



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

**Office of the Dean**  
Clio Hall  
Princeton University  
Princeton, NJ 08544  
[gradschool.princeton.edu](http://gradschool.princeton.edu)

*Sarah-Jane Leslie, Dean*  
*Class of 1943 Professor of Philosophy*

March 20, 2020

Dear Graduate Students,

We are all facing extraordinary challenges right now. As we navigate through these unprecedented times together, we want you to know that the Graduate School is here for you to provide support, resources, and guidance.

The University is implementing several changes to adapt to the significant challenges posed by COVID-19, and our response to this situation will continue to evolve as new guidance emerges. The most up-to-date and comprehensive information can be found on the [COVID-19: Coronavirus Information](#) website, and of all of our email communications to graduate students are also archived there.

We recognize that the impact of these changes is significant for all of us. As always, we are working closely with the Graduate Student Government (GSG) on the many issues facing graduate students as this situation unfolds. We write now to point you to important resources and information to help you face these challenges.

### **Seeking Support**

The health and well-being of all members of our University community remains our highest priority. Understandably, this crisis is provoking stress and anxiety. You may be deeply worried about your family and friends at this time. The necessity for social distancing and changes to your daily routine such as moving classes, lab meetings, and other interactions with faculty, advisers and colleagues to online platforms can be challenging and anxiety-provoking. Please remember the many campus resources available to support you.

The [Graduate School staff](#) are always available to answer your questions and assist you in whatever ways we can. Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) can be reached at (609) 258-3141, and [virtual CPS](#) counseling sessions are being offered as well.

CPS has also prepared [very helpful guidance](#) on how to take care of your mental health during this pandemic. The guidance is also attached here for convenience of reference; please do take a moment to review it.

## **Building Virtual Community**

We want to make sure our community is still able to connect even when we need to be physically apart. Please check out the virtual community building activities, workshops, and resources that the Graduate School and partner offices in Campus Life and throughout the University are offering for students: <https://winter.princeton.edu/virtual>. The offerings will include meditation sessions, virtual group movie nights, worship services, professional development workshops, fitness classes, games and more. Check back each week to see what else has been added to the schedule.

While the goal of the Virtual Community Building website is to integrate all co-curricular and community-building events, we want to make you aware of the new virtual programs and resources offered by the Graduate School's Access, Diversity & Inclusion and GradFUTURES Professional Development teams. The Kaleidoscope Newsletter provides details of Access, Diversity & Inclusion events and support resources. You can find the latest issue [here](#).

For personal and professional development, the GradFUTURES website now includes an easily accessible listing of dozens of [online programs and resources](#). We also invite you to join the [GradFUTURES LinkedIn group](#), an exclusive online community to help build connections and facilitate conversations among and between graduate students and graduate alumni. For a full listing of professional development programs and resources, and to register for online events, please check out the weekly GradFUTURES Newsletter or visit <https://gradfutures.princeton.edu> for more information.

## **Responding to Graduate Student Needs**

In close collaboration with the GSG, we have taken a number of important steps to respond to graduate students' needs in our current environment. We have already sent communications about most of these steps, and we encourage you again to review the University's COVID-19 website and the [FAQ's for graduate students](#) if you have any questions about them. Below is a brief recap:

### ***Funding and Financial Assistance***

- Graduate students with financial need who are suffering hardship related to COVID-19 may apply to an emergency fund administered by the Graduate School. Students who would like to be considered for this limited emergency funding, which may cover needs including but not limited to relocation/travel costs, storage fees, food insecurity, etc., should apply [here](#).
- Graduate students' stipends remain unchanged, even though research activities for many of them have been decreased;
- Graduate students who have incurred travel or conference expenses for which they have applied and have already been promised financial awards from the Graduate School will receive those awards, regardless of whether the related activity can occur, and our expectation is that all funding sources on campus are doing the same.

### ***Housing***

- Graduate students are receiving relocation assistance in order to return home that is based on actual need, and not based on a predetermined and capped dollar amount;
- Graduate students are allowed to stay in campus housing if they so choose.

