

Emergency Academic Regulations and Policies for Fall 2020

Expanded Version

Presented here are the Emergency Academic Regulations and Policies in effect for the fall semester of 2020. This expanded version of the regulations and policies announced on August 10 provides additional details on a number of important points. Accompanying this posting is an expanded version of the Grading Policy for Fall 2020.

The policies and regulations described here were developed by the Academic Policy and Regulations Team (“APART”), whose membership (listed below) includes students and the current and recent chairs of key Faculty Governance committees concerned with the Institute’s educational mission. These Emergency Academic Regulations and Policies were developed by APART after extensive deliberation and consultation with students, faculty, and staff. Our aim was to design emergency regulations and policies that take into consideration the diversity of our educational offerings, that anticipate exceptional situations, and which are sensitive to the difficult and unusual circumstances confronting our students, our faculty, and all members of the MIT community who support our educational programs. APART appreciates the magnitude of the challenges facing many of our students, particularly those working from remote time zones and those with difficult learning environments. In developing these policies and regulations our goal has been to take into account these challenges while not compromising the quality of the education and training being provided to all MIT students.

The [expanded version of the Grading Policy for Fall 2020](#) is also now available. Instructors are reminded that other [term regulations and examination policies](#) remain in effect and can be reviewed here.

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A. C. Cope Professor and
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Part I. Class Meetings and General Regulations

1. Academic calendar

All instruction – both graduate and undergraduate – will be delivered remotely during the first week of classes (September 1–7). Some in-person classes will be conducted on campus beginning Tuesday, September 8. In addition, all instruction will be delivered remotely for the final two weeks of classes (November 30–December 9). No academic exercises will be held and no assignments will be due during the Thanksgiving break, which begins at 5:00 PM on Friday, November 20 and concludes at 11:59 PM on Sunday, November 29. **Note:** Some Sloan graduate students may be enrolled in subjects that will

meet on Saturday, November 21. For these students, Thanksgiving break begins at the conclusion of class sessions on Saturday, November 21.

The last day of classes will be Wednesday, December 9. Final exams will begin after a four-day reading period. All exams – in both undergraduate and graduate subjects – will be remote and will take place December 14–18.

2. In-person classes

Students must follow all public health requirements during in-person classes, including wearing a face covering and keeping six feet apart from others. Students who are uncomfortable participating in the in-person elements of a class should talk to the instructional team and/or the department academic administrator to request appropriate academic accommodations.

3. Alternative arrangements (undergraduate students)

For subjects with a required in-person component, departments must provide an alternative arrangement for undergraduate students who will not be on campus and who would otherwise have their ability to graduate on time impeded. Alternative arrangements might include remote alternatives for the in-person component of a subject (which could be an independent project), or an alternative remote subject that can satisfy the degree requirements.

Departments are reminded that the substitution of subjects to fulfill departmental requirements must be approved at the departmental level. For any case in which the substitution is not “comparable to the established curricula in breadth, depth, and integrated approach to a well-defined educational objective,” approval cannot be given by individual Faculty Advisors and must come from a designated faculty member or departmental faculty committee. A summary of the approved exceptions should be reported to the Committee on Curricula (CoC) at the end of the term.

If the departmental requirement is also a General Institute Requirement (e.g., REST, Institute LAB, or CI-M), then approval for the substitution must be obtained from the Committee on Curricula.

4. Alternative arrangements (graduate students)

Departments must similarly make alternative arrangements in the case of graduate students who are not able to attend required in-person subjects if it will impede their ability to graduate on time.

5. Providing recordings of synchronous lectures

In the case of predominantly lecture-based subjects with “live” (synchronous) lectures held during the scheduled class time, instructors should strongly consider also providing a video recording of the lecture that students can access “asynchronously” at any time. This will be especially beneficial for students whose home time zone makes it difficult to participate in a class session at the normally scheduled time and for students with

problematic home learning environments. In classes where recordings are made, the instructor should be sure to inform the students of the fact, indicate that the recording will only be made available to the students in the class and the teaching staff, and explain that the recording is being made purely for the benefit of the class.

