



The following Motions and Documents were considered by the Council on Student Affairs at its Thursday, January 14, 2021 meeting:

Agenda Title: **Synchronous Online Learning**

Secretary's note: Members of COSA requested that the GFC Secretary work with the proponent to make minor editorial changes to the GES and to remove redundancies from the documentation before it moved forward to GFC Executive Committee. Changes include minor grammatical changes to the motions, combining three Governance Executive Summaries into one document, revisions to the legislative compliance section, and assigning a title to the item.

CARRIED MOTION: THAT the Council on Student Affairs (COSA) recommend that the General Faculties Council (GFC) make appropriate provision for alternative delivery of lectures accessible to students in courses who cannot attend synchronous components, not including exams, until in-person delivery resumes.

CARRIED MOTION: THAT the Council on Student Affairs (COSA) recommend that the General Faculties Council (GFC) to have an appropriate alternative way of completing the course for students facing synchronous learning accessibility challenges, such as and not limited to, students who parent, students studying in a different time zone or having a poor internet connection from the participation grade/weightage that is based on attendance or activities requiring students to participate synchronously until in-person delivery resumes.

CARRIED MOTION: THAT the Council on Student Affairs (COSA) recommend the General Faculties Council (GFC) to explore alternatives and resolve the concerns/issues related to synchronous online learning.

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Governance Executive Summary
Action Item

Agenda Title	Synchronous Online Learning
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Motion

<p>THAT the Council on Student Affairs recommend that the General Faculties Council make appropriate provision for alternative delivery of lectures accessible to students in courses who cannot attend synchronous components, not including exams, until in-person delivery resumes.</p>
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Motion

<p>THAT the Council on Student Affairs recommend that the General Faculties Council have an appropriate alternative way of completing the course for students facing synchronous learning accessibility challenges, such as, and not limited to, students who parent, students studying in a different time zone or having a poor internet connection, from the participation grade/weightage that is based on attendance or activities requiring students to participate synchronously, until in-person delivery resumes.</p>
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Motion

<p>THAT the Council on Student Affairs recommend the General Faculties Council explore alternatives and resolve the concerns/issues related to synchronous online learning.</p>

Item

Action Requested	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approval <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation
Proposed by	Chanpreet Singh, President of the International Students' Association (ISA)
Presenter(s)	Chanpreet Singh, President of the International Students' Association (ISA)

Details

Office of Administrative Responsibility	Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
The Purpose of the Proposal is:	<p>The proposal is before the committee because the General Faculties Council (GFC) needs to explore alternatives and resolve issues related to synchronous online learning. Students are severely suffering, mentally and academically, due to synchronous online learning practice including lectures not being accessible to students in some time zones, participation grading based on attendance or activities requiring students to participate synchronously, and banning the use of the proctoring tools violating student privacy.</p> <p>GFC is asked to make appropriate provision for alternative delivery of lectures accessible to students in courses who cannot attend synchronous components, not including exams, until in-person delivery resumes.</p> <p>GFC is also asked to consider appropriate alternative ways of completing coursework for students facing synchronous learning accessibility challenges. These may include, but are not limited to, students who parent, who study in a different time zone, who have a poor internet connection. These students should be provided with alternatives to participation grades/weightage that are based on</p>