### ***Academic and Research Obligations***

- Graduate students can turn for support to the Academic Affairs team at the Graduate School for any concerns they may have. For example, if they have questions or concerns about their lab environment, or seek guidance and advice on navigating conversations with faculty about working remotely, they should reach out to [Dean Christine Murphy](#);
- Graduate students serving as AIs are being offered support and guidance by the McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning as they transition to online teaching;
- Graduate students' academic requirements are being appropriately [adjusted](#) this semester, and no student who has difficulty this semester meeting requirements because of illness, caregiving, or unexpected childcare duties will see their reenrollment or academic standing affected.

### ***International Graduate Students***

- The Davis International Center has updated guidance for international graduate students that can be found [here](#). If you have questions after reviewing this information, please email [puvisa@princeton.edu](mailto:puvisa@princeton.edu) for general inquiries or schedule a call/virtual meeting with your assigned [international student advisor](#).

### **Refunds and Direct Deposit**

We encourage all students who are expecting refunds of any type to enroll in direct deposit. Students with direct deposit will receive any credited funds more quickly. Students not enrolled in direct deposit can enroll online through TigerHub at <https://registrar.princeton.edu/tigerhub>.

Please note that per the University's guidelines to limit in-person contact, the Financial Service Center staff will be working remotely, and checks will not be available for pick up on campus. If students are not enrolled in direct deposit, checks will be mailed to the home address on record. If this poses a problem, please contact the Financial Service Center at [finance@princeton.edu](mailto:finance@princeton.edu) with any questions and to discuss other options that may be available.

### **On-Campus Dining**

For those graduate students who are remaining on campus and who have purchased a meal plan, Whitman dining hall is currently open. As of March 23<sup>rd</sup>, Procter Hall will again be open for meals for graduate students who have purchased a meal plan. To promote social distancing, meals will be available to take out only.

Graduate students who have not purchased a meal plan can purchase individual meals through PAW points or student charge. It is also still possible at this time to purchase a meal plan. For additional details, please see <https://dining.princeton.edu/>.

### **Virtual Office Hours**

We'd like to remind you that staff from the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School will be hosting virtual office hours TODAY between 12-1 PM to address questions or concerns you may have. This session is open to graduate students from all divisions and will be hosted via Zoom at the link found

[here](#). Please contact [Assistant Dean Nicole Barkley](#) from our Student Life team if you have questions.

## **THANK YOU!**

Thank you to the many graduate students who have reached out to share their concerns and offer support. We are deeply appreciative of everything you are doing to care for yourselves, and to support each other during these uncertain times. We would also like to reiterate our thanks for the outstanding leadership, and continued partnership and support of the [Graduate Student Government](#).

Lastly, we sincerely appreciate your patience and understanding as work to address the impact of this public health crisis on our campus and throughout the world. We will get through this together.

Please be sure to check [coronavirus.princeton.edu](https://coronavirus.princeton.edu) regularly for updates, information, and guidance.

Wishing you well,

Sarah-Jane Leslie  
Dean of the Graduate School



## Taking Care of Your Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic

---

### GRADUATE STUDENTS

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed and impacted the lives and routines of the Princeton community as well as the rest of the world. Moving classes, lab meetings, and other interactions with faculty, advisors and colleagues to online platforms to allow for social distancing can be destabilizing, upsetting, and anxiety provoking. Reactions to a crisis can appear very different from person to person and can occur at any time. Please consider the following recommendations for taking care of yourself during this time.

**Acknowledge and accept the full range of emotional responses you may be feeling.** Some of you may be feeling scared for yourself or your families, or may feel anxious about how you are going to complete your graduate work with limited access to labs and libraries. Some of you may feel angry about the impact of COVID-19 on your daily routines, or feel sad because you miss spending time with your friends and you are feeling socially isolated. Some of you may be feeling a combination of all these things. All of your feelings are normal reactions to an unprecedented situation. Try to accept your feelings as they come. Allowing yourself to process your feelings is an important step toward working through them.

