



Montreal, March 27, 2020

SUBJECT: Beacons for the end of the 2020 winter university term in the context of a pandemic

Minister Roberge,

The Fédération québécoise des professeures et professeurs d'université (FQPPU) would like to thank you for informing us this morning of your instructions to university leaders today.

We think it is worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic is currently forcing all citizens to make exceptional efforts. The 8,200 professors that we represent at the FQPPU are also making extraordinary efforts to find harmonious solutions at the end of the 2020 winter term in the context of the pandemic.

In your letter to university leaders today, you mentioned that new guidelines will be sent to them in the near future. In this context, we would like to contribute to the ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES) thinking on this subject by sharing the following with you.

Over the last few days, university leaders have issued numerous instructions and put in place various models for the termination of the 2020 winter term in the context of a pandemic. It should be noted that period of reappraisal prescribed by the MEES and ending on March 27 has not been respected in several institutions. Instead, some universities have put their faculty under pressure to transform the classroom courses that were interrupted on March 13 into “distance learning courses” developed at high speed. We pointed out to the MEES, as early as March 14 and 15, that this haste had many pitfalls, notably the failure to take into account the particular contexts of many of the colleagues we represent, who are also under pressure from several students.

Other universities have instead opted for a prior learning assessment and recognition model that allows professors to complete the 2020 winter term in a harmonious manner. With the period you had prescribed for reflection ending today and the exercise having been carried out as scenarios were published two weeks ago, the FQPPU has studied the scenarios being considered in the Quebec university network and has completed its analysis of the situation.

It is crucial to state from the outset that the immense constraints of the pandemic to which everyone is subject lead us to propose terms and conditions for the end of the 2020 winter term in that are both as harmonious and respectful as possible for our students, but that must also not be excessively restrictive or unrealistic for professors. As such, the FQPPU is aware that problems of work-family balance are becoming major for many colleagues, and we therefore ask that the term termination measures take this into account.

We agree with your invitation to think about the situation in terms of flexibility, knowing that the living, studying and working conditions of both students and professors are currently very difficult.

We therefore propose the following three principles to guide the way forward:

- 1) Students should have the opportunity to obtain a “Pass” grade for a course if evaluations to date show that they have achieved a passing grade. They will then receive credit for that course;
- 2) Students should be given the opportunity to withdraw from a course without failing if they have not yet been evaluated or if the grade they have received to date does not meet the requirements of the course. This option should be accompanied by a tuition refund for the course in question;
- 3) Given the nature of the course being offered, where faculty are willing and feel it is appropriate, teaching could continue at a distance starting March 30, 2020, online or in other ways at the discretion of the professor. Students would receive a final grade that would count towards their overall grade point average. In all cases, the modalities of continuing teaching and evaluation remain the prerogative of the professor.

We ask that these principles be taken into account in future updates of the instructions to universities.

Please accept, Minister Roberge, the expression of my best wishes and my full cooperation.

Jean Portugais

Président

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