Emergency Academic Regulations and Recommendations

for Spring 2021

Presented here are the Emergency Academic Regulations and Recommendations for the spring semester of 2021. The recommendations 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 Recommendations were developed by APART after extensive deliberation and consultation with students, faculty, and staff. Our aim was to design emergency regulations and recommendations 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. We also recognize that developing high quality remote versions of courses that achieve the learning goals of our educational program has been no easy task for our faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants, many of whose lives have been seriously impacted by the global pandemic. 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.

A note about "regulations" and "recommendations":
The regulations promulgated here were developed after extensive consultation and deliberation. In some cases, however, the diverse nature of the subjects in different departments made it difficult to develop a binding regulation that would be appropriate for all subjects across the Institute. In such cases we provide recommendations that we expect will be followed by most but not necessarily all classes. In this fashion we have attempted to accommodate the diverse nature of the subjects that comprise the academic programs of all departments.

The [expanded version](#) of the Grading Policy for Spring 2021 is also now available. Instructors are reminded that other [term regulations and examination policies](#) remain in effect.

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Chair of the MIT Faculty

Part I. Class Meetings and General Regulations

1. Academic calendar

The first day of classes is Tuesday February 16. All instruction – both graduate and undergraduate – will be delivered remotely during the first two weeks (February 16-26). To compensate for the elimination of Spring Break, several three- and four-day breaks have been scheduled, taking place on March 6-8, March 20-23, April 17-20, and May 7-9. See (5) below with regard to regulations concerning these breaks. The Monday schedule of classes will apply on Tuesday March 9. Add Date is Friday March 19 and Drop Date is Thursday April 29. For H3 subjects Add Date is February 26 and Drop Date is March 19. For H4 subjects Add Date is April 16 and Drop Date is May 6.

The last day of classes will be Thursday, May 20. Final exams will begin after a three-day reading period. All exams – in both undergraduate and graduate subjects – will take place May 24-27. The Registrar requires that grades be due by Tuesday June 1.

2. In-person classes

Students taking in-person classes must follow all public health requirements in effect at the time, such as 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 on campus, 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 departments have the authority to approve departures by individual students from approved Course curricula which are comparable to the established curricula in breadth, depth, and integrated approach to a well-defined educational objective. Departmental authority to approve departures which involve substitutions not in kind for more than one subject shall rest with a single member of the Faculty or with an appropriate department Faculty committee, rather than individual Faculty advisors, and a summary of all such departures shall be reported to the Committee on Curricula each 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. **Regulations concerning three- and four-day breaks**
   No required meetings may be held and no assignments may be due during the following four breaks: From 5 PM Friday March 5 to 8 AM Tuesday March 9, from 5 PM Friday March 19 to 8 AM Wednesday March 24, from 5 PM Friday April 16 to 8 AM Wednesday April 21, and from 10 PM Thursday May 6 to 8 AM Monday May 10. Exceptions to this regulation require the approval of the [Chair of the Faculty](#).

6. **Providing recordings of synchronous lectures**
   Providing recordings of "live" (synchronous) classes for asynchronous viewing may be appropriate for some – but not all – subjects.

   In the case of classes in which meetings involve significant interaction with or among student members of the class, recording a class session for asynchronous viewing may <u>not</u> be appropriate. This 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.

   In the case of predominantly lecture-based subjects with "live" (synchronous) lectures held during the scheduled class time, instructors are strongly encouraged to consider 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. Note, however, that this is a <u>recommendation</u> and not a <u>requirement</u>, and will not be enforced. 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.

7. **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 Spring 2021 semester with many subjects providing asynchronous lectures.

   Instructors should be aware that they may require attendance at class meetings, in which case this must be made clear in the statement of required work published at the beginning of the semester. In addition, to facilitate planning by students and their advisors, Instructors requiring attendance in class meetings are urged to announce this to pre-registered students in advance of Registration Week. This can be accomplished via an email sent using the Registrar's Office Pre-Registration Class List. Instructors requiring

attendance are encouraged to be flexible in accommodating students with difficult circumstances as discussed in (9) below.

Advisors should pay close attention to potential schedule conflicts this spring 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 February 4. 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 and FireRoad 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.

8. 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 a period of time; (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

Spring 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 Spring 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 for 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 a stipulated number of 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.

9. Statement of required work

Instructors must provide students with information regarding the work required for the subject according to the schedule described in (10) below. This must be provided in written form by posting on Canvas, Stellar, or the class website. In the case of classes that do not have the ability to post online, the information must be sent by email to all students including those who register after the beginning of the semester. Instructors must indicate whether class sessions will be synchronous or asynchronous and must describe their expectations with regard to the participation of students in synchronous elements of a class, both remote and in-person.