**Use reliable sources to stay informed.** Obtain the latest information during an infectious disease outbreak from credible and reliable sources of information. Up-to-date, accurate recommendations regarding disease prevention, self and family care, and travel guidance can be found at the following websites:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- Princeton University: <https://www.princeton.edu/content/covid-19-coronavirus-information>
- Your state and local health departments' websites

**Limit media exposure.** Turn off the television and/or alert notifications on your phone if it is increasing your distress. Exposure to media can be healthy or unhealthy: for some individuals keeping abreast of all breaking news can help in feeling a sense of control over the situation while for others it may reinforce anxiety and fear. Research has shown that excess media exposure to coverage of stressful events can result in negative outcomes. Use trusted resources to gather the information you need and then turn it off when you need to.

**Anticipate stress reactions and recognize signs of distress.** Emotional distress is common and normal in the context of uncertainty and potentially life-threatening situations. Stress can present itself in different ways including physical, emotional, or cognitive ways. Some common physical responses can be stomach problems, aches and pains, and appetite changes. Some common feelings may be sadness, guilt, anger, fear, and anxiety. Some common cognitive responses can be memory issues, confusion, indecisiveness and decreased concentration. All reactions can be normal. The important thing is to pay attention to how you are feeling, and if your symptoms become too severe, reach out for help.

*Up-to-date University guidance and information about COVID-19 can be found at: <http://coronavirus.princeton.edu>*

**Try different strategies to reduce distress.** There is no right or wrong way to deal with this stress. The strategies that will work for you may not work for others. It is important to try different things to see what is most helpful for you. Some strategies can include:

- Being prepared (e.g., developing a personal/ family plan for the outbreak).
- Educating yourself about preventive measures such as hand-washing technique, cough etiquette, social distancing.
- Talking to loved ones about worries and concerns. Know that your feelings are normal and others may be experiencing them too. Connect with friends and family through Skype or FaceTime, or try a shared online game if you're isolated.
- Scheduling positive activities. Look at the virtual engagement activities being planned by the University at <https://winter.princeton.edu/virtual>. Do things that you usually find enjoyable, even if right now it can feel a little harder to feel motivated. Some examples might be listening to music, exercising, practicing breathing routines, spending time in nature or with animals, journaling, or reading inspirational texts.
- Taking time to renew your spirit through prayer, meditation or helping others. See if there are opportunities for community engagement that don't require in-person activities, like pulling together a resource guide for people in your local community or raising money for important causes through your social media connections.
- Making sure to eat regularly, and notice your body's hunger cues. Pay attention to how what you're eating makes you feel. Food can serve both as fuel to keep us going but also a means of pleasure. Schedule a virtual brunch with a friend, so you can eat "together" but remain safe while respecting the mandate to socially distance.
- Getting enough sleep every night, and trying to keep a regular sleep schedule as much as you can. We know sleep is restorative and reduces anxiety, helps learning, helps problem solving, and allows the brain to rest. Even short periods of sleep deprivation can impact mood.
- Considering what physical activities and movement you can engage in for stress reduction. That could be anything from dancing in your room to going for runs to making sure you stretch out your arms and legs and hands regularly. We can often feel distress in our bodies, so pay attention to what your body is saying it needs.
- If you are stuck at home, create a routine for yourself. Get out of bed, take a shower, and do some work. Engage in your online classes. Plan time for studying. Plan time for having fun and relaxing.

Up-to-date University guidance and information about COVID-19 can be found at: <http://coronavirus.princeton.edu>

For more resources including self-care apps and exercises, visit:

<https://uhs.princeton.edu/mindbody>

<https://umatter.princeton.edu/connecting-matters/tools/caring-yourself>

For most people stress reactions will lessen over the first few weeks. However, when symptoms are significantly impacting functioning, becoming harder to manage, or are increasing in severity then we encourage you to reach out to CPS. Please call us at 609-258-3141, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.