

COVID-19 FAQs

From the April 14 Student Community Meeting

MSW Courses

If classes must continue remotely in September, will they remain online for both Fall and Winter semesters?

We are anticipating that fall courses will be online. It is uncertain if winter courses would be in person, online or a combination of both. There is still a lot of uncertainty. We are in constant communication with U of T's central administrators, and we are committed to providing you with updates as soon as we receive them. While we do hope to have in-person courses in the fall, there may still be restrictions about the number of people that are permitted to physically be in class, so the expectation is that we will remain online in some form. It is hard to know about the winter yet. What happens at U of T will not be unique. It is important that when things open up, it is done so in a way that supports public health and the public good.

Summer classes are practically full and may affect some students' plans for graduating on time. What can be done to address this?

We have received permission from SGS to increase the number of summer courses. Additionally, we have worked hard with our instructors to, when possible, increase the cap on the number of students who are eligible to enrol in a course. There are also still quite a few elective courses with a lot of room in them. We encourage you to look at them as well.

How can students who prefer or require in-person teaching and communication to maximize learning and retention be supported?

Unfortunately, given that we are in the midst of a global pandemic, no schools of social work across North America or elsewhere are providing in-person learning at this time. The directive that we hold no in-person classes comes from the federal and provincial governments. We are committed to providing students with a quality online educational experience and continue to train and support our faculty on best practices that lead to high student learning and satisfaction.

PhD students

How will PhD students planning to defend their final thesis in the summer be affected?

All defences will be presented virtually, online. Please consult with your advisor. Anyone who wants to do it in-person defense will have to put on hold until a later date.

Fees

Will international fees be modified given the move to remote lectures?

There is currently no discussion of changing fees at U of T.

A few things are worth noting. In some cases, online education can be more expensive, and other Canadian universities are looking at the possibility of tuition increases. Our primary goal at the Faculty is to provide students with the highest possible quality of online education. We continue to provide training and support to our faculty on how to best maximize the online environment and promote student satisfaction.

General

Will students who were awarded an Ontario Graduate Scholarship still receive funding?

Students who are recipients of an Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) will be issued the award as long as they are enrolled for 2 or 3 consecutive academic terms as full-time students during that 2020-21 Academic session.

How will online classes and practicum accommodate for students with access needs with regard to screens/technology?

If a student is experiencing disability related limitations, we encourage students to register with [U of T's Accessibility Services](#).

Will all these changes this will affect our ability to obtain good job options after we graduate?

This is a world-wide phenomenon, and the reality is that once it is over, workforces will be deployed very differently. Many will be looking for individuals who can provide services remotely. We will be teaching you how to acquire these valuable online clinical skills.

You will not be disadvantaged because everyone is experiencing the same thing. When you look at the growth of the sector, the need for social workers continues to grow. The need for social workers will grow even more in light of COVID-19. Our prediction is that there will be more opportunities and that employers will be looking for social workers who can function on online service platforms.

Practicum

Where do we find remote tasks to fulfill the required hours?

We have listed resources for remote learning on the [COVID-19 Impact on Practicum Courses page, which can be found here](#).

Can Practicum I students on a normal schedule who do not currently have Field Instructor assigned to them continue with remote activities in order to finish by April 28, or are we expected to put our practicum on a “pause” until we have a new Field Instructor?

There is great flexibility in terms of when you can finish your practicum; April 28 is based on continuing at 7 hours per day. Note that an extension form would not be required until mid-June. As required by CASWE accreditation standards, you do need to be supervised by a Field Instructor.

Do we report our progress to our Faculty Field Liaison or is there another assigned supervisor?

If you have not yet been assigned a Field Instructor, please notify your Faculty Field Liaison. In the interim, please report your progress to your Faculty Field Liaison.

What is the process going forward for Summer 2020 remote practicums? When do students have to let the practicum office know if they would like to be enrolled in summer practicum?

The SGS deadline to add a Summer session course (including SWK4702Y) is Monday, May 4th.

Students and field instructors have between April 27 (the start of the spring semester) and September 4 (end of Summer semester) to complete in the summer practicum. The start date can be as late as the first week in July.

Students whose previously-matched practicums have been unmatched will be e-mailed protocol regarding selecting from the opportunities on the PAS.

Would it still be reasonable for summer Practicum students to get some form of direct or mixed experiences online?

We are committed to maintaining quality practicum placements for our students going forward. Whenever possible, we are trying to match students with Field Instructors who are offering some sort of services, counselling or otherwise. For example, we have met with U of T Student Wellness to discuss how our students could be involved in online counselling sessions.

It still depends on what is available and what a Field Instructor can offer. Experiences can take many different forms. This is an opportunity to be creative. If you have contacts with an agency, we encourage you to let us know.

