in-person delivery if health circumstances shift and enhanced restrictions become necessary.

- Adequate technology and access are key for students to be successful.

**Plan/Logistics**

- Course inventories across all health science programs (*Appendix C* for example) and for graduate program offerings have been used to identify: (1) any course where there is a proposed need for in-person delivery so that further analysis could be undertaken; and (2) any course offered remotely that might need a “more-than-typical” level of support for the instructor to build and deliver.

**The logistics for in-person delivery:**

- Based on advice and guidance from COT, determined a set of standard “rules” when it comes to in-person delivery and leveraged the expertise of the Safe Return team to this end. This included such things as use of the CoVID-19 Health and Safety Online Course, as well as symptoms checklists and/or screening questions, and cleaning logs.

- Together with COT and PRT supports, we need to again develop a plan regarding use of buildings and spaces within buildings. Some of the key areas identified for winter program delivery include (but are not limited to):
  - Clinical Learning Resource Centre
  - Health Sciences Building
  - Veterinary Medicine Hospital and building

- Attention is also required to evaluate and support students who are completing degree requirements offsite of the university campus (e.g., practicum experiences, field courses). A process document was created over the summer to position colleges to make decisions about whether academic activity in an off-campus location (including other parts of Canada) is needed and well-advised and to provide guidance on how to assess whether an alternate site has adequate safety measures in place.

**The logistics for remote delivery:**

- We continue to work through the challenges faced by students regarding remote access and technology.
  - Rural and remote students (with a particular focus on Indigenous students living on reserve)
    - Donor funding was sought and attained to support the purchase of computer equipment and internet access for Indigenous students
The three primary PSE institutions of the province teamed up to lobby for better commercial packages (e.g., equipment, data) for PSE students in the province.

- International students in countries where access to university platforms is a challenge and/or local government restrictions on specific content areas potentially place students into a dangerous study situation

- Continued work to support faculty in learning resource development and remote delivery (e.g., use of technology, options within remote delivery, building tools, demonstrating tools, assisting with the development of new content). Please see the Remote Teaching website for full information https://teaching.usask.ca/remote-teaching/index.php

  - Assistance has been provided to instructors and faculty in aid of thinking through the exams and the design of course assessments more generally. One focus has been on how to foster a climate of academic integrity and communicating expectations to students for both “open” and “closed book” assessments

  - Tools are available for faculty to use in obtaining student feedback on courses. Such collection of feedback is recommended midway through the course as well as at the end. The Student Learning Experience Questionnaire (SLEQ) is suitable for use at both time points and has been amended to include remote-specific items that faculty and instructors can use to collect student feedback on learning experiences impacted by pandemic circumstances.

  - An additional element is the development and availability of a peer review tool that faculty can adapt to their local teaching context and use in their peer review of remote offerings.

- Continued work to support student success in an online environment (e.g., front end modules developed by Student Learning Services and the Distance Education Unit about how to be successful in a remote class). Please see the Remote Learning website for fuller resource examples https://students.usask.ca/remote-learning/index.php

The logistics of supports to students (online and potentially in-person depending on public health regulations):

- We continue to identify support services that must be open onsite as part of the Framework for Increasing Activity and there needs to be some prioritization around which of the support services would remain as remote offerings. The Student Wellness Centre has partially reopened to provide health supports.

- As we get closer to a fuller state of opening we must be prepared to respond to the return of students onto campus and determine the appropriate ordering for re-opening in person (subject to approvals).

- When the number of international and Indigenous students on campus starts to increase, we need to explore access to the centres. We need to be sure to serve the needs of these students while also recognizing that our centres are gathering spaces (that we may not be able to use as gathering spaces for the near future).

- We will want to have places for student communities to come together for academic, social and ceremonial purposes, but they need to be virtual not physical gatherings for a period of time. Accordingly, we need to be creative in how we create these spaces (e.g., weekly “grounding circle
ceremonies” offered with elder support through the Aboriginal Student Centre and the Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre)

- As it becomes possible, we need to create suitable and safe study spaces, and the University Library will lead the planning around increased activity and required software and protocols.

- Similarly, where and when possible we look to colleagues in Recreational Services to provide safe fitness and rec options for students in-person (e.g., the Fit Centre re-opening, soccer, Zumba, etc.) as well as providing virtual options (e.g., yoga, fitness) for those who are not on campus or do not seek to be on campus as this time.

Timelines and Deliverables

- Early to mid-October – work largely completed in terms of identifying programming needs for remote and in-person classes (e.g., all course inventories returned, direct entry college decision completed for UG programs).

- October – communicate to students where decisions to offer programming remotely have been determined.

- As soon as possible – communicate to students where decisions have been made to offer programming in face-to-face mode.

- End of October into early November – confirm and solidify logistical planning for any in-person delivery requests.

- Ongoing – support faculty and staff who are developing learning resources and planning remote courses.