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	<p>attendance or activities requiring students to participate synchronously. These measures should be offered until in-person delivery resumes.</p> <p>Finally, it is recommended that GFC explore alternatives and resolve the concerns/issues related to synchronous online learning.</p>
<p>Executive Summary</p>	<p>Due to Covid-19, the University of Alberta switched to the remote delivery of the lectures. This created an additional problem for the international or out-of-province students studying remotely in varied time zones. Some courses have weighting of term work based on the attendance of the students or participation in a synchronous activity. This is leading to some students having to wake up in the middle of the night or at odd times to attend lectures scheduled on Mountain Standard Time (MST).</p> <p>Students who parent are also severely suffering due to their inability to actively participate in synchronously delivered lectures. Students from rural communities, or developing countries are also suffering due to poor internet connections, further limiting their ability to participate in a synchronously delivered lecture.</p> <p>Recording of synchronously delivered lectures or other alternatives to make course content accessible to students until in-person delivery resumes is the minimum that the University of Alberta can do to help students. Decisions to use proctoring tools, should consider the students in developing countries with hours of power cuts and poor internet connectivity.</p> <p>The GFC should acknowledge these concerns and take actions as described in the motions. While we understand that some courses might require active class participation, at the same time it is unacceptable to force a student to compromise their mental health or physical wellbeing. There are concerns related to Academic Freedom due to these recommendations, but it's important to understand that they are only applicable for the short term. GFC members should recognize that Academic equity and student mental health are as important as Academic Freedom. Students are suffering mentally and the University has a duty to accommodate these students by making the required temporary policy changes. This is why General Faculties Council (GFC) is asked to explore alternatives and resolve the concerns/issues related to synchronous online learning.</p>
<p>Supplementary Notes and context</p>	<p>GFC Meeting Procedural Rules require that:</p> <p><i>(6.1) "the agenda of each GFC meeting will be proposed by the GFC Executive Committee and approved by GFC. The GFC Executive Committee will ensure that items put before GFC are complete and ready for discussion and published in advance of the meeting."</i></p> <p>The GFC Executive Committee Terms of Reference indicate the responsibility to:</p>

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	<p>4.2 Prepare the agenda for all regular and special meetings of General Faculties Council. (...) The committee may choose to provide comments to GFC on any agenda items.</p> <p>In addition, Motion 1 and Motion 2 as recommended by COSA, may come into conflict with University Policy, Collective Agreements, and Privacy Legislation.</p>
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Engagement and Routing (Include meeting dates)

<p>Consultation and Stakeholder Participation (parties who have seen the proposal and in what capacity)</p> <p><For information on the protocol see the Governance Resources section Student Participation Protocol></p>	<p><u>Those who are actively participating:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Draper, Vice President Academic (University of Alberta Students' Union) • Sachiketha Reddy, Vice President Academic (University of Alberta Graduate Students' Association)
	<p><u>Those who have been consulted:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30+ GFC Graduate/Undergraduate Student Members. • Council of International Students
	<p><u>Those who have been informed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Alberta International (UAI) • Office of the Dean of Students • Registrar and Associate registrars - University Registrar • Vice Provost Learning Initiatives • Vice Provost Programs • Public Health Response Team Academic Impacts Group • Public Health Response Team • GFC Committee on the Learning Environment • GFC Programs Committee • GFC Executive • Festival of Teaching and Learning Steering Committee • GFC Academic Standards Committee
<p>Approval Route (Governance) (including meeting dates)</p>	<p>Council on Student Affairs (COSA) January 14, 2021 (Recommendation) GFC Executive Committee, February 10, 2021 (Recommendation on the GFC Agenda) General Faculties Council, February 22, 2021 (Approval)</p>

Strategic Alignment

<p>Alignment with <i>For the Public Good</i></p>	<p>Please note the Institutional Strategic Plan objective(s)/strategies the proposal supports.</p>		
<p>Alignment with Core Risk Area</p>	<p>Please note below the specific institutional risk(s) this proposal is addressing.</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Enrolment Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faculty and Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Funding and Resource Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IT Services, Software and Hardware <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leadership and Change <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Infrastructure </td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship with Stakeholders <input type="checkbox"/> Reputation <input type="checkbox"/> Research Enterprise <input type="checkbox"/> Safety <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student Success </td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Enrolment Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faculty and Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Funding and Resource Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IT Services, Software and Hardware <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leadership and Change <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationship with Stakeholders <input type="checkbox"/> Reputation <input type="checkbox"/> Research Enterprise <input type="checkbox"/> Safety <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student Success
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<p>Legislative Compliance and jurisdiction</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Section 32 (1) of the PSLA states that “A general faculties council may establish a council on student affairs to exercise immediate jurisdiction over student affairs with respect to any matters and in any manner the general faculties council determines and to exercise or perform any other powers, duties and functions the general faculties council determines.” b. Section 26(1) of the PSLA states that “Subject to the authority of the board, a general faculties council is responsible for the academic affairs of the university and, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, has the authority to(...): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> c. (o) make recommendations to the board with respect to (...) any other matters considered by the general faculties council to be of interest to the university” - Section 19(3) of the PSLA further states that “[a] board must consider the recommendations of the general faculties council, if any, on matters of academic import prior to providing for.” 2) Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate Policy 3) Duty to Accommodate Procedure 4) Council on Student Affairs Terms of Reference 5) Assessment and Grading Policy 6) Evaluation Procedures and Grading System – University Calendar 7) Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act FOIPP): Purpose of collection of information (33) No personal information may be collected by or for a public body unless (...) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> c. that information relates directly to and is necessary for an operating program or activity of the public body. 8) Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Policy 9) Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Procedure 10) Collective Agreement between the Board and the AASUA 2018-2020
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Attachments:

