

# Messages and FAQs

## From the June 18, 2020, Student Community Meeting

### **A message from the Dean**

The last few months have laid bare the fact that we are currently dealing with two intersecting pandemics: COVID-19 and anti-Black racism.

In the past few weeks we have seen that racism is not only terrible but deadly. Mr. George Floyd was diagnosed with COVID-19 and was asymptomatic. But it was not COVID-19 that killed Mr. Floyd — it was systematic racism.

The last several weeks have been extremely difficult for many of us in the FIFSW community, but it has been especially burdensome for our Black students, staff and faculty. Many Black and other marginalized communities are already dealing with complex trauma stemming from systemic racism, poverty and exclusion. Now many of these communities are also carrying the fear, anger and pain emanating from the constant media replay of Mr. Floyd's killing.

COVID-19 has cast a disproportionate burden on Black and other vulnerable populations. In other North American cities like Detroit, St. Louis and Chicago, Blacks are infected with COVID-19 at higher rates and account for almost 70% of COVID-related deaths. A colour-blind approach to Canadian public health has handicapped our ability to clearly understand the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black Canadians.

The profession of social work has a mission to work towards the creation of more just and inclusive societies. But while advocating for change, the profession has also caused significant harm to already vulnerable groups. FIFSW and others in the social work field must continue to strive to decolonize our approach.

I am reflecting on how I reproduce harmful messages and approaches that stem from the colonial system in which I was trained and in which I grew up. This is important, personal work that we must all do in order to avoid becoming unintended agents of the status quo, and instead become change agents.

[The Faculty's Statement on Anti-Black Racism and Social Inequality](#), is more than a statement. It has a list of action steps that students, staff and faculty must all courageously undertake in order to curtail the systemic racism, which we all contribute to and can dismantle.

The profession of social work is not just science but action. Therefore, we must collectively resist the urge for comfort when addressing these inequalities. We must also resist the urge to be innocent.

While we have made significant progress within the Faculty towards creating a learning community and a curriculum for the 21st century, there is a lot more work for us to collectively undertake.

**Listed below are some FIFSW initiatives we have implemented to address these converging pandemics.**

<p>Public Discourse</p>	<p>A number of faculty, whose research touches on these areas, are speaking out publicly on issues of anti-Black racism, stigma, and communities disproportionately affected by the pandemic. These include (but are not limited to)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associate Professor Tanya Sharpe’s <a href="#">30@8:30 series</a>, presented by her research centre The CRIB on Instagram Live and Zoom</li> <li>• Associate Professor Carmen Logie’s new <a href="#">podcast on Stigma</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">A video produced by The CRIB</a> that included participation from Faculty, students, alumni and international partners who are members of The CRIB’s global community.</li> </ul> <p>Faculty have also been using their voice to speak out on these issues in the media in more than 60 appearances in TV, radio and online print publications. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Dean Voisin’s Op-Ed in the Toronto Star</a></li> <li>• Appearances on CTV News, Global News, The Agenda, CityTV, Breakfast Television, 900 CHML, Global News Vancouver, Omni TV, The Canadian Press, The National Post, and U of T News. (<a href="#">Visit our website to find links to recent news.</a>)</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">FIFSW’s statement on Anti-Black Racism and Inequality</a></p> <p>FIFSW Consultation to other U of T Faculties and CAD Social Work Research and community partnerships</p>
<p>Dr. Ken Hardy Racial Sensitivity Trainings</p>	<p>In 2019, faculty and staff each recently completed 8 half-day workshops on racial sensitivity with Dr. Ken Hardy.</p>
<p>Beyond Ken Hardy</p>	<p>Since the workshops with Dr. Hardy, we have had two student intergroup dialogues and two faculty discussions. The agenda for the next faculty meeting will focus on how we can work to further decolonize our work at the Faculty.</p>