External Relations/Partnerships

- City of Saskatoon
- Post-Secondary Counsellors (FSIN)
- FSIN and Métis Nation of Saskatchewan Leadership, Saskatoon Tribal Council, Prince Albert Grand Council Leadership
- School Boards
- Health practitioners who host our students in clinic placements (outside the SHA)
- Other external partners who host our students in practicum settings
- SHA
- Medical Health Officer
- University of Regina and Saskatchewan Polytechnic
- IRCC and provincial government colleagues in Advanced Education focused on international students
Research

Introduction

Over the spring and summer, we increased time-sensitive research activity on campus as outlined in the Framework for a Staged Approach to Increasing Activity in University Spaces. By the end of August 2020, we had issued nearly 750 permits for research activity, involving approximately 330 faculty, 780 students, and 630 staff. Through the fall and winter, we will continue to approve as much research activity as possible, in keeping with provincial public health directives, and respecting the realities and various demands on university supplies and resources.

Goal(s)

For research, we have two primary goals:

1) Keep everyone involved in research healthy and safe, while increasing research activity in a staged approach as health and safety becomes easier to maintain; and

2) Continually strive to allow as much research activity as possible to proceed, while respecting the necessary limits required by the evolving situation, and while understanding the potential to return to stricter limits should the situation require.

Resources/Supports

On-campus research:

- Resources (these have already been implemented and used over the spring, summer, and early fall and will be continually refined as needed going into the winter):
  - CoVID-19 Safety Permit Application for Increased Activity;
  - Short CoVID-19 Health and Safety Online Course;
  - Lab Safety Manual – CoVID-19 Pandemic Supplement;
  - Research Facility Re-Opening Checklist;
  - Symptom Self-Monitoring Checklist;
  - Cleaning Log; and
  - Clear and transparent process[es] for determining which activities can proceed.

- Ancillary supports and services:
  - Facilities – providing maintenance and custodial operations and other facility services necessary to allow research activity to proceed while meeting enhanced requirements for cleaning and physical distancing;
  - Procurement – optimizing purchasing activities at a time of significant supply-chain disruption to meet the supply needs of approved research projects;
  - Safety Resources – conducting lab inspections, approving biosafety and radiation permits, providing hazardous waste-management services, and assisting researchers in implementing appropriate safety procedures;
  - Animal Care and Research Support – approving and overseeing all animal-based research, coordinating all logistics related to ordering and transporting research animals, delivering
animal care services in various university facilities and providing animal-welfare and animal-handling training; and
- University Library – providing access to physical materials including contact-less pick-up of requested material and a “scan-and-send” service for portions of books following fair-dealing guidelines.

Field work:

- **Field-work decision tree and expectations guide** – this has been in use since April 2020 and was recently updated. It has been well received, and other institutions (e.g., UBC) have asked to adapt it for their purposes. We will continue to update this as the pandemic and associated public health directives evolve over the coming months.

Remote research (i.e., from home):

- “Researching Remotely” webpage – developed by the OVPR, University Library and ICT, with support from communications, this page lists various resources and links to assist researchers. In the lead-up to the fall, we will be expanding this to create a one-stop shop for researchers to access all programs, services and supports (including documents and forms) relevant to them throughout the research lifecycle.

Other and/or additional resources may also become necessary or be identified as implementation progresses.

Roles and Responsibilities

Decision-making process regarding increased research activity:

1. Deans/Executive Directors (EDs): Deans and EDs will prioritize and approve requests from their colleges, schools and centres, using whatever process they deem best to make those determinations.
2. COT: The COT will review the Dean/ED-approved applications, to ensure plans are as safe and effective as possible, and that they can be appropriately supported with university supplies and resources.
3. PRT: The PRT will be engaged should any disputes or significant questions emerge.

Key Assumptions

- Tri-Agencies will continue to be quite flexible, but not all other funding partners will be able to be as flexible.
- Many industry and non-profit partners may continue to see significant negative effects on their revenues, workforce and investment positions, presenting difficulties for sponsored research.
- Fee-for-service revenues in various units on campus may continue to be affected by both restricted activity on campus and adverse economic effects on industry users.
- Reduced research activity will result in fewer inventions and disclosures for commercial evaluation.
USask may be a significant player in CoVID breakthroughs, especially given VIDO-InterVac’s leading role in developing and testing vaccines and therapeutic treatments.

**Plan/Logistics**

- The activity-approval process is outlined (see above - Decision-making process regarding increased research activity).
- As stated in the introduction, on-campus research activity in the winter will build on what we are in a position to allow through the fall, in keeping with public health directives and respecting the various demands on university supplies and resources.

**Timelines and Deliverables**

- All documents, forms and the online safety course are already in use (and will be refined as needed)
- The college/school-based approval process is in place and will be carried forward into the winter.

**External Relations/Partnerships**

- Provincial government – continuing to keep them appropriately informed of our contributions to COVID-19 research, our actions to increase research activity, and our alignment with the Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan.
- Funding agencies – liaising with funding agencies for all pre- and post-award activities, including extension requests.
- Industry and non-profit partners – liaising with industry and non-profit partners, including for changes to funding arrangements.
- Other post-secondary institutions – coordinating activities, learning from the experiences of other institutions, and demonstrating leadership by sharing our own insights, processes, documents, etc.
- Others as outlined and synchronized by our communications plan (see below), including Indigenous government and organizations.

