FIFSW FAQs
from the September 21, 2020
Student Community Update meeting

Courses

Will the winter semester courses be online?
At this time, it is difficult to answer this question with certainty. At present, we are planning for online classes. We look forward to meeting and teaching in person again when the threat of COVID-19 dissipates. Please know that we appreciate and value everyone’s flexibility — not only over the past six months, but as we plan for the semester ahead.

There used to be an option for students to go to the office to consult syllabi. Is there a system of place for us to consult these online?
We realize that it is helpful for students to consult course syllabi when planning which courses they want to take. We previously provided syllabi for viewing in hardcopy form to protect intellectual property rights. If you would like to view syllabi this term, please reach out the Kay Ramdass in FIFSW’s general office who will request permission to share course syllabi from instructors.

Do you have advice or recommendation for students who get screen fatigue?
We are all learning to deal with and adapt to increased screen time. This is a good question and a real issue. We recommend that you manage your time by planning ahead. Schedule time to take a walk outside in between classes. Consider whether you can take a meeting while walking. Engage in selfcare. Find the things that bring you joy and incorporate exercise, healthy eating and meditation into your day.

Accessibility Services has also developed the resource Strategies for Online Learning & Accessibility that includes great tips on how to transition to online learning, stay motivated and building new skills.

Building Access

Can students access FIFSW’s building?
Given the evolving circumstances surrounding COVID-19, all MSW classes and meetings will be held remotely. We ask that MSW students not access the building at this time as we do not have enough space to accommodate everyone while maintaining the necessary public health regulations.
Some of the classrooms in our building are being used for small classes for other departments and faculties at U of T, which complicates things. (Students in these classes will have access to the third floor student lounge, which is limited to 10 people in order to maintain physical distancing.) The more people that are in our building, the more difficult it becomes to control the risk of exposure. Our goal is to prioritize the health of our community.

Administrative staff are also continuing to mainly work from home and will not be in the building to provide in-person support.

The protocol is different for PhD students as this group is significantly smaller and engaged in research. All PhD students will use a booking system and will receive information by email on the protocols to be followed should they wish to enter the building. (See more information on building access for PhD students, below.)

**Will PhD students be able to use the PhD room?**
PhD students have shared offices on the 5th floor, and may access the building between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm. (Fobs are required after hours.) Physical distancing measures have been put in place with respect to seating. The Faculty is implementing a calendaring system to enable students to book desk space at three-hour intervals. Instructions on the protocols to be followed will be provided by email.

Anyone accessing campus buildings is encouraged to use the University’s UCheck self-assessment portal. UCheck is a web portal that enables faculty members, librarians, staff, and students to generate a COVID-19 risk status by completing a quick and thorough self-assessment that is tailored to U of T. This risk status will inform whether an individual should come to campus or stay home. UCheck is not a contact tracing or exposure notification app. Your individual responses to the self-assessment questionnaire are kept private and will not be received by the University.

**Where can FIFSW students go if they need a space to watch and participate in a virtual class?**
U of T Libraries have spaces where students don’t have to be quiet. Robarts Library, in particular, offers a number of options. This includes the first floor, the common spaces on the second floor (with the exception of the reading room), and the food court, also on the second floor. The areas around the escalators in the core of Robarts Library are also not zoned for silence.

There are also non-library study spaces where students don’t have to be quiet, such as Sid Smith Commons.

**What are some ways that students can build communities of support and get to know each other during this time of remote learning?**
FIFSW’s Graduate Student Association (GSA) has created a virtual ZOOM LUNCHROOM, an open space for all students to hangout and connect. The Zoom lunchroom will be open Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from noon to 1:30pm.
You can also find information on clubs, groups and community learning opportunities via U of T's Student Life website. The University’s Academic Success programs include workshops for grad students, graduate writing groups, study hubs, as well as a grad productivity group to help you work from home.

Awards and finances

Are international students eligible for internal awards?
There are some awards that international students can apply for; however, most of the awards are restricted to students from Ontario. Regardless, we encourage everyone to apply. Remember that you will need a U of T email address to access the Internal Awards Database. You will receive a U of T email address after obtaining your T-Card.

Are the awards open to part time students?
We have some open awards that can be considered for part time students, but most are for students who are full time.

***A reminder that students who are registered with Accessibility Services and demonstrate financial need can request funding for disability-related services and equipment.

Where can we find information on Internal Awards?
Students should have received an email with information on how to log into the Internal Awards website. Access to the Internal Awards website will only be provided to students with a U of T email address. The application period started after 9:00am on September 23. Instructions on how to apply will be provided after they log into the system.

***Students who recently updated ACORN with their U of T email address should notify Sharon about the email changes.

Accessibility Services

U of T’s Accessibility Services office is open and is connecting with students virtually. Accessibility Services is committed to providing students with disabilities access to academic accommodations, programs and services that may be helpful as they work to achieve their academic goals. Information on how to register with Accessibility Services is on U of T’s Student Life website.

