MCS Town Hall Notes

MCS Town Hall

On November 16th, 2020, the MCS clubs and societies held an MCS Town Hall where students could come and ask questions to the administration of the department, the professors, and upper year student leaders. In this document, you'll find the answers to questions relating **Academics**, **Internships**, **PEY**, **Professional Life**, **Student Life**, and more!

Contents

Academics

When will we get to know the cut-offs for the CS POSt? 😜

Late May.

Someway, somehow, now that course delivery is mostly online would it be possible to offer second year CS courses in the summer at UTM OR to have the St. George/Scarborough campuses increase the number of students that can enrol in the online courses?

We want to offer some second year courses to let people catch up (CSC209, CSC258), but this is depending on resources/faculty availability.

Regarding St. George courses: you cannot take CSC148 nor MAT102 at St. George/UTSC or from other universities.

What is considered a good enough CGPA to maintain for Math Specialist?

The entry requirements for August for 2020 was ~2.6 CGPA, so assume it will not be lower than that! There are also required courses that need passing/have cut-offs.

Is taking MAT136 in the summer a problem?

No, take it any time!

Will we see a huge increase in post requirements due to the effect of COVID on teaching and examinations?

We're not sure. We have fewer students this year applying (most likely due to COVID), so we don't know how well they're doing online compared to face-to-face right now. We suspect NOT.

Are there any advantages to doing CS specialist over CS major other than having to have additional programs when doing a CS major?

The Major gives you more flexibility than the specialist, and requirements for getting into POSt are the same! Employers don't even know the difference between Major and Specialist, so do whatever works better for you.

Can I take courses at a different campus?

There are courses offered at St. George/UTSC that aren't offered at UTM; these are fine to take as long as you meet their prerequisites (sometimes they're different.) There needs to be enough space in the course. Also, double check your degree requirements to ensure that you can properly substitute courses for those at other campuses.

Relevant websites to check:

- https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/math-cs-stats/current-students/programs-and-courses/course-equivalents

  http://transferex.utoronto.ca/trans-nav/#/

Is there a penalty if I drop my course? Is there a limit on how many courses I can drop?

Tuition fees are the real big penalty. There's a deadline to when you can drop a course and not have it appear on your transcript. Can also Late Withdrawals (LWD) but it does appear on your transcript that you were enrolled in the course and LWD-ed. Students may request to withdraw from a course via the LWD option from a total of no more than 3.0 credits.

More information about dropping courses:

- https://student.utm.utoronto.ca/calendar//calendar_detail2.pl?Topic=Dropping%20Courses

Hello profs, what's the best path for someone who is interested in robotics?

Do well in your math courses, and love calculus and linear algebra! If that's fulfilled, you're on a good path! You can take the introduction to robotics course in third year (CSC376 – Fundamental of Robotics), and there are many courses to choose after that. There's more robotics courses offered in winter, and there are interesting fourth year courses as well! If you want to get involved with robotics before 3rd year, check out the UTM Robotics Club!

Would you recommend I do my summer classes earlier or later?

Depends on your life and your plans for the summer. Usually courses in the summer are pretty limited (CSC148 only.)

This question is for CS POSt. Let's say I get the required marks in MAT102 and CSC148, but I am unable to get the required over CGPA mark. What will the next steps be? Will I have to retake MAT102 and CSC148 or will I only have to get a good CGPA in 2nd year?

> The cut off for MAT102 and CSC148 are decided every year, and next year may be different. If your CGPA is really close after April, consider applying for POSt in August and take a course over the summer to not wait for the next year.

How to make ENG110 count for the writing requirement for CS post?

> ENG100 can replace CSC290. As long as listed in the calendar, you can just go ahead and take it. No need to do anything else, it's already programmed in Degree Explorer. These are the courses we accept to substitute for CSC290H5: CCT110H5, ENG100H5, ENG110Y5, HSC200H5, HSC300H5, LIN204H5, WRI173H5 and WRI203H5.

How many times can I retake a course for POSt?

> The maximum number of times you can pass a course is twice. For example, say you get 65% the first time, and 77% the second time, you will no longer be able to take the course - even if you didn't meet the POSt cut off.
> You'll have to enroll through the Office of the Registrar if you passed the first time.

Why is it that students have to wait till the end of the year to know the POSt requirements? Doesn't that make the year even more stressful than it already is? Does UofT really care about our mental health or is it just for the looks?

We need to wait for marks and student CGPA to come out before determining cut-off. Also, we need to know how many students applied to determine what the min CGPA and marks should be.

At UTM, we want to provide as much support for students, mentally and academically. If you trust a professor enough, feel free to email them and talk to them about any difficulties you're dealing with. Alternatively, you can contact the HCC to make a same day appointment for some counselling at the link below.

- https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/health/health-counselling-centre

Are there any gaming courses?

These courses haven't been offered in a long time (it's CSC404 in the academic calendar), but it most likely won't be offered any time soon. Once in a while, CSC490 tackles gaming though. It's not something that can be offered on a whim, but the downtown campus also has a few "Gaming" related courses like CSC417, if you're interested.

Why is it CSC108 and not CSC101?

