



OCT Video Conferencing Guidelines

To: Presidents and All Members

From: Harvey Bischof, President

For Information

Pursuant to COVID-19 Update #3 and #10, and the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) [Video Conferencing Guidelines](#), OSSTF/FEESO would like to provide an update on further advice with respect to the use of online, virtual communication with students and families.

While much of the advice from the OCT adheres to previous advice from the College and OSSTF/FEESO, the risks raised in the new College document underscore the need for members to use their professional judgment to evaluate the appropriate use of technology applicable to their practice. Live videos do make members more vulnerable to unpredictable audience behaviour. Members may consider using techniques such as asynchronous pre-recorded videos, where technology permits. Communicating with students and families can happen effectively without the use of video, and if using a platform that includes video, covering up or turning off student and teacher webcams can also be considered, where appropriate. Teacher members are strongly advised to avoid having one-on-one video sessions with students because of the inherent risk associated with being alone with a student. As per the OCT Professional Advisory [Professional Misconduct of a Sexual Nature](#), members should avoid *seeing [a student] in private situations. Ensure classroom and office doors are open, that the student is not physically isolated from others, and that your interactions can be observed.* OSSTF/FEESO believes the same principles apply in virtual formats.

Since employer protocols differ from one school board to another, it is not possible to give consistent detailed advice to all members across the province. It is OSSTF/FEESO's position that members should exercise professional judgment on strategies and formats they use for curriculum delivery during this time in order to deliver the most effective and appropriate instruction. As noted in D/BU #105, *Implications of the Use of Video Streaming Platforms*, sent to local presidents, a specific list of "dos and don'ts" could result in members acting against the instructions of their employers in situations where school boards have directed that specific activities should occur. These situations could put members in jeopardy of discipline for insubordination. Therefore, members should follow the direction of the employer and contact their local Bargaining Unit immediately if they believe that employer-directed behaviour puts them at risk.

Members who are opting to use virtual spaces in their instruction should report any concerning behaviour directly to administration and should consider keeping a log of events to assist with classroom management tracking. For new or unfamiliar platforms, teachers may wish to practice with colleagues before going *live* with students. Members should also consider course content and context while planning lessons using video conferencing strategies.



If you have questions about this D/BU, please contact Peter Bates at peter.bates@osstf.ca or Jessica Burnie at jessica.burnie@osstf.ca.

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