**Governance**

**Introduction and Goal(s)**

From the first emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the university strongly committed to ensuring the continuance of its core governance functions, which are essential for achieving its mission as well as strategic and operational success—this goal remains for the duration of the current circumstances and throughout the transition toward increased on-campus activity.

**Resources/Supports**

Responsibility for the university’s governance functions remain primarily within the purview of the Office of the University Secretary and Chief Governance Officer; however, this is a collaborative and collegial process in partnership with:
• The representatives/members of each of the three governing bodies (Board of Governors, Senate, and University Council)
• The governing bodies’ respective executive committees, University administration/leadership, and the Office of the President

And in cooperation with/informed by:
• Pandemic Response & Recovery Team (PRT)
• Office of the Vice-Provost Faculty Relations
• Office of the Registrar

Roles and Responsibilities
This remains largely the same: https://secretariat.usask.ca/index.php

Key Assumptions
• The core governance functions of the university must be maintained in order to guide and governance support its academic, financial, community engagement, and strategic endeavours, such that the “what” of these functions will continue even when the “how” must be adapted to any given scenario.
• Even under the most restrictive pandemic scenarios that might be encountered (but are not currently anticipated), ongoing operative governance functions will be imperative.
• Prolonged remote decision-making and absence of interaction and deliberation will risk detriments to the relationships among and between governing bodies and the university, and may erode trust and engagement. Thus, maintaining engagement is an explicit focus and communication in all its forms will be an essential means to mitigating an erosion of integrity and functioning.
• Our ability to demonstrate (1) that our governing bodies continue to operate effectively and in a way that is timely, responsive, and responsible, and (2) that our governance structures facilitate decision making under even the most challenging circumstances, will contribute to our positive public reputation and trust.
• All governing bodies (and the majority of their committees) represent groups larger than 10 people; Senate and Council each have more than 100 members. Even as on-campus activity gradually increases, these bodies are unlikely to be permitted to meet in-person for an extended period of time.
• In deciding on alternative formats and platforms through which to hold meetings, engage in discussion, and perform all of the governance functions, we must continue to strive for balance among potentially contending factors, including but not limited to:
  o Increased demands on members of our governing bodies and committees, resource and support staff that are realized in the transition to remote work environments (e.g., increased workloads overall, caregiver/parenting/home educator duties, etc.) and a need for greater flexibility
  o Benefits and limitations of online meeting platforms (e.g., opportunity for synchronous discussion of issues versus interrupted or unreliable transmission due to technical difficulties or bandwidth issues; usability of platforms versus security concerns; suitability or effectiveness of platforms/formats for large groups; members’ and chairs’ preferences and/or level of comfort and familiarity with format; unequal access)
• Some ‘discretionary’ activities (e.g., Senate education committee, which generally uses interactive large-group discussions) will need to be put on hold, with efforts are undertaken to maintain relationships and engagement.
• Regardless of the degree of in-person contact, the governing bodies represent an important conduit to the university and broader communities, and can provide opportunities for advocacy, support, and advice.

Plan/Logistics
As all governing bodies are N>10; Senate and Council N>100, these groups will likely not be permitted to meet in-person for some time. Thus, the majority of communications and processes are anticipated to remain digital/remote throughout the Winter term. Most circumstances have been, and can continue to be, handled via ‘normal’ decision and authority pathways, with some adjustments to process (i.e., electronic) and timelines.

There are three categories of urgent situations that may emerge in this context, vis-à-vis governance and decision-making:

1. Emergency (e.g., COVID-19 related) situations that must be dealt with immediately and thus clearly justify use of ‘emergency measures’ and deviations from normal decision processes and/or use of delegations of authority.
2. Situations arising from current (i.e. COVID-19 related) circumstances that are urgent but could follow ‘normal’ processes, although these may require adjusted timelines or other modifications.
3. Urgent items that arise, but are not emergency circumstances (e.g., in this case, are not COVID-19 related) and therefore have little justification for ‘emergency measures.’

(A delegations of authority summary is available from the Office of the University Secretary and Chief Governance Officer, with examples of each of the above including the pathways for decision making.)

Regardless of the urgency or non-urgency of a decision, some form of enhanced interactivity is desirable for richer deliberations and engagement. We will thus be seeking to implement practical approaches to increase the extent of synchronous communication that can enable deliberation/dialogue for virtual meetings of governing bodies, while remaining mindful of the bandwidth and associated demands of ‘higher-tech’ approaches to large meetings. We must also ensure that we engage in regular, purposeful, and transparent communications with Board, Senate, and Council beyond the ‘regular business’ of meetings.

Some committees, working groups, as well as student appeals and hearings may be able to meet in person once we are advised that it is appropriate to do so (based on guidelines and policies of government, Saskatchewan Health Authority, PRT and COT). Until that time, all will proceed as they have been, via adapted virtual processes.

Likewise, collegial processes continue, and are completed remotely as they have been through spring/fall 2020, until advised otherwise (authority is the Board, but delegated to Colleges and guided by the Collective Agreement). Faculty Council processes and decision-making will be completed as they have been through spring/fall 2020, until advised otherwise (authority is University Council, but delegated to Colleges through and guided by the Council Bylaws).

