What follows are the questions from the Parents & Families Town Hall meeting on Wednesday, August 12, 2020, Q&A forum that were answered off-screen by members of the Office of the Dean of the College (ODOC).

In addition to the information provided below, please see the following resources:

- Undergraduate Student FAQ
- Financial Aid FAQ
- Princeton Athletics FAQ (PDF)
- University Health Services
- Davis International Center

1. I’m a class of 2024 parent - would you please describe what a typical week of online classes and experiences might look like, feel like, sound like etc…?  

ODOC 06:39 PM

Welcome to Princeton! Our faculty will be teaching in creative ways — they may be delivering live lectures, conducting live discussions, leading “practica” or hands-on, experiential course elements, or holding office hours. In the sciences, faculty will send out “lab kits” to students to conduct at-home experiments. Faculty in the arts will use on-line platforms that allow for creative expression, rehearsals, and performance.

2. Would it be possible to reinstate the full week of fall break after mid-terms to help with mental health? Why is there a need to keep to the abbreviated calendar now that all students are remote? Thank you for considering this option.

ODOC 06:56 PM

The faculty adopted a revised academic calendar to minimize the comings and goings from campus for all populations -- faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergraduates. We still believe that to be an important piece of our public health measures. Therefore, we will not change the academic calendar.

3. any chance Princeton might offer TWO summers of on-campus teaching/ life to sort of “make up” the loss of that for current students?

ODOC 06:30 PM

Princeton is planning two 6-week summer sessions for Summer 2021. This is entirely new and still in development. We hope it will provide an opportunity for students to take courses on campus.

4. Every student was assigned a single with the de-densified plans- Why would quarantining for 14 days on arrival to campus not be manageable??
It is manageable, but the NJ Department of Health requirements for quarantine would limit the student to their bedrooms except to pick up meals from within the dorm, or for medical care. Most of the dorm rooms are not air conditioned.

5. Are all students on financial aid eligible for the off campus living expenses, or only students on a full ride?


This FAQ describes how the at home and off campus budgets work, including an update for first year students and juniors who recently learned about the change in fall plans.

6. There have been rumors that professors are happier to keep the undergrads off campus; they have their labs and their grad students. Of course, they would likely rather focus on their research.

While we cannot speak for all faculty, there were many faculty very much hoping to bring students back to campus. The faculty are committed to undergraduate teaching and would certainly prefer to teach in person as soon as conditions permit.

7. Thank you for doing this again. I appreciate the amount of work that you all have done to ensure the safety of all in the Princeton University community. I am certain that these are complex decisions and I trust that you are keeping the health and safety of all in mind, as well as the educational and campus experience of the students. Please be creative and bold in your thinking.

Thank you for urging us to be creative and bold. We have some very exciting new curricular and co-curricular opportunities for students (including our first-year students).

8. Could you please share the age of freshmen (class of 2024) who have asked for a deferral?

These are not numbers we plan to release at this time.

9. Will first year students be able to take 5 classes in the fall given that the limit of 4 classes is largely to allow time for students to be involved in extracurricular activities? If fully remote, first years may want to take an additional class. What is the limit on the number of classes for first year students in the spring?
First-year students take four courses in the fall of their first year. This allows them to adjust to the rigor of Princeton course load and have space to reflect on how they learn and what they are most interested in learning. In the spring, first-year students may choose to take 5 courses, and, by the spring term, they have a sense of how to manage a Princeton course load and what sorts of academic support they need to be their most successful. Students can discuss their course load at length with their Director of Studies and faculty adviser, who are there to support their choices and help them navigate our curriculum.

10. How would engineering classes be handled virtually?

ODOC 06:14 PM

Our faculty have several options for teaching experiential or lab courses online: for labs, for instance, they may choose to send their students at-home materials for their use or they may choose to focus on data analysis, rather than data collection. These are just two possibilities; we’re working closely with faculty to make experiential courses rich and robust.

11. Given that study groups are an important element of the students’ learning process, are there any steps Princeton are planning to foster this? Or will this be left up to the students to organize them?

ODOC 06:18 PM

Yes, we are! We are working closely with faculty and departments to “virtualize” study groups.

12. The freshmen seminars seem very limited in space. Students are not placed in multiple seminars. Given it’s remote learning, will there be more spaces or spring semester for the seminars?

