

DRAFT Guiding Principles for Fall 2020 Online Learning Taskforce

As we plan for Fall 2020 teaching and learning, we don't know where things will stand with COVID 19. As a residential campus, in a rural setting, we face special challenges because a) our students may not be able to travel to campus and b) physical distancing and self-isolating are not possible in residences so our students could not return to campus. With that in mind, StFX, like most Canadian universities, is planning for online learning in the fall term.

The Online Learning Taskforce was struck to explore the challenges of moving to a pedagogically sound remote teaching and learning format, and to advise with respect to the necessary steps required to be able to do so. **A focus on teaching and learning are at the heart of this exercise.**

The Online Learning Task Force will use the following principles to guide our work:

1. **Maintaining academic quality.** StFX students are used to quality teaching which uses best practices to combine academic rigor with student engagement in learning.
2. **Managing expectations.** We are committed to doing the best job we can with the resources we have available at StFX to support the campus-wide transition to online learning for Fall 2020. We recognize that moving face to face courses to online platforms in a four-month period is a challenge.
3. **Starting now.** Moving a course designed for face to face instruction to an online platform is considerable work. Faculty will need to begin to engage in this process beginning in early May and be prepared to devote **significant** time for this transition.
4. **Supporting.** Moving to online teaching requires a shift in thinking and design. There will be pedagogical and technological professional development to support this transition. StFX has considerable experience and capacity with online teaching and learning.
5. **Caring.** This process is occurring during an unprecedented and stressful times. We need to ensure we care for our faculty, teaching staff, and students in this transition.
6. **Acknowledging differences.** Faculty and teaching staff, like our students, have different levels of entry, learning preferences, and needs. There are also content and context differences that require different approaches. We acknowledge the diversity among faculty and teaching staff, and aim to meet them where they are. At the same time, we must keep in mind that students will also have differences that must be addressed as best as possible though the delivery of course content.

7. **Collective efficacy.** Several areas of the university are working towards the same goal of maintaining a high-quality educational experience for our students. Working collaboratively and collegially fosters a sense of oneness in purpose and mission. By working collectively, we are independently better.
8. **Equity and accessibility.** It is important to ensure all students have access to the educational opportunities provided for them in online learning. We acknowledge that online education poses risks of exacerbating existing inequities and will consider approaches to online delivery that minimize such risks.

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