

Before we get started



Let us know if you can hear us when we do **Audio checks**



Download **Presentation Slides** at uoft.me/ctsi-videos



Turn on live captions if you would like closed captioning (see screenshot for details)

During the webinar



Your **microphone** will be muted until Q&A at the end of the session



Type questions and comments into the **Chat**

Teaching with Quercus: Managing Online Discussions of Difficult Topics

Following the webinar

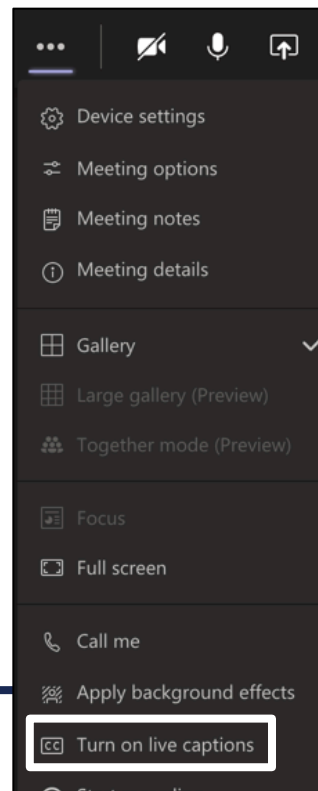


View **Session Recording** at uoft.me/ctsi-videos in 2 business days



Complete **Feedback Survey** (link sent via email)

Welcome!



Teaching with Quercus: Managing Online Discussions of Difficult Topics

Cristina D'Amico and Justin Fletcher
February 17, 2021

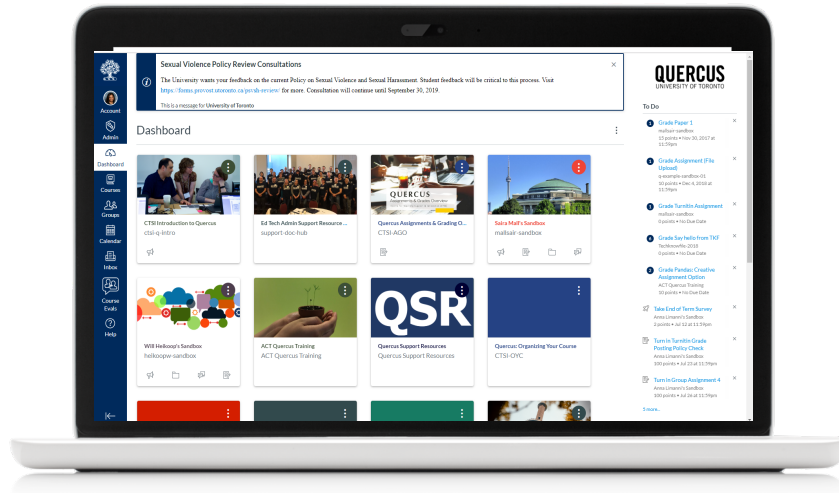


UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

CENTRE FOR TEACHING SUPPORT & INNOVATION

Land acknowledgement

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.



QUERCUS

The University of Toronto's Academic Toolbox

QUERCUS



Organize content

Connect and
communicate



The Academic Toolbox helps you...



Assess student work
and provide feedback

Teach from a distance



In this webinar:

1

Plan and organize conversations of difficult subject matters that support students in achieving course learning outcomes

2

Implement strategies for facilitating asynchronous and/or synchronous discussions

3

Select approaches that support you and your students in having difficult conversations

4

Lead a discussion debrief to consolidate student learning

Quick poll

I feel comfortable facilitating online discussions.

Teaching with Quercus: Managing difficult conversations online

Discussion planning handout

This document is a companion to the webinar, **Teaching with Quercus: Managing Difficult Conversations Online** (October 6, 2020), offered by the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation. Session materials, including a complete reference list, are available at uoft.me/ctsi-videos.

A. Plan and organize the discussion

Instructions: Answer the following questions to help you plan and organize the discussion of a controversial, difficult, sensitive, or challenging subject matter.

