

Graduate Education - COVID-19 Response

Summary of Current Status

Classes were cancelled from March 16 through March 27 and resumed on March 30. Classroom instruction will be online for the rest of the semester. Please note, the semester has NOT been extended. The last day of classes is Tuesday, May 12th, with final exams scheduled for May 14th through May 20th. The last day to withdraw from a UMCP/UMCES course has been moved to May 12th. All graduate courses in the spring 2020 have moved to a satisfactory/fail (S/F) grading system unless a student elects to receive the earned letter grade for the course. If a student does not elect to receive a letter grade, all letter grades of C- and above will be converted to an S, while all grades below a C- will be converted to an F. Students have until May 12, 2020 to make that choice.

UMCES will not host its originally scheduled in-person commencement ceremony this year, but degrees will still be granted this semester. We are looking into alternative options to honor those who have successfully completed their degrees, including an online ceremony on the day and the time of the originally scheduled commencement, May 29th at 1 PM. Some kind of in-person hooding ceremony is being planned for a later date and will be communicated as soon as possible.

We ask that you be patient in this transition. Should you have specific concerns, please direct them to the UMCES Vice President for Education's office at education@umces.edu

Zoom

Zoom is a web-based application enabling faculty, staff, and students to host meetings, webinars, and conference calls remotely. UMCES has a number of Zoom login credentials for use. Please contact your lab's assistant director or IT group for more information on your lab's credentials. To download Zoom for your desktop, laptop, or mobile device, please see the Zoom website: <https://zoom.us/download>

UMCES IT Director Kurt Florez has identified the following minimum requirements for a successful Zoom connection: An internet connection that is at least broadband wired or wireless (3G or 4G/LTE). Minimum bandwidth is 600kbps (up/down) and recommended is 1.5 Mbps (up/down). Check your Internet bandwidth using Speed Test: <https://www.speedtest.net/>

Be aware that internet connection speeds may be somewhat slower during class times. If you are having trouble with connections, turn off your video camera and, if necessary, call in using your phone. This will prioritize better reception of the "classroom" information feed.

Zoom IT support requests and questions can be emailed to UMCES IT Coordinator, Kurt Florez, kflorez@umces.edu. Please also see the Zoom website for Zoom support (<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>) and tutorials on the various Zoom features (<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-Video-Tutorials>)

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- If possible, we recommend wearing a headset or headphones if you are attending a Zoom meeting. This reduces outside noise and allows for everyone in the course or conference to fully engage without outside distractions.
- Utilize the Zoom chat feature to field questions and comments from students.
- Download the Zoom App on your phone as a potential back-up if your internet connection becomes unstable.

Online Committee Meetings, Comprehensive Exams, and Defenses

All milestones, including Ph.D. and M.S. defenses, must be held remotely and provisions must be made for participation in the public presentation portion of the defense as well as the private committee defense. To register for a remote defense, please complete the form at go.umd.edu/gs-rrd

UMD has posted detailed advice for remote dissertation and thesis defenses: <https://gradschool.umd.edu/newsroom/remote-dissertation-thesis-defense-advice>. One of the most important recommendations is to have the advisor set up and host the remote defense.

We have also come across a nice blog post from a faculty member at the University of Florida who has recently participated in remote defenses. He gives excellent suggestions that might be worth looking into. <https://threader.app/thread/1240336385896316928> There are lots more – if you find a particularly good one, please let us know at education@umces.edu and we will post it to this Educational Resources page.

For students who have upcoming comprehensive exams and faculty having to administer them, parts of these exams may need to be proctored remotely. For comprehensive exam questions originally intended to be in-person and closed-book, we recommend the use of LockDown Browser, coupled with a monitored webcam. LockDown can be downloaded here:

(<https://download.respondus.com/lockdown/download.php?id=228545938>).

LockDown Browser will allow the student to take an exam, but will prevent the student from any printing, accessing of applications, copying, or going to unauthorized websites. For more information on LockDown Browser, please see this video (~3 minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuX8WoeAycs>

There should be no need to make special arrangements for take-home format comprehensive exam questions, other than those that have been used previously.

