

# Remote Experience Survey 2020SP Highlights

The Remote Experience Survey was administered in the second half of May, 2020 to gather student feedback on the abrupt transition to remote learning precipitated by the global coronavirus pandemic. The survey focused on how students felt about their connections to the MIT community, student utilization of various support structures, student participation in extracurricular activities, and student perceptions of their remote learning experience.

The section headings in this report correspond to the tab names in the Tableau report posted here: <https://ir.mit.edu/remote-experience>

## RR/Community

### Response rate

Overall, 30% of students responded to the survey. By degree level, undergraduates had the highest response rate (39%), followed by master's students (29%), and doctoral students (22%).

### MIT Community/Administration

More than half of students (63%) somewhat or strongly agreed that they feel like part of the MIT community, but almost one in four (23%) somewhat or strongly disagreed with that sentiment. Doctoral students reported higher levels of agreement, with 67% somewhat or strongly agreeing and 16% somewhat or strongly disagreeing.

Over two thirds (67%) of students somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement "MIT administrators are genuinely concerned about my welfare" but 16% somewhat or strongly disagreed with the statement. Undergraduates reported lower levels of agreement, with 61% somewhat or strongly agreeing.

## Activities

### Extracurricular activities

Among student activities, the ones that have been most difficult to continue participating in after the switch to remote learning have been those related to sports, with 75% or more of students who had participated in these activities before the transition to remote learning reporting not being able to continue participation.

Students reported that they have been able to maintain participation in many other activities, with FSILGs, Student Government, Religious or spiritual groups, and Student publications all receiving more than 80% of students indicating they have been able to continue participation remotely.

Despite being able to continue participation remotely, students reported that the quality of participation has mostly been worse than it was on campus. The activities that have suffered the largest decline in quality by transitioning to remote are Music, theater, or other performance groups, FSILGs, and Engineering teams, with 90% or more of participating students reporting that the quality is worse or much worse than it was on campus.

The activities that have suffered the least decline in quality by transitioning to remote participation are UROPs and Student publications, with 40% or more of students reporting these activities are about the same as they were on campus, or even better for a small percentage of students.

### Engagement

In general, students reported that the quality of their interactions with other students have suffered the most from the transition to remote learning. Eighty-five percent or more of respondents reported that their interactions with Other students in their subjects, Fellow students in their major or program, Friends from MIT, and Residents of their dorm or FSILG were worse or much worse remotely than they were on campus.

Relative to engagement with other students, the quality of engagement with faculty suffered less. More than half of students reported that engagement with their research advisor (only asked of grad students), their academic advisor, and their UROP supervisor (only asked of those who participated in a UROP) was about the same or better than it was on campus.

## Tech/Remote

### Technology and space

Generally, students did not report experiencing technological barriers to remote learning, with over 90% somewhat or strongly agreeing that they had adequate hardware and software for remote learning. Seventy-nine percent of students somewhat or strongly agreed that their internet access was sufficient for remote learning. Over half of students (60%) somewhat or strongly agreed that they had an adequate space for remote learning.

Students were divided over the efficacy of Zoom or similar technology for conducting class sessions. Forty-two percent of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement “Generally, class sessions held on Zoom or similar technology were effective for my learning” while 45% somewhat or strongly disagreed with that statement. (The other 14% chose Neither agree nor disagree).

### Focus, collaboration

When asked about the subjective experience of remote learning, students reported that focusing was difficult, with 79% of students somewhat or strongly disagreeing that they were able to focus during online sessions as well as they do in-person. Sixty-four percent of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that distractions in their living arrangement made it difficult for them to learn.

Collaboration was also difficult for students, with two thirds (65%) somewhat or strongly disagreeing that they have continued to collaborate with other students as much as they did before the transition.

### Emergency Grading

Eighty-eight percent of students somewhat or strongly agreed that the Emergency Grading policy eased some of the stress of the second half of the semester, and only 29% of student respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that they worried about the impacts of Emergency Grading on their future job prospects or graduate school applications.

### Overall assessment of remote learning

As an overall assessment, 70% of student respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that they had a difficult time learning in the new, self-directed environment.

Slightly more than half of respondents (53%) somewhat or strongly agreed that they would rather take a semester off than do the semester via remote learning. There was a divide between doctoral student respondents and undergraduate and master's student respondents on this question, with 61% and 53% of undergraduate and master's respondents, respectively, somewhat or strongly agreeing that they would prefer to take a semester off. Only 28% of doctoral student respondents somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement.

## Stress & Well Being

### Stress

Just over half of respondents (51%) report that they had more or much more stress during the remote learning period as compared to the first part of the semester.

### Feeling supported

Eighty-four percent of respondents somewhat or strongly agree that they feel supported by their family and friends, while 56% of respondents somewhat or strongly agree that they feel supported by MIT.

### Factors impeding learning

Among various factors students were asked about, the one that had the largest reported impact on their ability to learn was general stress related to COVID-19, with 71% of respondents somewhat or strongly agreeing that this stress made it difficult for them to learn.

Next most impactful was the lack of access to campus support services (44% of respondents somewhat or strongly agreeing that this lack made it difficult for them to learn), followed by family obligations related to COVID-19 (39% somewhat or strongly agreeing these made it difficult for them to learn), financial stresses related to COVID-19 (27% somewhat or strongly agreeing these made it difficult for them to learn), and their own personal health issues related to COVID-19 (13% somewhat or strongly agreeing that these made it difficult for them to learn).