1. Identify your topic What is the discussion topic? What makes it controversial, difficult, sensitive, or challenging?	
2. Discuss for learning What is the purpose of the discussion? What do I want students to learn from the discussion? How is the topic/discussion connected to the learning outcomes?	
3. Complete pre-reflection Does the discussion topic interact with my social identity? If so, how would that impact my engagement with the discussion? What preconceptions/values am I bringing to the discussion? Will these values be shared by my students? Can I consider a framing of this topic/conversation?	
4. Set the tone What are the ground rules I will implement for my course? What do I hope to include in my course's community agreement?	
5. Determine the discussion question/outcome What discussion question or prompt will I pose to students? If not planning to organize the discussion with a question, what are the intended outcomes of the discussion?	

Discussion planning handout



Plan and organize

(1) Identify your topic

Answer in chat:

1. Identify your discussion topic.
2. What makes it controversial, difficult, sensitive, or challenging?



(2) Discuss *for* learning

Think about:

- What is the purpose of the discussion?
- What do you want students to learn from the discussion?
- How is the topic/discussion connected to the learning outcomes?

(3) Complete pre-reflection

- Adapted from the "social identity wheel" (Hahn-Tapper 2005).
- **Social justice theory** and **trauma-informed pedagogy**, two theoretical elements of EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion). (Cote-Meek 2014; Davidson 2017).

(3) Complete pre-reflection

- Does the discussion topic interact with my social identity? If so, how would that impact my engagement with the discussion?
- What preconceptions/values am I bringing to the discussion? Will these values be shared by my students?
- Can I consider a framing of this topic/conversation?

(4) Set the tone

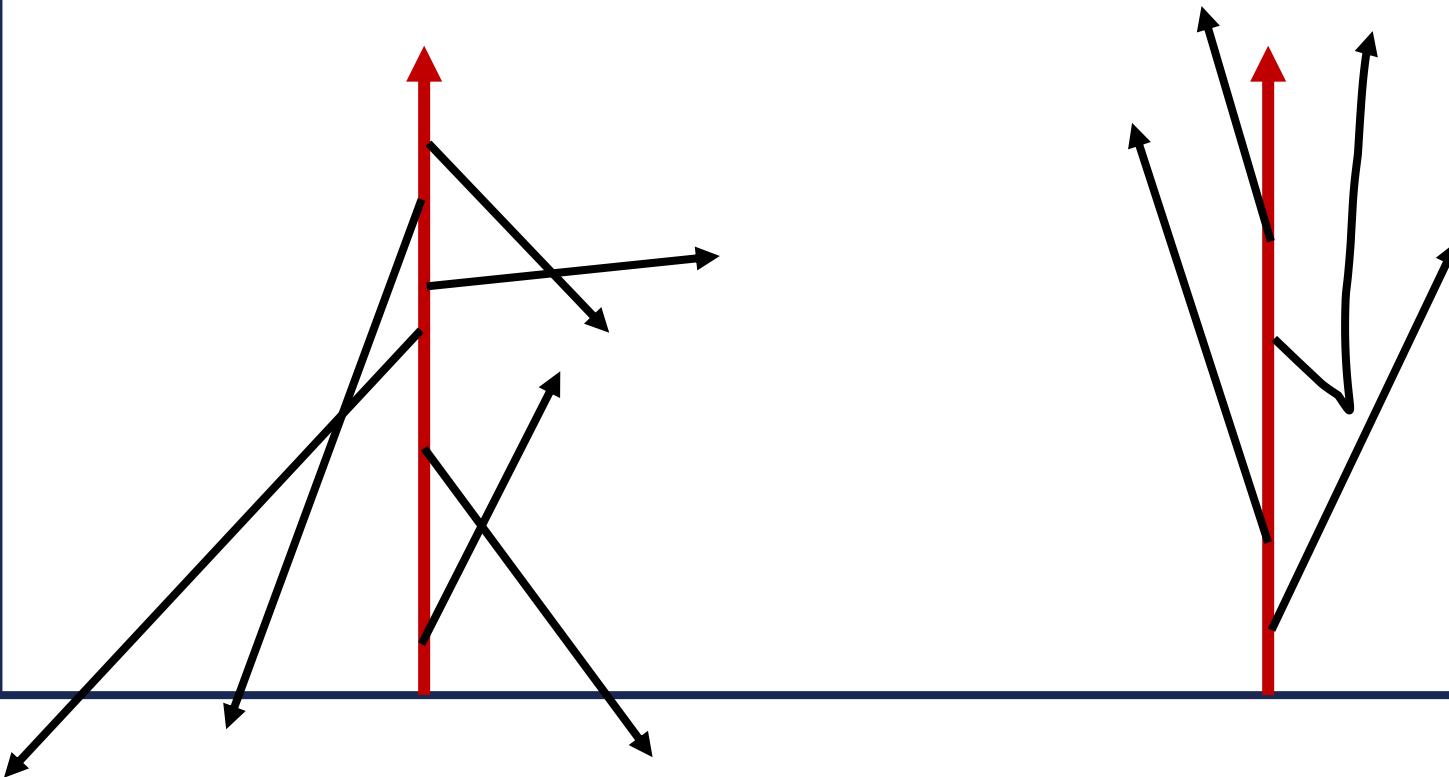
- Acknowledge that you're conversing in a different space than you and your students might be used to
- Create ground rules in advance of the conversation
- Consider building a [Community Agreement](#) with students