ODOC 06:26 PM

There will be more opportunities in the spring; we are attempting to get almost all students into some small class in the fall.

ODOC 06:28 PM

There will be another set of Freshman Seminars offered in the spring. Also, first-years will have the opportunity to enroll in open seats on August 25th. As students finalize their fall schedules, we have lots of movement on first-year course enrollment day.

13. Can students take a ½ load in 2021/21 and then 2021/22 to stretch their freshmen year over 2 years if they start remote this fall?

ODOC 07:14 PM

Princeton does not permit part-time study, so it is not possible for a student to stretch out their first year of coursework across four semesters.
14. Physics, Chemistry, and Calculus are not typical virtual classes. These classes are best learned face to face. I have heard most virtual classes are pass/fail except if you are a BSE student. How is that fair to the incoming freshman BSE students?

ODOC 06:36 PM

Our faculty have creative ideas for teaching these courses online — including through the use of digital tools. Faculty may choose to designate their courses as P/D/F only, though departments may require courses taken for requirements to be taken for a grade.

15. Our sons and daughters have worked so hard to achieve the distinction of “attending” Princeton University. However, for many it felt like the University of Phoenix last spring. Please explain what will be done this fall semester academically so that our Tigers are truly getting a Princeton education.

ODOC 06:47 PM

Yes, certainly. We want our students to be fully engaged and rigorously challenged. Our faculty are prepared to teach on digital platforms and with digital tools in creative and novel ways. We are introducing new curricular and co-curricular experiences, as Dean Dolan indicated. Our faculty and students are reaching out to connect with our incoming and returning students.

16. How do you plan to address “Zoom fatigue” creatively?

ODOC 07:06 PM

Good question — faculty may choose to vary the pace and cadences of their classes by introducing new activities, new forms of peer engagement, and new experiential elements.

17. How will the lottery work? Will freshman who have already been given the one-year gap year, keep it or do they go into the lottery?

ODOC 06:17 PM

If a student was already granted a deferral, prior to the changes for the fall semester, they will be able to enroll in the year indicated in their deferral confirmation.

18. Other schools are prioritizing freshmen ... what is Princeton’s position on freshmen? They have no network, no connection with the Princeton community yet.

ODOC 06:43 PM

The first-years are already connected through the ClassPath online platform and the small group experiences. They are meeting with faculty advisers this week and will be involved in the Entryways program. We have many plans to keep them engaged!
19. Why has Princeton not refined its academic calendar to run academic semesters back-to-back until any incoming student “logjam” is addressed, potentially mitigating the need for any deferrals?

ODOC 06:11 PM

The changes to the academic calendar were instituted to minimize the comings and goings to campus for all populations - faculty, staff, graduate students and undergraduate students. Therefore, the recently passed calendar will not change.

20. Thank you for everything that you have done!

ODOC 06:21 PM

Thanks so much, A__!

21. I request that the decision to not let ROTC cadets return to campus this fall be revisited. These young men & women will be serving in harm’s way as early as June 2021. You are placing those future leaders at a great disadvantage by not allowing them to return to campus and train together with the cadre on campus. Zoom training does not suffice critical military training that cannot be satisfied this spring. My basis of knowledge comes from having worked with HQs Cadet Command and both my husband and I being Colonels (Retired). I respectfully ask that you revisit this decision. Lastly, as a school board member having to make similar decisions with our school district, I understand your concerns but believe this group of students can be exempted.

ODOC 07:16 PM

Army ROTC cadets will be invited to campus this fall.

22. How can student seek a research opportunity with remote learning?

ODOC 06:09 PM

We encourage students to work with their faculty adviser and with the Office of Undergraduate Research to identify remote research opportunities.

23. Will most classes be live or will they be prerecorded?

ODOC 07:10 PM

Faculty may choose to prerecord lectures as well as to lead live discussions, live problem-solving sessions, and live “practica” (or experiential) sessions.

24. Can you address how tutoring and writing support (through the McGraw Center) would be provided remotely, especially to help support new, first-year students adjusting to the curriculum? If students were living on campus, this support would be provided free of charge by Princeton.
It will still be free of charge; both the McGraw Center and Writing Center will offer their services remotely.

25. If a freshman already received confirmation back in May that they can defer and enter the university in fall ’21, is that all set or do they get thrown into the lottery?

