

August 27, 2020

To: The Student Community at the Technion

From: Professor Hossam Haick, Dean of Undergraduate Studies

Subject: Procedures and Information for Students in Preparation for the 2020-2021 Winter Semester

Dear Students,

First of all, in preparation for the start of the semester, I would like to wish you all an interesting and fruitful semester. To all the new students, welcome and good luck with your studies! This period of time is one of many changes and necessitates adapting to a new and different type of lifestyle, as well as teaching and learning methods than those to which we have become accustomed. As such, these changes present us with challenges and difficulties. On our end, we are doing what we can to improve the teaching side of things, and we are continuously learning and improving. This letter will highlight and attempt to clarify what awaits us in the upcoming semester.

This letter emphasizes the main procedures and regulations for the upcoming 2020-2021 Winter Semester. **Full details of the Senate's regulations in regard to teaching will be available on the [course catalogue](#).**

1. Important Dates

The academic calendar can be found [here](#).

- Orientation day for new students will take place online on Tuesday, October 20, 2020.
- The first day of classes of the 2020-2021 Winter Semester will take place on Wednesday, October 21, 2020.
- Hanukkah vacation will take place between December 13-18, 2020.
- The final day of classes for the 2020-2021 Winter Semester will be Tuesday, January 26, 2021.

2. Publication of Syllabi and Evaluation Methods

In light of the changing and unpredictable reality in the time of Corona, a standard syllabus will be published that will contain responses to key questions, including, as much as is possible, responses about the morbidity rate and the corresponding constraints (cases and responses).

The teaching staff will create and publish this type of syllabus for the students to assess on the course website by September 17, 2020, prior to the start of the semester. In the creation of the syllabus, particular emphases will be placed on the following points:

- a. The syllabus will include a full explanation of how students will be evaluated in the course, which will include alternatives contingent on the likelihood of future exams, including references to situations in which an in-person exam on campus will not be possible. For example: “Thirty-percent of the final grade will be based on grades received throughout the course and 70% will be based on the final exam. In the case that it will not be possible to hold an in-person final exam on campus, **50% of the final grade will be based on grades received during the course and 50% on an online final exam.**” Alternatively, the bolded part of the previous sentence may be replaced with a clarification such as: “**50% of the final grade will be based on grades received throughout the course and 50% will be based on homework assignments that students will have 3 days to submit**” or “**50% will be based on grades received throughout the course and 50% based on an online oral exam**” and so on.
- b. Course staff will provide alternative evaluation methods for high-risk students or students in isolation who are prevented from coming to campus.
- c. Course staff will indicate the number of homework assignments and their submission dates in advance on the syllabus. Grades will be calculated based on what is stated on the syllabus regardless of the number of assignments that end up being assigned.
- d. Course staff will indicate if there are any mandatory in-person activities. For such activities, mandatory attendance will only be required if they are truly academically necessary. We are aware that there may be students who will not be able to meet these mandatory attendance requirements due to health issues, isolation, belonging to a high-risk group, lockdown of particular neighborhoods/cities, transportation restrictions, being parents to children in the case of school closures (kindergartens and/or elementary schools).
- e. We would like to emphasize that a pass/fail grade option is not part of the alternative evaluation methods we mentioned, and it will not be an option.

3. Teaching in the Time of Corona

One of our main tasks for the upcoming semester is to provide a sense of security and continuity in teaching and learning, despite the current crisis. The main difficulty that students report, and that we all experience, is that of a sense of uncertainty. This feeling also pertains to the way in which teaching will occur during the upcoming period of time and therefore:

- a. In general, the Technion plans to conduct in-person teaching, in accordance with the restrictions of the “Purple Badge” (which may be updated from time to time).
- b. Teaching will take place at the Technion (in classrooms that are dedicated to online teaching, laboratories, etc.). Lecturers and teaching assistants will be asked to teach from their assigned classrooms in accordance with the schedule created. They will then teach

from those classrooms both to students who are physically present as well as to those who will attend digitally. Online teaching that is not conducted from the Technion's facilities (for example, from home) will be presented as an alternative option only in the event of an emergency, when teaching from the campuses is not at all possible.

- c. In the event that it will not be possible to fully engage in frontal instruction, the option to engage in online teaching (partially) will be permitted, with priority given to first and then second year students.
- d. All lessons will be video and audio recorded and will be available to students enrolled in the course until the final exam. These recordings will be automatically deleted at the end of the semester except in cases in which the lecturers explicitly request that it not be deleted.
- e. It is important to retain the curricula presented in the catalogue and to ensure that class lessons will be held on time as scheduled and for the allotted amount of time.
- f. In the case of hybrid teaching, in which some students are physically present in the classroom and others are participating online, the course staff will make sure to allow students who are joining from home to participate in discussions, ask questions, etc., as much as is possible.
- g. Lecturers in charge of large courses (over 80 registered students) – in particular those courses in which there are a number of lecture groups that require special preparation – will develop appropriate solutions. These solutions may include combining the groups into one lecture group and expanding the scope of the exercises, combining frontal-synchronous teaching with asynchronous study materials (i.e., not requiring students to be present in the same place at the same time), etc.
- h. In courses in which there are several practicums, at least one will take place synchronously online (live) and there will be an emphasis on providing a solutions for students who are participating digitally.

4. Dissemination of Information

- a. Course staff will publish all details related to the content of the course and how the course will be managed by September 17, 2020. In particular, course staff will explain the various components of how students will be graded, the weights given to each component, the distinction between a “protective” grade and a “final” grade, all in accordance with the format described above. **Guidelines will not change during the semester.** As stated in section 2e, there will not be an option to receive a pass/fail grade.
- b. **Office hours:** Course staff will publish their office hours at the beginning of the semester, both in-person office hours and online office hours. We remind lecturers that having discussions and dialogues with students, and providing opportunities to further explain topics that were taught but need additional explanations are especially important during this time.

