

Remote Teaching and Learning Task Force
Update #6
July 6, 2020

Colleagues,

As July begins, we look back at the immense amount of work that has been done in May and June to prepare for online courses in the fall. The Remote Teaching and Learning Task Force has completed the busiest phase of its work: assessing needs, preparing recommendations, and exploring how those recommendations will be implemented. The Task Force is entering the next phase of its work where members will concentrate on staying updated about how recommendations are progressing, trouble-shooting as needed, and watching for emerging issues related to online course delivery for 2020-21.

Recommendations

Since we began meeting in early May, the Task Force has approved approximately thirty recommendations; the full text of each can be accessed on our [website](#). At its most recent meeting on June 25, the Task Force approved the following eleven new recommendations.

Faculty Readiness

- *Provide a clear process by which Faculty and Teaching Staff can apply early for funds needed for materials/ equipment to support their teaching:*
This recommendation encourages clarity about the way faculty members can access equipment they need to deliver courses online (e.g., microphones and headphones; or more specialized equipment for specific courses, e.g., tablets)
- *Provide opportunities for mentorship, support, and community building:*
This recommendation provides a plan to offer opportunities for faculty and teaching staff to exchange ideas on online learning both during the spring/summer 2020 and ongoing through the academic year.
- *Assess course instructors' and students' responses to the transition to remote delivery:*
This recommendation presents a plan for gathering feedback from students and instructors during the Fall semester about the transition to remote teaching and learning.
- *Review and evaluate the Task Force experience: What did we learn?*
This recommendation provides a plan for a special meeting of the Task Force in January 2021 to discuss how the experience of preparing for online teaching in fall 2020 can be used to inform ongoing teaching and learning initiatives at StFX.

Technology

- *Implement a comprehensive IT support plan to provide assistance to faculty and students to develop and deliver online courses.*

This recommendation outlines the kinds of support services that IT Services will provide faculty, teaching staff, and students.

Ongoing Student Academic Support

- *To ensure accessibility, lectures and online classroom activities should be recorded and made available in Moodle.*

This recommendation encourages faculty to record online lectures. It also provides a plan for communicating the relevant issues around intellectual property, copyright, and academic integrity.

- *Faculty should provide their students with articles/documents in original PDF format or via links to documents instead of scanned photocopies whenever possible.*

This recommendation explains the importance of using original PDF documents versus scans.

- *Service units should offer some services at alternative hours to ensure students in other time zones have some access to services.*

Assuming a significant number of students may need to access support services from outside of the Atlantic time zone, this recommendation encourages academic support units (e.g., advising, library) to offer some services outside normal business hours.

- *Ensure that staff have the necessary technology to deliver services from remote locations in the event that they cannot work from campus.*

If support staff are required to work from home, this recommendation explains the importance of staff being provided with necessary resources (e.g., proper workstations).

- *Formal attempts should be made by multiple units in the University to ensure that students continue to have the opportunity for informal interactions with their peers.*

This recommendation encourages units to create opportunities for students who are learning online to interact with other students inside and outside of the classroom.

- *The resource document found in Appendix A should be made easily accessible to the entire campus community.*

This recommendation is about sharing an up-to-date resource document containing contact instructions and online services being provided by various academic support units. This document will be kept current and made easily accessible to the entire campus community for the return to classes.

Recommendation vs rule

The Task Force recognizes that not every recommendation for online delivery will work for every program or course. Departments or Programs that feel there is a strong rationale for a different

approach in a specific course/ program are encouraged to reach out to their Dean to discuss alternatives.

Software requests

The Task Force has previously approved a [baseline list of software tools](#) and services that IT Services will support for the delivery of online courses. Departments or programs that need to request specialized software not included in this list and should reach out to IT Services. IT Services will assess the security and support plan for the software. More information about the process is available [here](#).

Professional Development

Workshops

Over the past weeks, twenty-five different PD sessions related to online teaching and learning have been offered by members of the StFX community. The sheer number and the diversity of topics is testament to the expertise and commitment of our community members who are actively supporting each other prepare for what will be an unprecedented academic year. All sessions have been recorded and are available on our [website](#). A few additional sessions are being planned and will be announced in the next few weeks.

Opportunities to observe online classes

During July, faculty and teaching staff are invited to observe online courses being delivered in the Master of Education and Master of Adult Education programs. Several Education instructors are willing to have instructors new to online teaching 'drop into' a synchronous online class. This adds another layer of being able to see some of the teaching strategies and tools in online teaching applied in action. Please contact Maica Murphy mmurphy@stfx.ca for more information.

Security, Copyright, Intellectual property

A number of faculty members have expressed concern about issues related to recording lectures, posting course material online, and security while delivering online courses. We are preparing resources that will help faculty understand best practices related to these issues and also explain acceptable behavior to students. These will be shared shortly.

Once again, we want to extend our thanks to all the faculty and staff who have been sharing their expertise and time to help their colleagues prepare for 2020-21. Because of the tremendous effort and commitment of everyone involved, we will be well-positioned to offer StFX students the best learning experience possible during these unprecedented times.

The Task Force work is continuing, and we encourage members of the community to contact us with suggestions, concerns, and questions. As we move into the next phase of our work, we will continue to send community-wide updates as needed.

Janice Landry and Joanne Tompkins
Co-chairs, Remote Teaching and Learning Task Force