The feasibility of holding an in-person Spring Convocation (N>100, June 2021) is unknown at this time, and we will continue to monitor the situation and associated health and safety requirements carefully.
Timelines and Deliverables

January - April: Board and its committees meet remotely, unless we are advised that in-person meetings of this comparatively smaller group are permitted in accordance with health and safety restrictions and requirements. Council and its committees continue to meet remotely but synchronously (e.g., WebEx), as decided by its Coordinating Committee, on the presumption that such platforms have been effective through the Fall semester. After additional consultation with members regarding their preferences and access/capabilities and informed by the format and outcomes of its October 2020 meeting, Senate may meet synchronously (revert to asynchronous if most appropriate and reliable).

Operations, Services, and Facilities

Introduction

Operations, facilities, and services will focus on what the spaces and services on-campus will require for the continuation of approved on-campus activity.

Goal(s)

To support a consistent and supportive response to increased activity ensuring the safety of faculty, staff, and students.

Resources/Supports

Services Portfolio (Facilities, Protective Services, Parking Services, Consumer Services and Connection Point) and SPO Office (EPMO, IPLD, FRAN, Shared Services).

Roles and Responsibilities

Providing the logistical framework specific to facilities and building services to assist colleges and units in their delivery of the academic mission.

Providing key services on campus to ensure those that are needing to be on-campus have what they need to be effective and safe.

Providing core services remotely to ensure business operations continue and honouring the principle that work that can be done remotely – remains so.

Key Assumptions

- Alignment with the Provincial Re-Open Plan parameters and restrictions as set out by the Chief Medical Health Officer.
- Increased on-campus activity is deemed critical and necessary to support the strategic priorities of the university.
Planning and Logistics

- Develop resource requirement checklist for return of on-campus activity (COT work, security patrol needs) - **completed**
- Develop capital program for building and service requirements based on Provincial public health guidelines (traffic flow, cleaning regime, signage and directional indicators, barriers and protective screens, entries, exits, removal of furniture) – **majority completed** – monitor and adjust as activity fluctuates
- Develop access inventory (including type of access required) and monitoring (what spaces have been utilized and for how long) – **completed**
- Develop response protocol for CoVID-19 positive case on campus - **completed**
- Map labour resources to buildings – **completed and monitoring**
- Continue to evaluate existing capital projects to determine whether on-site activity proceeds, to support teaching and research activities, and university operations – **completed and monitoring**
- Develop a re-open plan for ancillary services in support of student success (residence, culinary, parking, retail) – **June and ongoing**.

External Relations/Partnerships

Contracts with vendors (food deliveries), Colliers (residences), Ministry of Health, external design for signage, City of Saskatoon.

Technology

Introduction

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) must support the technology needs of both the resumption of on-campus activity as well as remote academic, research, and administrative activity. The added complexity of blended support will be a new focus moving forward. Overall, ICT resources will be remote when possible but will have presence on-campus commensurate with the service delivery needs.

Goal(s)

- Collaborate with academic, research, and administrative stakeholders to develop strategies and solutions that will provide a high-quality hybrid experience for students, grad students, faculty, and staff.
- Support digital learning and discovery by expanding our ecosystem of tools, technologies, training materials and resources.
- Support the plans of the mission-focused activities identified above (teaching, learning, research, governance and administration).
- Identify and address privacy and security issues related to changes required within the technology landscape.
• Adhere to enterprise architecture principles in addition to the principles of the winter implementation plan.

Resources/Supports
To achieve our goals, ICT will need:
• To be engaged in planning for academic program delivery and research that is remote, on-campus, or blended.
• To initiate conversations on the need for blended delivery and support due to the timeframe and resources required for implementing some of these technologies.
• Safety guidelines/proper safety and PPE equipment and supplies required for staff provide in-person support when on campus.

Roles and Responsibilities
• ICT teams (including academic tech, service desk, classroom support, college coordinators) will need to be on-campus at least part-time to support faculty in preparing for remote delivery in addition to supporting on-campus teaching and research activities.
• Data centre operations, network operations, customer/support service (A/V/Desktop support) staff will have at least some full-time presence on-campus.

Key Assumptions
• International students learning or researching remotely may require additional supports to be able to fully participate in learning and research activity due to political/technical/financial barriers.
• Rural and remote students (including Indigenous students living on reserve) may require additional supports to overcome technology and connectivity challenges.
• On-campus support needs for research will increase as research returns to campus. In addition, ICT may be required to provide new solutions and more support as researchers change their remote discovery methods.
• Teaching and learning facilities: We will need to map which computer labs are accessible for on premise vs virtual course work. Access to technology-enabled classrooms will be necessary for recording online courses, support for home/remote recording will also be necessary.
• To plan for technical capacity, we will assume enrolment levels for the fall/winter terms are consistent with prior years.
• Will need to be flexible as some college and department activities and various student activities could be switching between remote and on campus depending on current circumstances.
• Paper processes will continue to be switched to digital and simplified. IT support will be primarily remote.
• International travel bans will prevent many collaborators from coming to Saskatoon, and the campus community from outbound travel, resulting in an increased need for collaboration tools.
Hybrid Winter Term Implementation Plan 2.4

In-person conference attendance will be restricted requiring technical supports to attend.

