

# Scarborough

CAMPUS STUDENTS' UNION  
LOCAL 99 CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS

## CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE CAMPUS: GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO SCARBOROUGH - 2017

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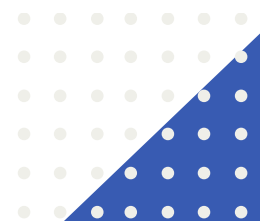
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# PREAMBLE



The Scarborough Campus Students' Union (SCSU) is the official the representative of over 12,000 Undergraduate Students at the University of Toronto, Scarborough Campus (UTSC). As per our Mission Statement, the SCSU is committed to progressively, responsibly, and effectively representing and serving the changing needs of students. We, the Executive, are dedicated to fulfilling our mission statement by addressing the issues that systematically impact our members and the surrounding community. As of 2011, 78% of students who entered their first year identified as a visible minority/non-white; this percentage drops to 69% when examining students in their fourth year (2-3). The 2015-16 enrolment report states that 68% of domestic students at UTSC rely on OSAP. The Tri-Campus October 2014 report has found that the number of students who register with AccessAbility Services has doubled in the past five years (10). When seeking recommendations, students are expected to disclose their matters to the University multiple times to receive the proper accommodation. There is also the fear that a student may be suggested accommodations by a Professor/Faculty member that are not necessarily conducive to their personal needs because of underlying bias/knowledge of said disability.

The SCSU recognizes that the University of Toronto, Scarborough has taken appropriate steps towards providing accommodation and accessibility services. However, through the conversations had, we have learned that there is a need for the Institution to recognize and act with an intersectional approach in relation to the barriers that our students experience. Recently Principal Bruce Kidd released the "Healthy Campus Initiative" which aims to "ensure that everything we do, from the courses we teach or take, the research we pursue [...] are health-enhancing". In order to achieve this, the academic policies which drive UTSC must be revised to create a more accessible campus. The essential components to a healthy campus as stated by Bruce Kidd are "equity, safety, and sustainability". Therefore, to achieve a healthy campus, a holistic understanding of the needs of students must be made.

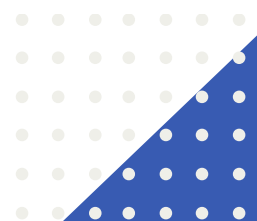




A healthy campus does not just revolve around the physical health of students but also their mental wellbeing. The academic policies which drive this University also then must be examined and developed through this lens. To be an equitable institution is to recognize the intersectionality and the needs of the population. The October 2014 Tri-Campus "Report of the Provostial Advisory Committee on Mental Health" recommends a systems approach towards the health and wellness of our students (3). This approach uses an intersectional lens as it "regards the entire University environment as necessarily involved in creating the conditions that allow its students to flourish" (2). The purpose of the University is to "foster an academic community in which learning and scholarship of every member may flourish, with vigilant protection for individual human rights and a resolute commitment to the principles of equal opportunity, equity, and justice". The current academic policies towards student rights, late penalties, self-declared sick notes, credit/no credit deadlines, and the banning of laptops within lecture halls are not currently conducive to the goals of the Institution. During the SCSU's Academic Advocacy Day on October 17, 2017, we were able to have conversations with the student body on the topic of accessible education and our following asks and recommendations. On that same day, we were able to collect 201 signatures in support.

Our recommendations fall within the goals of University of Toronto and are grounded in the following reports:

1. The Ontario Human Rights Commission's Report: Guidelines on Accessible Education
2. Report of the Provostial Advisory Committee on Student Mental Health"  
The University of Toronto Student Mental Health Strategy and Framework



# ASKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



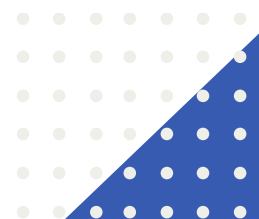
## STUDENT RIGHTS IN THE SYLLABUS AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

### *The Current Conditions*

Students have little to no knowledge of their academic rights due to their lack of accessibility because of the language used and the location of these University policies (see Appendix A). Without awareness or knowledge of one's Student Rights, one's academic performance can be affected. For example, there have been cases where students did not receive a syllabus within the first week of class or have received segments of the syllabus as the semester progressed. Without this clear outline of the topics and themes of the semester students lack guidance towards how course materials should be approached, especially when working with abstract/dense material. Without this outline, students may also become unaware of the midterms or essays that they may have. The syllabus outlines the dates and obligations that students are to hold without one the ability to schedule around different obligations become difficult.

