



## iSchool Student Townhall 2.0

Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting

Date: August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020 3:00 – 4:30 PM

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- 1) There are no syllabi posted yet for Winter Term 1. Could someone tell us when they will be posted so that we know what, if any books to purchase? Because I am not located in Vancouver, I may need to purchase resources from a source other than the UBC Bookstore and I would love to be able to get a jump on securing any resources so that I'm not behind on the first day of classes.**

Kevin: Syllabi will be made available through Canvas 1-2 weeks prior to the start of term. You can also email your instructors directly and inquire about the availability of course materials. Please note that you do not need to go to the UBC Bookstore to purchase. As we are transitioning all of the teaching online for the upcoming academic year, please check Canvas for most updated information about course materials.

**Post Town Hall addendum:** we have setup a page for [DRAFT syllabi](#) to be available for students. Please check the timetable and the draft syllabi page, and if the syllabi isn't available on either, then contact the instructor.

- 2) How do we engage with our classes? Do we just log into Canvas at the appointed time for our synchronous classes beginning on September 8th? Same for asynchronous classes? Or will someone be reaching out to us separately?**

Lisa: Readings and assigned learning materials are designed by instructors. They are aware of the technological needs and challenges experienced by students at the moment and they are striving to provide course materials through online resources, when possible open source, for less expensive alternatives. Keeping in touch with your instructor is very important, reach out to them as soon as possible if you need any particular resources. In terms of finding out your syllabus, [see Question 1]. Within Canvas, you can find your courses in one place and each course has its own designated space in Canvas. You can find everything about your courses on Canvas.

- 3) For an international student stranded in the US, are there any options or recommendations for university health insurance?**

Kevin: You will need to physically reside in B.C to receive the health insurance. I believe that for students who leave the university, you will have coverage for up to 6 months after that. For more questions, send us an email and we will be able to direct you

to the resources on campus who can offer a more accurate answer for you. However, please note that there are limitations on what we can do for those who are not in BC

**4) If UBC as a university decides to open in the Spring, will that impact the waiver of distance education restrictions for international students since the iSchool will be online?**

Erik: We have made the announcement earlier to transition all the course offerings to online for both Winter Term 1 and Winter Term 2, and you have the option to stay where you are during those two terms. We think that a full re-opening of the university is highly unlikely to happen in the near future. For smaller classes, the university allows for face-to-face teaching but we are not entirely sure about the restrictions and limitations for that. The reason we allowed for online teaching for Winter Term 2 is that we do not want to disadvantage any students who cannot physically be in Canada for the classes due to all the travel restrictions that are in place right now.

Lisa: G&PS has established the COVID-19 page with regular updates about various issues involved with the aforementioned issues for graduate students. However, information can change really quickly and so it's important to stay updated with the page. The website link to the page is here: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/covid-19>.

**5) Now that we know that Winter 2 will be online, will we have the opportunity to revise our course registration?**

Kevin: Yes, you have up to Winter Term 2 to change course registrations and schedules. **Jan 15** is the last day to drop Term 2 courses without a W standing, and **March 5** is the last day to do so with a W standing. To do that, go to Student Services Centre (SSC) to update your courses and change your selections. We hope everyone ends up with a course schedule that works for them. Here's the link to Student Services Centre (SSC): <https://ssc.adm.ubc.ca/sscportal/>.

**6) Will there be any workspaces available for us on campus?**

Erik: The short answer is No. Until the university starts to allow people to return to campus, there will be no workspaces available and allowed for students to use. We do encourage you to stay current with the updates from the university regarding this matter.

**7) I was wondering how to approach professors in synchronized classes regarding disability accommodations for online classes (if already enrolled with the Centre for Accessibility)?**

Lisa: you should be able to look up the timetable for your instructors' contact information and reach out to them with the letter from the Access and Diversity Centre. I suggest you reach out to them early to avoid delays and complications.

**8) When will we know what courses are synchronous and asynchronous in Term 2?**

Kevin: We will be making the updates regarding course offerings soon as course offerings for Winter Term 2 have already been confirmed.

**9) I am wondering why hybrid classes haven't been considered? There is a hands-on aspect to archive in particular that will be missed. Along with this the loss of discussion is huge. Quite frankly a discussion post in Canvas is in no way equivalent to an actual face to face discussion – we're in grad school attending seminars, discussion is vital and without it our education is missing a key component.**

Lisa: Hybrid classes are not allowed by the university at the moment, and the option was considered carefully internally as a unit. It is ultimately the decision of the university to disallow it at the moment given the current circumstances related to the pandemic. Many instructors provide break-out rooms via Zoom and please rest assured that discussions will take place in classes. We also need to recognize that online teaching has its own strengths in fostering discussions. Discussions have been robust and fruitful as evidenced by some of our summer session classes which concluded recently.

