

At-a-Glance Information for Graduate Students

As graduate students, you often face unique challenges that require you to juggle research or scholarship, coursework, jobs, and family obligations. While it is certain that COVID-19 has added a new dimension of stress to your lives, we hope that restrictions imposed to contain the pandemic will cause minimal disruption to your degree progress. To save you time and minimize anxiety we compiled this brief factsheet with important information on resources and tips to help you navigate the pandemic.

USM RESOURCES

- **Student Resources Website.** A new website called [Flight Path: Fall 2020](#) brings a comprehensive set of resources to your fingertips. It includes information such as COVID-19 updates and prevention, health and wellness, the university calendar, and more.
- **Mental Health Care.** Free and confidential mental health care is available to all currently-enrolled students through [Student Counseling Services](#). Business hours are 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday – Friday (601.266.4829), and counselors are available for emergency needs after hours and on weekends (601.606.4357). All services are currently online only. To speak with a compassionate, caring listener for immediate relief in managing stressors try [Eagle Cares](#).
- **Wellness.** Physical exercise is important to your health and well-being. To help you stay active, the Payne Center is open 7 days a week. Group exercise classes, with activities including yoga, cardio, barre, and Eagle Strong, are available Monday – Friday. The M.C. Johnson Natatorium is open Monday – Friday. Hours are limited at both facilities. For more information and schedules, visit [Campus Recreation](#).

COVID-19 PREVENTION AND TESTING

- **COVID-19 Testing.** COVID-19 antigen and antibody testing is available at Moffitt Health Center by appointment only. Click [here](#) for contact information for Moffitt Health Center.
- **Graduate Student Health Insurance Coverage.** Graduate assistant health insurance covers COVID-19 testing only when medically necessary. Testing for students who are symptomatic or exposed to a person who tested positive is covered by insurance. Surveillance testing is not covered.
- **Face Masks and Physical Distancing.** These preventive measures are required for all faculty, students, staff, and visitors while on campus. Masks must be worn in all campus locations except private offices. Students should bring their own masks. All individuals must avoid close contact and maintain six feet of distance from others.

CONTINUING PROGRESS TOWARD THE DEGREE

- **New Graduate Student Orientation.** Successful navigation through your graduate program requires an understanding of the expectations of the Graduate School and familiarity with our institution. To help you get started on the right foot, we require all new graduate students to complete a brief online orientation “course”. A link to access to the orientation modules in Canvas was provided to all newly-enrolled graduate students in an email from the Graduate School. Please complete the orientation immediately.
- **Advising.** Seeking regular guidance and input from your advisor on your academic and research progress is essential. Get on their calendar with frequent appointments via Teams, Zoom, or

Skype to discuss your progress. Stay in touch with your advisor if you face a crisis or hardship that could impact your ability to complete your academic or assistantship duties. Your advisor is your advocate, and they want to assist you in times of difficulty.

- **Graduate School Deadlines.** Deadlines for completion of milestones in your degree (defense of proposal, application for degree, defense of thesis or dissertation, etc.) are detailed on the [Graduate School website](#). Be aware of upcoming deadlines so you can plan accordingly. Missed deadlines will impede your degree progress.
- **Continuous Enrollment.** Students must maintain continuous fall and spring enrollment after completing required coursework and passing the comprehensive exam until the completion of their degree. See the Graduate Bulletin for the [Continuous Enrollment policy](#).
- **University Correspondence.** The Graduate School and your program will contact you with information and updates by email using your official usm.edu email address. Please check your campus email frequently.

FULFILLING GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

- **GA Awards and Responsibilities.** Graduate students who were awarded assistantships for the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters will receive a stipend and tuition waiver as stipulated in their award letter. However, in accordance with COVID-19 directives, work may be shifted from on campus to remote with some reassignment of responsibilities. Graduate coordinators or supervisors will contact graduate assistants to inform them of any changes in format or duties and expectations for fulfilling their duties.
- **GA Orientation and Training.** Graduate assistants are expected to attend any required orientation or training workshops conducted by the Graduate School or the student's school or program. Such sessions may be conducted in person with physical distancing measures in place or remotely via Zoom, Skype, or other platform. Check with your program coordinator for information on any requirements for training.

Contact the Graduate School:

Desira Bailey

Phone: 601.266.4262

Email: desira.l.bailey@usm.edu