Planning and Logistics

- ICT will continue to participate in research and academic planning groups with a goal of building a comprehensive yet concise academic and research technology toolkit that will address the emerging needs of faculty and researchers.
- Technical support will be required to change admin processes to digital.
- A prioritization mechanism will need to be in place as there will be more requests for new technology or changes in technology than ICT could handle at once.
- ICT will support and sustain existing IT services, but this will need to be balanced with the emerging needs of teaching, learning and research.
- ICT will expedite specific projects required to deliver on the hybrid model, including the LMS rollout and web conferencing tool selection. Other project details available at https://www.usask.ca/avp-ict/initiatives/.
- We will continue to work on delivering excellent recruiting tools/supporting faculty with remote grad students.

Timelines and Deliverables

- Canvas, the new LMS was configured and ready to use by mid-June 2020; onboarding of colleges and departments and wide-scale use was in place for September. Continue roll-out of the new system throughout fall and winter terms with expected full transition from Blackboard to Canvas by August 2021.
- Working, learning, and researching remotely web pages will be primary tools for sharing information about technology supports and resources.
  - Technology self-help materials (e.g. decision trees) for all faculty, staff and students.
  - More focus on video tutorials; “smart” knowledge base articles.
- Assessing the changing needs of the campus for web conferencing capabilities throughout fall 2020 and moving into selection, procurement and implementation first half of 2021.
- Communication, training, self-help materials and change management strategies to support remote and blended working, learning and research will be ongoing.

External Relations/Partnerships

- Saskatchewan Research Network Inc. (SRNet), telephone companies, government ministries, Indigenous leadership (First Nations, Métis and Inuit), and others to identify opportunities for addressing accessibility challenges for remote students, faculty, staff, researchers (including Indigenous and rural).
- Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA): USask technology in SHA buildings/hospital. As SHA shifts protocol we need partner to protect staff while providing services.
- Maintain effective relationships with IT peers at other universities to look for sector wide solutions for supporting remote activities.
Develop and maintain effective relationship with technology vendors to assist in the evolution of our technology ecosystem.

People and Resources

This includes Finance/Human Resources (HR)/Supply Chain/Safety (overall risk assessment).

Introduction

People and Resources must focus on the people, financial, safety and procurement services the campus will require to support the resumption of on-campus activity. People and Resources staff will be remote whenever possible but will have presence on campus commensurate with service delivery needs. We are committed to ensuring our staff are supported and equipped to be effective in their roles in either of these work circumstances.

Goal(s)

- Collaborate with academic, research, and administrative stakeholders to identify safe, financially responsible and sustainable practices for all reopen activities that ensures an effective distribution of people and resources (on- and off-campus).
- Ensure an overarching strategy and appropriate longer-term support systems (health and wellness/wellbeing, leadership support) for continued remote working arrangements for a select group of the university workforce.
- Minimize CoVID-19 exposure and risk for anyone returning to campus.
- Monitor and model the ongoing financial impacts of CoVID-19 on USask to permit decision-making that supports the ongoing financial and operational sustainability of the institution.

Resources/Supports

To achieve our goals, People and Resources will need to:

- Understand workforce impacts and provide/implement enabling strategies to support safe and effective on-campus reintegration strategies (of operations/services and associated employees). HR and Finance Strategic Business Advisors (SBAs) and the Safety Resources team are key resources to this work.
- Develop remote working strategies and longer-term support systems (health and wellness/wellbeing, leadership supports) for a select group of the university workforce. Central HR Specialists and HR SBAs are key resources to this work.
- Understand the impacts on revenues and costs of our implementation strategy including consideration of both direct costs of the requesting unit and support costs of other units. These financial impacts need to be considered both for individual reopening initiatives and for the cumulative effect of all reopening activities. Funding sources for incremental costs will need to be clearly identified.
- Ensure safety resources training, onsite inspections, and fire and life safety systems verifications are in place.
- Understand provincial and federal funding relief programs available to organizations and individuals and develop strategies that leverage these programs.
- Monitor and manage the inflows and outflows of payments to ensure sufficient cash to meet the university’s operational requirements.
• Consider, monitor and manage the domestic and foreign tax implications resulting from remote working and learning environments.
• Support government information requirements (e.g. provincial reporting requests, requirements for federal programs)

Roles and Responsibilities
To provide the logistical framework specific to People and Resources to assist colleges and units in their delivery of the academic mission that aligns with our phased implementation plan.

Key Assumptions
Alignment with the Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan parameters and restrictions. Increased on-campus activity is deemed critical and necessary to support the strategic priorities of the university. Safety protocols and parameters are in place before on-campus activity resumes. Employees are willing and prepared to return and reintegrate in the delivery of on-campus operations/services. Union support exists for the university’s re-open planning and strategy.

