



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

University of Toronto
Governing Council

Policy on Academic Continuity

June 1, 2026

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University of Toronto

Policy on Academic Continuity

Preamble

The University of Toronto is committed to fulfilling its mission of being “an internationally significant research university, with undergraduate, graduate and professional programs of excellent quality,” as stated in the [*Statement of Institutional Purpose*](#) and to upholding its obligations with respect to academic freedom under Article 5 of the Memorandum of Agreement with the University of Toronto Faculty Association. Events such as pandemic health emergencies, natural disasters, prolonged service interruptions, and ongoing labour disputes are potential threats to the University’s ability to fulfill its academic mission. Good stewardship requires that the University undertake appropriate planning and preparation to promote continuity. At the same time, the University must be prepared to respond to extraordinary circumstances in which the normal academic operations of the University may be disrupted.

Scope

The purpose of this document is to provide a policy framework that will guide the University in enhancing its ability to fulfill its academic mission in the face of potential threats to academic continuity and establishes the principles, threshold and processes that should guide the University in this context. It applies to instances when the academic continuity of one or more programs, one or more departments or faculties, one or more campuses, or the whole University is disrupted and changes need to be made to the normal academic operations of the University.

While events such as pandemic health emergencies, natural disasters, prolonged service interruptions, and ongoing labour disputes can impact research activities and libraries, which are vital to the fulfillment of the University’s mission, this policy applies to the delivery of academic programs. For purpose of this policy, academic programs include a set and sequence of courses and other learning opportunities within an area of study, which is completed in full or partial fulfillment of the requirements for the granting of an undergraduate, second-entry, or graduate degree

The *University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy* shall be considered in connection with the academic disruption section of this Policy. Additional related policies and guidelines should also be considered if relevant, including the *Code of Student Conduct*, *Policy on Crisis Preparedness and Routine Emergency Preparedness and Response*, and the *Framework for Responding to a Crisis or Routine Emergency*.

Declaration of an Academic Disruption

A state of academic disruption may be declared only in extraordinary circumstances in which the normal academic operations of the University may be disrupted. In determining whether an academic disruption should be declared, the following will be considered:

- The point in the term when the disruption occurred;
- The duration or expected duration of the disruption;
- The availability of physical and/or electronic instructional resources;
- The impact on attendance of students, instructors, and other necessary participants, and
- The impact of timing and sequence of evaluations.

In the event an academic disruption is declared, information regarding the foregoing considerations will be shared in a timely fashion with students, staff, faculty, and librarians who may be impacted by the disruption.

Principles

The following principles will guide the University in its preparation and planning for academic continuity and in its response to any potential disruption.

Fundamental Importance of Academic Freedom

The University is committed to upholding its obligations under Article 5 of the Memorandum of Agreement with the University of Toronto Faculty Association. Faculty members' and librarians' rights with respect to academic freedom will be fully respected in the implementation of this Policy and no actions will be required that are inconsistent with the academic freedom provisions of Article 5.

Continuity of the Academic Mission

The University is committed to taking appropriate steps to maintain the continuity of its academic programs and activities and to provide students with a reasonable opportunity to continue learning and complete academic requirements.

Integrity of Academic Programs

The University is committed to maintaining the integrity of all academic programs. Although steps may be taken under this policy which result in changes to academic programs and the educational experience of students, those changes must maintain the integrity of the academic program.

Primary Responsibility of Course Instructors

Course Instructors shall have primary responsibility and authority to make changes to their courses.

Fairness to Students

In seeking to maintain academic continuity, all members of the University community must be committed to treating students in a fair and equitable manner. Students have the freedom of choice to attend classes or not during a declared disruption without academic penalty insofar as the circumstances of the disruption make this practicable. However, where students have not attended classes that are meeting, they remain responsible for the course work and for meeting course requirements. A student who considers that a disruption has unreasonably affected their grade may appeal the grade following the divisional procedures.

Timely Information

Students, staff, faculty, and librarians who may be impacted by the disruption, need to be informed in a timely manner of changes to the academic program including altered course requirements, rescheduled academic activities, and procedures that will take effect at the end of any officially declared disruption to academic continuity.

