

President's statement on COVID-19, March 13

MARCH 13, 2020

Asima Vezina, President and Vice-Chancellor of Algoma University, released the following statement this afternoon as an update to the University's response to the evolving COVID-19 situation.



COMMUNICATION MEMO

Office of the President

2020-03-13

MEMO: **President's Statement on updated COVID-19 Action Plan**

TO: All Students, Faculty, Staff, Admin, SKG (Brampton, SSM, Timmins)

FROM: Asima Vezina (President, AU)

CC: Della Anaquod (President, SKG), AU Board, SKG Board

The health and safety of our entire Algoma community and the success of our students are paramount in our decision making. Today, I am writing to provide an important update (after consultation with other Universities, Public Health Units, Universities Canada and the Council of Ontario Universities) regarding Algoma University's response to mitigating risks associated with COVID-19. We know these decisions will cause some disruption, and we apologize for that as together, the University system works with the Ontario Government and Health Care systems to do our part in minimizing the spread and impact of COVID-19.

Over our 50+ year history, Algoma has faced several situations requiring unity and togetherness, however, in my discussion with colleagues, I am not sure that we have ever experienced a context that was as fluid and rapidly changing as this. As a community, and as your President, I am confident that by continuing to work positively and collaboratively as a team, we will implement a successful strategy that keeps people within our community safe while at the same time ensuring that the academic needs of our students are met. We need to work together.

Our approach is based on our effort to reduce health risks within the community. We are committed to doing our part to "flatten the curve" in the global strategy to reduce the impact

Communication Memo: President's Statement on updated COVID-19 Action Plan

of COVID-19. Although some actions may vary by campus, the overall approach and underlying philosophy will be consistent for our Brampton, Sault Ste. Marie and Timmins campuses.

More detailed information about these changes will be available for students, faculty, and staff on our [COVID-19 website](#) and through further communication with specific groups on specific issues. This is a fluid situation and will change. We will continue to post updates and link to other important information relevant to our community. ***I urge you to visit the site on a regular basis to ensure you stay informed.***

Thank you to the Algoma U COVID-19 Task Force, faculty, staff, and student leaders who have been working long hours the last several weeks to ensure we are prepared to manage the impact of COVID-19 on our community. Your care for this community is extraordinary.

To our students, these are unusual times and we know the current situation may be causing stress and uncertainty. Although the nature of a number of services will be provided through alternative means during this period, we are committed to supporting your academic and non-academic needs.

Finally, I want to thank everyone for your patience and understanding, and **I ask that you carefully read the specific details outlined in the pages below.**

Yours sincerely,

Asima Vezina

President & Vice-Chancellor

Algoma University

ALGOMA UNIVERSITY COVID-19 ACTION PLAN (March 13 Update):

ACADEMICS

Algoma U is **cancelling face-to-face classes, labs, and tutorials** beginning Monday, March 16.

At present we are cancelling all face-to-face classes, labs, and tutorials for the remainder of the Winter 2020 term (last day of scheduled classes is April 3). *We are not moving these online, we are cancelling them (see below for details).*

- All **thesis** presentations and thesis-related events are also cancelled for the remainder of the term
- The **research labs** in the CC building (SSM campus) will remain open. Any questions regarding research should be sent to research.office@algomau.ca
- **Exams:** The Office of the Registrar is working through contingency planning for final exams. We will share more information in the coming days. For any urgent exam-related questions, please contact registrar@algomau.ca

As the situation evolves, we will update this directive. Senate Executive met this afternoon to approve motions that will allow as much flexibility as possible in completing the term. Under the current circumstances:

- Faculty are asked to determine whether enough of the coursework has been completed to calculate a final grade at this point.
 - If so, you may proceed to calculate grades based on a redistribution of the course elements.
 - If you determine that there is still a significant percentage of the final course work to be completed, you have a number of options. These include but are not limited to:
 - Using the CMS for sharing course materials (documents, images, short videos, etc.) and receiving assignments from students
 - Using algomau.ca email to share materials with students, including instructions for assignments and receiving assignments
 - Using other platforms, such as YouTube, to share materials with students (YouTube has a captioning function, which may be helpful)
 - Allowing students to video-record presentations
 - Changing from an in-person to a take-home exam
 - Reweighting course components
 - Substituting an alternative assessment for remaining elements of the course grade
- Faculty making changes to course outlines/grade components should do so by Friday, March 20 at noon; classes to be notified of those changes.
- Faculty are asked to take into account that not every student has access at home to wifi or to devices on which they can complete coursework. You should not require student work that assumes they do have that access.