Planning and Logistics
• Sustain and support staff engaged in existing People and Resources services.
• Monitor needs and adjust/enhance supports for employee mental health in the pandemic/remote work context.
• Engage employees and leaders directly through surveys to better inform program development/adjustments to enhance employee engagement/effectiveness in the pandemic/remote work context.
• Ensure program development/adjustments to employee engagement/wellbeing and leadership support strategies.
• Enhance remote working protocols.
• Maintain a 6-monthly supply of COVID-19 response materials and expand the holdings to include other critical supplies as necessary.
• Maintain PPE website and look for opportunities to better streamline and integrate its supporting processes.
• Continue to foster a collaborative and supportive environment across all campus stores operations to provide better and more integrated services to the campus community.
• Maintain the full suite of procurement support to campus remotely, primarily through Connection Point, and continue to expand the scope of these services.
• Explore and adopt measures to contain costs and inflation that has accelerated as a result of the CoVID-19 pandemic.
• Mandate training and safe work practices for all employees returning to campus.
• Implementation of the campus face mask protocol and supporting resources for donning/doffing and cleaning.
• Developing classroom cleaning guidance/information/roles and responsibilities for in-person instruction.
• Proactive workplace inspections in approved increased activity locations to monitor adherence to covid-19 and safety protocols.
• Development of guidelines, role and responsibilities and flowchart to support organization response and recovery efforts to a positive covid-19 case on campus.
• Exposure Control Plan tool to facilitate identification and control measures.
• Ensure current support procedures exist for PPE usage (mask, gloves, gowns, etc. as appropriate), hand washing, hand sanitizer, a Laboratory Safety Pandemic Supplement, and cleaning procedures (see above – Research, Resources/Supports)
• Continue to track and monitor cost implications related to USask’s pandemic response and recovery.
• Continue to monitor and adjust/revise workforce strategies and programs to ensure ongoing support to, engagement of and productivity from employees, effective use and cost-management of people resources and continued compliance of collective agreements, legislation and policies.
• Identify and implement cost-containment initiatives to support the sustainability of resources and the institution.

External Relations/Stakeholders/Partnerships
• Maintain productive relationships with regulatory agencies and ensure compliance (OHS Regs, PHAC, CNSC, WCB, MWSLR)
• Continue to maintain strategic relationships with key suppliers to ensure an uninterrupted flow of goods and services to the university.
• Maintain effective communications with unions and strategic partners (USFA, CUPE 1975, CLS, SHA, VIDO/InterVac)
• Maintain effective communication with government partners, including federal, provincial and Indigenous partners and regulators (MAE, Provincial Auditor, Moody’s)

Communications and Engagement

The PRT’s work is guided by a set of principles, one of which is:

Communicate with our community. We will share our CoVID-19 status, plans, and actions around increased activity with internal and external stakeholders to ensure transparency and timeliness.

Periods of uncertainty and rapid change require clear and ongoing communication, and this comprehensive communications plan will be implemented to ensure the work of the PRT is highly visible and understood throughout the campus community and all stakeholders.

Communications goals:
• Clearly define the winter scenario and all campus status changes.
• Build awareness and understanding to the decision-making parameters and process.
• Provide clear, concise communications to all target audiences and stakeholders that addresses their respective concerns and questions.
• Provide consistent messaging in all communications, built from the content on the primary communications channels (single source of content).
• Design and deliver communication materials that are on brand.
Audiences/Stakeholders:

- Key information will be segmented by “core” USask audience groups
- From this key information, appropriate communications will be derived and targeted to the many other USask stakeholder groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Audiences</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Indigenous students/communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Governing bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research/Funders</td>
<td>Alumni/Donors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government (all levels)</td>
<td>Unions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media/Public</td>
<td>Affiliated organizations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Suppliers/Contractors</td>
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</tbody>
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Types of information to be communicated:

- PRT structure, mandate, and decision-making principles
- PRT decisions
- Campus status
- Academic program changes and details
- Campus rules and regulations
- Upcoming changes
- Frequently asked questions
- Milestones/timelines:
  - Winter implementation plan
  - Each re-opening phase
  - Other key milestones (TBD)

Frequency:

- Primarily weekly updates, with important information or changes posted as required (hourly or daily).

Channels:

- Primary channel for Core Audiences/Stakeholders: The focal point (single source) of all PRT communications will be the Updates Website, supported by email, PAWS, social media, USask News, and on-campus signage
  - Everything that needs to be known about USask plans, actions, and updates will be found on the updates site (or linked from it)
  - Secondary channels used when and where appropriate
  - All channels will be utilized as deemed best for each respective audience group
Team Composition and Deployment:

- The PRT Communications Team structure will mirror that of the PRT/PRT Advisory Hub:
  - Dedicated communications resources embedded within each primary PRT working group (specific communications resources to be identified)
    - Additional communications resources assigned to support the Advisory Hub and other stakeholder groups
    - Overlap of Core Audiences and Stakeholders responsibilities where appropriate
  - All report in to the PRT lead - Communications (AVP, Communications)
    - PRT Communications supported and facilitated with dedicated MS Team site for ongoing updates, files sharing, document storage, etc.
    - Full PRT Communications group meets weekly to ensure coordination and consistency of messaging
    - Central Comms will manage the PRT Updates site, core messaging, and design.