(4) Set the tone

Answer in [Office Form](#): What's ONE ground rule that you would implement for your course?

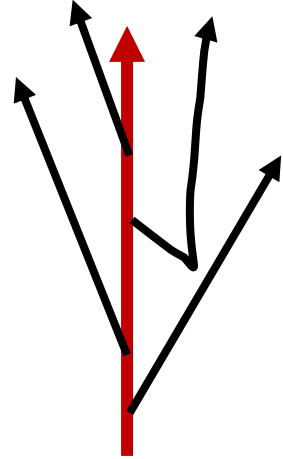


(5) Determine discussion question/outcome



(5) Determine discussion question/outcome

- Avoid yes/no questions
- Allow multiple perspectives to be expressed
- Centre it around the learning outcomes



(5) Determine discussion question/outcome

- What discussion question or prompt will you pose to students?
- If you're not planning to organize your discussion with a question, what are the intended outcomes of the conversation?



(6) Ensure student preparedness

Week 2 Readings

You are expected to read the following 2 articles linked below before participating in our discussion on <topic>. Questions to help you prepare for the discussion are provided.

<Reading 1 Citation>

Guiding Questions:

- What is the main argument the author is making about <topic> ... ?
- What are the main factors contributing to <phenomenon> ... ?


<Reading 2 Citation>







Guiding Questions:

- What research methodologies ... ?
- Thinking ahead to the next module ("Module Title"), why is this <topic> essential for our understanding of <subject>?

Pre-discussion
reading reflections

(6) Ensure student preparedness

▾ Perspectives on Evolution Complete All Items  + ⋮

	Reading 1 (Author, "Title," Date) View		⋮
	Reading 2 (Author, "Title," Date) View		⋮
	Reading Quiz Oct 7 5 pts Submit		⋮

Requirements

- ☒ Students must complete all of these requirements
 - ☒ Students must move through requirements in sequential order
- ☐ Student must complete one of these requirements

Reading 1 (Author, "Tit

view the item



Reading 2 (Author, "Tit

view the item



Reading Quiz

submit the assignment



[+ Add requirement](#)

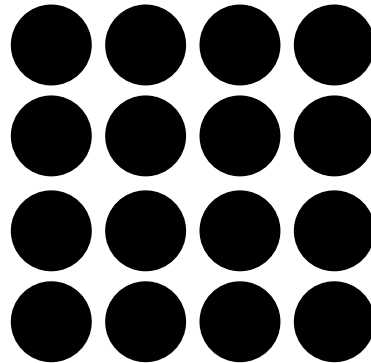
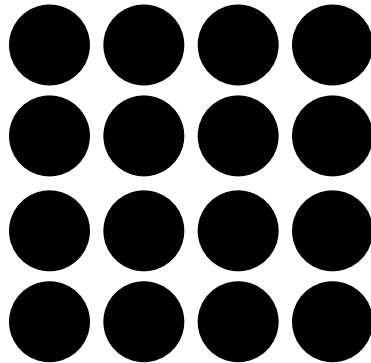
Pre-discussion reading quizzes