1. Attachment 1 (page(s) 1 - 5) Open letter to the University Administration
2. Attachment 2 (page(s) 1 - 2) Letter to the Council on Student Affairs (COSA)

Prepared by: Chanpreet Singh, ISA President, isa.president@ualberta.ca



University of Alberta
**INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS'
ASSOCIATION**

Date: December 3, 2020

Immediate Release

Open Letter to the University Administration

This letter is addressed to the University President, Provost and Academic Administration of the University of Alberta by the University of Alberta International Students' Association (UAISA, hereby ISA), to call upon the University to address the concerns related to recording of live lectures not being mandatory, participation grades and the use of remote proctoring softwares. The ISA raised these concerns earlier this year in the Council on Student Affairs (COSA), but unfortunately, the administration so far has failed to adequately address these concerns.

One particular concern raised by the ISA is the lack of live recorded lectures that could be used as resources by students, with some professors and sessional lecturers not offering any live recorded lectures at all. Adhering to the live classes schedule designed based on the MST time zone results in students living across the world compromising their sleep and well-being to attend classes. Therefore, some international students are missing live lectures or lacking enough attention and concentration while taking online courses as it is late at night in their country. These factors are negatively affecting their capabilities to effectively learn their course material, and ultimately their well-being.

We have also raised concerns regarding courses having participation weightage, to insist students to attend live lectures, again forcing international students to wake up in the middle of night for these participation credits.

Many professors are using multiple proctoring systems (i.e, SEM and ExamLock) to conduct remote proctoring for quizzes, seminars and exams. These softwares require a stable internet connection and have lighting requirements, which are not available to every international student studying around the globe. While we understand that final exams may require some sort of proctoring, making every weekly quiz or seminar proctored might be unfair to students sitting around the world, especially in developing nations. We as ISA stand by the UASU advocacy effort in banning the use of remote proctoring softwares.

International students are not in a different timezone by choice, they are in their home country due to very restricted availability of Canadian visa services, global travel restrictions and living expenses in Canada. As one of the leading internationalized universities, it is the duty of the University of Alberta to support international students in such times and address their concerns.



University of Alberta

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Our concerns have been frequently ignored by the administration, but as an advocate of international students, it is our duty and responsibility towards our community to write this open letter to the administration to make ourselves heard. The University of Alberta has 9,000+ international students, who chose University of Alberta amongst all other great institutions not only in Canada but globally, and this is how we are addressing concerns/issues that are impacting them the most by sidelining them under the name of Academic Freedom. It is unfair for the university to claim that it is not possible for it to simply make live-recorded lectures available whereas, on the other hand, it is relatively easier for the university to ask an international student to wake up at 2 am for four months.

The ISA strongly urges the University of Alberta Administration to address these concerns and make considerate decisions for the international students. The UAlberta international students' community is suffering across the globe and it is yet to see what our very own institution does to help them in such hard times. Today, the entire international students' community stands united and expresses these concerns through international student leaders who have joined this open letter initiative and their thoughts are attached to this letter.

The UAISA and entire international students' community calls upon the University of Alberta to make recording of live lectures mandatory and ban participation grades.