### *Recommendations*

1. That the University of Toronto, Scarborough include the Student Bill of Rights (see Appendix B) in the Course Information System and to encourage the various Academic Departments to include this in their syllabi.
2. For the University of Toronto Scarborough include the Student Bill of Rights on online platforms such as, but not limited to: Blackboard and ACORN.



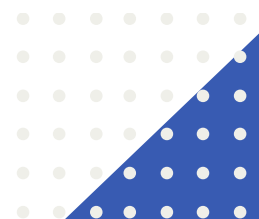


To implement this recommendation would take into account the different learning styles of students, their academic performance, and the ability for students to determine the need for accommodation/if current accommodations will be enough for the duration of the class (OHRC, 22). The October 2014 report on Student Mental Health also suggests that students should be informed of all the programs and services available (3). While this report does refer to the improvements and knowledge of Mental Health Resources, the report does recommend a systems-based approach that looks at the learning environment in a holistic lens. To further promote and act upon a systems approach that looks at the learning environment in a holistic lens. To further promote and act upon this approach UTSC will be able to take a step closer towards a Healthy Campus. Although not consistent, University of Toronto, Mississauga has already recognized the importance of this through including student rights within the syllabus (see Appendix C).

## MAXIMUM 5% CAP ON LATE PENALTIES

### *Current Conditions*

Late penalties are currently unregulated, through our conversations with students we have learned that there are cases where students can experience deductions per hour or penalties as high as 25% per day.





In the 2015-16 University of Toronto Enrolment Report, 68% of students relied on OSAP funding/loans. A large population of our student body, therefore, carries a financial burden that comes from post-secondary education. This forces students to work one or more part-time jobs on top of other obligations that come with pursuing a life in academia/experience building (clubs, DSAs, research opportunities, internships, multiple classes, caregiver responsibilities etc.). Students are then expected to balance/choose between assignments, choosing to go to work and receive an academic penalty or to call in sick in order to protect their academic standing. This is not conducive to one's academic performance and prevents students to perform in a consistent manner.

### *Recommendations*

1. For the University of Toronto Scarborough to implement an academic policy that caps late penalties to a maximum 5% per day.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) recognizes that time-consuming accommodation processes are barriers therefore, they are part of the responsibilities that institutions must take on under the code (4). Flexible academic guidelines have been placed into practice at other institutions such as Simon Fraser University. Their guidelines aim to provide and create flexible learning environments to empower and support students in their learning experiences. This practice recognizes individual needs that equity is based upon.

The *Academic Handbook: For Faculty and Staff* states the following:

*“The evaluation of student performance is made in a fair, accurate, consistent, and objective manner against these academic standards [...] grading practices are consistent and reflect appropriate academic standards” (15).*

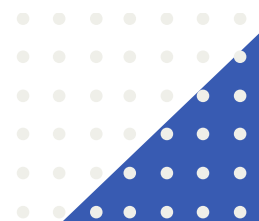




In order for this to be fully achieved, there must be a cap-off on late penalties. To implement this recommendation would allow for students to then be graded in a fair and consistent manner. The SCSU recognizes that the University already does take accommodation and accessibility into account. However, an intersectional systems approach must be taken into account.

In conversations with Professors who have and currently do work UTSC flexible academic accommodations have been implemented to create a flexible learning environment. One Professor implemented a flat 5% late penalty. Through his experience of teaching, he has seen that students experience unavoidable circumstances and recognizes that the act of receiving accommodation can cause further strain. He has also found that the number of students who do procrastinate/hand in assignments late has remained the same regardless of a flat or regression system. These students are the ones who tend to never be truly present or active in the classroom.

