How can you support your grad students in the COVID-19 context?

In the context of the current pandemic and the necessity of working from home, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies has gathered suggestions and guidance for supervisors as they work remotely with their students – continuing to mentor them, assisting them in the continuation of their research and scholarly activities, and helping ensure an environment that promotes the wellbeing of all. We acknowledge that each relationship and disciplinary field is different and may benefit from distinctive approaches.

Maintaining your working relationship in new ways:

- Ensure both you and your student understand the circumstances under which you’re working. Are there added responsibilities, such as childcare, or other factors that may influence the work environment, communication, or wellbeing of either of you?
- Set up virtual collaborative spaces that accommodate everyone’s preferences as much as possible. UBC IT recommends Zoom as a very versatile and ‘safe’ platform for most interactions – videoconferencing, chat rooms, instant messaging, etc. As with face-to-face meetings, it is best practice to follow up these virtual meetings by email regarding plans, decisions, etc.
- Try to maintain the forms of interactions you had before working from home (e.g., one-on-one and group discussions, regular reports). This can be helpful not only for ongoing productivity but for morale and a sense of continuity. At the same time, be considerate of new needs that may have arisen, which may necessitate revised expectations for progress and/or diminished availability.
• Agree on how often, when, and how you will continue to “meet”; develop guidelines for interactions and schedules, taking into consideration any additional time constraints both your students and you may have.
• Schedule regular check-ins with each student individually.

Maintaining student academic progress:

• Mutually consider how academic progress will be made. How will they work toward academic milestones such as comprehensive exams, proposal development or thesis/dissertation completion? If some aspect of your student’s program cannot continue, what other progress can be made?
• Continue with regularly scheduled supervisory committee meetings as much as possible.
• For situations in which research plans need to be put on hold – e.g. due to UBC research curtailment, human participant research restrictions, or field research requiring travel – discuss what other activities might be useful to focus on for the time being. A number of possibilities are compiled below.
• Be clear about expectations, but be understanding of the challenging circumstances many face, including the need to adapt to different ways of working.
• As much as possible, create opportunities for team members and collaborators to engage with each other – both for research continuity and social reasons. Ideally, journal clubs, writing groups, and other community activities should be maintained.

Student wellbeing:

• Working in isolation can be dispiriting. Read and share the many resources that exist for maintaining and promoting a sense of wellbeing in this environment. There are a number on the UBC Student Services website.
Encourage your students to access the sources of help listed on this website if they are finding it difficult to cope.

- Acknowledge the emotional stress everyone is under, but try not to dwell on the crisis and its negative repercussions longer than helpful.
- Promote the importance of accurate sources of information and keeping the situation in perspective; encourage regular care such as exercise, eating well, (distanced) social interaction, and practices such as mindfulness.
- Look after yourself!

**Student finances:**

- This may well be a time of financial strain for your students. As much as possible, you are encouraged to continue funding them if they are supported by your grants. In cases where students are experiencing serious financial issues, emergency funding may be available through Enrolment Services.
- While we haven’t yet determined the most effective ways to ease the burdens many of you face, G+PS is exploring a range of options. Please be assured that all major University-wide multi-year scholarships will continue to be paid throughout the eligibility period.
- For the most up-to-date information on funding, please visit the G+PS Funding FAQ.

**When academic/research progress is not possible:**

- If by May you come to the conclusion that any of your students are unable to progress in their research or program at all, it may make sense to consider a leave of absence. Please note, however, that this status comes with restrictions, including funding, access to resources and, for international students, work eligibility.
- For more information on leaves of absence, visit the G+PS General FAQ.
For immigration and work eligibility information, visit the International Student Guide FAQ.

Possible activities for students to support academic progress when research is curtailed:

- Analyzing previously compiled material and data, and designing research approaches.
- Reading and synthesizing scholarly literature
- Preparing ethics proposals.
- Attending and presenting at online journal clubs
- Writing or revising – manuscripts, thesis chapters, grant applications, review articles.
- Working on contributions for collaborative publications.
- Preparing grant/fellowship applications (attend the April 9 or April 16 webinar on fall fellowship applications).
- Preparing research seminars, and/or posters for meetings.
- Engaging in teaching opportunities.
- Taking online courses/webinars, including those directed at professional development.

See the G+PS website for numerous virtual professional development opportunities. To stay informed on upcoming online workshops, services, and resources, subscribe to GradUpdate weekly emails or follow us on Twitter @UBCGradSchool

The following units also have ongoing services:

- The UBC Library Research Commons hosts a consultation page in which students can book consultations for:
- Thesis Formatting,
- Citation management (RefWorks, Zotero, Mendeley),
- Data Analysis (R, Python, SPSS, NVivo)
- Research Ethics.

- The Centre for Writing and Scholarly Communication is continuing to offer writing consultations and to host an online writing community on Tuesdays (9-11 am) and Wednesdays (2-4 pm).
- The Centre for Student Involvement and Careers has online career advising.