<p>New faculty and Provost Postdoctoral Fellows</p>	<p>This year FIFSW hired three new faculty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Kyle Ganson, whose work focuses on mental health and eating disorders among male college students.</li> <li>• Dr. Ashley Quinn, an Indigenous researcher and teacher whose work includes the role of Indigenous culture and identity in the long-term developmental outcomes among children and youth in the child welfare system.</li> <li>• Dr. Harry Taylor, whose work focuses on social isolation and loneliness among older adult Black Americans</li> </ul> <p>This year we will also welcome two Fellows from the <a href="#">Provost's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program</a>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Lori Chambers, producer, director, and co-author of "Because She Cares," a spoken word play on AIDS service employment as (un)caring work for Black immigrant women living with HIV.</li> <li>• Dr. Notisha Massaquoi, former Executive Director of <a href="#">Women's Health in Women's Hands Community Health Centre</a></li> </ul> <p>The Lee Wu Kee Ming Chair in Indigenous Social Work:</p> <p>FIFSW has received funding to seek and appoint an eminent Indigenous scholar with a distinguished program of research focused on developing policy, service or solutions specific to Indigenous communities. Recruitment for the Lee Wu Kee Ming Chair in Indigenous Social Work will begin in Fall 2020.</p>
<p>Curriculum</p>	<p>Our Curriculum and Innovation Committee will be doing a complete mapping of our curriculum to see where content is missing and will be seeking student input as part of this exercise.</p> <p>This spring, we engaged the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) to offer Indigenous Cultural Competency Training to both 60 students and 10 staff.</p>
<p>Increased student communication</p>	<p>Efforts to increase communication with students has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student dinners</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly open office hours for any student, faculty and staff to meet with the Dean</li> <li>• Fall, winter, spring and summer email updates from the Dean</li> <li>• Weekly updates from the ADA office</li> <li>• Monthly meetings between student leadership and the Associate Dean, Academic</li> </ul>
Curriculum Flexibility/Support	<p>To support students as we adjust to the requirement to provide remote learning, we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased flexibility in course offerings and practicum opportunities</li> <li>• Set up an emergency fund to address COVID-19 related hardships occurring in March and April, 2020</li> <li>• <a href="#">Created a new staff role: International Student Coordinator as well as a new faculty role: FIFSW International Liaison</a></li> </ul>

## Fall course delivery

### **Will fall courses be online or in person?**

All courses in FIFSW's MSW program and PhD program will proceed remotely in the fall due to the need to continue physical distancing in the wake of the pandemic.

### **Will the intensive face-to-face session for the MSW ITR program take place online or will students in this program need to fly to Toronto to attend the session?**

The MSW ITR program follows a different format that is highly personal. We continue to work with the group behind the scenes to figure out how this will be delivered in the fall. Please stay tuned.

### **What platforms will instructors use to deliver courses?**

The choice of platforms for course delivery is up to the individual instructor. We suspect most will use zoom; however, some may use Blackboard or Microsoft Teams. The platform that they use will be communicated in the syllabus for the course.

### **Could you put the course syllabi online?**

We can't post syllabi online as they are the intellectual property of each instructor. You may reach out to your instructor to request to view a syllabus in advance. Please note that you need to be a registered student at the time that you reach out.

**Is there an option to attend classes in person for students with difficulties with remote learning?**

Should you have difficulties with remote learning related to disability and already be registered with Accessibility Services, we recommend you reach out to your Accessibility Advisor to discuss accommodation options and services for support with remote learning. If you are not yet registered with Accessibility Services, we encourage you to do so ASAP. To register with Accessibility Services, please visit: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/>.

The Accessibility Services office has also created [a document outlining strategies for online learning and accessibility](#) that is available to all students.

**Do we need to be present for all classes during the time they are offered? Is there flexibility to “attend” those classes at a different time?**

Courses that are listed as synchronous in our timetables have a scheduled class time that students are required to be present for and will include at least some live virtual class time via an online meeting platform. If you are interested in these classes but aren't sure you can attend during the set time, we suggest that you reach out directly to the instructors of these courses to better understand their expectations.

**Will we have the opportunity to meet with faculty advisors or the registrars in-person or online in a one-on-one meeting in the Fall?**

Meetings will be online. You may absolutely reach out to your advisor once they have been assigned to plan meeting with them. You may also reach out to our Registrar [Sharon Bewell](#) or the Associate Dean, Academic [David Burnes](#).

**When do we find out who our academic advisor is?**

Academic advisors will be assigned during the month of July.

**Will the Advanced Standing Student Practice Seminar on Assessment and Interviewing Skills workshop still take place online?**

Yes, this workshop will be occurring online.

**Will five-day intensive courses take place online?**

As the five-day intensive courses are offered during the Summer session next year, it is too early to provide a definitive answer as to whether classes will be online or in person.