To place this recommendation into action would have the potential to alleviate the number of students who seek out a VOI (Verification of Illness). There has been a large influx of students who primarily use the Health and Wellness Centre for this reason. This creates barriers for students who need their resources for either more pressing medical issues or counselling.



# SELF-DECLARED SICK NOTES



## *Current Conditions*

In order to avoid academic penalties on assignments, quizzes, participation, attendance, and other related academic items, students are expected to provide medical documentation. This is a tedious and costly process when seeking medical documentation outside of Health and Wellness. When students are too unwell to attend class it is almost always the case that they may be too ill to go and obtain documentation. If a student does decide to go and get documentation regardless of their current ability they will then have the potential to also get others sick. As aforementioned, the Health and Wellness Centre spends time issuing VOIs to students causing a delay for those who are seeking health services.

## *Recommendations*

1. For the University of Toronto to implement a self-declared system where students will be able to use this through the year.

The OHRC recognizes that being unable to receive accommodation in a timely manner is a barrier towards education (4). The Tri-Campus October 3014 report has seen that the number of students who register with AccessAbility Services has doubled in the past five years (10). This number has and will continue to grow as the academic, familial, work (etc.) stressors and expectations become increasingly burdensome. It should also be noted that these are students who have reported these barriers based on mental health alone.

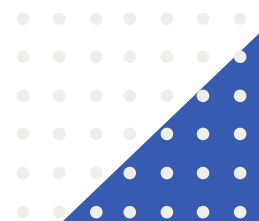






Other institutions such as Queen's University has implemented a self-declaration system and that these forms are available online for quick access (See Appendix D). There has even been proposed labour legislation to ban Ontario employers to ask medical notes from their employees 0 the back up on medical resources is also seen on a Provincial level (Macleod). As aforementioned, the Health and Wellness Centre is also experiencing a similar phenomenon where resources are being used to write VOIs instead of attending to pressing medical happenings. Requiring students to obtain medical documentation disrupts the time that they should be utilizing to rest. It should also be noted that sick-notes may not even be in reference to one's condition but to sick family members - adding unneeded stress and the removal of the student from caregiver duties.

Student feedback conducted through the October 2014 report shows that there is a strong desire and need for a system that would allow students to move with ease among services to avoid delays at accessing essential support at critical times (20). Unnecessary stress is added onto students as they may have to wait even past the deadline to submit the assignment to determine if they are able to receive an extension. This recommendation allows those who need an accommodation to be granted within a reasonable amount of time.





# LIFTING LAPTOP POLICY BANS

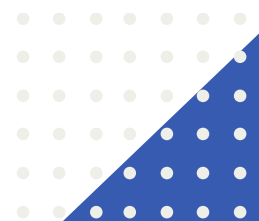
## *Current Conditions*

As of May 2017, the Office of the Vice-Principal Academic & Dean released *Strategies for Instructors for Laptops in the Classroom*. This document outlines strategies and guidelines with the duty to accommodate students through allowing the use of such materials. The SCSU recognizes that through this action Administration has taken the appropriate steps towards the continuation of a culture and environment of equity and accessibility. These, however, are only suggestions for Professors allowing for the implementation of the ban of laptops. As a result, there are still instances in which students are experiencing undue hardship due to the ban because this was an accommodation that was then removed.

## *Recommendations*

1. For the University of Toronto Scarborough to develop a mandatory policy against the banning of laptops in the classroom and to include this information to students through resources such as, but not limited to, syllabi, Blackboard, and ACORN.

While discouragement of the use of laptops in classrooms does seem neutral it does contribute to an unintended effect of discrimination as recognized by the OHRC. On face value, the *Strategies for Instructors for Laptops in the Classroom* shows that the administration does recognize the barrier set against students through banning laptops. However, because it does not stop the implementation of such bans this indirectly has an adverse effect. When students enter post-secondary education they are expected to take control of it, right down to attaching themselves to the resources that they need - including their individual learning styles. To take away the ability to use laptops in the classrooms is also mandating the ways in which students can/are supposed to learn in the classroom.





