

COVID-19 Academic Continuity Plan

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

This plan was developed by an academic subteam of the UWM Infectious Disease Preparedness Team, with representation from Academic Affairs, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), University Information Technology Services (UITS), Classroom Technology, the Registrar's Office, and UWM's branch campuses. The plan provides background on the coronavirus (COVID-19), reviews CDC guidance for universities, and outlines steps the University would take to implement social distancing strategies in teaching, learning, and research, including moving courses online.

Purpose

In light of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the Centers for Disease Control has advised colleges and universities to plan for the potential impact on instruction were COVID-19 cases to occur in our community.

The UWM Infectious Disease Preparedness Team is monitoring the situation and planning for various contingencies, including the possibility of significant student, faculty and staff absenteeism and appropriate campus responses should that occur. In addition, the Crisis Management Team, led by the Chancellor, has also been activated.

Keep in mind that, per guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, if a student is ill with flu-like symptoms, they should not come to the university. Depending on levels of absenteeism, there may be a need during the course of the semester to modify class attendance policies and research productivity expectations. Healthcare systems will likely become overburdened were an outbreak to occur and would not be able to provide medical excuses. Faculty members are encouraged to discuss flexible response strategies to student absences with their department chairs, and to develop backup plans if they themselves should become ill.

Background on COVID-19

- [UWM COVID-19 website](#)
- [CDC General Information](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education](#)
- [Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center](#)

CDC Recommendations on Social Distancing in Instruction

Here are the recommendations for [social distancing](#) from the CDC:

If local health officials report that there are cases of COVID-19 in the community, institutions of higher education (IHE) need to take additional steps in **response** to prevent further spread of the disease. The first step for IHE in this situation is to talk with local

health officials. [Note: At UWM, the Campus Health Officer is the liaison with the City of Milwaukee Health Department.]

Determine if, when, and for how long the IHE may need to suspend classes and postpone or cancel events and research activities.

Temporarily suspending classes is a strategy to stop or slow the further spread of COVID-19 in communities. When classes are suspended, IHE may stay open for staff or faculty (unless ill) while students temporarily stop attending in-person classes. Keeping the IHE facilities open a) allows faculty to develop and deliver lessons and materials electronically, thus maintaining continuity of teaching and learning; and b) allows other staff members to continue to provide services and help with additional response efforts.

IHE administrators should work in close collaboration with local health officials and the IHE's university system to make class suspension and event and activity cancellation decisions. IHE are not expected to make decisions about suspending classes or canceling events on their own. IHE can seek specific guidance from local health officials to determine if, when, and for how long to take these steps. Class suspension and event and activity (e.g., on-campus sporting, theater, and music events) cancellation may be recommended for at least 14 days, or possibly longer if advised by local health officials. The nature of these actions (e.g., geographic scope, duration) may change as the local outbreak situation evolves.

CDC also recommends continuity plans to address how to temporarily postpone, limit, or adapt research-related activities (e.g., study recruitment or participation, access to labs) in a manner that protects the safety of researchers, participants, facilities, and equipment.

Notifications to Faculty, Staff, and Students

Following consultation with the CMT, the Chancellor will notify faculty, staff, and students if the campus will be closed for face-to-face classes as a social distancing measure. Further notice will be sent to students enrolled in research classes if access to research labs becomes limited, along with notices to postdocs, faculty, scientists and lab staff.

Campus Options for Moving Courses Online

Instructors should begin planning now, because if UWM suspends face-to-face instruction, many courses may need to move online. UWM has a strong foundation for implementing social distance strategies: In a typical semester, about 11,000 students enroll in 850+ online courses.

UWM's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning has prepared a [Quick Start](#)

[Guide on Academic Preparedness for Teaching and Learning](#) that can help instructors adapt face-to-face courses to a fully online mode of delivery if the campus were to be closed to students. The Quick Start Guide covers options for moving lecture materials, discussions, and assessments into Canvas, plus options for delivering synchronous live or recorded lectures. Note that Classroom Services and CETL are developing a testing/documentation plan to support instructors offering synchronous instruction.

Course Cancellations

Some courses will not be adaptable to social distancing strategies. Performance courses in the arts, laboratory courses, and other hands-on courses might need to be cancelled in the event of the campus closing to students. Depending on the point in the semester when a closure occurs, it may be possible to award grades based on student performance in the course to date. If that is not a possibility, Academic Affairs will work with departments to identify courses that could be quickly launched for an 8- or 4-week term within a semester. The campus Crisis Management Team (CMT) will make determinations about specific strategies to be used with respect to cancelled courses in the event of a campus closure.

Branch Campuses

Instructors at UWM-Waukesha and UWM-Washington County will have access to the resources of the Kenwood campus. Needs and issues specific to these campuses are being explored and will be added to this plan as available.

Accessibility

In the event that social distancing in instruction is required at UWM, instructors will continue to be responsible for ensuring that their students receive the documented accommodations that they need. Instructors should reference the [Accessibility Training and Resource site](#) developed by CETL and the Accessibility Resource Center for more information. Instructors can contact the [Accessibility Resource Center](#) directly with questions related to providing students with accommodations.