Implement strategies for facilitating discussions

Synchronous and asynchronous

Discussion strategy principles

- Allow everyone the opportunity to contribute
- Minimize likelihood of discussion monopolizers



Synchronous discussion tools

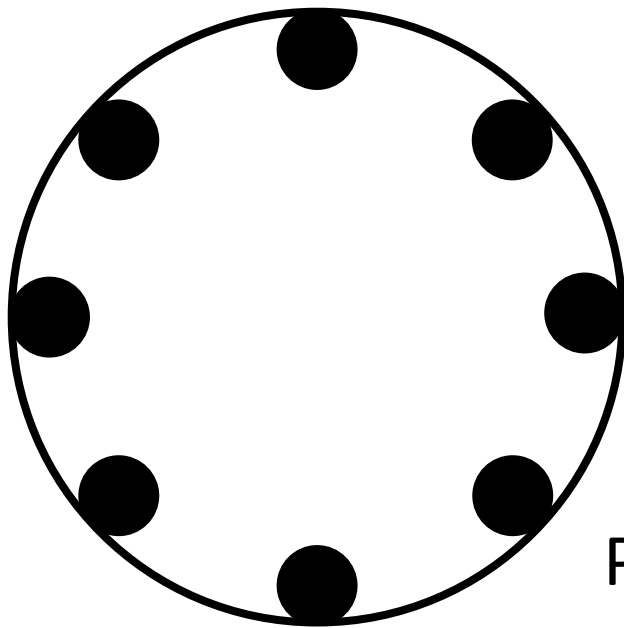
Blackboard
collaborate™»



















Teams Video Meetings

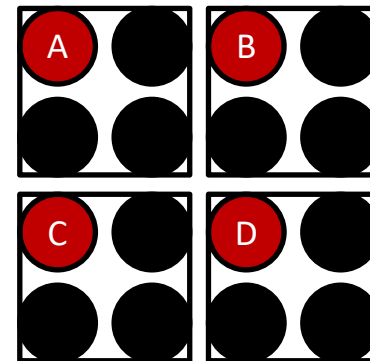
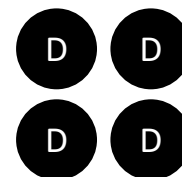
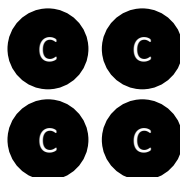
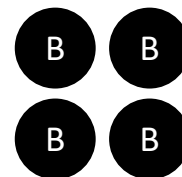
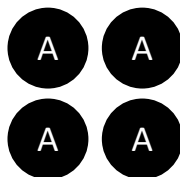
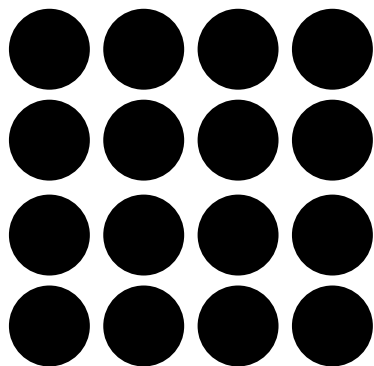
zoom

Synchronous I: Roundtable



7 Attendees			...
Moderator (1)			
	 Beth Carlson		...
Presenter (1)			
	 Maki		...
Participants (5)			
	Rachel		...
	Alexi		...
	Flor		...
	Raghu		...
	 Steve		...

Synchronous II: Think-pair/group-share



Synchronous III: Virtual post-it note



Synchronous tips

- Establish protocol for asking questions or contributing
- Align synchronous webinar tool usage and availability with ground rules and facilitation strategy
 - Raise hand, Chat, Polling, Breakout groups
- Avoid calling on a single student to speak about their personal experience
- Signpost discussion and reflection prompts

Asynchronous discussion tools

QUERCUS
Discussions



Peppere

Asynchronous I: Collaborative wiki

- Encourages information gathering and reflection before a challenging discussion.
- Includes multiple forms of media (e.g., videos, web pages, research articles) for increased engagement.