It is emphasized that for subjects in which meetings involve significant interaction with or among student members of the class, the instructor has the option not to provide a recording. This may be appropriate particularly in smaller, discussion-based classes and may be out of concern that recording a discussion may reduce participation by those present synchronously, or because active participation in the live discussion is necessary to achieve the learning goals of the subject.

6. Advising and registration in subjects with conflicts

Students sometimes wish to register for multiple subjects that have class meetings scheduled at the same time, and this may be more common during the Fall 2020 semester with many subjects providing asynchronous lectures. Advisors should pay close attention to potential schedule conflicts this fall and should evaluate such conflicts in discussion with their advisees when asked to approve such registration, particularly when it involves subjects that have expected or required synchronous components. The syllabi of such subjects should be reviewed when advisors and advisees discuss registration in subjects with conflicting schedules.

Advisors can identify any initial conflicts in schedules by referring to the individual student schedules on WebSIS which will be posted on Friday, August 28. In instances where there are conflicting subjects, one subject will be displayed on the default time grid view, while the conflicting subject(s) will be listed below the grid with a message denoting which subject/section is in conflict. The conflicting subject will not have a schedule. Note that in addition, student-developed scheduling tools such as CoursePicker (picker.mit.edu) and FireRoad (fireroad.mit.edu) are also available to identify classes with conflicting schedules.

Any subsequent changes to a student's registration require approval by the advisor as well as approval of the instructor after the first week of classes. These subsequent proposed changes provide an additional opportunity for advisors to evaluate the potential for scheduling conflicts. Advisors may wish to use the "consult" option and have a conversation with the student prior to approving subsequent registration for classes with conflicting schedules.

7. Contingency planning: in-person and remote subjects

Departments and instructors of subjects with a required in-person element must develop contingency plans for how such classes will proceed in the event that in-person activities (for some or all participants) are interrupted at some point during the semester. Examples of such situations include: (a) An instructor or teaching assistant tests positive for COVID-19 or comes into contact with someone who tested positive and so is unable to teach in person for a period of time; (b) A student in a class tests positive for COVID-19, and based on MIT Medical best practices, the students who interacted closely with that student in a classroom or lab setting are not permitted to attend the in-person elements of the class

for about one week; (c) Several students in a class are required to quarantine because they were in contact with someone outside of class who tested positive for COVID-19; (d) Health conditions in the greater Boston area deteriorate and the Commonwealth orders that we discontinue in-person instruction; (e) Some number of instructors and TAs decide before the term starts or during the term that they are no longer comfortable teaching in-person elements of a class.

Contingency plans should also be developed for remote subjects with regard to how these classes will proceed in the event that the instructor becomes ill and is not able to teach.

Responsibility for contingency planning rests with departments. Department leadership should develop contingency plans for scenarios such as those listed above and discuss them with faculty, teaching assistants, and other instructional staff in advance of the Fall semester. Some questions to consider include the following. (a) To what extent would your educational goals for in-person instruction be compromised by having to pivot on short notice to fully online delivery? (b) Are there changes in instructional delivery you wish to make in advance of the start of Fall classes to mitigate potential impacts that pivoting may have on achieving your educational objectives? (c) Given the potential for disruption of in-person classes and the capacity to meet contingencies, is the department offering any in-person subjects that should be proactively (in advance of the semester's start) shifted to an online-only format instead of, or in addition to, the class with in-person elements?

Department leadership and the instructional staff need to be fully aware of MIT Medical policy on what should happen if a student tests positive to COVID in a class with in-person elements. In brief, students who test positive will be isolated and anyone who interacted closely with the infected student will be quarantined for five days, after which time they will be tested and not allowed to return to classes with in-person elements unless they test negative. As part of contact tracing, MIT Medical may contact members of the teaching staff of a class as well as students in the class after interviewing the student who tested positive.

