



APPROVED

iSchool Student Townhall

Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting

Date: May 8th, 2020 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Q: What is the potential for reduction of tuition and fees due to online courses and shifted responsibility for resources such as printing costs?

Dean Susan Porter: We haven't been able to reduce tuition because we don't have approval for this from the province. We have worked on providing more financial resources to students as a way of offsetting the tuition costs. Tuition fees cover much more than the courses, and these are continuing expenses in the university and departments. Students in financial need could seek funding through the recently launched Graduate Bursary Fund.

Luanne Freund: From the school's perspective, it's important to make funding available to support students as opposed to reducing the fees, because student fees support important student services and groups. However, we are still considering what to do with student fees, and will see how the situation progresses this summer. In terms of tuition, we don't have control over that, so we follow university policy.

Q: What are the preventative measures to address Privacy issues regarding the image and voice being shared during online instruction?

Luanne Freund: We have been assured that the digital tools we use such as Zoom and other learning tools are closely vetted and approved by the UBC office of the Chief Information Officer. As for sharing of image and voice, faculty should not be recording any of the classes and we are working on developing a policy that will guide our actions in online teaching. In the iSchool, we have an informal policy that students should have the option of whether or not any assignments or course contributions should be publicly available. If you have concerns, please raise these directly with the instructor as these are important questions. Lisa Nathan: By signing into Canvas, users choose to agree to certain privacy guidelines. One way to address privacy concerns is to liaise with the UBC Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology team and find possible solutions.

Jacqui Brinkman: Blackboard Collaborate recordings have the ability to anonymize the chat/conversations in recordings. Zoom does not. One option could be to use an alias/nickname if that is a possibility

Q: When will we find out whether all fall courses will be taught online or in -person and what about spring term? (note that the formal notifications regarding fall teaching went out on May14)

Luanne Freund: we are working right now under the assumption that vast majority of fall courses will be taught online. We are working towards of a review of fall course offerings and checking in with instructors about changing their classes online. We believe most of the courses offered at iSchool can be taught online. The university has not come up with a formal announcement regarding this matter, so we encourage faculty members to start developing online courses in order to prepare for the future. We are also exploring options where we can design courses to have some online components and some in-person components. We are following the province's decision to make a final decision around this important matter. In addition, there is also a chance that the spring courses will also be online.

Susan Porter: There will be a UBC Broadcast announcement next week regarding the fall semester.

Q: Is the mix of synchronous and asynchronous classes that is happening this summer reflective of how courses will be provided in the Winter Term? Is there an idea of when the timetable will be published?

Luanne Freund: Yes, we are developing a plan on how the online learning will happen in the school. Our goal is to make the schedule available at the end of May and the expectation is that very little change will happen to the timetable and most of the regular courses in the timetable will be offered in the Winter Term. We are aiming for half or more of the courses to be asynchronous because we want to make sure people who are located in a different time zone to be able to take the classes.

Q: Will the schedule be posted at the end of May specify whether the courses are synchronous and asynchronous?

Luanne Freund: We understand that this is very important information for students so we will make that clear in our announcement of the course schedule.

Q. Have there been discussions regarding the impact on practicum and/or professional experience opportunities?

Kevin Day: There has been a decrease in the number of professional development opportunities in the field and we are working with community partners to see to what extent remote work opportunities can be generated during this time. There are a lot fewer opportunities to work in a physical workspace due to the pandemic. However, we do expect to see a lot more opportunities surface when restrictions loosen up.

Q: When will program completion letters be available for students graduating this semester?

Kevin Day: If you have applied to graduation already, then Dr. Lisa Nathan could sign an unofficial program completion letter and issue it to you. The official program completion letters will be available through the Student Services Centre but please recognize that the processing takes time.

Q: If a mixed online/in-person format is something that the school decides to transition to, how much notice would be provided to students? Would accommodations be made for students who would be unable to return to BC? Totally fine if there isn't an answer quite yet since it's not something completely being prepared for/planned for.

Luanne Freund: We are aware that some students of ours have left the country and won't be back in time for fall semester. We are going to make it possible for students to stay where they are to take courses online.

Q: For students who had experiences cancelled for this spring/summer, will they be notified first if their experience can now be done remotely?

Kevin Day: Yes, students will be informed first if their experiences were cancelled previously.

Q: Any updates or sneak peaks on LIBR 593B? Is the summer course schedule now confirmed with no new additions planned?

Luanne Freund: Summer course schedule is now confirmed, and we have added three courses from the original course schedule and we have added caps in these courses or added a TA to increase the size of the class to meet demand. My hope is that everyone could find courses that work for them given the current situation. LIBR 593B is a summer course called Information in Times of Crisis designed to be taught in the time of the crisis. We are open to discuss all manners of crisis including climate change and other types of crisis. We are bringing in lots of expertise from faculty members and we are very excited about it.