If a student was already granted a deferral, prior to the changes for the fall semester, they will be able to enroll in the year indicated in their deferral confirmation.

26. Given that instruction will now be all on-line, can you please give some consideration to us in the West in scheduling? There are several 5:30 a.m. classes (PST) that put an undue burden on those not in the East.

Larger courses are creating precepts at non-standard times to support students in different time zones. We have also opened the 4:30 -7:30 pm ET block for this purpose. All live class sessions should be recorded for students to view. That said, small seminars may not work well for students in a distant time zone. They may wish to adjust their course selection to pick something that will work better for them.

27. Can students do a one semester leave?

One-semester leaves are generally not possible because of the structure of the curriculum.

28. Whether they get a one or two year leave; they still get the 48 hours?

Yes.

29. Can they just take one semester deferral?

First-year students will only be considered for full 1 year or 2-year deferrals.

30. When will we know about 1- or 2-year deferrals?

We will let students know as soon as we can. If they are granted a two-year deferral, they will be able to rescind their deferral request and rejoin the class of 2024.
31. *Freshman Seminars are not available to all. What else in the Entryways program is available?*

ODOC 07:22 PM

Enrollments in FRS options will shift as the semester begins. Many open spots will become available during the drop/add period, so there are still opportunities for students to enroll in one of these courses. Half of the first-year class will also be enrolled in a writing seminar, another small course experience. Other students may choose to take the HUM (Humanities) sequence or apply to a special Creative Writing seminar just for first-year students. In addition to these small seminar experiences, the Entryways program will include weekly “College 101” gatherings with all students in their “zee” (advisee) groups and a weekly webinar colloquia with their Heads of College and other faculty.

32. *How can science lab kits be sent safely overseas?*

ODOC 07:19 PM

The Environmental Health and Safety team is reviewing the kit contents to make sure they can be sent safely, both domestically and internationally.

33. *Can my junior request a leave for spring semester if he’s not invited back?*

ODOC 07:00 PM

Your student may take a one-year leave beginning spring 2021.

34. *What is the percentage of freshman who have sought a deferral?*

ODOC 07:02 PM

We are not releasing these numbers at this time.

35. *Any update on the ROTC cadets being on campus or not this Fall?*

ODOC 06:05 PM

Army ROTC cadets will be invited to campus this fall. Navy ROTC and Air Force ROTC have gone virtual for the fall semester, so those midshipmen and cadets will not be invited to campus this fall.

36. *Can ROTC students still live on campus this fall?*

ODOC 06:07 PM

Army ROTC cadets will be invited to campus this fall. Navy and Air Force ROTC have indicated they will be virtual this fall.

37. *When will student find out if she can return in Fall 2021 if applied for a gap year?*

ODOC 07:06 PM
We will let students know as soon as we can. If they are granted a two-year deferral, they will be able to rescind their deferral request and rejoin the class of 2024.

38. Was there ever a thought, not including grad students, to just have all undergraduates (or majority of those that don’t have hardship or other special circumstances) defer the year?

ODOC 06:20 PM

All undergraduates have the option to elect to take a leave. Some students will elect to take a leave; other students will wish or need to continue their progress to degree. We feel it is important to continue to provide a path to degree for those who wish to persist.

39. Re: Students requesting leave of absence and using a lottery to determine which students return after 1 year vs 2 years - how will students who are not the standard be treated? For example, seniors who are willing to live off campus, athletes who risk eligibility etc.?

ODOC 07:24 PM

We want to treat all students equitably.

40. Are students allowed to take a leave of absence starting with the spring semester (student would be on leave for S21 and F21)?

ODOC 06:21 PM

Students may request a leave for one year beginning in spring 2021.

41. is it possible to give current students more than 48 hours to decide re: their leave-of-absences? And when will students receive their response/notifications for their leave applications?

ODOC 07:25 PM

We need to know in 48 hours because we are so close to the beginning of the term. We hope to notify them next week.

42. If continuing students are approved for a one-year leave do they still get 48 hours to confirm?

ODOC 06:45 PM

Ye.s

43. I thought financial aid packages would be released before the deadline for requesting a leave of absence?

ODOC 06:42 PM

They are being released this evening, and you will hopefully have your award soon.

