THE GRADUATE SCHOOL COVID-19 UPDATES

4/2/20

Updated 4/8/20

HOWARD UNIVERSITY | The Graduate School

DEADLINES

Graduation, Candidacy and Oral Defense Deadlines

March 27 *extended to April 17** - **MASTER'S CANDIDATES** - Last day to submit applications for Admission to Candidacy.

April 3 *extended to April 24** – **PH.D. CANDIDATES** – Doctoral candidates planning to graduate for Summer or Fall 2020 are required to submit the formal application for **Admission to Candidacy**.

April 3 *Extended to April 17** - **PH.D. CANDIDATES** - Last day to submit requests for oral defense examinations. Submit requests for oral defense examinations (Forms GS-EA-1 through GS-EA-4), the **Turnitin.com Originality Report**, and the curriculum vitae for the external examiner. A final copy of the dissertation must accompany the requests. Oral defense examinations will be scheduled only after dissertations have been checked thoroughly and approved by the Office of Graduate Studies.

Doctoral candidates planning to graduate for Spring 2020 were required to submit the formal application for candidacy not later than October 25, 2019.

April 3 *Extended to April 24** – **MASTER'S THESIS CANDIDATES** – Submit the notification of defense. The notification must include a memo listing the student's name, names of the committee members, as well as the date, time, and place of the final oral examination. Form GS-EA-3, and the Turnitin.com Originality Report must be attached. A final copy of the thesis must accompany the requests.

April 10 *Extended to May 1** – **PH.D. CANDIDATES** – In order to allow students ten working days following their defense examinations to make any necessary corrections in their dissertations, this is the last date on which defense examinations will be scheduled.

April 30 – The spring 2020 Graduation Application (available via BisonWeb) will close after this date.

May 1 *Extended to May 15** – Electronic Submission of Theses and Dissertations are due. All degree candidates who have successfully defended the dissertation or the thesis must upload the final document to ProQuest Publishing.

PLEASE NOTE: All degree candidates must submit the electronic versions of their theses or dissertations no later than ten working days after the oral defense.

May 1 *Extended to May 15** – Certification Form GS-EA-6 are due for all degree candidates who have successfully defended the dissertation or the thesis.

May 1 *Extended to May 15** – Certification Form GS-EA-6 for all non-thesis degree candidates is due.

May 1 *Extended to May 15** – Certification Form GS-EA-7 for all graduate certificate candidates is due.

DEFENSES, CANDIDACY & IRB

Can I still defend my thesis or dissertation this semester?

Yes, you can work with your graduate program director and/or chair to schedule a thesis defense and with **Mr. Jahmal McCray via email at Jahmal.McCray@howard.edu** to submit your paperwork. And you can request to have your oral dissertation defense scheduled by emailing **Ms. Betty Goodwin at BGoodwin@howard.edu**.

Graduate School Requirements for Thesis & Doctoral Examinations Overview

• To initiate the formal request for the final oral defense, the candidate must submit Forms GS-EA 1 through GS-EA-4, the Turnitin.com originality report, and the curriculum vitae for the external examiner to Ms. Goodwin for doctoral students and Mr. McCray for master's students;

• A final copy of the dissertation/thesis must accompany the requests;

• Oral defense examinations will be scheduled only after dissertations/thesis have been checked thoroughly and approved by the Office of Graduate Studies;

• The Tele/Video Conference process is initiated and completed by the Graduate School. Thesis students are to contact Mr. McCray and doctoral students must contact Ms. Goodwin in the Graduate School for initial set-up;

• Requests must be made at least one week in advance of the remote meeting;

• It is the students' responsibility to ensure that all visual aids used at the examination be available to committee participants prior to the examination (final document, PowerPoint, other related handouts);

• A digital copy of the visual aids should also be used via screen share features for review by the committee during the examination;

• The candidates and faculty must be in a location where there is a stable and reliable internet connection;

• All other members, including the chair and the external examiner, are expected to participate via tele/video conference and to follow the traditional procedures of asking the candidate two round questions. The meeting will be scheduled for 3 hours to allow for resolution of any technical issues;

• If communication is broken during the examination and cannot be retrieved, thereby not fulfilling the standards of a high quality oral examination, the defense will be terminated and rescheduled to a later time/date;

• Committee members who are participating remotely will be asked to dial into another remote meeting room for a deliberation session and vote (pass, reexamine, fail). The chair of the committee must record the deliberation (pass, reexamine, fail) and vote. The student will be asked to join the conference to receive the vote (pass, reexamine, fail) and a summary of the deliberation. The Chair of the defense will invite the candidate to join the deliberation;

• The student will have ten (10) working days to make any necessary/recommended corrections. The final document must be sent to Ms. Goodwin (doctoral) or Mr. McCray (master's) for final processing; and

• If the above stated requirements are not met, the examination may be invalid, and the Graduate School may require another examination.