No idea! 😛

I couldn't find much information online on Business, Science, and Entrepreneurship minor program. Is there anything you could tell us about this minor program (when combined with programs like CS, stats)?

They are minors designed for students that are in science related majors, and in terms of the courses that you take, some are basic to business related areas like HR, accounting, etc., and some are more particular to STEM and business ventures. It's a really great program! For the business minor, you can apply for your science POSt and business minor at the same time. They'll check to see if you're enrolled in a science POSt before considering you for the business minor. *If you're interested in the Business minor:*

- https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/imi/programs/minor-business-science-and-entrepreneurship

I'm a first year and want to study Finance. I want to work a quantitative job that combines finance and programming. Can you suggest upper year courses relevant to my goals? If I could only choose a minor in stats or CS, which would be better?

A lot of finance courses are only for upper years, but the business minor is most likely the best choice for combining finance and programming. Which one is better is up to you and your life plans. ☺

CSC290 appears on the search bar on ACORN but it says no meeting sessions, is it not offered during the winter?

CSC290 has been cancelled for the winter session of 2020.

How was the start of teaching CS in UofT? Was Python always used in the first year courses?

It was Java until 2007, and then they switched to Python 2 (which took a whole summer to do). Especially because there are students taking this course that aren't necessarily going into CS or Stats, Python has a lot of libraries and modules that can be used in some really cool ways, so Python is pretty cool!

If we get into CS major could we re-apply for Specialist? Or is it done for the person.

You can email Yvette Ye to move from one of the CS Specialists to the CS Major or from CS Specialist to Info. Sec. Specialist, but to go from Major to Specialist, you need to reapply for specialist! You can request to change before you apply for graduation, there's no hurry to make the decision.

Why does POSt exist at all when there are better solutions like raising admission requirements / adding a supplementary application (engineering)?

One of the biggest things is grade inflation. Adding a supplementary application would create an even more competitive program.

Why was CSC290 cancelled for next term?

We just had to! There's limitations to how many courses each prof can teach.

By next year, do we have to choose a POSt? What if we choose a major in second year and we do some courses, can you switch to another major or minor?

Yes, you need to apply for a POSt before starting your 2nd year. As long as you meet their entry requirements, you can enrol in any program whenever you want. There might be exceptions such as Management programs. They restrict some of their first year courses to their own students. There are some majors that do not have any requirements & you can apply to them as soon as you have 4 credits.

Internships, PEY, and Professional Life

Any advice on getting CS related professional experience (internships, PEY)? When do you suggest students start looking/applying for intern positions? What minimum skills are needed?

Students usually apply after 2nd year. Students usually go on PEY after 3rd year. They MUST come back to school as a full time student after PEY. It depends on what your end goal is in terms of what you want to be able to learn and what skills you want to apply!

How can I become a TA?

Profs will look for how you've performed in class, how you interact with people, and how excited you are about the material! Profs also talk to each other! ☺

CSSC

Student Life and Miscellaneous Questions

How do I stay motivated?

It helps to really think about why the heck you're doing what you're doing! We're all extremely privileged to study at and work at this university, and remembering why you're doing this is a great way to stay motivated towards what you're doing!

Student leader answer: Lower years sometimes mistakenly think that upper years have things under wraps and get their assignments done in a day, things like that. This isn't necessarily always the case. Look at the big picture. Use schedules and calendars to stay on track. Stay motivated with peers. Do "group studies". Work in silence with your peers like a library vibe.

Do you think that potentially being in a relationship could negatively impact my grades? If so, should I not date anyone for the next 4 years?

Find the right person? But absolutely! Go date!

@Dan Zingaro: Who's your favourite TA?

All of the CSC148 TAs are awesome! (Nice save.)

Are y'all planning to use proctoring for any exams now/ and in the future? I've heard there were many technical problems in the past.

For faculty who were present, they all said no for their classes.

Why does UofT pretend that they care about our mental health, when they have not even addressed the suicide a fellow student at UofT last week?

Why did UofT not address the suicide case they had last week?

> We do care! If you are in need of help, please seek it! You must be responsible for your own well-being. Your health is priority number one. UTM is implementing many new mental health resources like UTM's P2P.
>
> The MCS community is deeply saddened by the news. An official statement was released by New College here:
>
> - http://www.newcollege.utoronto.ca/news/important-notice-for-the-new-college-community/

Regarding AI and Robotics, what are the dangers that we may face in the future? Are you worried about it?

> Not worried about it. We have our laws and ethics. We know what's doable and what isn't. "We're not even close".

Do you think you can handle the enrolment spike in the CS programs while still pushing people towards the industry away from academics as you do?

> We aren't sure. There's a shortage of CS Profs right now, because most CS students/professionals end up in industry or working in CS incubators/startups. Because there's a shortage of resources, we try to combat the spike by reducing the number of students admitted. It's not ideal but it's what's currently implemented. It wouldn't be fair if we admitted a bunch of students and didn't have enough resources for them.

What is the future of Computer Science going to be like?

Who knows? The future is bright :)

For more questions, check out CSSC's Ask Jack! Your one stop shop for answers to your burning questions and resources that are relevant to YOU and YOUR needs!

https://cssc.utm.utoronto.ca/ask-jack