8. Statement of required work

Instructors must provide students with information regarding the work required for the subject according to the schedule described in (8) below. For Fall 2020, this information must include the number and kinds of assignments, the schedule of tests and due dates for major projects, whether or not there will be a final examination, and the grading criteria and procedures to be used. Instructors should indicate whether class sessions will be synchronous or asynchronous and must also indicate how attendance at class meetings will figure into the final grade. Instructors should describe their expectations with regard to the participation of students in synchronous elements of a class, both remote and in-person. Instructors who are planning assignments or activities that will require undergraduate students to use iPads should discuss this.

In providing information regarding required work, instructors are strongly encouraged to consider options for flexibility to accommodate the variety of circumstances in which

students may find themselves throughout the course of the term. For example, low bandwidth may prevent remote students from sharing video, connectivity issues may interfere with the establishment of stable connections for the full duration of a synchronous class period, and unexpected disruptions may impede the ability of students to maintain a schedule as planned. Students should continue to utilize support offices for assistance with challenges that interfere with their ability to perform their academic work as described in (10) below. Instructors should also be prepared to receive communications from these offices, and to provide accommodations for exceptions as appropriate. Instructors are encouraged to consider and communicate the procedures that students should follow to provide feedback to the teaching staff on aspects of course structure and management, particularly given the lack of any prior feedback on remote instruction for fall term courses. Where possible, instructors should also consider establishing clear guidelines on any allowances for exceptions to the stated requirements, e.g., policies on late submission of homework and the options to make-up (or have waived) missed attendance in mandatory synchronous class meetings.

9. Schedule for statement of required work

For undergraduate subjects, the statement of required work must be provided by the end of the first week of a subject, together with at least an approximate schedule of tests and due dates for major projects. The precise schedule of tests and due dates for major assignments must be provided by the end of the third week for full-term subjects and by the end of the second week for half-term subjects. For graduate subjects, the precise schedule of assignments and exams and other information as detailed above must be provided by the end of the third week in a full-term subject and by the end of the second week in a half-term subject.

10. Changes in statement of required work

Any subsequent change to what is announced during the first weeks of a subject must be approved in advance by the [Chair of the Faculty](#). This includes (but is not limited to) any increase in the number of assignments, quizzes, tests, or exams.

11. Student support

Instructors are encouraged to be flexible in assisting students with academic requests and should work with students disadvantaged in completing work due to their home situation (e.g., lack of privacy, internet connectivity issues, etc.). The Division of Student Life has [excellent advice](#) for instructors on supporting and working with students during the COVID-19 crisis. Students should continue to utilize Student Support Services (S3) and GradSupport when they are dealing with personal or medical issues that interfere with their ability to attend class, complete work, or take exams. To make academic requests, undergraduate students should contact S3 and graduate students should contact GradSupport with as much advance notice as possible, understanding that some situations are unplanned and arise unexpectedly. Faculty should consider including statements about how they will approach such requests in their syllabus based on [draft templates](#) available from Student Support and Wellbeing.

12. Third-party online proctoring

Instructors are advised not to utilize third-party online proctoring for midterm or final exams unless all other options have been exhausted. The use of third-party online proctoring (e.g., Proctortrack) requires the permission of the [Chair of the Faculty](#) and requests must be submitted by September 1. If the use of third-party online proctoring is approved, this must be indicated in the statement of required work provided by the deadlines described in (8) above.

Part II. Scheduling of Classes and Midterm Exams

13. Scheduling classes, recitations, and office hours

Instructors should strongly consider scheduling recitation sections and office hours in ways that take into account the situation of students in other time zones. For example, if a subject has multiple international students and several recitation sections, then instructors should consider scheduling one or more sections at times corresponding to 9 AM to 10 PM local time for students working remotely from time zones distant from Boston. Note that no required undergraduate class meetings (including recitations) can be scheduled between 5 and 7 PM (MIT local time).

14. Scheduling of activities outside of normal class time

Some subjects may require extra hours outside of regular class time for special activities such as presentation sessions. Instructors are reminded that these activities require an exception from the [Chair of the Faculty](#). In addition, these activities must be scheduled at the beginning of the semester and included in the syllabus, and students who are unable to participate because of regularly scheduled academic exercises in other subjects, which always take priority, must be accommodated.

