Supporting Course Resiliency: Best Practices for Teaching Staff

The University's *Policy on Academic Continuity* (January 26, 2012) "recognizes that events such as pandemic health emergencies, natural disasters, prolonged service interruptions, and ongoing labour disputes are potential threats to academic continuity" and states that "Good stewardship requires that the University undertake appropriate planning and preparation to promote continuity."

The Policy emphasizes the extent to which "resilient course and program design and other preparedness" can minimize the potential for disruption of the University's academic mission. The following best practices are intended to support Teaching Staff in their efforts to ensure the resiliency of their courses.

Collect and maintain a record of all grades

Ensure that there is a central and accessible record of all grades.

Post critical course materials on the course site

Ensure that students have ongoing access to critical course documents including course syllabi and assignments through Quercus.

Develop communication strategies

Ensure that students can be reached for regular communications through Quercus or a listserv and provide students with clear guidelines about the use of these tools.

Plan for alternate means for assignment submission

Clarify acceptable modes of assignment submission (e.g. in person, by email, or Quercus) and any additional details or requirements about each mode. For example, when accepting assignments by email, consider specifying acceptable document formats.

A number of online tools available through Quercus provide opportunities for the facilitation of assignments and assessments. More information about using these and other tools to support course resiliency is available on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation (CTSI) website at http://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/strategies/continuity-planning/

Understand the framework for modifying course evaluation methods

Become familiar with the policy governing grading practices:
https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/grading-practices-policy-university-assessment-and-january-26-2012

Even if the potential modification of course evaluation methods has not been clearly identified to students at the outset of the course, evaluation methods can still be changed under the Policy with the consent of the students. If a decision is made to change the evaluation methods or their relative weights, then the consent of students may be obtained by a vote taken in class or through Quercus or email.
- In-class vote: with the consent of at least a simple majority of students attending the class, provided the vote is announced no later than in the previous class.
- Online or email vote: with the consent of a simple majority of students who vote, provided the vote is announced through Quercus and in class no later than the previous class. If the class is not meeting in person, then it is acceptable to announce the vote through Quercus only, no later than when the previous class would have been held.

Consider incorporating online learning activities

Consider supplementing courses with on-line activities. Interactive tools available through Quercus and other sources include web conferencing, lecture capture, online discussion, and survey and assessment tools. Further information regarding these suggested instructional strategies is available on the CTSI website:
https://teaching.utoronto.ca/ed-tech/online-learning/

CTSI staff are available for assistance in using specific tools or implementing particular approaches. Instructional technology support staff located within divisions may also be consulted for support in implementing activities to engage students using online activities.