



CONTINUITY OF EDUCATION PLAN

September 2021

Introduction

As outlined in the [Institutional Strategic Plan 2018-2025](#), Brock University's academic mission is to support its students and faculty in the discovery of knowledge through exemplary scholarship, teaching and service. From the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the health and safety of Brock's students, faculty and staff being its paramount priority, this mission has remained in focus despite significant challenges faced by the post-secondary sector. Existing policies, emergency plans, legislation, and regulations, as well as support and guidance from federal, provincial, and local public health officials continue to shape our path moving forward.

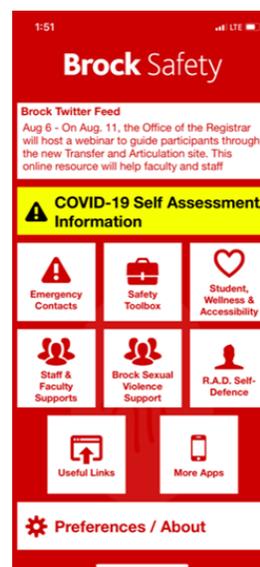
This Continuity of Education Plan was prepared to highlight Brock's anticipated response to any potential academic disruption, whether created by pandemic conditions or any other emergency. This response would be guided by existing institutional documents and policies, which are collected and described in this document.

Brock's Existing Emergency Plans

The Continuity of Education Plan exists in a broader framework of institutional emergency plans, each tailored to respond to various types of potential incidents that may temporarily affect University operations.

Based on the Ontario Incident Management System (IMS), Brock's [Emergency Management Plan](#) (EMP) serves as an all-hazards response and management tool. The plan outlines a standardized approach to emergency management encompassing personnel, equipment, communications, and procedures while operating within a common organizational structure. It is predicated on the understanding that in every incident, there are certain management functions that must be carried out regardless of the number of persons involved in the response. The plan is flexible and may be scaled to meet the needs of any particular situation. In addition to common IMS functional roles, the EMP also calls for academic representation, including from the University's research function, to ensure that the response to any major incident is collaborative and considers the impact upon all areas of the University.

The [Inclement Weather Procedure](#) addresses circumstances in which severe weather conditions (snow, rain, wind and/or ice) may lead to brief interruption in campus activity. The University will temporarily suspend in-person academic programming when severe weather poses a significant danger to students, staff, faculty and/or the community whether attending classes or other activities held at Brock campuses in St. Catharines and Hamilton. Given the variation in weather activity between Niagara and Hamilton, there may be situations in which one of the campuses is not affected and can continue with normal operations. Concerns over safety while on campus and in travelling to and from the campus will be



paramount to decision-makers. If severe weather conditions are sustained over a longer period, these procedures may be overridden by the Emergency Management Plan.

Brock's [Faculty Handbook](#) includes provisions in section 3.C.6 for dealing with a disruption in academic activities, especially events that may affect students' academic progress or impact their ability to complete their academic requirements in a given term. In such cases, the University administration and Senate can collaborate to extend course withdrawal deadlines, modify traditional grading schemes, or otherwise make changes that are mutually understood to benefit students. The goals of this policy section in the Handbook are to ensure the academic integrity of Brock programs, to ensure fair and equitable treatment of students, and to provide timely information to students, staff, and faculty.

Timely communication is critical during emergency situations and remains a priority for Brock University. Recently, an enhanced mass notification system (MNS) was launched to improve communication with the community during emergency situations. In the event of an emergency, the MNS may be used to push messaging to the University community as a whole or to select groups or locations as appropriate. Messaging may be sent to smart phones via the Brock Safety App, SMS text, and/or email. Further, messaging may be delivered through office telephone extensions/voicemail and displayed on digital message boards located throughout campus, with audio messaging broadcast where available. Perhaps the most significant change that was introduced is the ability to broadcast emergency messaging on all registered Brock computer display screens (including those assigned to lecture halls and study areas). Everyone is encouraged to support emergency preparedness efforts and download the suite of [Brock University mobile apps](#) to ensure they remain informed any incident that may impact activities on campus.

Brock's Pandemic Response Plans

Brock's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been coordinated by the University's Emergency Management Group, with regular updates provided to Senate and the Board of Trustees by the University administration and key decision items brought to governance bodies as appropriate. The Emergency Management Group operates under the purview of the Emergency Management Plan, which was activated on March 13, 2020 to focus on pandemic response. However, as the EMP was designed to respond to short-term events, and given the prolonged nature of the pandemic, a number of pandemic-specific response documents were created.

The Brock University Pandemic Plan Guiding Document was developed to outline a general organizational response to risks presented by pandemics. As a guideline, this plan is intended to complement specific operational plans developed by key internal stakeholders as well as the Emergency Management Group, should the Emergency Management Plan be activated. Once a specific pandemic has been identified as a potential threat to the community, the characteristics of that underlying disease will guide efforts to prepare, respond, and recover.