## CREDIT/NO CREDIT EXTENSION

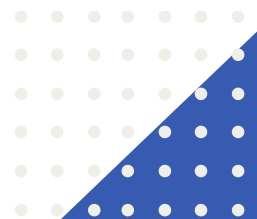
### *Current Conditions*

The current deadline for students to Credit/No Credit their classes on November 20, 2017, and March 22, 2018. However, the last day of classes is December 4, 2017, and April 6, 2018 - a significant two-week gap. Students are then expected to make an estimate of their academic standing two weeks before they receive the rest of their grades. As a result, students make inaccurate choices about the classes that they are currently enrolled. It should also be noted that the last day to late withdraw from a class is on the last day of classes/submit term assignments.

### *Recommendations*

1. For the University of Toronto Scarborough to extend the Credit/No Credit deadline to the last day of classes.

To extend the deadline to Credit/No Credit a class would create a streamlined system that would not only benefit students but also has the potential to lessen the load on petitions surrounding this particular area. As aforementioned in the *Academic Handbook: for Faculty and Staff* states that students must be graded in a fair and consistent manner against the University's academic standards (15). To leave such a significant gap between the deadline and when students receive their marks causes students to make uninformed decisions towards their education. It also should be noted that the University of Toronto Mississauga has already extended their deadlines to the last day of term(s).



# REFERENCES



<https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/the-real-sickness-of-medical-notes/article35350781/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&>

<http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/ending-sick-note-requirements-best-for-healthcare-system-says-doctor-1.3451531>

[http://hive.utoronto.ca/public/dean/faculty/Academic\\_HandbookOctober\\_2012final\\_000-7.pdf](http://hive.utoronto.ca/public/dean/faculty/Academic_HandbookOctober_2012final_000-7.pdf)

<http://hive.utoronto.ca/public/registrar/Fall%2017-Winter%2018%20dates.pdf>

<https://m.utm.utoronto.ca/importantDates.php?type=C>

[http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/Guidelines\\_on\\_accessible\\_education.pdf](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/Guidelines_on_accessible_education.pdf)

<http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/health-services/services-offered/sick-notes>

<http://scsu.ca/ihavearight/>

[http://www.sfu.ca/healthycampuscommunity/learningenvironments/WLE/flexibility\\_and\\_control.html](http://www.sfu.ca/healthycampuscommunity/learningenvironments/WLE/flexibility_and_control.html)

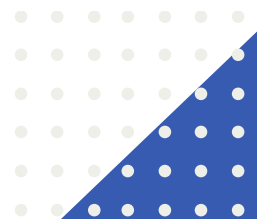
<https://www.utoronto.ca/about-u-of-t/mission>

<http://www.utoronto.ca/aboutus/blog/2017/05/31/towards-healthy-campus>

[https://www.utoronto.ca/sites/default/files/about/2013/B\\_12\\_Diversity5112.pdf](https://www.utoronto.ca/sites/default/files/about/2013/B_12_Diversity5112.pdf)

<http://www.utoronto.ca/ctl/sites/utoronto.ca.ctl/files/u25/laptop-strategies-classroom-may2017.pdf>

<https://www.utoronto.ca/sites/default/files/Facts%20%20Figures%202016%20online.pdf>



<http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/studentaffairs/student-policies>

Study Space

Student Policies

Campus Safety

UTSC Student Experience App

ASKme

## Student Policies



Important University of Toronto policies that all UTSC students should be familiar with:

- [Code of Student Conduct](#)
- [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#)
- [Policy for Compulsory Non-Academic Incidental Fees](#)
- [Statement on Access to Information and Protection of Privacy](#)
- [Policy on The Recognition of Campus Groups](#)
- [Statement on Freedom of Speech](#)
- [Policy on Access to Student Academic Records](#)
- [Policy on Student Financial Support](#)
- [Tuition Fee Policy](#)
- [University Grading Practices Policy](#)
- [Freedom of Speech and Campus Activities](#)
- [Policy on Scheduling of Classes and Examinations and Other Accommodations for Religious Observances](#)

For a complete listing of all policies at the University of Toronto, please visit the U of T Governing Council Website.