- Faculty are asked to take into account that some students have approved accommodations regarding coursework and exams. Those accommodations will still be respected. More information will be provided next week.
- Experiential learning, co-ops, internships, other placements: you should assume that these will not continue for the remainder of the term. We are working with department chairs to determine the impact of ending these early. If you have any questions on these matters, until further notice please contact dean@algonau.ca
- Study abroad: we are monitoring our students abroad. For any study abroad or exchange questions, please contact eunjung.riauka@algonau.ca
- Algonau U faculty members: if you have any questions about academics, please direct them in the first instance to your **department chair**. The chairs will update the dean's office daily. Here is a list of chairs:

Department of Biology & Chemistry (Environmental Studies)

-jennifer.foote@algonau.ca

Department of Community Economic and Social Development - celia.ross@algonau.ca

School of Computer Science and Technology - simon.xu@algonau.ca

Department of English and History - robert.rutherford@algonau.ca

Department of Music and Visual Arts - andrea.pinheiro@algonau.ca

Department of Geography, Geology and Land Stewardship nairne.cameron@algonau.ca

Department of Law and Politics - trevor.tchir@algonau.ca

Department of Modern Languages - celia.ross@algonau.ca

Department of Psychology - paul.dupuis@algonau.ca

Department of Sociology - deborah.woodman@algonau.ca

School of Business and Economics - cathy.denomme@algonau.ca

Department of Social Work - rose.cameron@algonau.ca

CAMPUS STATUS

The following will apply to all three campuses (Brampton, Sault Ste. Marie and Timmins) if applicable:

- At this time, the University and University buildings **remain open**. Facilities such as the libraries, computer labs, recreation centres and health services all remain open. All student counselling services have been moved to a Zoom platform.
- At this time, the University remains open and employees **should continue to report to work as usual**. We will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates as necessary. With the 2-week closing of Ontario's publicly funded elementary and secondary schools after March break, we recognize this may create specific challenges for some of our employees. If you have extraordinary circumstances that require accommodation, please speak with your supervisor who will then review with the Senior Executive.

- The **cafeteria on the Sault Ste. Marie Campus will remain open from 11 am - 5 pm Monday - Sunday**. Tim Hortons will close for the remainder of the semester. Please note that there will be some changes to operations in the cafeteria:
 - Self serve items such as the salad bar, soup, pastries, etc. will not be offered. Instead, the cafeteria will prepare increased numbers of take-home items for purchase.
 - Utensils will no longer be self serve but will be single serve.
- Algoma's **residences will remain open and operational**. Students wishing to go home and study remotely can do so.
- All **events, both on-and-off campus (including sponsorship/partnership events)**, currently scheduled until May 1, 2020, **are being cancelled, postponed or offered virtually**. Examples include non-essential meetings, group activities, varsity practices, campus tours, camps, social/campus life events - including AUSU/SASA events, thesis events, workshops, outreach activities.
- With respect to meetings deemed essential by the Senior Executive, all parties should determine the necessity of meeting in person and whether virtual/remote options can be employed. Plan to use a room that allows for the distancing of 2 metres or consider using our technology resources or a combination of in-person and remote participation to continue meetings. When in doubt, err on the side of caution or speak to your direct supervisor.

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

- All **work-related international travel (including the USA) is cancelled** until August 31, 2020, or until further notice.
- All **work-related, non-essential domestic travel is cancelled** until further notice. This includes inter-campus travel and campus visits.
- Essential work-related travel must be approved by your respective Senior Executive until this restriction is lifted.
- Anyone who chooses to travel for personal reasons is advised to visit the [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Travel Advice](#) webpage.

UPCOMING MEMOS

- Additional updates will be released in the coming week as follows (but not limited to):
 - support for international students
 - food security
 - health care
 - student services
 - working remotely

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- fever
- cough

- difficulty breathing

Many of these symptoms are similar to seasonal influenza. Should you experience these symptoms AND have recently travelled internationally to an affected region, avoid contact with others and follow-up with your health care professional. Advise your health professional in advance of attending the clinic of your symptoms and travel history.

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, please reach out to Brianne Pringle at brianne.pringle@algonau.ca or 705-949-2301 ext 4373 to ensure proper accommodations (both academic and employment) are in place.

To help protect yourself from possible infection, health officials recommend that everyone:

- wash your hands frequently and well with soap and warm water;
- use alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth;
- cough or sneeze into your elbow, or cover your cough or sneeze;
- avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness;
- stay home if you are sick and avoid contact with others;
- if you are sick, contact a health care provider about your symptoms and inform them of your travel history.

If you need support please contact the following support services:

For students in need of support, please contact Student Success Central by phone 705-949-2301 ext.4367 or by email healthservices@algonau.ca.

For faculty and staff in need of support, please call the Employee and Family Assistance Program toll-free 24 hours a day, seven days a week for immediate, confidential help at 1-877-630-6701/TTY: 1-877-371-9978.