How do I submit my candidacy forms?

Candidacy forms for master's students should be submitted to **Mr. Jahmal McCray via email at Jahmal.McCray@howard.edu**. Candidacy forms for doctoral students should be submitted to **Ms. Betty Goodwin via email at BGoodwin@howard.edu.**

What should I do if I have not heard about my IRB application?

You should contact the IRB office directly. Reviews of applications are ongoing, even during the pandemic. If you have additional questions, you can email Mr. Jahmal McCray at Jahmal.McCray@howard.edu, and he will work with Dr. Constance Ellison to have the IRB office provide a status update.

Submitting IRB Application for Dean's Signature

If a student has a completed IRB application, students can upload the application in PDF format and email the form to Mr. Jahmal McCray at jahmal.mccray@howard.edu. Mr. McCray will review the application and inform the student investigator of the application status. If anything is missing or incorrect on the application, Mr. McCray will send an email informing the student of said errors. The student must email Mr. McCray the missing or corrected documents to complete the application process.

Students should also be aware that The Office of Research and Regulatory Compliance has requirements for IRB applications. All investigators must have the following modules completed prior to submission to the IRB. If these requirements are not met, applications will be sent back to the investigators.

The new modules are as follows:
§ Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) online module
§ Social and Behavioral Responsible online module
§ Conflict of Interest (COI) online module
§ Information Privacy and Security (IPS) online module

These requirements plus RCR certifications must be submitted for IRB approval.

If the application is deemed ready for submission, Mr. McCray will forward the application for the Dean's signature and email the signed application to the student. Once the student receives the signed application, it is the student's responsibility to upload the application to the Office of Research and Regulatory Compliance. Please see the list of email addresses from the ORRC.

To better track and streamline the processing of research and other applications, the Office of Regulatory Research Compliance (ORRC) will accept these submissions via e-mail. Details are enumerated below:

• IRB-medical.orrc@howard.edu Medical-IRB (Medical Institutional Review Board): For review of "Human Subjects Research" involving the study of specific diseases and conditions (mental or physical), including detection, cause, treatment and rehabilitation of persons; the design of methods, drugs and devices used to diagnose, support and maintain the individual during and after treatment for specific diseases or conditions; and/or scientific investigation.

• IRB-nonmedical.orrc@howard.edu Non-Medical IRB (Non-Medical Institutional Review Board): For review of research that deals with human attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and is often characterized by data collection methods such as questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, direct or participant observation, and non-invasive physical measurements (qualitative or quantitative).

• IACUC.orrc@howard.edu IACUC (Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee): For review of research involving animals.

• IBC.orrc@howard.edu   IBC (Institutional Biosafety Committee): For review of research utilizing recombinant DNA or synthetic nucleic acid molecules, viral vectors, plasmid vectors, or other infectious agents, genetically modified plants or biohazardous materials (i.e. blood, human tissue, etc.)

Submitting IRB Application for Dean's Signature (cont'd)

• Exclusions.orrc@howard.edu (Excluded Research): For review of studies and or projects that do not involve the use of human participants or human data, biohazardous materials, animals.

• MTA.orrc@howard.edu MTA (Material Transfer Agreement): For reviews, involving the transfer of incoming or outgoing biohazardous materials and data.

• Theorrc@howard.edu For general communications or to report compliance issues/concerns

• COI.orrc@howard.edu COI (Conflict of Interest)

When submitting materials/applications, each e-mail should include items for only one study. For example, the e-mail may contain the protocol, consent document, and investigator brochure for one study.

Submit only complete, fully-signed documents. If electronic signatures are not available, the signature pages may be signed and scanned as a separate PDF document and attached to your submission e-mail. Unless requested, please do not submit additional study related information until the protocol has been approved.

When submitting your materials to the IRB, IACUC, or IBC, the e-mail subject line must include:
- Protocol # (if assigned)
- Principal Investigator's last name
- The type of submission (new project, amendment, renewal, protocol deviation, serious adverse events, etc.)

The body of your e-mail must include a list of the documents being submitted, and each document's name should reflect its content. We recommend that version dates are included in each document naming nomenclature. Incomplete applications (i.e. missing required supporting document) will be returned.

Submitting IRB Application for Dean's Signature (cont'd)

GRADING SYSTEM

Pass/Fail, Thesis/Dissertation Credits,
Comprehensive Exams, Extenuating Circumstances

Will the Graduate School participate in the Pass/Fail grading system?