[Set up a course page as a wiki](#)

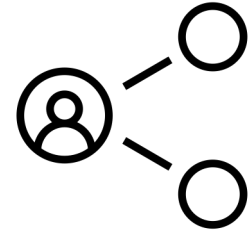
[Use Collaborative Space in OneNote Class Notebook](#)

Asynchronous II: Citational practice

- Incorporate proper citational practice into your discussion threads.
 - Example: "Include 1-2 citations alongside your responses to your peers."
- Encourages scholarly conversation, research, and academic integrity.

Asynchronous III: Peer-to-peer learning

- Enable peer-to-peer learning through threaded discussion board posts and specific instructions.



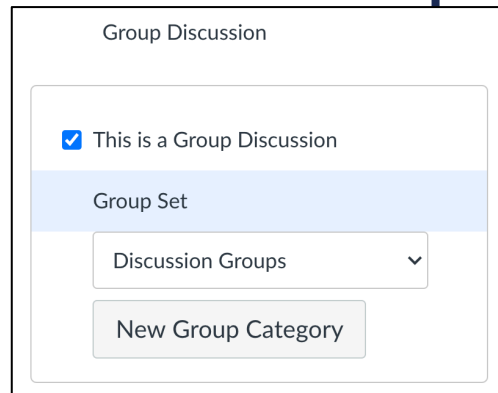
- Example: "Respond to two of your colleagues' posts before replying to the discussion thread." (Designate starters)
- Example: Use "must post first" feature before students can respond

Options

- ☒ Allow threaded replies
- ☒ Users must post before seeing replies
- ☐ Enable podcast feed
- ☐ Graded
- ☐ Allow liking
- ☐ Add to student to-do

Asynchronous tips

- Model academic discussion etiquette for students through an example post
- Provide a rubric to clarify expectations
- Provide clear instructions for all discussion-based activities prior to student completion
- Create group discussions when appropriate



The screenshot shows a 'Group Discussion' form. At the top, the title 'Group Discussion' is centered. Below it, there is a checkbox labeled 'This is a Group Discussion' which is checked. Underneath the checkbox is a section titled 'Group Set' with a light blue background. Within this section, there is a dropdown menu currently showing 'Discussion Groups' and a 'New Group Category' button.


Add to handout

- (7) Consider modality
- (8) Determine a facilitation strategy
- (9) Determine educational technology tools



Addressing unplanned challenges

(10) Prepare to respond: Plan for scenarios

Scenario	Ways I might address this
An argument emerges between students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••
Students push back against the instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••
Your scenario?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•• 

(10) Prepare to respond: Plan for scenarios

- Address the discomfort in the virtual space.
- Pause and offer opportunity for reflection.
- Remind students of the ground rules and community agreement
- Remind students of the lesson learning outcomes -- return the conversation to the class goals.
- Follow-up with individual students after class via email.
- Don't despair; you're doing your best!

Instructor Guide to Supporting Students in Online Learning Environments

September 2020

Students in courses may be experiencing various degrees of stress as a result of the current pandemic. The purpose of this guide is to provide instructors *with suggestions of how to support students* and includes a *helpful list of resources* to which instructors may wish to refer students in a specific context.

Proactive Approaches to Support Students in Your Courses

- 1** Work to build a sense of community. Host a virtual orientation and foster class and small group check-ins.
- 2** Make yourself available. Convey that you care about your students' well-being and let them know you can help them find the appropriate supports.
- 3** Consider equity and accessibility. Acknowledge challenges in this online environment and work with Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation (CTSI) to ensure materials are accessible.
- 4** Set a positive and encouraging tone. You're in a powerful position and your words greatly impact students. Be aware of your language and tone.

Student Challenges

Students are currently coping with unique stressors from changes in life including rapidly changing learning environments. These challenges may include:

Experiencing social isolation and lack of connectedness: Many students no longer have campus to provide a way to organize and structure life and are dealing with decreased social/physical interaction.

Feeling disappointment, grief, and frustration: Unexpected changes in academic direction and a change in what they envisioned their student experience to look like may lead to a range of feelings.

Experiencing inequities in access to technology: Some students may not have the technological infrastructure to keep up with online classes or connecting virtually with peers, such as WIFI, hardware and workspaces.

Dealing with uncertainty and anxiety: Given our rapidly changing environment, students may be feeling a sense of loss of control, disruption to a sense of normalcy, and anxiety.

