

McMaster has laid out its framework and principles for the approach to all of its planning decisions in a few key documents shared through various Letters from the President:

Planning for Fall 2020

From Letter from the President, May 25, 2020.

We want our students and everyone at the University to be as safe as possible, to have the support they need to be successful and to be confident that our decisions are based on public health advice. We know there are very real concerns regarding the evolution of the pandemic in the fall term and what that could mean for the health and well-being of every member of the McMaster community.

- Classes for the entire fall term will be online.
- With few exceptions students will not need to be on campus to take their courses.
- Undergraduate students entering the first year of their programs will not need to be on campus for the fall term with the exception of a limited number of health care professional courses. Students enrolling in such programs will receive additional information directly from their departments.
- Labs and other specialized facilities will only be available in very limited cases. Faculty and staff are encouraged to continue to find alternate means to deliver these types of programs or to redistribute courses so that work requiring access to labs or other types of facilities can be completed at a future time.
- A process for programs to request use of labs and other specialized facilities, where essential to meet program requirements, is in development and requests will require approval from the Department Chair, Dean and the Provost's Office.
- We are investing significantly in the online experience to assist faculty in developing high quality online programs that continue to provide students with opportunities to interact with each other and their instructors.
- We are enhancing support for all students with particular emphasis on student well-being, mental health, technical assistance, and ensuring accessibility.
- To help ensure that first-year students are welcomed into the McMaster community, and are able to find friends and mentors, we have developed the [Archway](#) program that will bring together small groups of students with coaches to create a memorable and successful first-year experience.
- Prioritizing health and safety will significantly limit the availability of residences on campus and spaces will only be available on an exceptional basis.

Guiding Framework and Approach to Planning Decisions for September 2020 and Beyond

From Letter from the President, April 30:

1. *For the 2020/21 academic year, we will continue to deliver on the academic and research mission of the University, while prioritizing the health, safety and well-being of all members of our community.*
2. *In doing so, we will remain focused on supporting and enabling the success of our students, delivering a high-quality learning environment and overall student experience.*
3. *Our goal is to welcome new and returning students back to campus as soon as this can be done safely and in accordance with Public Health guidance and government protocols. Priority will be given to those programs where physical access is necessary in order to complete academic requirements and enable students to complete their courses and graduate.*
4. *We will maintain our focus on research excellence and on supporting the work of our researchers across all disciplines, as well as enabling and advancing our long history of creativity and innovation.*
5. *We will continue to uphold our core University values, principles and policies, including our focus on inclusivity, accommodation and respect for one another, and our collegial decision-making processes. Any revisions or updating of policies will continue to be developed through the University's pre-existing governance processes.*
6. *We will continue to make fiscally prudent decisions that support our ongoing stability and success as an institution, balancing risk with opportunity.*
7. *We will continue to work together as a community to support our students, faculty and staff across the University and will ensure that information, plans and decisions are communicated clearly and promptly.*

Following the release of that framework, the university spelled out its approach to planning in a number of key overarching areas in a follow-up **Letter from the President, May 12:**

- We will continue to be guided by Public Health Ontario directives and advice. This advice is dynamic and will continue to change as the provincial recovery unfolds.
- In alignment with current Public Health guidance, masks will not be required on campus, save in specific cases such as labs where personal protective equipment (PPE) would have been required for normal operations, healthcare settings, or special circumstances such as certain cleaning operations.
- Individuals may choose to wear a mask in other situations. That is a personal choice.
- Everyone who is not considered part of an essential service should continue to work at home, if they are able to do so. More people will be invited to return to our campuses as the University begins to reopen, but for now we are asking people to continue to work from home.
- A research recovery plan is being developed by the Vice-President, Research and the Associate Deans, Research. Principal Investigators in consultation with Environmental & Occupational Health Support Services (EOHSS) will be primarily responsible for safety planning in their areas once reopening is underway. A request to expand the research

activity on campus, approved by the Department and the Faculty, will be required and must include a physical distancing and staffing plan so the University can maintain an overall view of who is on campus and in which locations.

- Self-monitoring for symptoms will continue to be important. Anyone who feels unwell should not come to campus, and should follow the advice on Ontario's COVID-19 self-screening website <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>.