

## COVID-19 Policies for Graduate Students

July 28, 2020

Dear Graduate Students,

I hope you are all doing well. Pasted in below (and attached) you will find a set of guidelines for returning to campus in Fall. Some of the guidelines are relevant for RA/TA/GAs only, and some are relevant for all graduate students. The information is extensive, but I'll hope you'll take time to read it as it concerns your well-being for Fall semester, including information about the precautions Lehigh is taking to reduce all of our risk of getting COVID-19, a link to the training module you have to complete before returning to campus, and what to do if you fall ill or live with someone who falls ill.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions. I wish you success and good health in the new semester.

Warmly,  
Beth

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### COVID-19-Related Policies for Graduate Students Fall 2020

This document offers guidance for Lehigh University graduate program directors, faculty, graduate coordinators, and graduate students, including those who are funded with TAs, RAs, or GA stipends in Fall Semester 2020.

#### Guiding Principles

During the Fall semester, everyone in the Lehigh community will work to balance the following three principles:

- 1. Provide the best Lehigh education and experience for students that is possible in these circumstances**
- 2. Protect the health of all members of the Lehigh community**
- 3. Uphold our principles of equity and community as we balance the previous two principles. Equity does not mean that all people are treated equally, but that all people are treated according to their needs.**

For example, for the first-year educational experience, the goal might be to offer an in-person component of most English 1 courses (#1). Exceptions should be based on individual instructor's COVID-related health/childcare/etc needs first and preference second (#2). And finally, decisions about course assignments should be made equitably by chairs; in this case all faculty and TA needs and preferences should be considered and addressed based on merit not on rank or other structure.

#### All Graduate Students: Returning to Campus

Lehigh will re-open with RAs/TAs/GAs being recalled to campus in a phased approach. In the Open I and Open II phases of Lehigh's reopening plan RAs/TAs/GAs should not return to campus until receiving approval from their Dean or unit manager. In the Open III phase, this permission may be granted by the Supervisor, Department Chair, or PI consistent with the Safety Management Plan they have developed for that area. In the Open IV phase, all graduate students may return to campus, though duties that can be accomplished remotely should continue to be completed off campus.

Before returning to campus, all Graduate Students are required to verify they have completed a 20-minute [online training module](#). At the end of the module, individuals must acknowledge and commit to understanding and abiding by the health and safety standards outlined. Send your certificate of completion to your supervisor, PI, or department chair.

Even after RAs/TAs/GAs have received approval to return to campus, working remotely should still be prioritized when feasible. Those who can accomplish their assigned duties remotely, should continue doing so.

Everyone on campus is expected to stay up-to-date and aware of all national, state, local and Lehigh University health and safety requirements. The university will display posters, signs and directions on campus highlighting and reinforcing the safety standards. For graduate students who need to be on campus for research or for assistantships, supervisors, chairs, and PIs will work to create a safe environment. Because graduate students are likely to share offices, they are encouraged to set up a schedule in the space that allows for appropriate social distancing. For example, office mates might alternate days or blocks of time in the office. Unused classrooms, tents, and other spaces on campus will be available for graduate students to reserve when an alternate space is needed.

### **All Graduate Students: Responsibility to Observe Public Health Directives**

Individuals who have been approved to return to campus must monitor personal health for symptoms and risk of exposure every day before coming onto campus in Fall 2020. A self-screening tool is available within the [HawkWatch](#) app or, for those unable to download the app, a Qualtrix instrument will soon be available on PCs.

Lehigh will provide cloth face coverings to everyone in the Lehigh community upon their return to campus. Individuals are responsible for maintaining and cleaning their face coverings. Individuals are also permitted to use their own personal face coverings. If an RA/TA/GA's duties require additional or specific Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), these will be provided by Lehigh. All PPE must be worn appropriately, [according to posted instructions](#).

Face coverings and other appropriate PPE must be worn when entering a public space (including kitchens, bathrooms and common rooms even when others are not present) and when interacting with others (including in-person meetings, exchanging physical paperwork, etc.) Since we often do not know when these situations will arise, face coverings and appropriate PPE should be kept with you at all times on campus.

