

Dear Queen's Law students and community members,

I am writing to provide you with an update on our plans for the Fall Term 2020. As you are aware, universities everywhere are struggling with the challenges of planning for the next academic year in the face of uncertainty arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

I want to commend faculty, staff and students for their resilience and creativity in responding to the pandemic so far. To our students who have just completed their year, or indeed their degree, I wish to offer congratulations.

We are anticipating an exciting new academic year—albeit one that will take a very distinctive form. We are already looking forward to welcoming students entering their second and third years of the JD program back to Queen's—and we are looking forward to providing a warm welcome to the newest members of Queen's Law, the incoming class of 2023.

What will the Fall Term 2020 look like? The University has been in constant touch with local public health officials, and it cannot predict at this point what level of in-person, on-campus activities will be possible in the autumn. Many Queen's programs will be taught remotely. In the case of the Faculty of Law, it is fair to say that much of the program will also be taught remotely. However, we believe firmly in the value for legal education of in-person interactions between students and faculty members. We are therefore committed to providing some in-person learning experiences for our students in the fall—so long as provincial regulations are amended to permit this.

We are planning in-person teaching based upon the following assumptions:

- We will put the health and safety of students, faculty and staff first in the design of the fall program.
- If provincial regulations permit in-person teaching, these regulations and/or public health directives will likely require physical distancing within law school classrooms and other parts of the law school building, as well as other precautionary measures (e.g. regular cleaning).
- In-person learning experiences for students will therefore likely be in the form of smaller group sessions that supplement on-line delivery of materials.
- For health or family reasons, some students may be reluctant to participate in in-person sessions, and they will have the option of completing the term remotely. In-person sessions will therefore either be made accessible electronically or alternative on-line sessions will take place.
- The life of the Queen's Law community will thrive as usual, but many services and programs, including guest lectures, career advancement sessions and services, and networking opportunities, will be provided through alternative modes to ensure access to everyone.

The Fall Term will look and feel different from normal – but I am confident in saying that, in the end, the defining features of Queen’s Law, its unique sense of community and the dedicated commitment of all of its members to creating a rigorous and exciting learning and research environment, will shape the experience for everyone.

Students will of course wish to know whether they should be physically present in Kingston for the Fall Term 2020. As I have explained, we are planning to provide in-person learning opportunities for you should provincial regulations allow them, and if you feel comfortable participating. You may prefer to complete the term remotely—in which case you can. Or you may prefer to take advantage of the in-person opportunities that we hope will be offered. In making your decision about moving to Kingston, you may wish to keep in mind that, aside from any formal in-person classes that might be offered, there are various on-campus services and activities that may be accessible in-person during the Fall Term (access to the law library, study spaces, student government, clubs and organizations, etc.), though where possible, we will strive to ensure that these or similar services can be accessed remotely as well. You may also wish to keep in mind when making decisions about housing, that we continue to hope to return to much more normal on-campus programming at the beginning of the Winter Term in January 2021.

Should you move to Kingston for the fall, you will be expected to abide by local public health guidelines, which may differ from your home community. So, it will be important to monitor the latest information.

We know that this mixed delivery of classes will be a significant change from what you expected for your fall Queen’s Law experience. However, we will be guided by public health advice for the safety of our students, faculty, staff and the communities in which we operate, and we will continue to ensure excellence in the legal education we provide.

We are committed to ensuring this is still an extraordinary experience for you and your classmates, and I look forward to seeing you all – be it in person (at a reasonable distance), or on-screen, in the fall.



Mark Walters  
Dean, Faculty of Law