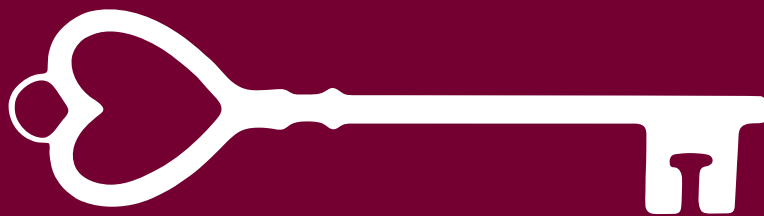




MacSecrets



MacSecrets is an annual campaign that allows students to share their emotions, struggles, and advice.

Created by the Mental Health Wellness Outreach Team

MacSecrets

MacSecrets is an annual campaign that allows students to share their emotions, struggles, and advice.

The goal of this initiative is to show students that they are not alone and give them a place to safely (and anonymously) share their feelings.

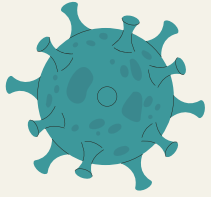
This year, we asked you to tell us about your experiences with returning to in-person learning!



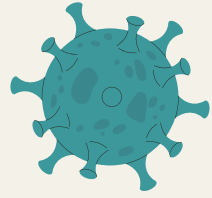
Question 1

How have you been impacted by the uncertainty of the pandemic? How have things changed for you since the transition to in-person learning?





During the Pandemic



Ever since the lockdown in March 2020, I have been attending virtual sessions. Things changed drastically since there were no in-person components. My studying method changed since I have to stay at home and do not have to memorize certain things. My social connections also suffered because I don't get to meet new people.

It made me lose a lot of optimism for the future, that's for sure. For almost 2 years I felt some sort of depressed.

The transition has been hard cause I got into such a rhythm of what I need to do to navigate the education system before the pandemic started. Once it began it felt like that rhythm was taken away and I'm now navigating the system all over again with a better understanding for my needs but not knowing how to talk to profs when it comes to telling them that I can't physically make myself focus.

Transitioning to In-Person Learning

The transition to in-person learning has not only been difficult, but anxiety-inducing. Students must change the way they learn and take notes, but they now also have the looming fear of not passing their required courses due to uncontrollable circumstances.

It's honestly been very difficult transitioning to in person learning because for the longest time I've been doing school online.

.. I'm also terrified of in-person examinations.

The uncertainty has made me feel anxious, as we have all seen that things in our community and guidelines can change, quite literally, at any moment. I have felt more at ease about the possibility of these changes with the return of in person classes, but the residual anxiousness is still making its slow exit. Going back to a real lecture hall after a 2 year break was a bit more mentally and physically shocking than I was anticipating.

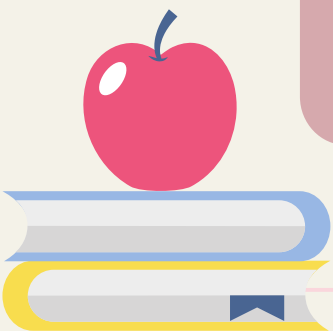
Transitioning to In-Person Learning

Since the return to in person learning (my first in person experience since joining McMaster), I feel refreshed. I feel that I'm able to better pay attention to my classes and better concentrate on the content. In addition, I feel like my social life has been revived.

I have to be much more aware of travel time when scheduling so I'm not as productive. I feel like everyone is so excited to go back that I'm wrong to feel nervous or disrupted by it

I have been impacted by the uncertainty. It has just been alot more tiring with in person learning.

Very difficult to put things into schedule because of the changes. In person learning disrupted my well established routine and im not doing great.





Transitioning to In-Person Learning

When I got to McMaster In the fall it felt amazing to be surrounded by people again and to have a few in-person classes. Now that everything is in person I love meeting people and am really enjoying life!

I think I'm feeling a lot more stressed trying to adjust to all the changes (online then in person) and changing my schedule to accommodate for balancing everything I think after the transition I haven't really had much time to do a lot of things I liked bc by the end of the day I'm already too tired and have school work to do "

"I have been waiting for in person learning for a couple years not unlike everyone else and finally being back to it is both rewarding and scary at the same time and that's okay. I love being back on campus but it definitely does come with its challenges. I think what I have learned most from this experience is that we cannot take anything for granted."



