

TO: All MUNFA Members  
FROM: The MUNFA Executive Committee  
DATE: January 31, 2022  
SUBJECT: **Response from Administration re: Return to In-Person Teaching**

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While many Academic Staff Members (ASMs) shift to in-person teaching this week, we ask that they keep the MUNFA Office, [munfa@mun.ca](mailto:munfa@mun.ca), informed of additional concerns that arise.

We also wish to provide an update on [MUNFA's letter to senior administration](#) which detailed a number of outstanding questions/concerns about the return to in-person teaching. The MUNFA Office received a [response from Dr. Timmons](#) on the evening of January 28, 2022 after our office had closed. While the full response is linked above, we've included a summary of MUNFA's questions and Dr. Timmons' answers below.

**Q: Will the administration allow increased flexibility to individual ASMs who are immunocompromised or have other health-related concerns and/or those with family members in a similar position?**

A: Dr. Timmons advised MUNFA that ASMs who are immunocompromised or who have other health-related concerns could apply for an accommodation under the [Workplace Accommodation Policy](#), but offered no comment on ASMs who have family members in a similar position. (Note: MUNFA has [two outstanding grievances](#) relating to the administration's handling of requests under the Workplace Accommodation Policy.)

**Q: Does the administration plan to compensate the increased workload associated with providing courses in multiple modalities?**

A: Dr. Timmons expressed appreciation for the commitment from faculty, reiterated previous suggestions for student accommodations, and directed MUNFA to a [resource on addressing informal accommodation requests](#) created on January 27, 2022, just 4 days prior to the return to campus. While Dr. Timmons explicitly stated that ASMs are not required to deliver equivalent course experiences in multiple modalities, the letter was silent on whether ASMs would be compensated/recognized for the additional work and time required to implement the range of accommodations suggested.

**Q: Given the suggestion for students to contact Department Heads if instructors are unable to provide the requested flexibility or accommodation, what is the administration's plan if such a scenario arises?**

A: Dr. Timmons explained that this was communicated to students as Departmental Heads may be able to offer additional suggestions to determine an outcome acceptable to the ASM that meets a student's needs.

**Q: We request that you provide clear information directly from Public Health indicating that Memorial University is exempt from guidelines such as physical distancing, and direct us to communication from Public Health Officials where post-secondary institutions have been defined as “essential.”**

A: Dr. Timmons was either unable or unwilling to provide confirmation from Public Health Officials that clearly states Memorial University is “essential” and exempt from guidelines such as physical distancing.

*(Note: The Government of NL’s website includes [guidance for essential workers](#) and for [primary/secondary schools](#) but does not reference post-secondary institutions in either such category.)*

**Q: What is the University’s guidance for instructors delivering in-person courses who miss multiple days of instruction while self-isolating?**

A: Dr. Timmons reiterated that ASMs should regularly check Public Health direction regarding isolation requirements and noted that academic units have instructional continuity plans but failed to offer any further guidance.

**Q: Please confirm that individual instructors (and students/staff) will be provided an N95 mask. What is the process for instructors to request N95 masks or is the administration intending to distribute masks to all instructors required to return to in-person teaching?**

A: Dr. Timmons reaffirmed that individual instructors would be provided with N95 masks upon request to their Head but did not offer information on the availability of such masks for students. MUNFA is aware that there remains some confusion around masking requirements for instructors while lecturing. Although most communications state that masks are required by students, faculty, and staff in all public spaces, [Memorial’s website](#) still indicates that instructors can remove their mask while lecturing if they can maintain a distance of at least six feet from others.

**Q: We request that the full ventilation assessment be made public to the University community.**

A: Dr. Timmons directed MUNFA to the “[Ventilation](#)” section of Memorial’s Return to Campus plan, last updated on January 28, 2022. This page includes a new [report](#) by a COVID-19 Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Working Group, the membership of which is left vague. The report largely offers broad claims about ventilation in classrooms while not providing specific information on individual classrooms. For example, the report states that “Facilities Management has also replaced the MERV 8 filters where possible...” but it does not outline which classrooms have undergone upgrades, or which classrooms continue to use MERV 8 filters.