Lisa Nathan: If anyone is interested in taking LIBR 593B , please send Lisa Nathan an email if you have any questions. We are working on the course by bringing in guest speakers who are subject experts and the content will be up-to-date given the current situation.

Q: According to the province, libraries will potentially begin to open over the summer - is it possible to use the iSchool's relationship with public and academic libraries to get work for students – i.e the libraries are going to need additional short-term manpower in circulation to deal with the influx of returned library books etc. - even short-term work opportunities would be great!

Luanne Freund: We can certainly reach out to the library leaderships in the Lower Mainland. We do recognize there are challenges there and lots of staff have been laid off from their respective positions in the libraries. We are not sure if they will be doing more hiring during this time, but we can definitely ask. The iSchool also has a job site where employers come to us to post jobs. My guess is that they will be hiring back workers who have been laid off first and then student jobs will be considered subsequently.

Q: Thanks for doing this! Do we have any special intel on whether material access to books etc. in UBC's libraries will start to open back up in limited ways as we move toward the Fall?

Luanne Freund: The “return to activity” plan is still a work-in-progress and my understanding is that even a return to our offices may not happen in the first stage of re-opening. My guess is that the libraries on campus will not be opening up soon in the first stage of the re-opening plan but the best would be to wait and see.

Susan Porter: We are working on plans for this and we don't have specific dates regarding the re-opening of the libraries.

Q: Building on an earlier question: with fewer jobs available for new/soon-to-be grads right now, what supports does the iSchool have to help address concerns about post-graduation employment in a recession?

Luanne Freund: We are still trying to figure this out, but it would be helpful to hear from graduates who are graduating soon for input and feedback. Mentorship from our alumni could help and we can host virtual career events to help our graduates as well. However, currently the job market is severely impacted by the pandemic. The industry has lots of unknowns in terms of what it would be like when we return to work. One thing worth noting is that our Masters degrees are educating students to work in a broad range of careers. It could be important to consider job opportunities in more than just the library and archival fields. We would like to hear from you for suggestions on what we can do to assist.

Q: I would love to circle back to of the issue of adjusting tuition. What exactly has UBC done to look into adjusting tuition, or changing fees for students, other than bursaries? Especially things like campus fees, facilities fees, etc. Is UBC planning to follow other universities that have waived or reduced incidental fees?

Susan Porter: Most of the fees that are charged from the students are AMS or Graduate Student Society fees, and they have their own reasons for maintaining them. With regards to tuition, instead of looking at how to reduce the tuition fees or offer refunds, we are focusing our efforts on providing more funding opportunities for students through awards and various bursary funding opportunities. We are still trying to offer more awards at this very moment. It is also worth noting that certain housing and day care fees have been eliminated already to offer relief to the student community.

Q: I may have missed this, but will there be a difference in price between asynchronous and synchronous classes moving forward? Quite frankly the loss of the lecture and actual face-to-face discussion components is of a detriment to a Masters level education, and I personally do not feel asynchronous courses to be comparable in value.

Luanne Freund: By looking at best practices and past research findings, asynchronous courses seem to be more effective learning opportunities, as compared to synchronous courses. There are fully online MLIS programs in the United States and the tuition fees are significantly higher than ours. Our goal is to offer courses at the same level of quality as the ones from other online programs in North America. We have started to talk about how we can design a mix of course meeting formats such as small group tutorials to supplement our online course offerings. We would like to hear input from all of you and incorporate missing elements into our design.

Q: If we have a SD (Standing Deferred) for the previous term, are we ineligible to apply for departmental awards?

Kevin Day: There are different eligibility requirements for each iSchool award. The standing deferred status will affect those awards that are GPA-based but it won't have a negative impact in other areas.

Luanne Freund: This is a good flag for us to look at our awards process; we know that grades in the past term are not very representative, and so we may decide not to consider them when deciding on awards.

Q: Our summer tuition fees still include recreation facility fees. But right now, these facilities are not operating. Can UBC waive or reduce these fees?

Emi Sasagawa: The short answer is no. Those fees will not be reimbursed for the time being. However, if you have purchased a membership in addition to the recreational fees that you paid as a UBC student, you will be able to get some partial reimbursement. There are no refunds on the Athletics & Recreation fees at the present moment. However, Athletics & Recreation is refunding student purchased memberships for fitness centres like the BirdCoop – this is largely an automatic process and would apply to the majority of graduate students who have purchased a membership.

Individuals that have purchased a four-month or one-year membership (likely anyone that was not required to pay Athletics & Recreation fees) will have their membership automatically extended by the duration of our closure. Those types of memberships are eligible for a refund upon request as some people will have completed their programs/schooling and extended terms may not be useful. They can begin a refund request by emailing: info.recreation@ubc.ca.

Q: Will this impact or change some restrictions on things like when students can do internships, co-ops, or graduate?