If you have trouble accessing the medical documentation needed to register with Accessibility Services, please don’t hesitate to let them know. Students may contact Accessibility Services via email (accessibility.services@utoronto.ca) or phone (416-978-8060).
Practicum

We’d like to thank Year Two and Advanced Standing students for their patience this fall. As you are aware, many of our practicums continue to be virtual. For those who do not yet have a practicum, please note that there are a number of practicum options still available. All have been vetted for their quality and we are confident that they will provide you with valuable training for employment post-graduation.

What is the timeline for students in the first year of the two-year MSW program to choose their placement?
Year One students will begin practicum in January. We will be holding an information session in October to share the protocol for obtaining your placement. All Year One students will receive an invitation to this information session via email. You will have the opportunity to view the options available to you and complete a matching assignment.

When should part-time students contact the practicum office about the placement process for placements beginning Sept 2021?
You should contact the Practicum Office about four months before you anticipate starting your practicum.

If courses are online in the winter semester, what does that mean for practicum?
At present, many of our practicums are virtual, and we expect that this will continue in the new year. We want to encourage you to remember that online service delivery is likely to become the norm, even after the threat of the pandemic dissipates. As more people access services via a virtual platform, a number of service providers are finding that online service delivery allows for more flexibility in meeting with people. For example, clients do not have to find child care or worry about transportation, making meetings more accessible. As a result, we expect that many services will continue to be provided virtually.

If a student's practicum is remote and they're expected to have high speed internet with a lot/increased bandwidth, and the student is financially not in the place to upgrade, who can they reach out to for financial support for this? What financial supports are available?
Practicum sites are responsible to make sure that students have the tools they need. At the same time, we are aware that some of our community partners are challenged, including financially, to address the demands imposed on them by this global pandemic. If you are experiencing an issue, please contact your Faculty Field Liaison. Unfortunately, the Practicum Office doesn’t have access to finances, but while there isn’t specific funding to support students with practicum-related expenses, students can indicate these expenses in their applications for Internal Awards.
**Is it possible we will not find a placement for winter?**

The Practicum Office is seeking field instructors for all students. A number of flexible measures have been introduced to increase the options, including:

- Virtual practicums
- Practicums in various geographical locations
- Practicums in places where a student is employed
- Project, policy and research-based learnings
- Field instructors determine length – from 338.2 to 469

We cannot predict the outcome with certainty; however our intention is for each student to be assigned a practicum for the winter semester.

**Is there any talk about changing all practicums to remote again due to COVID? Or will it be up to the practicum organizations and student?**

FIFSW and its practicum partners are required to follow university directives and public health guidelines. Whether or not all practicums become remote will be determined by changes to these directives.

**International students**

**Can international students do a practicum placement outside of Canada?**

If this is your wish, please contact us. We will work with you to find a placement that meets the requirements of our program. Please keep Megan Davies, FIFSW’s International Student Coordinator, informed by copying her on your emails to practicum.fsw@utoronto.ca.

**What is the university's plan for students who will leave Canada and return after the winter break?**

The Government of Canada requires all travellers returning to Canada to quarantine for 14 days upon returning. If you are quarantining in your own space off campus, including quarantining in another Province before coming to Toronto, please register with the Non-U of T Quarantine “At Home” Program through StarRez.

For students who don’t have their own space to quarantine, U of T’s Mandatory Quarantine Accommodating program is offering spaces for students to fulfill the Government’s mandatory quarantine requirements and to support students’ overall health and safety. As part of this program, the University will provide:

- Transportation from the airport to the quarantine location
- Private room with washroom at a hotel or the UTM residence (depending on availability)
- 3 meals/day delivered to your door
• Other supports (daily check in/nurse monitoring, quarantine supplies including personal thermometer, residence life staff, and connections with your academic division for information on programming, orientation, etc. during your quarantine)

An application form is available at StarRez. Students will need to sign-off on self-isolation protocols aligned with relevant government guidance, and remain in their rooms for the 14-day period. Guests will not be allowed during this time.

Any student thinking of leaving Canada over the winter break should make an appointment with one of the immigration advisors at U of T’s Centre for International Experience to get up-to-date information.

Miscellaneous

What will the faculty will be doing with funding that was previously used toward in-person events/food/material given out at the faculty?
Unfortunately, the cost of running a school in an online environment has actually been quite significant. Added costs have included purchasing new audio-visual and computing equipment for on-line teaching and research, AV support for different on-line platforms, PPEs and sanitizing supplies, and increased contractors for cleaning and disinfecting. The University is also investing heavily in IT security, cloud computing, new on-line platforms and in new network services to address internet connectivity challenges experienced by international students. These costs have significantly exceeded what we have saved by not holding in-person events. The University is facing funding challenges, but the overall impact will not be known until operations return to a level of normalcy.