

Dear Directors of Graduate Studies and Department Chairs,

In light of the university's messages about our response to the coronavirus pandemic, we've received a few notes from both students and from faculty asking for guidance about the roles of Graduate Assistants (GAs) during this time, and the impact of our [response to COVID-19](#) on graduate students' academic progress. Please keep in mind that that this is a fluid event, and further updates will be provided as needed.

Although we are moving instruction to an online format, at this point the president and provost have asked that we continue our operations - which includes continuing to engage, instruct and train students - to the best of our abilities. The duties carried out by GAs serve the dual function of advancing the research and educational missions of the university, while also facilitating the development of important professional skills and competencies that further students' training. We recognize that GAs serve in multiple roles (teaching assistants, research assistants, clinic assistants, tutors, etc.), and they should continue to carry out their teaching obligations, research and creative activities and service duties in a reasonable, safe and sensible manner, under operating conditions as outlined in the university's [response to COVID-19](#). Since university operations are to continue, graduate students should check with their supervisors and faculty mentors/advisors to see how their work as GAs can also continue, even if it involves working remotely.

While we're uncertain at this point whether there will be further restrictions on university functions, our faculty should do their best to support students' progress in their programs so they may have a successful conclusion to the semester. This may mean making special efforts to accommodate graduate students' requests for thesis or dissertation proposal meetings, defenses, review of culminating projects, and other academic events that mark milestones in a students' degree progress. Faculty should strive to honor previous scheduled meetings with students. Much of this type of work can be done remotely, and is encouraged. Information about virtual meeting platforms can be found here: <https://louisville.edu/its/tech-support/working-remotely/working-remotely>. If meeting are held in person, please follow CDC-recommended [social distancing and preventative hygiene practices](#). At this point in time, the university's academic calendar remains unchanged.

Thank you for providing the support, counsel and community our students will need as we negotiate the inconveniences brought on by the pandemic. Please also take care of yourselves and your colleagues as we weather this challenge. And please let your students know that the University Counseling Center (<https://louisville.edu/counseling>) and other offices will continue to provide to services to students, possibly in a modified fashion, as long as the university is open.

Please feel free to contact us if you have further questions.

Regards,
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