Kevin Day: Our students need to complete 21 credits before qualifying for co-op work. Given the current situation, all Masters and Ph.D students will have an additional term to finish their programs as an accommodation.

Susan Porter: There are more extensions beyond what Kevin just described.

Q: Would you consider releasing course syllabi before the courses start so the students know what type of assignments or readings would be expected so that they have more information when selecting courses?

Luanne Freund: Yes, and we do have a standard date that all syllabus are due from instructors and shared. Because faculty members are still working on the online transition, they will need more time to make the documents available to everyone. We will aim for making it available one month before the course starts but it will not be available before the registration date. Please feel free to ask instructors if they can share an early version of the syllabus, or if you have specific questions about a course. Also, we now understand that synchronous and asynchronous format is a really important consideration for course selection, so we will make sure to add that information into the syllabus and share it before registration.

Q: Will the fall graduation be virtual or is it too soon to tell? When does UBC anticipate in-person graduation ceremonies to resume?

Susan Porter: We do not have enough information on this at the current moment.

Luanne Freund: UBC is not making these decisions on its own. It's guided by the Province's recommendations. A good way to get a sense for this is to look at the updates from the Province.

Q: Will the courses on Canvas stay accessible until August for students with SD (Standing Deferred)?

Kevin Day: Students need to request the materials from the instructors. I don't believe the materials would stay on the canvas until August.

Luanne Freund: I think there's a cut-off date, but it may be possible to request an extension from specific instructors. Please note that instructors don't have control over who has access on canvas.

Lisa Nathan: This can be a good question for the CTLT team.

Q: Will it be possible in September for small classes to be held in person? Masters courses are typically small, so it could be possible to phase into in-person classes.

Luanne Freund: We will be going over the course schedule and looking for courses that are small and need to be taught in person rather than online. We also need to find classrooms that allow for social distancing and we are not sure if we would get priority access to this type of classrooms since the majority of our courses can be taught online. We also do not want to disadvantage students who cannot come back to the country and on time to attend in-person classes. We don't want to be in a situation where we will put any students at disadvantage. We need to do it in a way where all the students can continue to take the classes they intend to take. [Note that we have since announced that all iSchool classes will be online in the fall].

Lisa Nathan: As the pandemic is still ongoing, we still need to think about the potential risks exposed to people even with social distancing measures in place.

Q: Will there be online peer advisors available for the technology requirement? There were in-person classes previously, but that likely will not be possible this fall.

Luanne Freund: We started to discuss the same topic and explore some options around it. The plan now is to have the technology advisors and peer advisors to work virtually. The workshops will be organized and conducted online. We might need to scale back some of the other online activities to enable people to focus on what is truly important.

Richard Arias Hernandez: Last year, we have created a canvas course and utilized technology to help students experiment with online advisors. The workshops will have to be offered online given the current situation.

Rick Kopak: We have implemented the iSchool Tech-Connect site last year. We might need to broaden it so that all courses will have access to this site to allow opportunities to ask questions remotely and use the site in the current situation.

Q: Is there any way for students to hold meetings on Canvas through Collaborate Ultra?

Kevin Day: Peer Advisors are set up with Zoom and I am set up with both Zoom and Collaborate Ultra. I am not an instructor and do not have access to Canvas.

Luanne Freund: It may be easier for us to do it for student clubs, but we can certainly work to find opportunities to use technology so that they can help our students host online meetings. [Note that we are looking into plans to use the Tech Connect site to give students access to Collaborate Ultra]

Q: Is there a way for students to audit some courses online but not taking them?

Luanne Freund: Students can contact course instructors and the instructor will discuss with you to what extent you would like to audit the course. It is definitely possible but I would recommend you to contact the instructors first.

Q: Is there a reason why UBC doesn't allow students to archive their courses on Canvas? I went to a large university for my undergrad, my program was primarily online, and I can still access all of my prior courses for reference as long as my account is still active.

Luanne Freund: There are lots of ongoing discussions related to intellectual property issues around course materials. Technically, the intellectual property of the course materials belongs to the faculty members. Faculty members could lose their intellectual property by allowing students to have access to the course materials after the courses end. Right now, we don't have the ability to do this, as Canvas does not support it.

Lisa: This can be another great question for the UBC CTLT team.

Q: Will open dialogues like these be common throughout this time? As the overall situation develops it is important to know what will be going on.

Luanne Freund: We certainly can do another one of these townhalls. Our main communication channel with the students is still the Digest Weekly newsletter. We will also do a survey of students this summer.

Q: And will there be a forum for student discussion/comments moving forward as we figure out what does/doesn't work as this is something very important to the students?

Erik Kwakkel: As the incoming Director, I am open to try anything that can get information to the students and faculty members. I enjoyed the Director's Forum that Luanne had with students and I believe we can continue the forum through virtual gatherings. Students can be vocal about what they need to hear from us.