

## Discussion Framework for Community Conversations

Dear student group, living group, autonomous collective, anarcho-syndicalist commune, [insert designation of choice!]:

On behalf of the UA Committee on COVID-19 (hereafter abbreviated to “committee”), thank you for taking the time to organise a community conversation. We know that this is a ridiculously stressful time for several reasons — not the least of which is a widespread sentiment that individual voices are being drowned out. Between long emails, vast town halls, and endless surveys, important perspectives are getting lost, overheard, or diluted. The traditional forms of outreach limit decision-making because they remove the context from thousands of your opinions, making it challenging to see common trends and slowing analysis. Well, tough times call for new alternatives. We’re going to try something new, and we ask for your help in accomplishing it:

We believe that documenting students’ opinions on the scale of communities will allow us to better amplify your interests and specific needs. By helping us collect the outcomes of decentralised conversations into a central location, you will help us build a launchpad from which we can begin distilling your thoughts into actionable policy recommendations as quickly as possible, making it more likely for MIT administration to take your voice into consideration.

We believe that all our community members have critically important perspectives. As MIT students, we are a group of critical thinkers and highly intelligent individuals. This document is a framework for getting the voice of your community — and by extension, your voice — heard.

### **Suggested use:**

We hope that you will use this document as a template for your discussion. We have attempted to compile topics relevant to imminent and important decisions, and questions that we would appreciate direct input on. So that we can collate your opinions as best as possible, we ask that you:

1. Copy the list of questions into your own google doc.
2. Appoint a scribe to take minutes and to synthesize the biggest takeaways from your conversations for us.
3. Conduct the conversation as you see fit, with the overarching objective of identifying your community’s opinions on the topics, and if possible, answering some or all of the questions (there may be more than one answer per community.)
4. Have fun(?!!)
5. Sharing the document to anyone with the link, and submitting it (as a link!) in this google form (<https://forms.gle/H8QbVQKRPCjcWX4PA>), along with the name of your community.

### **Limitations:**

- We operate off the assumption that people in given communities share a common interest or experiences. An individual may have different needs to the rest of the community. If there is such an exception, or there is a strong disagreement within groups in the community, please mention it in your minutes.

## FRAMEWORK

### Contents

1. Reference materials (for use anytime pre-discussion, peri-discussion, or post-discussion!)
2. Suggested topics for discussion, many of which MIT administration has specifically requested input on.
3. A series of essential questions.
4. A google form where you can submit a link to meeting minutes.

### Reference materials:

For getting up-to-date on the most recent developments:

MIT:

- Official COVID-19 website: <https://covid19.mit.edu/>
- UA Committee on COVID-19 Resources: <http://tinyurl.com/mitcovidresponse>
- UA Recommendations: <http://ua.mit.edu/resources-documents>
- IDSS Research (helpful when thinking around public health):  
<https://idss.mit.edu/research/idss-covid-19-collaboration-isolat>

Peer Institutions:

- Harvard: <https://www.fas.harvard.edu/fas-fall-2020-planning>
- Boston University: <https://www.bu.edu/back2bu/>

If you would like a member of the committee represented at your community conversation, please reach out to us at [ua-covid19@mit.edu](mailto:ua-covid19@mit.edu). We'd be happy to help!

### Suggested Topics

1. Academics
  - a. Grading schema in the Fall (P/NR? Optional P/NR? Regular grading? Other?)
  - b. On-campus activities (UROP? Lab classes?)
2. Housing
  - a. What's important to you?
  - b. What are your plans as a community?
  - c. What are you worried about?
  - d. How should "need" be assessed for who comes back? (e.g. by year group, by major, classes, by living or learning conditions? If it's a combination thereof, how might you weigh them??)
3. COVID-19 Considerations
  - a. Thoughts on the measures for community public health. Too stringent? Too lax?
  - b. Which ones would you not comply with and why if any?
  - c. What kind of enforcement do you think would be appropriate?
  - d. What kind of data are you comfortable being used for contact-tracing? (e.g. location, medical...)
4. Community-specific considerations
  - a. E.g. Cook for yourself, athletics, performance art, social, etc.
  - b. How are you planning on including freshmen in your community? Do you think it's possible for them to have a holistic experience, and why?

### Essential Questions

1. Which aspects of the upcoming Fall 2020 decisions would have the greatest impact on your community's plans, and why?

2. What are the most important ways you believe MIT should support your community?
3. How has being remote impacted your community in Spring 2020, and what strategies have you found especially useful?
4. How do you envision the “new normal” at MIT? In what ways do you believe we can use the pandemic to make lasting, beneficial changes?
5. What about your community makes you happy? :-)