**10) Why are the online class sizes still so small? It doesn't make sense, seeing as the virtual world is not constrained by physical walls and seats, that class sizes cannot be opened up to give access to the students who need these classes. It was extremely hard for me to get into classes for the Fall and I'm not very happy with the selection I was able to get.**

Kevin: A lot of classes are restricted in size due to various factors. Before we went to online teaching, the class size was restricted by the capacity of the classroom as well as the capacity of the teaching faculty members. As for now, we also need to consider the financial impact of hiring additional Teaching Assistants to assist in bigger classes.

Erik: It's important to make sure the class size is suitable for the online teaching environment. Also, it's important to maintain a balance in class size across the course offerings.

Richard: I have personally taught a bigger class and it was a struggle to keep up with online discussions. As a result, the size limit makes sense for ensuring high quality learning experiences for our students and for maintaining good online teaching quality. A lot of our students value and need individual attention and support from their instructors and smaller classes allow for more enriching discussions and learning. Student experience will be different when we expand the class size.

Heather: If you would like to get into a certain class that's currently full, please look at the syllabus ahead of time and contact your instructors. Some students will be dropping

their classes in the first weeks of the new term and we will move people from the waitlist into the class accordingly.

- 11) My question is about LIBR 504, the mandatory class. Why aren't seats in this class reserved for students about to graduate? I should be graduating after Winter Term 1 but can't because I'm low on the waitlist for LIBR 504 and that has caused me quite a bit of stress because I really cannot afford to still have to be in school in January of next year.**

Kevin: Sometimes it is difficult for us to know when students would graduate. Please reach out to us directly and we will prioritize your seat. Also, it's important to know that LIBR 504 is not intended to be taken at the end of the program. Please reach out to us by email. You can reach Sandy Abah, Program Assistant at [ischool.program@ubc.ca](mailto:ischool.program@ubc.ca) and Kevin Day, Educational Services Manager at [ischool.edsm@ubc.ca](mailto:ischool.edsm@ubc.ca).

- 12) If we cannot access the health coverage from out of BC, will we be able to get the cost refunded?**

Answer: It is a complicated situation and we encourage you to reach out to campus resources for international students. International Student Advising provides great resources for international students and please check out their website at: <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/international-student-advising>. You can also find contact information there to speak with an International Student Advisor.

- 13) For LIBR 504, why can't students be on the waitlist for both semesters? I need the last core course, but I can't be on waitlist for either semester, just one.**

Kevin: Yes, you can definitely sign up to be on the waitlist for both terms and there are waitlists available for both terms in Student Services Centre (SSC).

- 14) I am a new incoming student, and trying to balance four core courses with part-time work/family. Two questions: 1) How many hours per week can I expect for lecture/reading/assignment 2) If I do not take all four core courses the first term, can I register for elective courses too?**

Victoria: There will be approximately 10 hours / week of course work for a given asynchronous class and this estimate will vary depending on the nature of the course. This estimate is also a learning goal we, as instructors, set up for our students. Please feel free to send emails to your instructors as different instructors may have different estimates for their courses.

Kevin: Students can choose to take less than the four Core courses at once. It is recommended they speak to their faculty advisor first as certain courses have priority. If

they pursue this, they will have to fill out a pre-requisite exemption form which would allow students to take electives with the remaining Core simultaneously. The link to the form can be found here: [https://lais.air.arts.ubc.ca/documents/2019/11/exemption-prerequisite-course-form\\_2019.pdf](https://lais.air.arts.ubc.ca/documents/2019/11/exemption-prerequisite-course-form_2019.pdf).

**15) How do we set up on Canvas?**

Lisa: Students are set up on Canvas automatically. You can just log into Canvas and you should be able to see your course modules. <https://canvas.ubc.ca/>

**16) Why aren't syllabi posted BEFORE class selection, so that students can actually see what the class is like before they enroll in it? Regarding syllabi being posted on Canvas, those would only be accessible if you did end up enrolling in class (which seems much too late to be posting the syllabus).**

Erik: Instructors are usually quite busy with designing the syllabus until shortly before the official start date of the class. Although we tried to offer “cushion time” between now and the course start date, your instructors are also perfecting their course design and course materials. You are welcome to always contact the instructors for more information about the courses, which will also allow you to receive the most updated and accurate information.

**Post Town Hall addendum:** we have setup a page for [DRAFT syllabi](#) to be available for students. Please check the timetable and the draft syllabi page, and if the syllabi isn't available on either, then contact the instructor.