Lehigh custodial services will continue to clean offices and workspaces on an enhanced protocol developed with CDC and PA Dept of Health guidance; however, everyone must take additional responsibility to wipe down commonly used surfaces after use (including shared printers and copiers, meeting room tables and chairs, microwaves, light switches and doorknobs, etc.) with disinfectants made available by the University.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place or used the restroom, after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing, and before and after eating. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

## **All Graduate Students: What to do when you feel symptoms of or know you have been exposed to COVID-19**

If you don't feel well, stay home, and notify your instructor, supervisor, department chair, or PI that you are ill. If you arrive on campus and begin to feel symptoms consistent with the COVID-19 virus such as fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html> immediately notify your instructor, supervisor, department chair, or PI and go home.

If you receive primary care at the Lehigh University Health and Wellness Center (LU HWC) call for medical advice and so that the LU HWC can assist with COVID-19 testing and make recommendations (610-758-3870). If you call your non-Lehigh University primary care provider for medical advice, you must also call the Lehigh University Health and Wellness Center (LU HWC) as soon as possible so that the LU HWC can assist with COVID-19 testing and make recommendations. You should stay home until you are cleared to return to campus by the LU HWC.

Anyone who is awaiting COVID-19 test results or who tests positive for COVID-19 should self-isolate and follow the LU HWC and their primary care physician's advice. This will include contact tracing to identify people who you may have had close contact with from 48 hours prior to onset of your symptoms to the present. This process will be managed by the LU HWC and the Bethlehem Health Bureau for students living on campus or in the local Bethlehem Community. If you live outside of Bethlehem, your local public health entity will initiate the contact tracing process once there is a positive COVID-19 test. If a member of your household—housemate or a family member—tests positive for COVID-19, all members of the household must quarantine for 14 days AFTER the last day that the person who has COVID-19 is in isolation. You are not required to notify your instructor, supervisor, department chair, or PI of a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. However, you should follow normal departmental protocol as you would for not being able to complete your classwork or duties due to any other illness.

Like faculty and staff, graduate students who test positive for COVID-19 must submit a clearance note from the LU HWC or a primary care physician before returning to campus. Graduate students should fill out this [brief form](#), uploading a PDF or jpeg of the doctor's note, email, or HWC electronic health record message. The form will be viewed by staff in the Provost Office, who will notify those you identify that you are cleared to return to campus. If you have any questions, please contact [covidg@lehigh.edu](mailto:covidg@lehigh.edu).

## **RA/TA/GAs only: What to do if you fall sick with COVID-19 and cannot accomplish your assistantship duties**

RAs, TAs, and GAs who receive stipends cannot be compelled to conduct assistantship duties while in mandated quarantine or sick. If RA/TA/GAs fall ill, they should stay home until they are cleared to return to campus. The funding source for RA/TA/GA assistantships will continue to pay the graduate student's stipend while s/he is in quarantine or while sick. If the department or PI needs to pay someone to cover the RA/TA/GA's duties, or needs resources to continue paying the student in order to comply with funding agency rules, the Provost Office will provide up to 5 weeks of coverage. AFTER the student has returned to his or her duties, the department coordinator should submit this RA/TA/GA COVID Leave Funding [form](#) to request the funding. Departments with questions about replacement funding for RAs/TAs/GAs who are ill should email [covidg@lehigh.edu](mailto:covidg@lehigh.edu).

## **For Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows**

On July 10, the Provost issued a [statement](#) that, given the health and safety concerns and the importance of instructors of all types to the Lehigh community, no instructor will be required to teach in person for the Fall semester. As a result, instructors with medical conditions that may put them at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19

will **not** be required to complete the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) reasonable accommodation process if they wish to teach remotely.

Decisions about alternative approaches and duties will be made at the department or college level. All instructors of record who wish to teach remotely regardless of the reason will be required to notify their Department Chair or PI about their decision to opt out of in-person teaching for the Fall semester and their plan to ensure that they will meet student learning expectations and outcomes. If at some point during the semester your mode of teaching should change significantly, you must notify your department chair.

If you are currently scheduled to teach in person and would prefer to teach remotely this semester, the process is as follows:

- Work within your academic unit and with your chair to make the appropriate arrangements to formalize your instructional mode for the fall semester.
- If you are unable to come to a satisfactory agreement with your academic unit and chair, please engage the graduate associate dean within your college for problem-solving assistance.
- If a solution cannot be found at the college level, teaching assistants should consult the Deputy Provost for Graduate Education, Beth Dolan ([bdk3@lehigh.edu](mailto:bdk3@lehigh.edu)).