For Spring 2021, the information provided to students must also 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, the grading criteria and procedures to be used, and the relative contribution of each assignment and course component (e.g., class participation, attendance) to the final grade. In classes that require participation and/or attendance, instructors must clearly articulate the standards and means of assessment for those components of the class. In addition, to facilitate planning by students and their advisors, Instructors requiring attendance in class meetings are urged to announce this to pre-registered students in advance of Registration Week. This can be accomplished via an email sent using the Registrar's Office Pre-Registration Class List. 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 provide 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 (12) 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 can follow to provide feedback to the teaching staff on aspects of course structure and management. 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.

10. Schedule for statement of required work

For underguraduate 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 and assignments. 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.

11. 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 significant increase in the number of assignments, quizzes, tests, or exams, or changes in policies concerning participation or attendance in class meetings. Requests to the Chair of the Faculty in the latter part of the semester should include justification why the late change is needed to achieve the learning goals of the subject.

12. Student support

Instructors are strongly 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.

13. 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 February 16. 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 (10) above. Online proctoring by the MIT teaching staff (e.g., via Zoom) does not require prior permission, but the class must be informed of such proctoring in advance, preferably in the statement of required work.

Part II. Scheduling of Classes and Midterm Exams

14. Scheduling classes, recitations, and office hours
Instructors are strongly encouraged to survey their classes at the beginning of the semester to determine whether there are students participating in the class from remote time zones. When that is the case, and when staffing allows it, instructors should strongly consider scheduling recitation sections and especially office hours in ways that take into account the situation of these students. 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) if students are not given an option for an alternative meeting time.

15. 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.

16. Scheduling and time allocated for midterm exams
In the case of midterm exams scheduled during a normal class session involving remote submission, instructors should include provisions in the scheduling to accommodate the time needed for submission and these arrangements must take into account students granted extended time due to disabilities. "Midterm exams" refer to any tests scheduled during the semester. When extra time is provided past the end of the normal class session, instructors must ensure that this extra time does not cause a conflict for any students, i.e., those who have another class scheduled immediately following the exam. This may be done either by ensuring that no conflict exists, or by making alternative arrangements for submission/upload logistics by any student who would otherwise have such a conflict.

17. 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, and in such cases the Instructor must ensure that an alternative time for the exam is available for these students.

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 spring is Friday May 14, 2021. The regulations for subjects with final exams this spring 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. Exceptions to this rule require approval in advance by the Chair of the Faculty.

However, for Spring 2021 there is a change for subjects with no final exams. For these subjects, the deadline for assignments due during the last week of classes is 10 PM EDT on Thursday, May 20, the last day of classes. This deadline applies regardless of when the last class session is scheduled. 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 EDT on Thursday, May 20.

19. Take-home exams and *ex camera* final exams

Take-home exams for undergraduate subjects must be completed by the end of the Last Test Date (Friday, May 14). Take-home exams for graduate subjects without final exams and without an assignment due after May 14 must be completed by 10 PM EDT on Thursday, May 20, the last day of classes.

In accordance with regulation 2.53, an *ex camera* final examination may be held with the permission of the Chair of the Faculty. An *ex camera* final examination must be offered over the course of one afternoon beginning at 1:30 PM EDT and ending no later than 7:30 PM EDT and must be scheduled during the week of final examinations. Students must be 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 spring semester subjects. Specifically, Instructors are encouraged to assess students by increasing the number and variety of assignments so that each contributes a relatively lower proportion of student's grades.

In the event that a final exam is deemed necessary, then the following regulations apply. All final exams in full-term and H4 subjects must be no more than three hours in duration and must be held May 24-27 according to the schedule set by the Registrar with the exception of the alternative scheduling described in (21) 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. For full-term subjects, Drop Date is April 29, 2021. For half-term subjects in the first half of the semester, Drop Date is March 19. For half-term subjects in the second half of the semester, Drop Date is May 6.

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 request 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.

23. Residency Requirements

For Academic Year 2020-2021, a student is considered to be in residence if they are enrolled as a student and making progress towards a degree. Note: Doctoral students approved by OGE for non-resident status are not considered to be in residence.

Academic Policy and Regulations Team (December 2020)

- Rick Danheiser, Chair of the Faculty and Chair of APART (Science, Chemistry)
- Arthur Bahr, Chair of CUP (SHASS, Literature)
- Rebecca Black, Graduate Student Member of FPC
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- Jeremiah Johnson, Chair of CAP (Science, Chemistry)
- Tami Kaplan, Faculty Governance Administrator
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- David Singer, Secretary of the Faculty, Head of Political Science (SHASS)
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