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**To:** Provost and Chief Academic Officers

**From:** Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) Natural Sciences Faculty Panel and  
Natural Sciences Transfer Assurance Guide (TAG) Panel Leads

**Date:** May 6, 2020

**Subject:** Teaching of OTM Natural Sciences Laboratory Courses During  
Covid-19 Pandemic

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Dear Colleagues,

The Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) Natural Sciences Faculty Panel wishes to pass along to natural science colleagues across the state our recognition of the challenges associated with the effective delivery of OTM natural sciences laboratory courses via the current pandemic-related remote delivery format. Under normal circumstances, the panel expects that the activities used in OTM laboratory courses taught in a distance-learning format meet all the criteria laid out in the OTM guidelines. While we still expect that all OTM laboratory courses continue to follow these guidelines as closely as is feasible, we also recognize the need to be more flexible at this time. We ask that institutions do their best to deliver a useful and effective OTM laboratory course, while recognizing that it may not always be possible to fulfill all the usually expected OTM laboratory guidelines. This relaxation in the normal guidelines for OTM laboratory course delivery will apply through the end of the Fall 2020 semester.

At many Ohio colleges and universities, beginning major courses across the natural sciences that are approved for inter-institutional transfer under a Transfer Assurance Guide (TAG) are also approved courses within the OTM. Productive discussions with the natural sciences TAG Panel leads (Biology, General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Geology, Physics) led to a general acceptance that those beginning major science TAG courses that are also OTM-approved courses will be appropriate for transfer following the flexible guidelines outlined in the preceding paragraph.<sup>1</sup> However, it was agreed that courses approved for transfer under the **Organic Chemistry TAG** should be excluded from this general recommendation. Organic Chemistry courses are typically taken as the second year of courses in chemistry by science majors, and they represent the only courses in this subdiscipline for many students majoring in chemistry and related areas. As a result, there are strong arguments for requiring at least a

substantial hands-on component within the organic chemistry laboratory sequence even in these challenging times, especially relating to the safety of the students and their colleagues as they move on to later courses, to graduate school and to future employment.<sup>2</sup>

Efforts will be made in the coming weeks to engage science faculty across the state in discipline-specific discussions regarding best practices in the remote delivery of TAG-approved science major laboratory courses as institutions are forced to teach courses at-distance during this Covid-19 pandemic. More information will be forthcoming from ODHE soon.

We wish you well as you design appropriate natural science laboratory experiences for your students during this Covid-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

Paul Sampson, Kent State University (OTM Natural Sciences Panel Lead; Organic Chemistry TAG Panel Lead)

Claudia Barr, Stark State College (OTM Natural Sciences Panel)

Rhea Busick, Rhodes State Community College (OTM Natural Sciences Panel)

Robert Joel Duff, University of Akron (OTM Natural Sciences Panel)

Andrew Heckler, Ohio State University (OTM Natural Sciences Panel)

Susan Hoffman, Miami University (OTM Natural Sciences Panel)

Harry Kestler, Lorain County Community College (OTM Natural Sciences Panel)

Jeff Snyder, Bowling Green State University (OTM Natural Sciences Panel)

John Plenefisch, University of Toledo (Biology TAG Panel Lead)

Brian Leskiw, Youngstown State University (General Chemistry TAG Panel Lead)

Jeff Richardson, Columbus State Community College (Geology TAG Panel Co-Lead)

Daniel Holm, Kent State University (Geology TAG Panel Co-Lead)

David Ingram, Ohio University (Physics TAG Panel Lead)

<sup>1</sup> The Biology TAG panel lead requests that institutions incorporate within any remotely delivered TAG-approved Biology lab course, whenever feasible, (i) the hands-on use by students of at least some real biological specimens, and (ii) the remote use of microscopes.

<sup>2</sup> A separate memorandum from the Organic Chemistry TAG panel details these concerns.