**17) Recognizing that we're in incredible circumstances, I'm concerned that once we graduate we'll be entering the workforce with deficiencies in our practical education as archivists. How is this going to be addressed?**

Victoria: We will have to determine what we can't deliver to you in regards to practical education. In addition, we will foresee how the situation changes and we will monitor closely to see how the situation will unfold in the near future. For incoming students, the core classes in first year are more theoretical and because of that, there is not as much practical experience to be missed. In addition, there are lots of practical work experiences that you will be able to gain by working remotely as well. We will work together and ensure that you don't have gaps in regards to practical education and knowledge.

**18) What type of platform will be used to deliver synchronous courses: Zoom, Collaborate Ultra, Canvas or at the discretion of the course instructor?**

Lisa and Violet: Zoom and Collaborate Ultra are official UBC-approved platforms. Collaborate Ultra has been imbedded in Canvas. In addition, the university has recently

signed up for Microsoft Teams for students, staff and faculty members as of the past Monday for a soft launch. The Collaborate Ultra will continue to be in use until next year.

**19) I understand that students of the iSchool have the option to apply for Schedule B fees to move to part-time studies but that if we do so, we have to remain PT for the duration of the program. Has the school considered changing this policy given the move to online learning? I struggle to be in front of a screen and my ideal circumstances might be that I'd only take 2 or 3 classes per term but I don't want to be stuck in PT studies.**

Lisa: For graduate students at UBC, your tuition payment schedule depends on whether you choose schedule A or Schedule B (which allows you to stretch your payment schedule longer). In the end, you will end up paying the same amount. It does not depend on how many courses you actually take per term. For instance, you can choose to sign up for more courses in a given term, but your tuition is still paid with a set schedule.

**20) I really enjoyed online discussions during the summertime, but being completely honest, they took me a long time to craft. It would be very appreciated if that would be considered and weighted by professors when deciding participation marks and the amount of student engagement in such discussions.**

Erik: Instructors are well aware of the issues and anxiety that students are dealing with. You can share your feelings and anxiety with your instructors in a respectful manner and please be confident that you will be able to figure it out together.

**21) Is it possible to test out of a core course?**

Answer: Please contact Sandy, Kevin and Lisa directly for your questions. You are encouraged to contact them individually to speak about your unique circumstances. You can find their contact information here: <https://ischool.ubc.ca/people/staff/>.

**22) Regarding discussion posts: the first few people posting are often at a disadvantage as well, especially the very first poster, in that they cannot engage with other people's thoughts. Also, after posting, Canvas notifications do a really bad job of notifying you when someone responds to your post, and I think most students aren't going to remember to go back and check the forum again for responses/other posts.**

Answer: We will communicate these comments and suggestions to the instructors and make sure the comments are shared among them.

**23) For international students, how many classes do you need to take to be considered as full-time studies?**

Lisa: At UBC, the part-time and full-time studies status depend on your tuition schedule. It also depends on the rules and regulations of individual regulatory bodies. Please check with your Program Assistant and Advisors. The International Student Advising office can be a great resource to ask about this as well.

**24) There has been an emphasis on direct contact between students and instructors/staff to address issues (like waitlists and syllabus). This adds considerably to faculty workload and neglects streamlined solutions advantage students more equally. How do faculty and staff intend to manage workload and ensure students' needs are being addressed while providing increased individual attention to each student?**

Erik and Kevin: We strive for providing the same teaching and instructional quality for the upcoming academic year. Whenever you reach out to a faculty member, they always come back to us and to see if there's a waitlist and prioritize the seat release according to that. As professional educators, although we are not necessarily trained to teach all of our classes online in the full academic year, we will be utilizing resources to help instructors go through the unknown territory of online teaching. We all need to realize that for most of us, what we are facing right now is an unknown situation. We all need to tough it out and know that we will be able to return to our normal environment eventually.

Violet: We just do the best we can with it and instructors are striving to create high quality teaching and instruction for the fall. Staff members are also working hard to support students whenever we can. We are also working in the background to provide care and resources to our staff and faculty members in order for them to go through this challenging time.

Richard: We are open to suggestions and like Erik mentioned, we are navigating the online transition for the full academic year just like you are, and we welcome your advice and feedback for our course design and offerings. We are very open to listening to the good ideas and suggestions from our students.

**25) New Question: As an incoming first-year MAS student, I have no idea what courses I should be registering for in Winter II. Is there a place where this information is posted?**

Erik: For course registration and related matters, we have a timetable for both terms online. Please refer to our website for more information:  
<https://ischool.ubc.ca/programs/courses/timetables/timetable-2020-2021-winter-session/>.

Victoria: For students registered in the MAS program, there will be an orientation happening on September 16<sup>th</sup> and the dual degree students will also be invited. You will be provided an overview for the course offerings and it can help you to determine which courses best suit your career aspirations.

Violet: Please note that there will be more orientation related communications coming up in the next couple of weeks.