The following recommendation regarding the grading policy for the Spring 2020 semester was submitted to the Provost on April 8. The Provost will offer a response and finalize the grading policy in the coming days.

A student who has earned an <A> grade in a course should be assigned an <A> grade in the class.

A student who has earned a <B> grade in a course should be assigned a <B> grade in the class.

A student who is poised to pass a course but who argues that he/she/they might have earned a higher grade except for the pandemic should request of the faculty of record to be assigned an <I> for the course. The request for the <I> must be submitted prior to the submission of final grades. An incomplete grade contract that outlines the specific assignments to be completed and deadlines for submission of all assignments must be completed and filed with the Graduate School prior to the assignment of the <I> in Bison Web. The contract must also indicate the grade to be earned if no additional work is done. When appropriate, the <I> + letter grade (the grade earned if no additional work is complete) should be submitted.

A student who is poised to earn a <C> grade in a course but who argues that he/she/they might have been in a better position to earn a passing grade except for the pandemic should request of the faculty of record to be assigned an <I > for the course. The request for the <I> must be submitted prior to the submission of final grades. An incomplete grade contract that outlines the specific assignments to be completed and deadlines for submission of all assignments must be completed and filed with the Graduate School prior to the assignment of the <I> in Bison Web. The contract must also indicate the grade to be earned, <C>, if no additional work is done. When appropriate, the <IC> should be submitted.

Grades for all courses that are pre-requisites for courses to be taken in the Fall 2020 semester must be earned and posted before August 7, in advance of the start of the Fall 2020 semester. This includes incomplete grades given during the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters. All other incomplete grades from the Spring 2020 semester (those that are not pre-requisites) must be resolved before December 15, 2020.

To ensure that no student is unfairly penalized for the difficulties he/she/they are facing during the pandemic, the Graduate School also supports the proposed "No Credit" option. This will allow students who earn a <C> grade (or below) but who are not eligible for or not amenable to an <I/IC> to avoid having the <C> grade (or below) reflected on the transcript. Instead, the transcript will reflect "No Credit" instead of the <C> grade (or below). A "No Credit" designation will not count against the GPA, but the course cannot be counted toward the graduation or course restoration requirements (if this course is being taken to restore an expired one) and must be taken again if it is a required course.

GRADING SYSTEM

Pass/Fail, Thesis/Dissertation Credits,
Comprehensive Exams, Extenuating Circumstances

Will the Graduate School participate in the Pass/Fail grading system? (cont'd)

We were not able to achieve consensus among students or faculty on the issue of having the <C> grade be considered a passing grade for the semester.

We note that a <C> grade is a passing grade, according to the Graduate School's Rules and Regulations. The <C> grade instead of the <P> grade becomes problematic for students in three ways. First, the <C> grade will adversely impact students' GPA, while the <P> will not. Second, students are dismissed from the Graduate School if they earn more than two <C>s. A <P> grade this semester would not adversely impact students in this way. Third, in some programs, students are required to retake any course in which they earn a <C> grade. A <P> grade would meet the threshold of a passing grade and, thereby, would not warrant students' having to retake courses in which they earned the <P> grade during the Spring 2020 semester.

We recognize that most of the programs under the Graduate School's auspices are taught by faculty whose primary appointments are in other schools and colleges. Relatedly, I note that the policy adopted by the Graduate School may conflict with the policy adopted in other schools and colleges. The recommendation in this regard is that all courses offered by programs in the Graduate School follow the policy adopted without exception.

What should I do if I am registered for thesis and dissertation credits?

You should schedule a weekly check-in with your advisor. You can meet with your advisor digitally via phone, Microsoft Teams, Google Meetings, Zoom, etc.

What do I do if I need to take a comprehensive or qualifying exam this semester or this summer?

Reach out to your graduate program director. Exams are being scheduled to help students stay on course and take advantage of the weeks of preparation they had begun prior to the declaration of the pandemic.

I may not be able to attend classes remotely due to a need to care for a sick child/parent/spouse, for childbirth, for military service, or for another extenuating circumstance. How do I handle this?

You may apply for a leave of absence from your program, which must be granted with the permission of the Graduate Dean, provided that you request accommodations in advance. The procedures and implications for taking a leave of absence are explained in detail in Article II, Section 3 of the Graduate School's Rules and Regulations. Please review this document and contact your advisor and Director of Graduate Studies before requesting a leave of absence. Keep in mind that you will be unable to use university facilities during your leave, and there is no guarantee you will be given the same financial support upon your return.

Graduate School's Rules & Regulations Article II, Section 3

ARTICLE II. REGISTRATION AND ENROLLMENT
Students must register for classes during the registration period as announced in the University Calendar as well as follow procedures for registration as outlined in the Student Reference Manual and Directory of Classes. These documents can be found at the Howard University website, www.howard.edu.