If fall practicums are required to be done remotely, when will this announcement be made?

As soon as we have an indication of this, we will let you know. It is hard to predict at present.

If we are continuing remote learning in the fall, could we pursue practicum opportunities outside Toronto since there wouldn't be a need to live near campus?

We are very open to that as long as there is a Field Instructor who meets our accreditation standards.

Would it be possible to stay with the new re-assigned supervisors some of us have been given for Year 2 Practicum?

We are very open to this and willing to negotiate.

If Year 1 Practicum students are able to continue their same practicum into Year 2, wouldn't this prevent other students applying for Year 2 practicum from having access to these opportunities?

It is difficult to determine the long-term impact of this strategy. The continuity may be attractive and reduced hours would facilitate two practicums where a field instructor had previously considered only one student.

Have any of our instructors and professors with private practices been asked if they are able to supervise students for Practicum?

We did put out an appeal to faculty. They are most welcome to provide a field experience in their private practice. Some are also involving students in their research as part of practicum.

Given FIFSW's history of providing practicum opportunities at U of T's Health and Wellness Centre and Accessibility Services, are these potential venues that the Practicum Office is exploring for summer practicum students?

This is absolutely being explored. We have been in discussion with Student Health and Wellness and the Vice Provost of Student Experience, and are working very hard to open up avenues of potential practicum experiences. There seem to be possibilities. We are continuing these conversations.

If there are external online training/webinars that have associated fees, can we advocate for grants or funding from FIFSW to participate in them? Could part of our tuition be redirected towards these remote learning activities?

The way that tuition is guided is outside of our control. This is not something we can commit to at this time. We would encourage you to focus on external training that doesn't have a cost.

Is it possible to extend practicum hours back to the original 525 hours if we find a practicum where this would make sense?

This is something to negotiate with your Field Instructor. The minimum requirement is now 337.5 hours. However, some field instructors may have capacity to maintain a practicum for up to 525 hours. Please keep your FFL and the Practicum Office advised, as the schedules are customized and need to reflect this.

Will you be able to ensure that students are placed in practicums according to their top three interests that will be indicated in their practicum applications?

Unfortunately, there is less availability now than there was previous to the pandemic. The option of selecting your top three choices may not be in place for September

practicums. The protocol has yet to be determined, but we will let you know when we have more information.

If it is not possible to assign us to a practicum that matches the interests of Practicum 2 students, can we defer our practicum to fall?

As always, there is a limitation on number and types of practicums. We do our best to match students, but cannot ensure that a placement matches a student's interest. On the issue of whether you can defer your practicum until the fall, we want to be as flexible as we can. Please reach out to us individually so that we can figure out the best solution for you based on the options available.

For Year 2 Practicums, will there be practicums at the hospitals or is it likely that they will continue to not be able to supervise students?

We are still in negotiations and advocating for our students. Some Field Instructors want to continue supervising their students (remotely) but have been instructed not to due to capacity restrictions. As soon as we are advised of a change, we will let you know.

How will students in the COPAS specialization, who will need a practicum in addictions in order to fulfill the requirements, be affected by requirements for remote learning?

As with the other addiction-specific practicums, the intention is that students would receive remote supervision.

Since there is no conclusive date as to when the pandemic will be contained or resolved, is the option of practicum continuation available for UHN students as well?

UHN Field Instructors have been given clear instruction that they cannot engage in student supervision at this time. It is likely that a return to some "new normal" will be gradual and that the resolution of this pandemic will not be immediate. Given such uncertainty, it is advisable that students think of flexible options and preferences for completing their field placements.

For those of us in the Children and Families Field of Study, it is very hard to guarantee direct practice (online) with children. How will this be navigated in regards to 2nd year practicum?

We are looking for Field Instructors who can provide that kind of experience. We will have a better idea of this closer to September. We are in contact with service providers who have moved to online services and exploring how they might accommodate more of our student

As mentioned in a recent email "practicum hours and remote learning will be accepted until April 2021." This may encourage students to choose summer practicum in hopes of getting direct experience. Is there a cap on the number of students who are allowed to choose summer practicum? If so, how will you ensure this is an equitable process for all students who would like to choose

summer practicum?

It is premature to respond to how practicums will look this September and next summer.

If a (remote) placement with an agency is not possible, will people without practicums be expected to just do the activities (listening to a podcast and critically reflect, do online trainings) outlined by the practicum office and meet with an MSW to count as their hours? There are a range of activities we have suggested and posted on our website, and continue to advocate for. For example, the KHP option is truly direct practice. It is the social work field instructor who will be providing the social work lens.