**26) Might we ask our instructors to be more consistent in using Canvas to diminish the frustrations for students? Maybe a template for every instructor, or something?**

Answer: There is a template for Canvas and all the faculty members are aware of it. However, it is important to recognize that different courses do require different course structure and the structure of various assignments in the course also play a role in the course design process. It really is up to the faculty members to decide on how they would like to utilize the course template.

**27) What are the iSchool's plans for supporting students' mental health, beyond referring students to general campus resources? Is there a possibility of hosting virtual social events focused on self-care?**

Kevin: We are thinking about designing virtual events to support our students during this challenging time. This is a great idea and we will take it into consideration when we design our events and programming.

Erik: It would also be great if we could keep an eye out for each other, and inquiring about how the students around you are doing.

Violet: I am aware that LASSA has been working on a number of events and I am sure this will be part of the discussion. There will be more events coming up in the Fall held by LASSA.

Rio Picollo: LASSA would love to host events like this (and have some in the works). Please email us your ideas at [lassa.ubc@gmail.com](mailto:lassa.ubc@gmail.com).

**28) I found the peer mentorship program very helpful when I was the first-year student last year. I wonder if the program will continue this year as well?**

Kevin and Erik: Peer Advisors have been hired for the upcoming academic year and they will continue to support our students throughout the year.

**29) While I appreciate all the virtual resources and social opportunities, but not all people do well/are able to participate online. Virtual social events are difficult for many, but then if we do not join we miss vital information and networking opportunities. Is there any way to be involved and connected without the expectation that this is 100% online all the time?**

Erik: Due to the continuation of the lock-down period, the interactions among us will be 100% online to keep everyone safe.

**30) Do we not get enough experience with group work in many aspects of the core courses? We can see that it causes students stress when you require additional graded demands--can we not suspend realities because reality is suspended for many of us for the time being?**

Violet: It's an interesting balance and we will be collecting the comments regarding the group work and share them with our instructors. We are trying to create a community in the iSchool and this is an opportunity to build and foster those connections.

Victoria: I appreciate the difficulty of doing group work online and together. However, at least for the context in the MAS program, it is important to form professional relationships among your peers and these relationships will last for the rest of your life which benefit you both personally and professionally. As a professor, I do not want you to miss out on that. Ultimately, it depends on individual instructor whether group work is included in the course or not.

**31) One issue that hasn't been discussed yet is access to WIFI! I live in a remote area and have to pay for the best broadband to be able to guarantee being able to get online with any regularity. This is just another cost that I now have to factor in to my budget. Does anyone have any views on that?**

Erik: This is unfortunately something that is hard for the school to be involved in.

**32) do we need to re-register for courses in term 2, or will courses automatically convert to online courses on their own?**

Erik: You do not need to re-register for courses in term 2 because they will automatically convert to online courses on their own.

**33) Can I'm wondering if we could have a group chat-ish thing for each class so we have a place to ask our classmate question/share information?**

Answer: Canvas has a chat function that instructors can activate on their own. Please speak to your instructors directly about it.

**34) I am an incoming student who is in the middle of visa process. As the term has gone online, the authorities may not find traveling to Canada justifiable and require supporting documents. Based on COVID-19 FAQ page, I need an essential purpose to be able to apply for visa. It is worth mentioning that, personally, I face a 12.5**

**hour difference in time zones which will be a challenge when term starts. Is that a convincing reason?**

Lisa: It is important to recognize that each of the boarder authorities has their own rules for admitting people into the country. I do know about people who have returned from other countries and they seem to have no problem with getting in.

Erik: You could reach out directly to me for more information on this at [ischool.director@ubc.ca](mailto:ischool.director@ubc.ca). One other great resource for this issue is the International Student Advising office on campus. They have advisors who can speak to you regarding your individually unique circumstances.

**35) The iSchool in the past has loaned laptops etc, can that not still be facilitated?**

Violet: There are limitations right now for borrowing equipment from the school given the remote working situation we are in and please recognize that this will be a short-term loan instead of a long-term loan. In the past, we usually required the equipment to be returned to us at the end of each day. One participant mentioned that they have been provided with a laptop by UBC Enrolment Services which can be an option that's worth exploring. In the past few months, we have also sent out a survey to students to gather insights on their ability to access learning-related technology.

**36) Will this sort of town hall meeting continue moving forward? Communication between faculty/students/staff as a whole is important. especially right now.**

Erik: Yes, we plan to host a student townhall at least once per term and it is great to know that such forum is useful to our students. I am happy to have them more frequent if there is a need for it, or if circumstances change. We are open to keep the dialogue and discussions going at the school to help you navigate the changes you are experiencing right now.

**37) Where can we find contact information of the assistants and advisors?**

Answer: You can find key contact information of the iSchool at: <https://ischool.ubc.ca/people/staff/>. Please reach out to us at anytime with your questions and concerns!