44. Relationship with faculty? What relationship with professors will students have in pre-recorded classes?
Although a number of courses do have pre-recorded lectures -- which will assist students in various time zones in accessing those lectures -- those courses also have synchronous precepts that will be much smaller than average, allowing closer interactions between students and instructional staff. Office hours will continue to be available to students enrolled in a course, and our faculty are developing creative and innovative ways to facilitate interactions with students, and among students themselves -- for instance, with more project-based, interactive assignments.

45. No clue why freshmen have only one day to select their courses.

First-year course selection always happens over one day so that we can be available in a central way for questions and support. This year, we have spread academic advising over the week before course enrollment. First-year students are having group meetings with their faculty advisers this week, and then have 1-1 meetings with their faculty advisers during the week of 17th, in which they will discuss their academic interests and pick their fall course load. On the 25th, they enroll in these courses, which they have discussed with their adviser the week before. The Colleges and registrar will be on hand in Zoom rooms all day to assist with questions as they come up, and the peer academic advisers are offering study-breaks and other check-ins throughout the advising and enrollment process.

First-year students have several days to plan fall semester courses. They will be advised in groups and in an individual session with the academic adviser beginning next week. They enroll on August 25, following the advising period. Then they have the first two weeks of the semester to explore courses.

46. I understand (hope) all classes will be recorded. But how will these groups for community participation adjust for various time zones?

Faculty may choose to schedule precepts and classes at a range of times (and precepts may be smaller); they may also integrate new forms of participation for students (including peer-to-peer engagement).

47. My student has heard NOTHING from the professors whose classes he’s enrolled in—regarding how they are going to conduct classes online.
I’m so sorry to hear it; you’re very welcome to be in touch with your student’s residential college staff (their dean or director of studies).

48. For students taking on a two-year deferral, will they be given the opportunity to come back after one-year in the case that Princeton invites all students back to campus for academic year 2021?

ODOC 06:50 PM

No, if a student is granted a 2-year deferral, their year of enrollment will be fall 2022.

49. Would the summer term be open to freshmen who decided to defer this year?

ODOC 07:13 PM

No, it would only be available to enrolled students.

50. Thank you so much for these meetings! The Princeton administration has definitely taken this situation seriously and responded accordingly to protect the health of all their Tigers. My ‘24 is very excited to start her first semester at Princeton, and she is already using the many resources that Princeton has provided to get herself involved in the Princeton community.

ODOC 07:24 PM

So glad to hear that! We are excited to welcome the Class of 2024.

51. Can you speak to the offerings which might be available for summer 2021? For example, given that IIP and other Princeton sponsored summer internship programs typically have their applications due in November, will this still be the expected timeline? Will there still be advising available for these programs?

ODOC 07:24 PM

We hope that public health conditions and travel restrictions will allow us to resume are typical international programs, including IIP and Global Seminars. We will communicate application timelines as needed.

52. Incoming freshman have not received their schedules to reach out to the faculty!

ODOC 07:21 PM

First-year students may reach out to faculty teaching courses they hope to enroll in. They will also have meetings with their faculty advisers next week.

53. Thank you for summer sessions!! Please have them in person if possible!

ODOC 07:20 PM

We certainly hope that public health conditions will permit on-campus summer courses in Summer 2021.
54. A big thank you to Princeton for being brave enough to lead in the decisions about returning to campus or not and for especially considering the complications that arise from our close knit residential housing community as compared to other universities that have substantial off campus housing.

ODOC 07:01 PM
Thanks for your support!

55. You just said that students taking LOA can take courses at other colleges - can this grade be applied to their Princeton GPA?

ODOC 07:00 PM
No, those courses will not appear on the Princeton transcript.

56. Who will be allowed to take summer classes?

ODOC 07:27 PM
Continuously enrolled students.

57. How should a Jr go about finding an advisor for the JPs?

ODOC 07:09 PM
Assigning advisers for the junior independent work happens differently in various departments -- these methods of matching students with advisers will still continue virtually, in ways that are tailored to the practices of different departments. Students with can contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies in their department with specific questions.

58. As to the arts - more than “discussions,” how are these practiced online? How does someone play an instrument in an ensemble? Will there be private lessons? How do theater and dance majors do their work?

ODOC 07:16 PM
Private lessons shifted to virtual instruction this past spring and continued. Theater, dance, and studio classes are adjusting to virtual teaching and performance.