Financial Aid Considerations

The U.S. Department of Education has issued [guidance for interruptions of study related to COVID19](#). Impacts on aid and work study will vary, depending on timing during the semester. UWM's Financial Aid Office will engage with the UWM CMT as needed.

Special Considerations [in development]

Graduate Student Research and Sponsored Research

The Graduate School and Office of Research have prepared the following Research Checklist of actions to consider in planning for possible disruption resulting from a COVID-19 outbreak. Unless actions are required by centralized university or school/college operations,

each research group is advised to decide the best way to prepare for possible disruption (inspired by Columbia University).

1. Identify emergency personnel who are essential to the operation of your laboratory and make sure that they know what to do in the event of suspended operations. All students who conduct experimental or computational research should know the name of their emergency contact personnel.
2. Review your communication plan and remind lab personnel of who is in the notification chain. Create a plan if you do not have one. Be sure that you have a list of all lab personnel and their current contact information, including all students.
3. Identify priorities in case of restricted access. You should discuss how work should be handled if some personnel and students are unable to come to work. Discuss expectations with graduate research assistants about lab work on days when classes are cancelled.
4. Ensure remote access to files, data, servers, etc. Check that all members of your research team who might need to work remotely have access to computers that are able to connect to research files and data sets, research literature and meeting software (such as Microsoft Teams).
5. Depending on the nature of your research, consider prioritizing work that has to be done in the lab and delay work that can be done remotely, such as data analysis. Freeze samples as you proceed if feasible.
6. Contact your funding agency Project Officer to learn what to do if you believe that you will not be able to meet a grant deadline or need special assistance to do so.
7. Check the University travel restrictions before planning any research-related travel.
8. Contact the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP), the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Animal Resource Center (ARC) if you have any specific questions relating to grants management, human subjects research or research with animals.
9. Contact the Graduate School (GS) and the Center for International Education (CIE) if delays in research and travel cause changes to your graduate milestones, including graduation.

Internships & Practica

There are special considerations regarding internships and practica, which will be addressed by the Academic Preparedness team in consultation with the relevant academic programs. Additional information will be added here when it is available.

Final Exams

UWM's final exam policy and federal guidance on COVID-19 allow for flexibility in altering the final exam schedule, should it be needed. The Academic Preparedness team, in consultation with governance and schools and colleges, will address this topic and add more detail as it is available.

Commencement

If social distancing measures are implemented, the CMT, in coordination with the Secretary of the University, would make a determination regarding whether to cancel or postpone

commencement. Note that the Milwaukee Health Department could also exercise its authority concerning gatherings with large numbers of people.

International Students

Current Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations limit the number of courses F-1 international students can take online when residing in the United States to one per semester. The DHS has announced that it will issue guidance to allow universities to adapt their procedures and policies for the COVID-19 outbreak. Universities will be required to report COVID-19 procedural adaptations to ensure that international students can continue to make normal progress in a full course of study as required by federal regulations. More details will be forthcoming from DHS.

Students Who Lack Internet Access

The Academic Preparedness team, in consultation with the Dean of Students, will explore alternative course options if students have limited means to access online courses and materials.

Questions & Comments

Inquiries concerning this plan can be emailed to academic-preparedness@uwm.edu . Note that this plan will be updated as planning continues and circumstances change.

Appendix. Using Microsoft Teams for Academic Administrative Purposes

Microsoft Teams is an essential platform for academic departments' administrative work during a campus closure. Resource materials are listed below. Department chairpersons, committee chairs, program directors, and administrative staff should familiarize themselves with these resources and develop a plan to use Teams during a campus closure.

(1) UWM's Teams Site: <https://uwm.edu/o365/about-teams/> In the site's

"Resources" section, see:

- "Quick Guides" (PDFs, requires login)
 - [Getting Started](#)
 - [Status & Settings](#)
 - [Chat](#)
 - [Teams](#)
 - [Calendar](#)
 - [Calls](#)
- "UWM Unified Knowledge Base"
 - [Teams Overview](#)
 - [Manage Activity](#)
 - [Set Your Status](#)
 - [Manage Priority Access](#)
 - [Manage Contacts and Chat](#)
 - [Accessing Files](#)
 - [Calendar and Virtual Meetings](#)

- [Recording Meetings](#)
- [Live Events](#)
- [Collaborate with External Guests](#)
- [Use a Code to Join a Team](#)
- [Teams Calls](#)
- “LinkedIn Learning” areas (requires login)
 - [Microsoft Teams Essential Training \(1 hr 56 mins\)](#)
 - [Migrating from Skype for Business to Teams \(46 mins\)](#)
 - [Microsoft Teams Quick Tips \(24 mins\)](#)

(2) FAQs: <https://uwm.edu/o365/teams-faqs/>

(3) Hands-on Microsoft Teams training manual (PDF) accessible from the Learning TECHniques site:

- Office 365 Resources:
<http://www4.uwm.edu/learningtechniques/ondemand/office365.cfm>
- Microsoft Teams Manual:
<https://panthers.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/TechnologyWeb/EQvOaGju8f1lvtw34wpXEGYB-HtEic49Oe7y6fydbTBDDA> (direct link, requires login)