**How are professors being supported as they prepare for enhancing the online teaching to support student engagement, incorporate student feedback, and ensure communication is clear and so on?**

Our instructors continue to undertake intensive training to improve online course delivery, investing time and effort to make sure they can do it as best as possible. Both FIFSW and the University have offered a number of workshops to assist our professors with this learning, which is an ongoing process.

**With the fall semester online, will enrollment for fall courses increase to meet the demand?**

We have opened up new sections of certain courses for which there is substantial demand. The decision to open space in individual courses is made on a case by case basis with individual instructors.

**If the status of the pandemic improves through the fall term, would online classes transition back into classroom setting? Will the winter term be online as well?**

Even as Toronto moves into Stage 3 of reopening, there will still be limitations on how many people can be in the same room. The way that our classrooms are configured presents limitations. We don't yet know what is going to happen in the winter.

## Course registration

**Can we find out in advance if courses will be offered synchronous or asynchronous?**

Yes. This has been listed in our [timetables](#) in a column titled "Planned Mode of Online Course Delivery."

**ASYNC** = Fully asynchronous (course has no scheduled virtual class time slot as it is completely web-based).

**SYNC** = Fully synchronous or a mixture of synchronous/asynchronous (course has a scheduled virtual class time slot that will include at least some live virtual class time over an online meeting platform).

**What are the chances that I will get into the required courses that I have been waitlisted for? I'm concerned that if I don't get into some of those I may not be able to graduate with my cohort.**

Students will get into the course that are required for their program. For first-year required core courses, if you are on a waitlist for one section, please register for another section that has space.

**When will the 'TBD' information in the timetables be shared?**

Course instructors should be posted for most courses by the end of June or early July.

## Simulation, Orientation and workshops

**Will Orientation for new incoming students be online?**

Yes, we are currently planning an online orientation that is engaging and informative and provides incoming students with the opportunity to meet each other and other members of the FIFSW community, including faculty and staff.

**How will the diversity workshops for Year 1 MSW students be delivered?**

The diversity workshop will take place online and have been designed as a three-hour immersive, interactive experience. Please note that students will need a functioning camera and microphone.

**Do you have any updates on how simulation-based learning will be delivered? How will practice Fridays work while everything stays online? Is this something we will still get to experience?**

Practice Fridays are a clinical simulation where you practice assessment skills with an actor and receive feedback from classmates and a facilitator. They are optional but very helpful for clinical practice. We have held Practice Fridays online in the spring and received good feedback. Our plan is to resume Practice Fridays virtually throughout the summer and into the fall. Megan Davies was recently hired to help transition simulation learning online.

## Accessibility Services

U of T's Accessibility Services office remains open to assist students with disability-related academic accommodations and supports. If disability impacts your learning and you are not already registered with the office, [please register ASAP to discuss how the office can be helpful in supporting your learning needs.](#)

After completing the online intake form and providing medical documentation, you will be set up with an Advisor for an intake appointment to discuss individualized academic accommodations for courses and/or practicums, and access to services and resources.

Should you have questions about the registration process after reviewing our website, please don't hesitate to connect with the office's administrative team at: [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca) or 416-978-8060.

The office has also created [a document outlining strategies for online learning and accessibility](#) that is available to all students.

Reshma Dhrodia is the On Location Accessibility Advisor for Professional Faculties North (Social Work, Law, OISE) and may be reached at: [reshma.dhrodia@utoronto.ca](mailto:reshma.dhrodia@utoronto.ca) or 416-978-7759.

## Finances

### **How much is tuition this year? Did it change significantly from last year?**

Tuition Fees for MSW students was cut by 10% from \$10,470 in 2018-2019 to \$9,420 in 2019-2020, with a freeze at this level for the 2020-2021 academic year, in accordance with the province's tuition fee framework.

The tuition fee for returning international MSW students is \$32,780 in 2020-2021. Last year it was \$31,220.

The tuition fee for new international MSW students is \$34,430 in 2020-2021.

Note that students also pay incidental fees on top of the tuition so a domestic MSW student will pay \$11,117.00 for tuition for the 2020-2021 Academic session.