Transitioning to In-Person Learning

Personally, virtual classes were a lifesaver as I commute from home and it was way more time efficient to have all my courses online. I find all the lectures hall too small for me as too many people areis crammed into one room. My time management is a mess as driving back and forth is tiresome. Some days I have class in the morning, and then in the afternoon

Because of the pandemic, my short summer vacation to visit family in Asia was extended to 1 year and a half. When school was hybrid, I felt that I adjusted pretty easily. I love the flexibility of working at home and at school. When school transitioned to in-person, I had a hard time adjusting. I wasn't used to living in Hamilton with strangers, going to class with a lot of people and at a set time during the day. My peaceful rhythm was lost, and I couldn't focus in class in-person. After a week of hard struggling, I decided to go back home and keep school hybrid for myself. I returned to watching lectures online when I felt ready and only went to school for in-person labs.”

Transitioning to In-Person Learning

it's such a relief to feel like things are returning to normal - with the warm weather I've seen people hanging out outside on campus for the first time in years. but it's very scary to wonder if we will lose it again

Before university, I was not feeling the impact of the pandemic because I was just working and doing some courses online. But when we got into lockdown in the beginning of January that hit me hard, my anxiety was worse than ever, especially because I am a first year who lives off campus so I could not see my friends frequently. Honestly, I do not like the 100% in person classes, I prefer blended so I have more time to do other responsibilities at home and work.

It's been difficult studying as I am not used to having to take notes in person

Health Concerns



I've definitely been more fearful for my health and how I may impact the health of those around me...

The uncertainty of the pandemic has increased my stress and anxiety levels. As a student with a disability, remote learning improved accessibility in my learning delivery and I felt safe at home despite the spread of the virus. Now that we are back in-person, I have to remain extra vigilant about not contracting the virus.

Lots of fear and anxiety around covid as I live with older people

Uncomfortable with the number of people on campus (i.e. lab overfilled even for pre-covid capacity limitations)



Income

The uncertainty of the pandemic has been really hard on me financially and mentally. My dad lost his job during the pandemic and hasn't been able to find a new one. I'm now wondering if I should get a job but I'm worried about balancing school and work"

Had to adjust to being at home and staying in for long periods of time. Affected my income significantly -- decreased income -- which created more stress. Making it difficult for me to focus on education. Things have not changed as of it. My classes are still remote.



Housing

The uncertainty of the pandemic made the decision to sign/not sign a lease difficult.

I had to pay rent for months that I wasn't in Hamilton to secure housing for winter last year and this school year. Transitioning to in person has been a little rough since I need to commute to school and the increase in the number of people was very sudden


Strategies

There has been a lot of changes in provincial public health guidelines, and what really helped me was keeping in touch with Ontario Government's and McMaster's social media accounts to stay informed of all the upcoming changes.



Question 2

What are some strategies you used to make the transition to in-person learning easier?



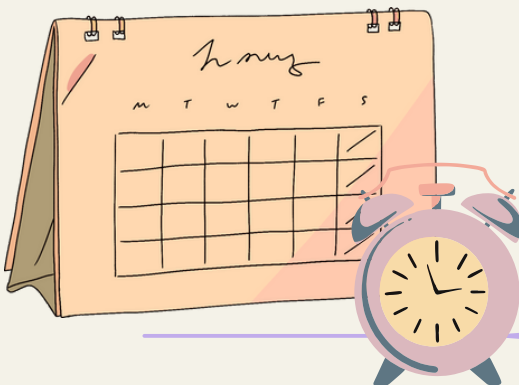
Staying Organized

I use a laptop to take all of my notes instead of notebooks. I motivate myself to wake up anytime for early classes by committing to go to the gym, I try to collaborate with classmates in-person more often than online.

Waking up early to prepare for the day, meal prep.

Agenda book and protected time.

In terms of note-taking, I transcribe notes from PowerPoint slides prior to attending class so that I can have a general understanding of the content to be discussed and so that I can listen more closely to the professor.



Staying Organized

I try to stick to a routine, keep to do lists, calendars, pack stuff ahead of time

I set weekly alarms before all my classes and continued to use my agenda.

Studying by copying down notes with paperwork.

I have been trying to communicate frequently and openly with my course instructors to let them know about my SAS accommodations and personal concerns with the transition to in-person learning.



Staying Healthy

Packing my own food, taking time to rest at home.

Take breaks when you need to, go at your own pace and remember that nothing is a race.

having a healthy diet - exercise every week (at least 30 minutes every 3 to 4 days)

Take breaks when you need to, go at your own pace and remember that nothing is a race.

Journalling, practicing honesty in everyday life.



You're Not Alone

I've tried to make new friends by talking with people in my lectures and tutorials to make in person learning a bit easier.

