

COMMUNIQUE 1

SEPTEMBER 17, 2009

FROM THE ACADEMIC DEAN
REGARDING H1N1

Dear Faculty members,

The academic administration and other services of John Abbott College are in the process of planning for and monitoring a possible outbreak of the H1N1 virus. This communiqué will be the first in a series to keep you informed of the College's academic response to the H1N1 virus. Teaching in times of extended emergency requires careful preparation, creativity and flexibility.

The role of academic administration during these times is to communicate effectively and responsively and to provide support and guidance.

Our first priority is to protect the health of John Abbott students, employees and their families. At the same time we will be taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the educational activities of the College continue, and that students not be penalized as a result of illness. To fulfill these goals without compromising our educational mission we may be challenged to find and accept alternative ways for students to meet the competencies and other requirements of our courses.

To this end we will be relying primarily on the professionalism and resourcefulness of individual teachers to respond to the individual circumstances of their students and their curriculum. We hope to be able to give you whatever support you need as you work with the challenges arising from the cases of the flu among your students, yourselves and your families.

The first principle of our response to a possible pandemic is to ask anyone who shows signs of the H1N1 virus **NOT TO COME TO THE COLLEGE.**

Staying home will allow you to rest and focus on recovery and will protect students and employees from a rapidly spreading disease. We are asking our faculty members to be flexible and to make every effort to accommodate students who miss class because of illness. Likewise we will also be flexible in accomodating faculty and staff absences. You can find guidelines as to when you should stay home at:

<http://www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/news/news.shtml>

(please refer to the decision making chart).

THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME GUIDELINES:

- For updates on campus wide status of flu conditions at JAC, please visit the College website
- The Centre for Disease Control and Public Health Canada recommend that institutions of higher learning refrain from requiring written medical confirmation for absences during the outbreak. Also the public is being asked not to contact doctors for routine cases; therefore not all students may be able to produce medical notes. We are committed to assuring that the students who follow Public Health guidelines about absence will not be penalized for following these recommendations and behaving in a socially responsible way. As stated in our IPESA: *The desired outcomes are to educate students, to prepare them for their role as responsible members of society.*
- Under no circumstances should penalties for non-attendance be so rigid that students feel compelled to attend class when ill and/or contagious
- We are asking faculty members to be considering, NOW, how they will be able to respond to a variety of problems and student inquiries which are likely to arise should the pandemic strike. Flexibility is the key. Students will miss tests and other sorts of evaluations; they may be absent more often than the course outlines allow; they may miss important content or labs and be at risk of performing poorly on tests and other evaluations. It is important to foresee these difficulties and have solutions and responses ready at hand. Again, the resourcefulness and compassion of individual teachers will provide the best responses to these situations. At the same time you should begin discussions with your colleagues, departments and programs to generate ideas and share solutions. Ideally plans should be feasible and treat all students equitably across sections of the same course and within departments.
- A repertoire of solutions could include preparation of make-up tests or evaluation; flexibility with absence policies; alternative assignments that can be completed at home; on-line communication and interchange; alternative office hours; flexibility with deadlines or lateness penalties; and so forth. Students have been informed that they should contact you as soon as possible about illness related absences and speak with you directly about your expectations upon their return. It is worth remembering that these students will no doubt be behind in most of their courses at the same time.
- In cases of faculty absences, reporting procedures for absences should be respected. The administration is committed to the same assurances regarding absences as stated above for students. Every effort should be made to have missed classes covered by informing either your Dean or Chairperson.
- Please keep in mind that some of our students have care-giving responsibilities and that this may have to be taken into consideration. Likewise, it is understood that you may have similar responsibilities.
- The role of the Health and Wellness Centre related to H1N1 is that of education and information, including prevention, how to look after oneself when ill, and when to seek medical attention. The Centre is not equipped to care for ill students. Students who are sick should be advised to go directly home from school and are not required to go to the Health and Wellness Centre
- In the event of a major campus emergency that compromises course requirements a revised academic calendar may have to be considered

In summary, this communiqué is the first in a series to provide you with information, support and guidelines with respect to H1N1.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Erich Schmedt" with a period at the end. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Erich Schmedt
Academic Dean
September 17, 2009