Living in challenging environments: Some students may be facing a range of challenges from shared housing, such as living in invalidating or abusive environments that are not supportive of all their identities, which can create unsafe circumstances.

Dealing with financial stressors: As a result of the economic impact, students or their families may be dealing with a loss of employment, income reduction, which may impact their participation in academic opportunities.

Identify, Assist, Refer

Students may exhibit a range of behaviours, or share thoughts and feelings that can indicate mental health stress or distress. For more information about how to identify, assist, and refer visit iar.utoronto.ca.

Instructor guide to supporting students in online learning environments

Debrief the discussion

(11) Facilitate student debrief

Facilitate reflection on the discussion to consolidate student learning.

Sample questions:

- What did I learn from participating in this discussion?
- Did my perspective on <topic> change? Why or why not?

(12) Debrief as facilitator

Reflect on how the conversation went.

Sample questions:

- What went particularly well?
- What did not go according to plan? How did I respond?
- What will I do differently for the next discussion?

Navigating Quercus support resources

Webinars

Online/remote teaching webinars

Recordings and materials:

<https://uoft.me/ctsi-videos>

Other CTSI events:

<https://teaching.utoronto.ca/events>

Global calendar to support online/remote teaching:

<https://online-remote.teaching.utoronto.ca/>

Quercus support resources

☰ Quercus Support Resources

Home

Modules

Search

The Basics



Start here. Navigate Quercus, modify settings and access courses.

Learn More

Build Your Course



Create course content and learn about features and integrated tools.

Learn More

Assessments



Create and grade different types of assessments.

Learn More

Students



Navigate Quercus, access courses and student mobile apps.

Learn More

Ed Tech Catalogue



Explore the full list of educational technologies at U of T.

Learn More

Support



Additional resources, training and support contacts.

Learn More

Student support resources

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Support



Additional resources, training and support contacts.

[Learn More](#)

- [Technology Requirements for Remote Teaching and Learning](#)
- [Quercus Student Guide](#)

Planning guide: Teaching online/remotely

University of Toronto
EVENTS SCHEDULE
TEACHING SUPPORT
EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY
RESEARCH ON TEACHING
TEACHING AWARDS
ABOUT CTSI
Q

Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation
130 St. George Street, Robarts Library, 4th floor

Teaching Strategies

- Continuity Planning**
- Classroom Management
- First Class Strategies
- Setting the Tone
- Large Classroom Teaching
- Inclusive Teaching
- Supporting Student-Faculty Interaction
- Academic Integrity and the Role of the Instructor

Faculty Mentoring for Teaching

Peer Observation of Teaching: Effective Practices

Teaching Online/Remotely – Planning for Next Term

[Plan Your Course](#) | [Build Your Course](#) | [Engage Students](#) | [Assess Students](#) | [Ensure Accessibility](#)

As an instructor you may be planning to move one or more courses to a fully online/remote mode and facing a very short timeline for the coming term. This resource will explore key considerations and provide examples and how-to guides for course planning.

Explore the following sections:

[Planning Your Course](#)



Continuity Planning

- Teaching Online/Remotely – Planning for Next Term**
 - Quick Guide for Continuity Planning
 - Pre-Recorded Videos
 - Host Live Sessions Online
 - Resources and Support
 - Academic Continuity at U of T: Tip Sheet for TAs

Divisional support

Support Contacts

If you have other questions or wish to speak with an individual, please contact your Divisional support

DIVISION/ FACULTY	CONTACT
Applied Science and Engineering 	tsaas@hscf@utoronto.ca
Architecture and Forestry	LH101@danield@utoronto.ca
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Dentistry	marisa.curnill@dentistry.utoronto.ca michael.zimmerman@dentistry.utoronto.ca marilyn.murphy@dentistry.utoronto.ca
Education 	scott.alison@utoronto.ca



CTSI website: <https://teaching.utoronto.ca>

Upcoming events: <https://teaching.utoronto.ca/events>

Quercus Support Resources: <https://uoft.me/qresources>

Divisional Support: <https://uoft.me/qsupportcontacts>

Questions: q.help@utoronto.ca

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Questions?

Thank you!