If you plan to teach in person and would like to identify changes in the classroom configuration for increased safety, contact facilities ([inreopen@lehigh.edu](mailto:inreopen@lehigh.edu)) to discuss possible classroom changes. If you would like access to enhanced PPE for teaching, visit this [site](#) to request PPE.

### **For All Graduate Students: Accommodations and Options**

Graduate students may need accommodations or options to address COVID-19 concerns that affect academic progress and engagement, including coursework, dissertation and thesis research, and assistantship responsibilities. A guiding principle is to strive to foster graduate students' abilities to complete their degrees.

- For other academic or RA/GA duties, possible ADA-based accommodations and non-ADA-based options for Graduate Students include:
- Remote/online learning, teaching, and/or research opportunities.
- Revised responsibilities (e.g., revised learning assignments; pivoted research. For example, change from lab-based research to computation-based research; revised assistantship duties with same funding source).
- Revised funding source (e.g., change from TA to RA/GA; change to a TA position with different teaching responsibilities).
- Additional PPE – personal protective equipment – provided by the university/department/PI.
- Being on campus in different shifts during de-densified time periods.
- Adjusting planned degree completion goals (e.g., a student who proposed 4 dissertation chapters, but could not complete all the research as planned due to COVID-19 delays, may work with his/her advisor to revise the goal to 3 chapters, and thus complete the degree as planned).
- Taking a leave of absence from the academic program.

*I: ADA-based accommodations for personal health conditions (physical health, mental health)*

If, *based on a physical or mental health condition*, you are concerned about returning to campus for coursework, dissertation/thesis research, or to complete RA/GA duties, contact [Disability Support Services](#) (610-758-4152) to discuss ADA-based accommodations. Graduate students should not discuss medical issues with instructors/supervisors/faculty advisors/PI, nor should faculty members decide accommodations. In developing accommodations, DSS will consult with academic program/faculty advisor/ instructor/assistantship supervisor as relevant to the situation. The assistantship fund source will continue to pay the student's stipend, unless DSS determines that an accommodation to perform essential assistantship responsibilities is not possible.

If you are a TA who does not want to come to campus to teach in person, you do NOT have to go through this process, but should make your faculty instructor or department chair aware of your preference.

## *II. Non-ADA-based options to address concerns about infecting a member of household with a vulnerable health condition, or about returning to campus in the midst of a global pandemic*

If you have family-based or general concerns about coming to campus for coursework or thesis/dissertation research, first discuss your concerns with your course instructor or faculty advisor. Faculty are asked to implement remote options where feasible. If the graduate student and faculty member are not able to reach a satisfactory modification, the student should consult the Director of Graduate Studies in the department. If unsuccessful, please see Resolving Conflicts below.

If you have family-based or general concerns about coming to campus for your RA/GA duties, first discuss your concerns with your supervisor or PI. Supervisors or PIs are asked to implement remote options where feasible. If the graduate student and supervisor or PI are not able to reach a satisfactory modification, the student should consult the Director of Graduate Studies in the department. If the issue is not resolved, the student should discuss with the Department Chair. If unsuccessful, please see Resolving Conflicts below.

If you are a TA who does not want to come to campus to teach in person, you should make your faculty instructor or department chair aware of your preference.

## **Resolving Conflicts**

RA/TA/GAs have four options for help resolving a conflict with a Supervisor, PI, or Department Chair:

- Contact the Graduate Associate Dean of your college:
  - CAS           Mike Burger ([rmb206@lehigh.edu](mailto:rmb206@lehigh.edu))
  - RCEAS       Sabrina Jedlicka ([ssj207@lehigh.edu](mailto:ssj207@lehigh.edu))
  - COE           Robin Hojnoski ([roh206@lehigh.edu](mailto:roh206@lehigh.edu))
  - LU Business   Oliver Yao ([yuy3@lehigh.edu](mailto:yuy3@lehigh.edu))
- Or, Contact Beth Dolan, Deputy Provost for Graduate Education ([bdk3@lehigh.edu](mailto:bdk3@lehigh.edu))
- Or, Contact Kathleen Hutnik, Associate Dean for Graduate Life ([kaha@lehigh.edu](mailto:kaha@lehigh.edu)).
  - Or, contact the University [Ombudspersons](#), who are available to any faculty, staff, or student, including graduate students.