The objectives of the Pandemic Plan are to:

- provide a safe and healthy environment as reasonably possible;
- ensure that key internal stakeholders are aware of their responsibilities associated with pandemic preparedness, response, and recovery;
- minimize risks to students, faculty, staff, and visitors;
- support students, faculty, and staff who remain at the University during a pandemic;

- ensure that a clear communications plan is in place;
- continue services and functions deemed essential to operations during a pandemic; and
- allow for a timely recovery in the event a pandemic interrupts teaching, research, and/or operations.

Key assumptions include the following:

- Once a pandemic has been identified, national, provincial, and municipal governments may follow with the declaration of an emergency;
- A pandemic may occur in one or more waves, each lasting weeks/months;
- Given that pandemics are related to new diseases or new strains of viruses, vaccinations will not be available during the early stages;
- A pandemic may result in increased absenteeism, impacting business continuity; and
- The University houses a population that may be considered vulnerable during a pandemic.

Specific to COVID-19, a Pandemic Recovery General Guiding Document was introduced. This plan, which is subject to frequent amendment to reflect current practices and regulatory requirements, addresses many topics including but not limited to: Brock's approach to academic programming, the function of the Emergency Management Group, general responsibilities, mitigation strategies (mask use, physical distancing, etc.), passive and active health screening, contact tracing, infection prevention and control, incident management (case identification and self-isolation), and student well-being (including mental health support). Key components of the plan include the Three-Stage Reopening Process and the Outbreak Management Plan.

Brock University introduced a [staged recovery process](#) (commonly referred to as the Brock Stages), intended to serve as a high-level reference to support planning efforts dependent upon the local and provincial pandemic situation. This approach outlined operational functions or activities that may be approved within a particular stage, subject to public health recommendations and regulatory requirements. The process includes a lockdown phase and three distinct stages that align directly with steps on [Ontario's Roadmap to Reopen](#). The Brock Stages document has proven to be a valuable tool, making clear the expected impacts on operational units as the University transitions between stages. It is important to note that the University will not transition to a less restrictive stage of recovery unless the relevant recommended public health measures have been implemented and regulatory requirements are satisfied.

Also contained within the overarching Pandemic Recovery document is the Outbreak Management Plan. This plan, which will remain in effect through the course of the current pandemic, outlines the anticipated actions of the Emergency Management Group should the University experience a confirmed COVID-19 outbreak within its population. In such an event, this plan calls for the activation of specific elements of the Emergency Management Group, with the response scaled based upon the nature of the situation. Any outbreak would also be managed in collaboration with local public health authorities and in alignment with provincial guidelines.

Addressing a Disruption to On-Campus Activity

Regardless of the cause of a disruption to on-campus teaching and learning, Brock has developed a series of strategies that may be enacted. The extent of the disruption will in turn impact the

level of response. For significant disruptions, Brock has considered the continuity of education in circumstances that may call for a reduction or cessation of on-campus teaching and learning activities. Brock's actions over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic provide a reliable template for the ways in which future disruptions to on-campus activity might be addressed.

In circumstances where there is no alternative but to stop on-campus teaching and learning, Brock would consider transitioning courses to an online format. Senate, the Brock University Faculty Association, and faculty members would be engaged to determine an appropriate path forward. Based on past experience, instructors would be able to continue with course delivery through our Learning Management System, while also using video conferencing solutions such as Microsoft Teams or Lifesize. Detailed information exists on [Brock's Centre for Pedagogical Innovation website](#) that may assist faculty and instructors in their course transitions. Additional support would be provided as required.

Should a situation require a reduction in the number of courses that could be delivered on-campus or a reduction in the occupant load in instructional areas, efforts would be made either to continue classes in a blended format or to prioritize courses for on-campus delivery. Senate, the Brock University Faculty Association, and faculty members would be engaged to determine an appropriate path forward.

Brock has a carefully considered framework in place to ensure the continuity of education should an emergency or outbreak disrupt the delivery of academic programming. In such a case, the academic progression of students and the continuation of other academic activities, including research and creative activities, will remain a paramount priority.

Additional Contact Information and Links

[Brock - Office of the Registrar](#)

[Brock Central Toolkit](#)

[Brock - Campus Security Services](#)

- 905-688-5550 extension 3200
- Non-emergency extension 4300

[Brock - Student Health Services](#)

- 905-688-5550 extension 3246
- covid19nurse@brocku.ca

[Urgent Crisis Counselling for Brock Students](#)

- 1-833-276-2533
- Outside North America 011-416-382-3257

[Niagara Emergency Medical Services](#)

- 9-1-1 (Emergency Use Only)

[Niagara Health Systems – St. Catharines Site](#)

- 905-378-4647

[Niagara Regional Police Service](#)

- 9-1-1 (Emergency Use Only)
- 905-688-4111 (Non-emergency)

[Niagara Region Public Health](#)

- 905-688-3762 or 1-800-263-7248
- 905-984-3690 (after hours)

[St. Catharines Fire Services](#)

- 9-1-1 (Emergency Use Only)