59. If freshmen are granted a deferral how long will they have to make a decision?

ODOC 07:07 PM
A first-year granted a one-year deferral will automatically be placed in the Class of 2025. There will be no opportunity to rescind their request. A first-year granted a two-year deferral would have a brief window to rescind.

60. Can students who are not on Financial Aid apply for the $3,000 stipend living off campus?
The off-campus budget pertains only to students on financial aid.

61. If our child requests to defer a year, how soon will they learn whether they can return in 2021 versus 2022?

We will let students know as soon as we can. If they are granted a two-year deferral, they will be able to rescind their deferral request and rejoin the class of 2024.

62. If you are a NJ resident and restrictions are relaxed, will it be a possibility to commute to classes, even if housing is not allotted?

No. For the fall 2020 term all undergraduate instruction will be remote.

63. International students cannot enter the US although they have F1-VISA?

Continuing international students may take an all-remote program, either in the U.S. or in their home country. This is not an option for first-year students, who must enroll in at least one in-person course to meet the conditions for their visa. I recommend you contact the Davis International Center for advice and guidance on visa issues.

64. What were the thoughts on PCR testing arriving students, as a means to obviate need for quarantining? Including going to the state of NJ and receiving exemption from quarantining for students who were PCR negative.

NJ Department of Health does not allow negative test results to reduce the length of quarantine. Anyone required to quarantine due to exposure or travel must do so for the entire 14 days.

65. What is the latest you would notify students of 1 or 2 year, for existing students?

As soon as possible and before the beginning of the term.

66. Is the school prepared to officially confirm there will be no NCAA athletics since the school is unwilling/unable to have students back on campus?
The Ivy League announced on July 8 that there will be no competition across the athletic conference this fall.


67. Could you reach out to certain communities / countries to encourage the students to work as a team, either remotely or in a bubble?

ODOC 06:59 PM

Yes — as Dean Dolan is saying right now, our faculty are being very creative. They may choose to assign research-intensive or project-based work, with a team-based focus. It could also be that local communities might gather Princeton students to work together if local public health guidelines allow.

68. What is the plan for the January session?

ODOC 06:36 PM

We are planning virtual activities for Wintersession 2021.

69. Will the academic schedule be changed now that the fall semester is entirely online?

ODOC 06:35 PM

No, we will stick with the academic calendar recently approved by the faculty.

70. What are you doing to help Freshman to smoothly transition and especially the ones have undecided majors to explore their interests? Freshman need to be put on the priority list for Spring. Have you considered to delay the deadline for declaring majors?

ODOC 06:59 PM

All first-years student just completed an online academic advising course, led by their Peer Academic Advisers, and structured around discussion of and reflection about academic exploration. Now, they are meeting with their faculty advisers to continue this exploration, which will be supported by their Director of Studies, faculty adviser, peer advisers, and departmental events and open houses throughout the year. Next week, the Academic Expo launches, a weeklong event of Zoom “office hours,” Zoom presentations, and an asynchronous online Canvas course of information, downloadable handouts, and insights from students. This Expo will be an exciting moment of exploration for our first-year students. Our AB students don’t decide their concentration (major) until the end of their sophomore year.

71. If there are students living in Princeton this fall who are taken a gap year, they are NOT allowed to use the library? What about if they are enrolled and are online?
Students who are not invited to campus for the fall will have the same access to facilities as the general public.

72. How many courses will be the maximum that freshmen can be enrolled in this semester? Is it 4 or 5 courses?

First-year students typically take four courses in their first semester.

73. Will the summer session be required?

No, summer session would be optional.

74. Is it correct that freshmen classes are now mostly PDF?

All courses will allow the PDF option, unless they are listed as PDF only. Students should consult with their faculty adviser or director of studies to determine if prerequisite courses for departmental concentrators need to be taken for a letter grade.

All courses for the fall term will include the option for students to elect PDF grading (which won’t count against the four PDFs permitted during a student’s career), but this is not restricted to courses for first-years. Departments and certificates will generally expect students to take required courses for a letter grade.

75. Will the number of courses that freshmen will be advised to take this semester change due to the remote setting of the semester?

No, they should take a normal course load.

76. As an incoming freshman, is there an option to defer for a semester rather than a year or 2 years?

No, deferral is only for one year or two.

77. Will the grading system remain the same remotely as it was in-person?

All courses will have the PDF option, unless a faculty member has listed it as PDF-only.