Regards,

Chanpreet Singh
President of ISA



Support from the entire International Students' Community

"A lot of students need to get up at mid-night to attend courses, seminars and labs, with eight-hour time differences. We feel that studying in such a way is harmful to our physical and mental well-being, and makes it more difficult for us to obtain achievements in those courses we are attending. So we hope that the university can make arrangements regarding this issue to ease our struggles, and make the opportunity for every student in U of A to obtain knowledge and make progress as fair as possible. "

- Kevin Tang,
President of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association

"The University of Alberta's Black Students' Association stands behind the International Students' Association in their open letter to the University of Alberta. We at the UABSA are committed to helping the international black identifying students at the University of Alberta, this includes advocating for students to have equal access to their classes. We understand that this time has been stressful and challenging for all however, that does not take away the fact that each and every student should have equal access to attending lectures and seminars even if they are in a different time zone. For this reason, the UABSA stands behind the recommendation to make it a priority for professors to record their lectures for international students. "

-Celine Caruso Dixon
President of the Black Students' Association

"As the president of the Indian Students' Association, It is extremely sad to see students who are currently abroad, go through so much, than the rest of us during these tough times especially on factors that are accommodable. Research has shown that sleep loss leads to learning and memory impairment, as well as decreased attention and vigilance, which can eventually lead to low grades and potentially lead them into a negative feedback loop. Considering the long-term consequences of our actions right now, I would like to appeal for providing the students with flexibility, in the terms of recorded lectures and to forgo participation grades to ease their burden. I sincerely hope that the university will reconsider its decision and make this a norm to support its students."

-Priyanka Maripuri
President of the Indian Students' Association



University of Alberta

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

“International students are at a disadvantage in this new online environment with mandatory live lectures, having to wake up at irregular hours to receive marks for their classes. As the university strives to create an environment with EDI at the forefront, it is crucial that recorded lectures are available to students across the globe. To create equity in our learning, it is essential that these recordings are provided to students.”

-Nicole de Grano & Rupert Gomez
Co-Presidents of the Philippine Students' Association

“The university experience makes a great difference in nourishing one's personality, in the times we are living in I believe the International Student Community is already at a great disadvantage and going through enough stress, so not providing the International students with proper resources such as recorded lectures is just setting them up for failure. I cannot stress this enough, I do strongly support the ISA for taking the initiative and bringing this matter to the responsible personnel, and would like to see the University take proper actions to address this issue.”

-Maimoona Kanwal
President of the Pakistani Students' Association

“Vietnam is 14 hours ahead of the MST time zone, forcing many of our international Vietnamese students to attend classes anywhere from 10PM to 5AM. A lot of homes in Vietnam are small, and oftentimes study and bedroom spaces are shared with other family members. It is incredibly hard for students to wake up to attend live lectures in the middle of the night while also trying to be considerate to their family.”

-Noella Chu
President of the Vietnamese Student's Association

“Through these dynamic times, it is important to understand how decisions made can affect students, both locally and internationally. Adapting to the intersect between recent changes in education and the current global circumstance can already be a task of its own, however introducing new obstacles to those who live in different time zones can be overbearing. It is essential to recognize the needs of students and offer a fair system in which education prosperity can be achieved. Not only can these changes prove to be beneficial to the academic success of students, but also to their mental health.”

-Elfes Johannes
President of the Eritrean & Ethiopian Students' Association



University of Alberta

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“Some professors refuse to record lectures on the basis of “encouraging students to attend live lectures to not miss anything behind.” I believe that this is unreasonable and discriminatory against international students who are not currently residing in Canada due to time difference. This is a trying time for all of us, educators and students, but we do hope that in order for students to study and for educators to instruct optimally, recorded lectures, more diverse availability times for office hours and banning participation grades will be the most beneficial solution to both students and educators.”