# APPENDIX B



<http://scsu.ca/ihavearight/>

\*Please note the last point has been included below and will be edited to include in the attached website.



# KNOW YOUR STUDENT RIGHTS!

## I Have The Right to :

- an accessible education.
- receive a course syllabus in the first week of class.
- receive at least one significant mark before the LAST day I can withdraw from a course.
- petition any mark for any test or assignment if I think that it was marked unfairly or incorrectly.
- practice my faith without academic penalty and with reasonable accommodation from my professors.
- have no assignment worth 80% of my final grade.
- not have any major term test worth 10% or more in the last two weeks of a course.
- to be informed of the use of turnitin.com.
- privacy of my grades.
- refuse changes to a syllabus once a course has started, unless approved by a majority of the class present.

# APPENDIX C



[https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/psychology/sites/files/psychology/public/shared/PSY340\\_Fall17.pdf](https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/psychology/sites/files/psychology/public/shared/PSY340_Fall17.pdf)

to have known." All students must refer to this website to obtain information on what constitutes plagiarism.

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>.

If questions arise after reading the material on the website, consult your instructor.

**Plagiarism will not be tolerated.**

## Equity Statement

The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns you may contact the UTM Equity and Diversity officer at [edo.utm@utoronto.ca](mailto:edo.utm@utoronto.ca) or the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union Vice President Equity at [vpequity@utmsu.ca](mailto:vpequity@utmsu.ca).

## Academic Rights

You, as a student at UTM, have the right to:

- Receive a syllabus by the first day of class.
- Rely upon a syllabus once a course is started. An instructor may only change marks' assignments by following the University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy provision 1.3.
- Refuse to use turnitin.com (you must be offered an alternative form of submission).
- Have access to your instructor for consultation during a course or follow up with the department chair if the instructor is unavailable.
- Ask the person who marked your term work for a re-evaluation if you feel it was not fairly graded. You have up to one month from the date of return of the item to inquire about the mark. If you are not satisfied with a re-evaluation, you may appeal to the instructor in charge of the course if the instructor did not mark the work. If your work is remarked, you must accept the resulting mark. You may only appeal a mark beyond the instructor if the term work was worth at least 20% of the course mark.
- Receive at least one significant mark (15% for H courses, 25% for Y courses) before the last day you can drop a course for H courses, and the last day of classes in the first week of January for Y courses taught in the Fall/Winter terms.
- Submit handwritten essays so long as they are neatly written.
- Have no assignment worth 100% of your final grade.
- Not have a term test worth 25% or more in the last two weeks of class.
- Retain intellectual property rights to your research.
- Receive all your assignments once graded.
- View your final exams. To see a final exam, you must submit an online Exam Reproduction Request within 6 months of the exam. There is a small non-refundable fee.
- Privacy of your final grades.
- Arrange for representation from Downtown Legal Services (DLS), a representative from the UTM Students' Union (UTMSU), and/or other forms of support if you are charged with an academic offence.

# APPENDIX D



<http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.swswww/files/files/Health%20Services/Declaration%20of%20Illness%20From.pdf>



## Declaration of Illness Form

Name:

Student Number:

Date:

As a result of a recent temporary illness, my academic performance was adversely affected. The illness was not chronic or of an extreme nature and therefore did not qualify me to receive an official "Verification of Illness" form from Health, Counselling and Disability Services, but based on this self-report, I would like to request accommodation for the effects of this temporary illness on my academic performance.

I was affected by this illness on the following dates: \_\_\_\_\_.

The following academic requirement(s) has/have been affected:  
\_\_\_\_\_ for Course(s) \_\_\_\_\_.

This report is based on my own description of illness. I understand and acknowledge that by filling in and sending/presenting this form, making a false statement will be considered to be a departure from academic integrity and will be investigated accordingly.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\* Queen's University collects, uses, maintains, discloses and disposes of information for the purposes of operating the programs and business functions of the university in a manner consistent with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). All personal information you provide in this form is protected under FIPPA. Personal information is recorded information about an individual including their name, address, telephone number, their race, religion, sex, family status, personal opinions or views and medical information.