I had open conversations with my friends, family, and peers to help me talk about and face these feelings of uncertainty I was having during the first week of classes. They all helped to assure me that I'm not the only one feeling this way and that it is 100% normal to feel like this, we've been through a pandemic!

Remember everyone's in the same boat.

Honestly, just reconnecting with my friends, profs, and TAs face to face

What made transitioning easier for me is to walk to campus with my housemates or meet up with friends that are attending the same classes as me. that way I don't feel alone in it all and I am not going about my day all by myself."

In-Person Learning

Still watching recorded lectures when needed.

Going to some in person classes, and doing other online when I can. Still doing hybrid.



Opportunities and Campus Space

I am trying my best to transition and be open to more opportunities on campus.


I think being on campus and going to libraries more made it easier to see myself as a Mac student again!





Question 3

What are some ways
that someone helped
you during the
transition to in-person
learning?



Emotional support

Gave me words of reassurance, knowing I am not alone.

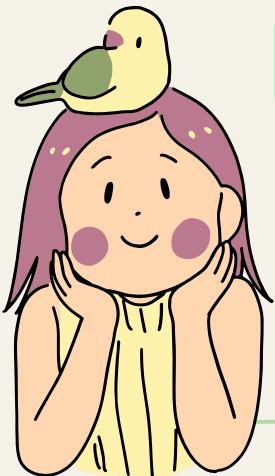
The people that I love in my life just giving me the outer reassurance I needed that everything is going to be okay and to take things one step at a time

Having close ones listen to me helps a lot.

Talking and complaining together.

Holding space through messages, being reactive and supportive

Just talking about the struggle, understanding that we are all kinda flying by the seat of our pants






Informational support

My best friend made the transition significantly better by helping me my courses that she took the year before in person.

My classmates have been a great help during the transition. Walking to/from classes we discuss anything we didn't understand about the content, encourage each other. Also, going out with friends for fun rather than schoolwork is a great mental relief from class.

Friends have informed me about areas on campus where face masks are available or where MacCheck is being verified. It makes me feel more safe on campus.

I don't think I had any struggle to do so, but I guess my friends gave me some confidence to meet new people in lectures



Support from Faculty

Supportive professors that agreed with my views.

Profs allowing online attendance for classes, it helped me dodge a bullet (lab partner caught covid).

Prior to switching online, I had two professors (for the same course) verbally and electronically explain where to go on campus, certain landmarks to look out for, and how exactly to fill out a scantron (first class back was a midterm).


Professors continuing to record, my department opened a lounge for students to eat/work.





Question 4

What is one piece of advice you would give to yourself at the beginning of the Fall 2021 Semester, knowing what you know now?



Time Management

Be sure to allocate for travel time and in-person exhaustion!!

Obvious enough don't skip lectures.

Sleep early and start early for all your deadlines.

Wake up early. When you wake up early, the day is longer and you can do so much more.

Keep organized, do not procrastinate.

Get an ADHD assessment and learn new management skills that can better help you rather than making you stressed cause they don't work 100% of the time.



Patience

Be patient with yourself, your peers, and all campus faculty. Everyone is going through the big changes and accepting one another makes the transition from online to in person all the more beneficial.

Online school is boring, but it will be 100x better come February, it's worth the wait.

Go at your own pace. I have constantly been comparing my education and career path to those around me, but the reality is that no one is living the same life as me, nor am I living the life of someone else. I am meant to find and follow my own path, just like you are meant to find and follow your own path. There is no "right" way to get your education, no "right" way to keep your health in check, no "right" way to take steps in your own life! What's right is what feels right to you and what is best for you in the long run.



Words of Wisdom



Stay hungry, stay foolish, and be bold.

It will get better!

Relationships may change, but there are always benefits to these changes, even if you can't see them at first.

Your grade is never going to be as perfect as high school, don't cry yourself to sleep when you receive multiple 70s. It's the new normal.

Continue to be bold and speak your mind even if no one else will

All will be well.

It will be so weird but it is so nice!!

There will never be the same normal as precovid, but there WILL be a normal in the pandemic, and life can still go on despite it being different than expected!

Health and Wellness

Keep following the COVID guidelines.

Meal prep.

- To buy more easy pre-made food (sandwich ingredients such as lettuce, tomato and meat)
- study room in Thode is a good spot to study
- check out the top floor of the art quad and the MDCL buildings.

I moved out of my student house and back home after the first in-person week. The day I made this change, I felt defeated even though this was the right decision for myself. Now, I am very grateful for my decision, because I live, work and rest best at home.

That it is a good idea that I started stocking up on face masks and hand sanitizer early on. I would also recommend myself to take the booster shot that I got over the winter break since the Omicron variant was unexpected.