Additional Resources

- **Creating Your Win-Win: What's Now & What's Next Weekly Zoom Meetings**
- These online weekly meetings for the UMCES students and FRAs will engage participants in personal and professional development topics as we gather virtually to share, stretch, and build community. Each session will include a brief mindfulness practice, topics of discussion chosen by the group, and brief training sessions that span the personal-professional continuum. Tuesdays at 3:30 p.m. Contact **Denise Yost** for login information.
- GoogleSuite (Google Drive, Docs, Sheets, Slides) for your computer and phone. Easily collaborate on documents using the Google Drive. Make sure that you set your document sharing permissions properly.
- Utilization of the **Adobe Creative Cloud Suite**
- This is a stressful time for everyone and it's easy to feel overwhelmed. It's OK to reach out for help. Many counseling centers are moving to provide services remotely to help people during this time: Please utilize the **UMCES Mental Healthcare Resources** for finding a mental healthcare provider in your area or students may access the **Counseling Center at UMCP**

General FAQs

1. As a faculty member, I have an international student starting in my lab in the fall of 2020. Do you anticipate any changes to their admission status?

International students admitted for the fall 2020 may face difficulties getting their visas issued, as the U.S. has closed consular visa processing until June in many countries. We have confirmed with the UMCP graduate office that it should be possible for international students to enroll and take fall classes remotely if the visa is delayed until spring. We can also defer admission to the program until spring if necessary. Please contact the MEES office soon if you have an incoming student that may have a visa issue so we can be proactive in handling this situation.

2. What do I do if I have a milestone that requires a meeting (comprehensive exams, a defense, etc.)?

All milestones, including Ph.D. and M.S. defenses, must be held remotely and provisions must be made for participation in the public presentation portion of the defense. To request permission for a remote defense, please complete the form at go.umd.edu/gs-rrd

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3. Are the deadlines still in place for spring 2020 submission of final theses and dissertations?

At this point, the deadlines for submitting final theses and dissertations remain unchanged: April 21 for Dissertations and April 28 for Theses. See <https://gradschool.umd.edu/coronavirus/frequently-asked-questions>. If students get everything uploaded and signed off by May 29th, then they will graduate in the summer but won't have to register for summer and won't incur any additional fees. Students who can't meet the May 29th deadline but want to graduate in the summer will need to register for one credit of 799 or 899, but the Office of Extended Studies is offering the credit for free. The summer deadlines are July 31 (PhD) and Aug 14 (MS).

4. I have a question about my bill, but the UMCP offices are working remotely. How do I get in touch with the bursar's office?

Per the UMD BillPay website, "In conjunction with University of Maryland as a whole, our office is currently closed to in person visitors. We are still staffed remotely and working for you during standard office hours and can receive emails at billtalk@umd.edu. Please bear with us as some services may be delayed or temporarily unavailable due to external department closures."

"Additionally, in an effort to assist families, our office will NOT be assessing the typical late fees on student account balances in March, 2020"

5. How do I contact the registrar and graduate school? Are there any procedural changes?

Please continue to reach out to offices if you are in need of information or have any questions. We recommend communicating via email rather than phone (Graduate School: gradschool@umd.edu and The Registrar's Office: registrar-help@umd.edu) as the primary means of communication. Please include your UID when reaching out. See this website for any changes to the registrar's functions: https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vT7YrDxCXOcRNJiFc5oUbjlVs4LtVKW8KPkwJnOuislXYgKq_VYTPAdeN7rcCmEYEPSUaIT78Xyccl/pub_

The MEES Office is also functioning remotely and is most efficiently reached via email at MEES@umd.edu. They are ready and eager to help!

6. Where can I find additional information as an international student?

For international student concerns, please see <https://gradschool.umd.edu/coronavirus/issmessage>. For specific UMCES employment concerns, please contact Human Resources personnel at your home unit and/or Center Administration; see <https://www.umces.edu/human-resources>.