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# Memorandum

**To:** All Faculty, All Staff  
**From:** <AssocDeanAcad@schulich.yorku.ca> AD Academic  
**Date:** Monday, March 15, 2021

**Re:** Memo: Student Video Privacy

Dear Instructors,

In light of emerging concerns regarding online student privacy, we'd like to highlight York University's stance preventing the mandating of student camera use during online classes.

Students have reported discomfort with their names, faces, and homes being recorded and / or shared while attending lectures. They have also reported "Zoom fatigue" with their curricular, co-curricular, and social activities largely being conducted via web-conferencing. Early in the pandemic, York provided an [Online Learning Protocol for York University Students](#) regarding the use of cameras and name displays when meeting remotely. While students are **encouraged** to have their cameras on during synchronous class sessions (i.e. over Zoom) to help build social interaction and class engagement, **'students are not required to have their camera on during most meetings'**. If students have privacy concerns about their data, instructors are encouraged to suggest any of the below potential resolutions:

1. Replacing their background with a [virtual background](#) (Please note, not all students will have computers capable of using this feature) or a static image such as a profile photo, to avoid a view into students' living spaces.
2. Using [nonverbal communication](#) during live lectures or tutorials to actively participate.
3. Optionally providing only their first name, or a nickname, when joining a session. If so, students should still identify themselves prior to the lecture for participation purposes.

If there is an expectation or course component that requires students to have a camera on during class time (ex: conducting a presentation), instructors should state this requirement within the course syllabus at the outset of the course. Students must be aware of any course requirement(s) ahead of time via the course syllabus so they can make any necessary arrangements to fully participate. If students are unable to adhere to the outlined requirements, they should advise their instructor at the beginning of the course and also contact Student Services to determine what accommodations, if any, can be made. We encourage instructors to only request webcam use when it will best facilitate course learning outcomes. Given the nature of students' remote environment, they should not be penalized for lack of webcam use. Instructors should allow nonverbal communications in order to assess participation.

We hope this email has provided some clarity on York University's official stance regarding mandating webcam use as well as potential resolutions. If you have any further questions, please contact the ADA office at [ada@schulich.yorku.ca](mailto:ada@schulich.yorku.ca).