

DATE: October 15, 2021

TO: Dr. Benoit-Antoine Bacon, President
Dr. Jerry Tomberlin, Provost

FROM: Dr. Lorraine Dyke, Deputy Provost (Academic Operations and Planning)
Chair, Carleton University Scenario Planning (CUSP) Working Group

RE: Planning recommendation for Winter 2022

In April 2021, the Carleton University Scenario Planning (CUSP) Working Group anticipated that widespread vaccination would make it possible to return to normal campus activity in Winter 2022. A fourth wave of COVID-19 – driven by incomplete vaccination and new variants – began in August but case counts are currently trending downward. Based on a review of the current situation, CUSP recommends that Carleton proceed with its ongoing safe and gradual return to campus – building on a successful Fall term – with a mix of online and face-to-face programming in Winter 2022.

Modeling last month from the [Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table](#) shows the curve is flattening but cautions there is still uncertainty regarding future developments. The most [recent analysis by the Public Health Agency of Canada](#) indicates that vaccines continue to be highly protective against COVID-19, including the Delta variant. Further, at current levels of transmission, the fourth wave is expected to decline. Groups at higher risk will be receiving [booster shots](#) and [vaccines for children under 12](#) may be available in the coming months.

In light of their high vaccination levels and masking requirements, the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities has indicated that in-person instruction at post-secondary institutions can resume without physical distancing. The province is expected to [announce a further lifting of public health restrictions](#) soon. At present, however, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) continues to recommend physical distancing in classrooms.

From the beginning of the pandemic, [the first principle guiding CUSP's recommendations](#) has been the health and wellbeing of students, faculty, staff and the broader community. We recommend that we continue to follow the advice of public health officials by planning in-person winter term courses in line with OPH's recommendation for physical distancing. In addition, we recommend offering a strong selection of online options for students who are unable to attend campus. This mixed approach has been successful thus far in keeping our community safe. If recommendations from OPH regarding physical distancing were revised to allow more flexibility prior to the completion of winter term registration, some increases in classroom capacities could be contemplated in collaboration with academic units.

We therefore recommend that in Winter 2022, academic programs:

- Be delivered through a mix of face-to-face and online instruction.

- Ensure that there are both face-to-face and online learning opportunities at all levels of every program, wherever possible.
- Plan classroom capacities in line with OPH physical distancing requirements for face-to-face learning, with online delivery for larger classes.
- Ensure a robust selection of online courses for students who are not able to come to campus.
- Prioritize courses for face-to-face delivery based on learning outcomes, pedagogy and choice for students.
- Provide key experiential learning opportunities (e.g. teaching labs) while maintaining safe distances. This will be achieved by modest increases in lab capacities where deemed safe by Environmental Health and Safety.¹

We recommend that Carleton remain flexible in building the schedule over the coming weeks as both government regulations and public health recommendations continue to evolve in real time. CUSP will continue to monitor the implications of the evolving situation for the continued success of our academic mission.

¹ Well ventilated environments (such as lab spaces) are considered low risk for transmission when face coverings are used (Jones et al., BMJ 2020; <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m3223>).