Ensuring Academic Continuity in the Event of Disruption

Course and program design, and other preparation, should aim to minimize the potential for disruption of the University's academic mission. In certain instances, however, extraordinary measures may be required in an effort to maintain or restore academic continuity.

Authority to declare a state of disruption

The Vice-President and Provost or the Academic Board have the responsibility and authority under this Policy to declare that a state of disruption has occurred. The state of disruption will continue until the Vice-President and Provost or the Academic Board formally declare it at an end. The purpose of such a declaration is to serve notice that the academic operations of the University will not proceed as normal. It provides the authority for changes to be made to any aspect of academic activities including the delivery of courses and programs, course and program requirements, modes of evaluation, and the length of the academic term, etc. consistent with the principles set out in this policy.

Declaration of a state of academic disruption

A state of disruption may be declared to affect one or more programs, one or more departments or faculties, one or more campuses, or the whole University. A state of disruption may be declared only in extraordinary circumstances in which the normal academic operations of the University may be disrupted. In the context of a declaration of a state of disruption, the University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy may not be practicable and may not apply. If a disruption is declared due to an ongoing labour dispute, faculty members and librarians are not required to carry out the duties of any University employee engaged in a legal work stoppage, and shall not be subject to any discipline or reprisal as a result of the refusal to carry out this work. However, faculty members and librarians continue to have responsibilities regarding academic continuity, as outlined in the sections below.

Coordination of University response

The Office of the Vice-President and Provost is responsible for working with the dean's offices of every division to co-ordinate the University's response during a declared state of disruption.

This co-ordination may include joint decision-making with affiliated institutions and field placement/training sites.

Communication of decision

In the case of a declaration of a state of disruption, the Vice-President and Provost shall take steps to inform the University community at large of the changes being implemented and will ensure that Governing Council and its committees are kept informed of the steps being taken to support academic continuity.

Responsibilities

All members of the University of Toronto community share in the responsibility to enhance and maintain the continuity of academic programs in a manner consistent with the principles in this policy.

The Office of the Vice-President and Provost has a responsibility to:

- Oversee the implementation of this policy
- Provide education and support to students, instructors and academic administrators regarding strategies for ensuring academic continuity
- Coordinate activity in the case of a state of disruption
- Inform all members of the community about a disruption in a timely fashion and issue communication regarding procedures to help ensure academic continuity
- Provide notice about a disruption to UTFA or Unions as soon as practicable where applicable, normally at the time the division and the instructor are notified of the approval of the disruption
- Communicate to division and unit heads about the importance of protecting academic freedom

Divisions/Faculties¹ have a responsibility to:

- Communicate with staff, faculty, librarians, students, and field placement/training sites as appropriate regarding division-specific plans

Unit Heads are responsible for:

- Ensuring that proactive measures have been taken to ensure academic continuity
- Overseeing changes to course procedures in the division in the case of a declaration of a state of disruption
- Where an instructor is not available during a disruption, the relevant unit head will assume responsibility for all essential administrative activities associated with the course

Instructors are responsible for:

- When preparing course syllabi, considering measures to support or enhance academic continuity, subject to the protection of academic freedom set out above
- Considering the application of the *University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy* where practicable

- Considering modifications to courses after a declaration of disruption and making any necessary changes to their courses consistent with the principles in this policy including academic freedom, such as course procedures, requirements and methods of evaluation in consultation with their unit heads to help ensure academic continuity
- Making reasonable accommodations for students who are unable to attend classes or complete academic requirements as a result of a disruption
- When considering potential modifications to courses after a declaration of disruption, endeavouring to consult appropriately with students

Students have a responsibility to:

- Complete all coursework and academic requirements
- Keep informed of a state of disruption and changing academic requirements and procedures

Approved by the Academic Board on May 28, 2026, effective June 1, 2026

RELATED DOCUMENTS

[Code of Student Conduct](#)

[Policy on Crisis and Routine Emergency Preparedness and Response](#)

¹The School of Graduate Studies is responsible for graduate programs and can delegate that responsibility to other Divisions where this is appropriate, consistent with this policy.