Stakeholder Feedback

As noted in the specific plans, a complex network of people from across the institution have provided considerable input and guidance in general pandemic planning and preparing this Winter 2021 implementation plan. Discussion with external stakeholders have been extensive, including the provincial government and post-secondary sector partners.
As we move forward with this plan, we intend to continue engaging our campus community and meeting with campus groups, including Dean’s Council, Council and Council Chairs, Associate Deans Academic, and Associate Deans Research, students union executives, and faculty and staff via their union leadership.

External stakeholders that the university will reach out to further discuss these plans will include:

- The City of Saskatoon
- Continued engagement with the provincial government
- Indigenous partners and organizations
- Business community organizations

**Timelines for Approval/Delivery**

- Draft Implementation Plan submitted to PEC: Sept. 29, 2020
- PEC approves Draft Implementation Plan: Oct 1, 2020
- Further engagement/stakeholder feedback received: Oct 2 – 16, 2020
- Updated Implementation Plan submitted to PEC: Oct 20, 2020
- Delivery of Implementation Plan: November 2020 - January 2021
Appendix A: Decision Tree for Remote vs F2F Delivery

**Decision tree for remote vs F2F delivery for fall 2020**

Types of learning activities that a faculty member/instructor undertakes where face-to-face might be considered necessary:

- hands on use of specialist equipment or artefacts, (e.g., lab)
- use of specialist software
- direct interaction with people/animals (e.g., performance, lab, practicum)
- experience in purpose-dedicated space (e.g., performance related, studio)
- experience in specialist location (e.g., field)

Does this learning activity enable achievement/demonstration of an essential course learning outcome(s) (i.e. does it contribute to development of essential skills for the program and/or is a prerequisite for future courses)?

YES > Drop that component of the course, adjust learning outcomes

NO > Can the learning activity be undertaken outside the campus environment (e.g. off site access to software) ensuring that public health requirements are upheld if activities are replicated in ones home or community?

YES > Make arrangements for activity off campus in ways that fit public health requirements

NO > Can the learning outcomes be achieved via a similar process/experience in a virtual environment or via a virtual simulation?

YES > Proceed with designing this experience for the course

NO > Can the course or this learning activity be delayed until there is enough public health advances to lift quarantine indefinitely (e.g. vaccine, widespread testing, etc.) without significant disruption to student progress?

YES > Delay the course offering

NO > Devise a plan for F2F in line with all safety protocols required (small groups, distancing, cleaning protocols, PPE) for approval by Dean or designate
Appendix B: Good Practice Guidelines for Remote Teaching

These guidelines are intended to inform your planning process and teaching practice for the fall of 2020. In considering these guidelines, it is important to note that we are all learning together through this period and, much like with your face-to-face (F2F) teaching, it will take time to develop teaching skills in a new environment. We recognize your time and effort in planning and teaching your course in the best way possible for your learners this fall.

There are many supports available to you. We are here to work with you as you plan and undertake teaching.

Consider the COVID-19 Context

All learning happens in a context that shapes one’s ability to engage and learn. Circumstances for learners and faculty in the fall of 2020 will continue to be complex and uncertain. These circumstances impact some learners more than others, and raise new issues of equity in our learning environments (e.g. variability in connectivity for rural and on reserve learners, accessibility for learners with a disability).

- **Be Flexible**: Develop a plan for how you can be flexible around assignments, assessments, and deadlines. Allow flexibility for learners to access content and participate in learning experiences at their own pace. Consider recording any synchronous activities for learners who may be unable to participate.
- **Provide Choice**: Choice in learning will help mitigate some of the equity issues (e.g. some choice in frequency and mode of participation, provision of assignment options).
- **Be Compassionate**: Approach your learners with compassion and understanding regarding their circumstances. Communicating caring and flexibility whenever you can will reduce student anxiety and increase learning.
- **Be Remote Ready**: Ensure you are familiar with your computer and the technology you are using. Practice beforehand if possible and if you are experiencing any difficulty, contact ICT for support.

> I really enjoy the Student Response System feed as it gives students the ability to ask questions as they would be able to if the class was in person. As well it has a nice community feeling to it, which is a huge positive for my mental health.  

**USask student Winter 2020 feedback**

1. Create your Course Framework

- **Take inventory**: Gather and reflect on your teaching practices, learning & lecture materials, and the learning activities you used in your face-to-face course. Also consider your assessment plan and how you provided feedback and connected with learners.
- **Confirm your course outcomes**: Review the learning outcomes in your existing course. Ensure these clearly articulate the things you want students to be able to do at the end of your remote course.
- **Outline a clear and consistent structure**: A typical structure includes weekly segmented sections of content broken into chunks called learning modules.

> Having lectures that were narrated was especially effective; I wish all my classes had that! Posting interactive exercises which were instantly graded was also a good way to practice course content.