15. Scheduling and time allocated for midterm exams

In the case of midterm exams involving remote submission, instructors should include provisions in the scheduling to accommodate the time needed for submission and these arrangements should take into account students granted extended time due to disabilities. "Midterm exams" refer to any tests scheduled during the semester.

16. Alternative arrangements for midterm exams

Instructors should provide students with the option to take midterm exams during one or more alternative periods within a 24-hour block of time that includes the regularly scheduled exam time. The duration of the alternative exam must be commensurate with that of the exam in the normally scheduled time slot. Midterm exams include any quiz, test, or exam given during the regular academic term (i.e., excluding Final Exam Week). Instructors should consider such alternatives to help address the needs of students in other time zones and to provide for students with uncertain internet connections or problematic home environments. If students are provided with this option, it must be

made clear that they cannot select a time that creates a conflict with another scheduled class session or exam.

17. Activities around Election Day

Instructors are strongly encouraged to avoid scheduling exams or having major assignments due on Election Day and the day following Election Day (November 3 and 4).

Part III. End-of-Term Assignments, Final Exams, and Theses

18. Scheduling end of semester assignments and exams

Sections 2.53 and 2.54 of Rules and Regulations of the Faculty regulate work during the last week of classes. As stated in the Academic Calendar, the “Last Test Date” (the Friday before the last week of classes) this fall is December 4, 2020. The regulations for subjects with final exams this fall remain the same, and is the same for both undergraduate and graduate subjects: there may be no assignments due and no tests held after the Last Test Date.

However, for Fall 2020 there is a change for subjects with no final exams. For these subjects, the deadline for an assignments due during the last week of classes is 10 PM EST on Wednesday, December 9, the last day of classes. In the case of graduate subjects with no final exam and no assignment due during the last week of classes, one test may be held during the last week before 10 PM EST on Wednesday, December 9.

19. Take-home and *ex camera* exams

Take-home exams must be completed by 10 PM on December 9 except in cases where the Chair of the Faculty has approved an *ex camera* final examination. In accordance with regulation 2.53, an *ex camera* examination must be offered over the course of an afternoon beginning at 1:30 PM EST and ending no later than 7:30 PM EST and will be scheduled during the week of final examinations. Students are permitted unrestricted use of resources in *ex camera* exams.

20. Final exams

Instructors are encouraged to de-emphasize high-stakes end-of-term methods of assessment such as final exams in fall semester subjects. In the event that a final exam is deemed necessary, then the following regulations apply. All final exams in full-term and H2 subjects must be remote exams of no more than three hours duration and must be held December 14-18 according to the schedule set by the Registrar with the exception of the alternative scheduling described in (3) below. Any other exceptions must be approved by the [Chair of the Faculty](#). The Registrar's Office will coordinate conflict exams for cases where a student has two exams scheduled for the same time. Final exams can be "open book" or "closed book". The choice of format must be announced and expectations must be clearly stated no later than Drop Date (November 18, 2020). For full-term subjects, Drop Date is November 18, 2020. For half-term subjects in the first half of the semester,

Drop Date is October 2, 2020. For half-term subjects in the second half of the semester, Drop Date is November 30, 2020.

21. Scheduling of final exams

Instructors should provide students with the option to take the final exam during one or more alternative periods of commensurate duration within a 24-hour block of time that includes the regularly scheduled final exam time. Instructors should consider such options to help address the needs of students in other time zones and to provide for students with uncertain internet connections or problematic home environments. In order to apply for an alternative exam time, students must contact the instructor no later than 5 PM one week prior to the day of the regularly scheduled final exam.

22. Thesis defenses and submission

Thesis and dissertation defenses should be conducted remotely. Students may require access to an on-campus room to ensure they can defend without interruption and with an adequate wifi connection.

The dates for thesis submission as stated in the Academic Calendar will remain the same. However, students must submit an electronic copy rather than a hardcopy to the Libraries. Details of this submission process will be coordinated by the Libraries. As usual, individual departments will inform students of the departmental schedule for submission and approval of theses.

Academic Policy and Regulations Team

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