

These are unprecedented times for our generation, and the uncertainty and upheaval they are causing are especially difficult to navigate when it is the health and wellbeing of so many that are at stake.

I'm writing on behalf of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies to let you know that we are aware that many of you are experiencing especially difficult challenges right now – in your personal circumstances, your research, and your academic work – and to assure you that we, and those at all levels at UBC, are working extremely hard to find ways to alleviate the challenges you face. You may find that some of your concerns and questions are addressed on our website, and I encourage you to visit it: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/covid-19>.

Briefly, the following are the measures that we and the University are taking to date:

Academic issues

- As courses and assessments go online, we realize that this can entail many uncertainties. Your instructors have the capacity to alter the **grading schemes or standing options** for current courses if necessary, and requests for **concessions** are always available to you. In concordance with the Senate, we are also delaying the deadline for grade submission. The [Assessment FAQ](#) shows details sent to grad programs and course instructors; please connect with your course instructors for details regarding your own course(s) if you have not already heard from them.
- We understand that interruptions in your ability to progress in your programs, whether because of personal circumstances, research curtailment, or other issues, may result in delayed completion of your program. We will therefore effectively **extend deadlines** for milestones (e.g. candidacy) and program completion by at least one term. Although process details of this are still being determined, please be assured that we will eliminate justification requirements for extensions related to the pandemic.
- **Final doctoral exams** are successfully proceeding completely online, and will continue as such as long as necessary.
- There will be a slight delay only in the **granting of degrees**, however the graduation ceremony has been indefinitely postponed.
- We appreciate that some of you may decide to take a **leave of absence** for some period in the near future. While this may be feasible for some, please note that leaves come with certain restrictions, especially in terms of funding and student employment as outlined in our [general FAQ](#).
- We realize that research projects for many have been put on hold for diverse reasons. We encourage you and your supervisor(s) to explore other opportunities for furthering your research and academic progress throughout this time of curtailment, while also planning ahead for how to proceed when the curtailment eases. Examples of such opportunities and suggestions for **practices that promote effective continuity of supervision and academic progress** have been compiled and are being sent to supervisors. Please view a copy of this message in our [announcements](#). We, and the University and research community more broadly, are continuing to deliberate on the longer term ramifications and potential mitigating strategies of research curtailment.

Wellbeing

The pandemic and related public health measures are naturally causing significant stress and anxiety for many. At the same time, there is much to be grateful for in our current environment, including the many people across UBC and beyond stepping up to make the situation better. The following are among the resources available to you now:

- **Mental health support**, including Student Health Services and Counselling Services, continue to be [provided \(virtually\)](#). Note that [EMPOWER ME](#) provides confidential counselling 24/7, and it's free for all UBC students. Please review other related [student services](#).
- There are also numerous resources on **enhancing wellbeing** in the current environment at the above sites. One example is the **Wellness Centre Online**, a space for engaging in topics relevant to student wellbeing. Students can [self-enrol](#).

Financial challenges

While we haven't yet determined the most effective ways to ease the burdens many of you face, we are exploring a range of options. We will keep you informed as measures are taken, and are also communicating with programs to better learn what is needed. Please note the following:

- Be assured that all major University-wide multi-year **scholarships** will continue to be paid throughout the eligibility period.
- If you are experiencing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 situation (extraordinary expenses, loss of employment, etc.) we strongly encourage you to schedule a [confidential advising appointment](#) with an **Enrolment Services Advisor**. An advisor will assess your financial situation and provide the best course of action for you. It may not be possible for Enrolment Services to provide immediate support in all circumstances, but meeting with an advisor will also enable the University to gather a clearer picture of the needs that exist and to direct its financial support resources more effectively.
- Indigenous graduate students with inquiries or issues with financial difficulties/distress should contact an **Indigenous Enrolment Services Advisor**. The Indigenous ESA Team can be reached at aboriginal.support@ubc.ca
- We are reviewing information about the support offered by the **federal and provincial governments**, to understand what may be applicable to graduate students - recognizing that these supports may help some, but certainly not all, students who require financial support.

Support for international students

We know many of our international graduate students may have questions about returning to Canada, your options to stay in Canada, traveling abroad, completing your studies, and working in Canada. To help answer some of these questions, International Student Advising (ISA) has recently published an [FAQ on the UBC International Student Guide](#). If you have any questions not addressed in the FAQ, we encourage you to reach out to ISA directly. Please note that although ISA is not providing in-person services at this time, they will continue to advise students by email (include your student number): isa@students.ubc.ca.

Professional development

Many UBC units have moved their workshops and one-to-one advising online. This may be an opportune time for many to make use of these helpful resources. The following are a few key links.

- The [G+PS professional development](#) site lists many upcoming virtual workshops and events hosted by units across and outside UBC. To help stay informed on upcoming online workshops, services, and resources, subscribe to or follow [GradUpdate weekly emails](#) and [@ubcgradschool](#) on Twitter.
- 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), and 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.

As new information and opportunities arise in the coming days and weeks, we will communicate them to you. In the meantime, I encourage you all to look after yourselves and others. Please know that your sustainment, wellbeing, and ongoing scholarly formation are our first priorities throughout this challenging time.

With best wishes to you,