5. Course Evaluation

- a. In accordance with the Students' Rights Act, the decision of the Senate allows students to take the exam during the first scheduled day/time (Moed A), the second scheduled day/time (Moed B), or both. The first and second exam options will be in the same format (except in cases in which the health guidelines necessitate changing the format) and uniformity in the grading components of the course will be maintained. Special guidelines (if any) will be specified for students who are repeating the course.
- b. The experience of last semester showed us that the format for conducting exams (in-person or online) may change from time to time and sometimes with only short notice. The format for conducting exams will be determined near the date of the exam by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and will take into account the relevant health regulations at the time.
- c. Please note the course staff may, **using only their academic and professional judgment**, adopt different evaluations methods in the course: **Formative evaluations (an internal evaluation conducted for the sake of learning)** are used to promote, improve, and develop learning and teaching processes; and a summative evaluations (an assessment of the learning that has taken place) are used to evaluate and report on students' achievements. It is important to utilize these evaluations in a way that provides students with feedback on their progress and provides lecturers with feedback about the challenges in the course and where they can make improvements to the course. Lecturers who would like to give homework or provide a midterm exam during the semester can use a variety of options. Among other options, lecturers can use one or more of the following approaches:
 - **Midterms:** In many courses, especially those that take place during the first semester, midterms are of great importance. They provide students with an opportunity to get experience with the type of tests that are given at the Technion, prior to taking the exam at the end of the semester.
 - **Oral exams:** Group projects can be assigned, and each group would be asked to present their project during an in-person or online class session.
 - **Group exams:** After students have taken an exam individually, they can be then be divided into groups and be given the same exam. Students that did not do well on the original exam can then work on understanding where they went wrong. The group exam score can then be worth 20% of the overall exam score.
 - **Extra points:** Students can be offered to earn back some of the points they lost on assignments/exams by resubmitting an assignment/exam, provided that they explain their original mistakes (this is done so that students reflect on the errors that they made).
 - You can take a complex task (such as a project) and divide it into stages (for example, the first stage can be the planning stage). With the help of feedback from the lecturer or peers, students can receive assessments and preliminary feedback that, in turn, will promote their learning.

- **Embedded assessments:** As the name implies, this approach combines tools from both formative and summative assessments.
- d. In accordance with Regulation 2.2.5 in the Course Catalogue, there cannot be more than one quiz in a particular subject/class that has a final exam, and there cannot be more than three exams in a subject/class that does not have a final exam. **Second exams (Moed B) must be scheduled for quizzes.**
- e. **Publishing grades:** Grades will be published no later than **10 (calendar) days** from the day of the exam. **Grades will be uploaded on the Upgrade system only:** <https://upgrade.technion.ac.il/login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f>.

6. **Hannukah Vacation**

Hannukah vacation will take place from December 13, 2020 to December 18, 2020. This vacation is given to students so that they can take the time to rest and to complete any work that they have not completed. There will be no assignment deadlines during the vacation and adequate time will be provided to complete assignments after the break, that will not necessitate doing work during the break.

7. **Time off and Considerations for Non-Jewish Students**

The Technion places great importance on respecting the religious freedom of the entire student body, and therefore specifies the holidays for each community (Muslims, Christians, Druze, Circassians) in which no exams will be held. Exemptions from mandatory attendance will be provided for classes that take place on these days (except for supplemental activities such as laboratory tasks and sports). On the eve of a holiday, there will be no exams after 4:30pm. If an assignment deadline is set for a holiday, students will be allowed to submit the assignment shortly after the holiday ends. The following is a list of holidays during the 2020-2021 winter semester:

Christian Holidays:

- Christmas -- from 4:30pm on December 24, 2020 until the end of the day on December 25, 2020
- New Year's – from 4:30pm on December 31, 2020 until the end of the day on January 1, 2021

Druze Holidays:

- Prophet Elijah Holiday – January 25, 2021

Muslim Holidays:

- No holidays during the 2020-2021 winter semester

8. **Reserves Service**

The Senate recognizes the disruption that results from needing to serve in the reserves during an exam period or when one has a prolonged service during the semester. The Senate has

determined that every effort should be made to allow these students to make-up course material and complete course/study major requirements **during the same semester** in which they are enrolled. In any case, the lecturer of the course will come up with an appropriate solution for students whose studies have been disrupted. Solutions can include exams, assignments, additional work, etc. These options are solely at the academic/professional discretion of the lecturer. Please note that regulations for reserves have been updated. Full details appear in the catalogue. Please also see Appendix F of the [Course Catalogue](#): Procedures for Accommodating Students Serving in the Reserves.

9. Students with Physical Disabilities

In November 2016, accessibility regulations for higher education institutions were published, which were then implemented on November 2018. The regulations require full accessibility both in the structure and physical space of institutions of higher education and the educational services that are provided by the institutions. The Student Advancement Department in the Office of the Dean of Students has published an “[Accessible Teaching](#)” booklet, which provides guidelines for academic staff. Course staff will ensure that several seats will be available at the front of the classroom for the first 15 minutes of the class session to allow students who arrive late due to physical disabilities to comfortably settle in class without feeling embarrassed. These seating areas are marked in each classroom. **Please be considerate of your peers and keep these seats available.**

- 10.** The Center for Promotion of Learning and Teaching and the Evaluation Center are available to you for a variety of services. You can find more information about the department here: <http://promoteach.technion.ac.il/>

Wishing you all a fruitful and successful semester.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "haick". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style.

Professor Hossam Haick, Dean of Undergraduate Studies