**USask student Winter 2020 feedback**
2. Build your Remote Course

For each learning module:
A. Identify desired outcomes
B. Create active learning experiences & engage learners
C. Plan for assessment and provision of feedback

- **Activate prior knowledge:** Think about how you can help learners connect the ideas you will present and discuss to their previous experiences and/or learning. Positioning your course in relation to what learners already know helps with engagement, knowledge retention, and deeper learning. (e.g. create visuals showing connections between ideas, build in questions that ask learners to think about or share what they know about the subject, begin a course/learning module with prompts like ‘have you ever wondered why...’ that connect the subject matter to familiar experiences).

- **Plan and integrate structured activities where learners engage, think, create and do:** Learners should be able to practice skills or complete tasks that will help them become better at what you want them to learn. When planning learner activities think about the time they would put into a face-to-face course and check your expectations in the remote context.

  "The instructor posted all our notes and PowerPoints as well as created a discussion board so we are able to comment and talk about today’s lecture and answer questions based on it. This still gives us a chance to interact with one another and read what others are saying about the material."

- **Create opportunities for connection and interaction:** Build opportunities for connection and interaction into your course design (e.g. have learners create profiles within the course, send a pre-course email survey on interests and goals for the course, have a course lounge, create smaller student groups for discussions, assignments).

  "The discussion boards were actually a good tool to learn from my peers and get additional perspective on textbook materials."

- **Check student understanding regularly:** This can be done at the start of a course and throughout using brief assessments or through the active learning where learners practice activities or skills you wish them to learn (these could be for marks but do not need to be). These can be used to adapt your learning activities where there appears to be a broad lack of understanding or a consistent knowledge gap amongst student in the course. This approach also allows you to point groups of learners having more difficulty toward additional resources or learning opportunities focused on the topic of issue.

- **Provide quality, timely, and early feedback:** This helps establish your presence and build trust. Providing opportunities for peer feedback helps establish richer learning communities, engages learners in understanding assessment criteria and expectations, and reduces the time needed for instructor feedback.

- **Create accessible summative assessments:** Guidelines are forthcoming that will consider efficiency, academic integrity, accessibility and evidence-informed assessment practice, including the technological tools needed to facilitate it. These are being drafted based on input and reflections from Winter 2020.

  "The ability to complete weekly online quizzes and 3 remote assignments that were previously embedded into this course made me stay on track during the pandemic."
3. Connect and check-in with learners regularly

- **Consider what student learning you want to facilitate through your presence:** Plan how you wish to use your time (e.g. answer questions, discuss a topic, work through a problem/case, provide feedback). It is important that you connect with learners through your activity in the virtual space. In considering how much time you dedicate to each course, think about the time you would be present for a face-to-face class (office hours, responding to queries, providing feedback, etc.) as a minimum.

- **Provide frequent, clear and consistent communication:** Provide clear directions to learners about your course and expectations for engagement. Prior to the first class, introduce yourself and clarify the first steps (e.g. click through the course, review the syllabus, calendarize assignments and assessments). Start each week with a post listing the outcomes for the week, specific instructions related to learning activities, and reminders about tasks/assignments that need to be completed. Explanations of why you are asking them to do certain activities will increase engagement (e.g. I am asking you to watch this video because...). Remember - clearly communicated expectations for learners will limit time spent clarifying and allow you to dedicate your time to supporting learning.

  "During these tough times he always kept us up to date on his class and gave us time to prepare for assignments during these troubling times. He also gave us clear instructions on how he wanted it done and why each assignment was important."  
  USask student Winter 2020 feedback

- **Ask for feedback:** An online environment does not always allow you to pick up the cues from learners (e.g. body language) that would be present in a F2F environment. Teaching and learning remotely is new for everyone - asking learners for feedback about what is going well and what you could change allows you to adjust your course. This could be done via a short, anonymous survey, within Blackboard or Canvas, through mid-course SLEQ feedback, or via an open class discussion.

- **Check student participation:** Use the Blackboard or Canvas analytics to determine if learners are logging in regularly. If someone is not, a quick email inviting them to re-engage can make a big difference to the likelihood of completion. These analytics can also show you where learners are spending their time and help you understand patterns of activity.

  "Our group was able to call my instructor and have a thorough conversation regarding the assignment. Anything we discussed that was relevant to other groups was summarized and sent by email to all students. This was very beneficial."  
  USask student Winter 2020 feedback
Appendix C: Health Sciences Course Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Prerequisites</th>
<th>Corequisites</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Health Sciences</td>
<td>John Smith</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>Equivalent to Bio 101</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Teaches foundational concepts in health sciences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anatomy and Physiology</td>
<td>Sarah Johnson</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Laboratory</td>
<td>Must complete Bio 101</td>
<td>Bio 102</td>
<td>Focuses on human anatomy and physiological processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathology</td>
<td>David Brown</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Seminar</td>
<td>must complete Bio 101 and Bio 102</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Studies diseases and disorders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacology</td>
<td>Emily Green</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Clinical</td>
<td>Must complete Bio 101, Bio 102, and Pathology</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Focuses on drug therapy and its effects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Ethics</td>
<td>Michael White</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Explores ethical dilemmas in healthcare.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Course titles and descriptions are fictional and for demonstration purposes only.