



The Honourable Ross Romano  
Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities  
Lower Level Unit 977 Mail Facility,  
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Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

May 15, 2020

**RE: STAGED REOPENING APPROACH**

Dear Minister:

Thank you for the opportunity on behalf of our members to offer input further to your memo dated Wednesday May 13<sup>th</sup>. We also appreciated the opportunity yesterday to discuss the development of a staged reopening approach to assist academically stranded students. As mentioned yesterday, we are responding in writing to the questions we received.

We need a staged reopening that supports the success of every student. The staged response needs to allow for continued use of blended hybrid learning techniques until a vaccine is broadly available. The phased-in approach will be unique to every campus. Each day of delay dramatically increases the number of stranded students.

The recommended staged approach is essential and is a critical component to reduce school density on reopening and ensure it is possible to provide a safe environment for students and staff.

A staged approach should include ALL stranded and "to be stranded" students. This category is generally a small portion of the entire student population so it provides a huge advantage to physical distancing since school density will be lower.

This approach needs to be extended until a vaccine is available, so into 2021. To be clear, we need the continued ability to use online learning and we need to have limited and safe access to schools.

Thank you again for the opportunity provide input on this important issue.

Regards,

Chris Conway, LLB, MBA  
Chief Executive Officer  
Career Colleges Ontario

cc: David Piccini, MPP, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister  
Doug Brewer, Chief of Staff to Minister Romano  
Carol Strachan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Advanced Education Learner Support Division  
Travis Coulter, Director and Superintendent, Private Career Colleges Branch

# 1 WHICH STUDENTS SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE ABOVE CATEGORY OF 'ACADEMICALLY STRANDED STUDENTS'?

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- Students that have completed all courses in their program except specific applied or lab courses that cannot be completed without lab access.
- Students that have completed all courses in their program but cannot complete placement due to COVID-19.
- Students that are taking classes remotely but will in the near term complete all theory and will become “academically stranded” due to practical/lab components or placement restrictions.
- Every day of delay in reopening rapidly increases the number of stranded students.

## a) WHAT ARE THE PROGRAMS THAT CANNOT BE OFFERED VIRTUALLY THAT IN ARE IN HIGH LABOUR MARKET DEMAND?

- There are about 5000 registered courses in Ontario that have some elements that can be delivered online—from a small percentage online up to 100% online.
- Labour market demand has a significant regional influence.
- Any program that has a hands-on component cannot be fully delivered online and must have a blended-learning approach that takes into consideration the physical distancing and health requirements now in place.

## b) WHAT SPECIFIC PROGRAMS ARE IN HIGH DEMAND THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED IN THIS CATEGORY?

- Labour market demand is regional. Sector employment rates are excellent, OSAP default rates are low and have been trending downward. All programs must be included.
- Each and every career college in Ontario focuses on offering programs for in-demand jobs. These graduates will fill vital roles within their communities during a critical time in their local economy’s response to and recovery from COVID-19.
- Career colleges serve an important role in training a unique demographic of Ontarians. They are mature students, retrainers and those seeking a new life and a new career. The career colleges sector has found success in placing graduates into Ontario’s workforce.

c) **WHAT IS THE SPECIFIC NUMBER OF STUDENTS PER INSTITUTION THAT WOULD BE INCLUDED IN THIS PILOT PROJECT?**

- All “stranded” and “soon to be stranded” students must be included in the phased approach in blended training. Each career college requires the flexibility to train their students based on a stage by stage approach. The number of stranded students increases every day there is a delay.

## 2 **WHAT ARE THE TIME-FRAMES THAT WE MUST ADHERE TO IN ORDER TO SUCCESSFULLY GRADUATE THESE STUDENTS IN A TIMELY FASHION?**

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a) **HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO COMPLETE THE PROGRAMS SO THESE STUDENTS CAN GRADUATE?**

- Program completion times vary by program and original graduation date. The quicker career colleges can reopen, the shorter the timeframe for students to complete their programs. A blended approach to program delivery will expedite completion times and allow students to receive quality training. Each college must have the flexibility to determine the time and the details for program completion based on student progress and safety considerations.

The way the sector is currently regulated allows for little flexibility for program completion times. Programs completion times are affected by the following:

1. Flexibility of regulation
2. Physical constraints of the situation
3. Evolving health regulations
4. Requirements of third-party regulators

b) **HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES TO PREPARE FOR THIS PILOT PROJECT? (I.E. NOTIFYING STUDENTS, PREPARING STAFF, FACULTY AND THE INSTITUTION)**

- The skills that need to be taught and tested in school are known and part of existing curriculum. Very little academic prep time is needed
- Preparing for physical distancing and safety is important, and many colleges have already begun this process and are in consultation with their program regulators. Career colleges can begin stage one of reopening their campuses within one week as long as safety requirements are met.

c) **WHAT IS THE LATEST POSSIBLE DATE THAT OUR GOVERNMENT WOULD NEED TO ANNOUNCE THIS PILOT TO ENSURE THERE IS SUFFICIENT TIME FOR A) AND B) ABOVE?**

- The sector is prepared to respond in support of an immediate ministry announcement. The majority of Ontario's career college programs can safely resume labs and practicums for stranded students within one week.

**3 WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC MEASURES EACH INSTITUTION WOULD NEED TO TAKE TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF ALL STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF WHO WOULD BE ATTENDING IN-PERSON?**

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- The list is long, however, most of the requirements are on the Ontario Public Health website.
- Sourcing of PPEs is already underway.
- Career colleges need to follow requirements as set out by third-party regulators.

a) **SPECIFICALLY, IN CONSIDERATION OF THIS BEING PROPOSED AS A PILOT PROJECT WITH FAR FEWER STUDENTS THAN A FULL RE-OPENING, WHAT REFINEMENTS, IF ANY WOULD YOU CONSIDER TO THE RE-OPENING FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT ALREADY PROVIDED EARLIER THIS WEEK FOR PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES?**

- This recommended staged approach is essential and a critical component to reducing campus density upon reopening and ensuring a safe environment for students and staff.
- A staged approach should include ALL stranded and soon to be stranded students. This category is generally a small portion of the entire student population, so it provides a huge advantage to physical distancing since campus density will be lower.
- This approach needs to be extended until a vaccine is available, likely carrying into 2021. To be clear, we need continued ability to use online learning, and we need to have limited and safe access to the campuses.