- Salsabila Natasha Andhika Putri
President of the Indonesian Students' Association

"The Nigerian Students' Association at the University of Alberta is committed to ensuring that Nigerian students enjoy a rich and fulfilling learning experience. The presentation of lectures and exams in a synchronous manner places a vast disadvantage to students residing outside of Canada. While we recognize the need to ensure academic integrity, it is also crucial to ensure academic fairness. Requiring students to attend lectures or write examinations at really late hours is far from equality, in our opinion. It is vital to have all classes recorded and available to be watched at the students' earliest convenience. We strongly urge the University of Alberta's Administration to consider this request in preparation for Winter 2020 and upcoming semesters hosted virtually.

-James Aina
President of the Nigerian Students' Association



University of Alberta

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Date: November 2, 2020

Office of the Vice President Academic

Impact of Online Learning on International Students

Covid-19 has made this academic year a challenging one for the entire UofA Community. The international student community overseas is currently facing increasingly hard challenges when trying to navigate through the technical aspects of remote learning. This document shall summarize a few of the challenges faced by international students.

Issue with Lectures not being recorded:

One particular concern raised by our community is the lack of live recorded lectures that students could use as resources, and which some professors and seasonal lectures are not offering at all. ISA is committed to raise awareness and foster changes regarding this issue. For international students overseas, time zone differences are affecting their ability to productively engage in online classes, mainly because of the odd times some lectures are being delivered in their home countries (e.g. very early mornings). It is also important to understand that our university has students from over 156+ countries, some of these students are in countries where there are no adequate internet connections, and hence are highly affected by the delivery of online live classes. Therefore, some international students are missing live lectures or lacking enough attention and concentration while taking online courses. These factors are negatively affecting their capabilities to effectively learn their course material, and ultimately their well-being.

Adhering to the live classes schedule designed based on the MST time zone results in students living across the world compromising their sleep and well-being to attend classes. Making the recordings available is crucial for the well-being and success of international students (currently residing around the world in different time zones) as they would be able to watch the lectures at a more appropriate schedule instead of joining classes in the middle of the night in some countries, as mentioned earlier. Recording lectures made available for later review could also potentially assist students in general to do better in the course as they would be to study the material multiple times and with better attentiveness.



Issue with Participation grade:

Few courses have participation weightage, to insist students to attend live lectures. While we understand that the motivation behind participation marks is to increase students participation and attendance, at the same time forcing international students to wake up in the middle of night for these participation credits is not valid. While, mandating attendance for a single lecture over the term for in-class activity is an exception, expecting students to attend every lecture in the middle of night is a concern. This would eventually lead to unfair performance evaluation of students from a different time zone.

Issue with Proctoring Systems - Smart Monitoring System (SEM) or ExamLock

Many professors are using multiple proctoring systems (i.e, SEM and ExamLock) to conduct remote proctoring for quizzes, seminars and exams. Such systems block the users computer and monitor students movements using webcams and audio/screen recorders. We understand that it is essential to proctor exams for academic integrity purposes, but it is also important to understand that our university has students from over 156+ countries, with not all of them having access to adequate internet connection. Students have also informed ISA about hardship in meeting the lightning requirements when using the proctoring systems. In addition, many countries do not have adequate electricity supply, thus leading to unpredictable power outages while writing exams on SEM or ExamLock. While we understand that final exams might need some sort of proctoring but making every weekly quiz or seminar proctored might be unfair to students sitting around the world, especially in developing nations.

Conclusion:

As an international student advocating body at the University of Alberta, we bring forward aforementioned concerns to the university administration and seek cooperation in resolving the concerns as we believe no student should have to wake up at odd times (for example, 3 am in the morning) for a whole term to attend classes. We understand that these are difficult times for both students and professors. The professors and students are both currently undergoing a learning process in which different means of technology/technique have to be experimented with, to understand what works best for online education. Most of the concerns outlined in this document are solvable by providing specific instructions to the professors such as making it mandatory for every lecture to be recorded, banning participation grades forcing students to attend more than one lecture, and restricting proctoring tools to only final exams or very essential components of a course. ISA looks forward to hearing more from the administration on the issues outlined in this document and we are committed to work together in resolving the aforementioned issues.