### **Are FIFSW COVID-19 emergency funds still available?**

We launched the FIFSW COVID-19 Emergency Grant for students who experienced COVID-19 related hardships occurring in March and April, 2020. The deadline for applying for the emergency funds was May 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Is the U of T providing on campus resources for students who are experiencing housing insecurity due to COVID-19?**

[U of T's Housing](#) office assists students with finding housing, searching for a roommate, and understanding your tenant rights and responsibilities. This office may also assist students dealing with landlord and roommate conflicts and other housing issues or challenges. The Graduate Student Union also provides emergency supports to students. Please feel free to follow up directly with FIFSW's registrar [Sharon Bewell](#) for more information. For students with financial limitations, there are also pathways for students in need a disability-specific related support or equipment. Please contact U of T's [Accessibility Services](#) office to learn more. As well, there are a number of financial support and funding opportunities currently offered through U of T and provincial and federal governments. [A list of these supports can be found on U of T's website via the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students.](#)

## Practicum

### **Will practicums be remote in the fall?**

We are required to follow the University's direction on this and, at present, we have been told that all practicums will be remote. As soon as restrictions are lifted, we will let you know.

### **When can we receive more information on practicum opportunities for the fall?**

We will have more details about practicum opportunities on July 16. We will share these opportunities online and during a zoom meeting, where we will provide information on the matching process and interviews. An email with details on how to register for this meeting will be sent shortly.

**If we have arranged a practicum placement in our community, is there room for flexibility in terms of in-person and remote participation?**

The University currently requires all practicums to be remote. As soon as restrictions are lifted, we will let you know.

**Can you provide further details regarding paid practicum opportunities?**

Given the current circumstances, we recognize that some students may wish to explore practicums in their agencies of employment, volunteering, or to seek new paid opportunities that would meet the learning objectives of a social work practicum. Professional activity and learning are not inconsistent, but there is a difference in emphasis between the goals of educational development and those of a job description. The focus of the MSW practicum must be on the student's learning.

[Click here to review the guidelines \[PDF\] for employment-based or volunteer-based practicums.](#)

This PDF also includes a form that students and their proposed field instructors may fill out to apply to for approval for an employment-based or volunteer-based practicum. (This form can be found in the Practicum section of FIFSW's website at Practicum > Forms > [Volunteer or Employment-based Practicum Guidelines-Application.](#))

**If we are able to complete our hours between Jan-Apr, Similar to practicum 1, are we able begin in January or do we have to begin by November?**

There are two reasons to not support a January start for Practicum II:

- The program is designed for, under normal circumstances, theory learned in classes (Monday-Tuesday) to be integrated in practicum (Wednesday-Friday). Although the pandemic has imposed restrictions, we are trying to maintain this structure for pedagogical reasons.
- The January practicums are reserved for Practicum I students, who do not have access to the fall semester practicums.

**Do international students still need to apply for a co-op work permit before starting a remote practicum?**

In order to begin a social work practicum in the MSW program students are required to have been approved for a study permit and co-op work permit. If you have specific questions or concerns you can email the university's [Centre for International Experience \(isa.cie@utoronto.ca\)](mailto:isa.cie@utoronto.ca) and one of the immigration advisors can talk to you about your specific situation. You can also speak to the International Student Advisor at FIFSW Megan Davies ([megancatherine.davies@utoronto.ca](mailto:megancatherine.davies@utoronto.ca)). <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/advising-immigration/>

## General course/program questions

**Several instructors are not inputting students' grades for assignments, participation, etc. on Quercus, so we often don't know how we have done on specific assignments. Could you please ensure that they do this?**

Instructors are not required to put grades on Quercus and may choose to provide grades through other applications. You should be receiving feedback on your assignments throughout the semester. If you aren't, that is a concern. We will look into this.

**Are students allowed to take two collaborative specializations?**

The way our program is structured, you only have room for two electives. The practicum component that is also related to your program of study, so it would be very challenging to do more than one collaborative specialization and graduate on time. If you are interested in doing this, we advise you to connect with the specialization office and to find out what is required. If you determine that this is something that would work for you, and you can do it in a reasonable time, we could certainly look at this option.

**How many elective courses are the one-year Advanced Standing students required to take?**

Each Field of Study requires students to complete four required courses in their Field of Study and two electives, plus SWK4510H RSH for Evidence-Based Social Work. SWK4510H is an additional course requirement for all students in the MSW Program and is taken in the first term of the Program (Fall session).