Section 3. Leave of Absence for Exceptional Family Circumstances
In recognition of the effects that childbirth, adoption, illness, disability, caring for incapacitated dependents (such as children, ill or injured partners, or aging parents), military service, or similar circumstances may have on the time and energy that graduate students have to devote to their educational programs, the University allows students in such circumstances to apply for a leave of absence.

A. Length of Leave
Students who apply for a leave of absence should indicate the length of the requested leave of absence and explain why their circumstances warrant a leave of that length. Leaves of absence in excess of four semesters are disfavored and will not be granted absent extraordinary circumstances or as required by law. Time to degree will not be impacted by an approved leave of absence. Approval can only be obtained by the Graduate School with support of the students' graduate program Chair and/or Director of Graduate Studies.

B. Application Procedures
A leave of absence for childbirth, adoption, illness, disability, dependent care, or similar circumstances normally must be requested and approved prior to the beginning of the academic term for which it is being requested. A letter of request should provide a detailed explanation of the circumstances leading to the request and a justification of the length of the requested leave. Each student should describe the progress they have made in their graduate program, and indicate if the requested leave of absence is expected to affect the time-to-degree, course viability, or course-restoration limitations set forth elsewhere in these Rules. The letter of request should be sent to the Dean of the Graduate School and, in cases of disability, the Office of Student Services. The letter of request must also state whether the request is supported by the student's faculty advisor and Director of Graduate Studies, and include supporting documentation. The faculty advisor, Director of Graduate Studies, Office of Student Services, and/or the Graduate Dean may request a doctor's statement to document any limitations arising from a student's disability or illness.

TECHNOLOGY

Are there technology resources available to me if I do not have access to the internet?

Yes, several carriers such as Comcast, Sprint, T-Mobile and AT&T have dropped fees, added data and offered other perks to people coping with COVID-19. Many of these carriers' efforts are a response to the "Keep Americans Connected Pledge" issued by the Federal Communications Commission.

The Keep Americans Connected Pledge reads as follows:
Given the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on American society, [[Company Name]] pledges for the next 60 days to:

1. Not terminate service to any residential or small business customers because of their inability to pay their bills due to the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic;
2. Waive any late fees that any residential or small business customers incur because of their economic circumstances related to the coronavirus pandemic; and
3. Open its Wi-Fi hotspots to any American who needs them.

Here are a few vendors that are making accommodations to new and current customers during COVID-19 pandemic:

Comcast: Offers free WiFi for 2 months to low income families plus all Xfinity hotspots are free to the public during this time.

Internet Essentials: $9.95 a month with no contract.

Charter: Free Internet offer for 2 months.

AT&T: Offers open hotspots, unlimited data to existing customers, and $10/month plans to low income families.

Verizon: No special offers, but following the FCC agreement.

Sprint: Follows FCC agreement, provides unlimited data to existing customers, and, starting Tuesday, 3/17/2020, will allow all handsets to enable hot-spots for 60 days at no extra charge.

T-Mobile: Follows FCC agreement, plus unlimited data to existing customers, and, coming soon, will allow all handsets to enable hot-spots for 60 days at no extra charge.

It should also be noted that the Graduate School made laptops available to students for borrowing upon request; however, due to stay at home orders, no additonal laptops can be provided for borrowing.

I don't have access to scanners and fax machines. How might I be able to exchange and/or sign important documents?

There are a number of free or nearly free programs that you may find helpful in your academic progress.

Scanning:	**Electronic Signature:**	**File Sharing:**	**PDF Merger:**	**File Converter:**
Genius Scan	DocuSign	Google Drive	PDF Merge	Zamzar.com
TurboScan	HelloSign	Dropbox	sodapdf.com	
Mobile Doc Scanner	PandaDoc	Microsoft OneDrive	smallpdf.com	**Mobile Fax:**
Scanner Pro	AdobeSign	Box	ilovepdf.com	FaxBurner
Prizmo		iCloud		eFax
JotNotPro				Easy Fax App
TinyScanPro				MyFax

JOB LOSS, HOUSING, UTILITIES & FOOD

I lost my off-campus job due to COVID-19 Pandemic, what can I do?

COVID-19 has taken a toll on many students across the country. You may be eligible for unemployment. We strongly encourage you to visit the United States Department of Labor website to learn more about the availability of these benefits where you live.

https://www.dol.gov/coronavirus/unemployment-insurance

I'm struggling to pay my utility bills during COVID-19. How are the utility companies assisting customers during this time?

If you live in the District, DC Council passed emergency legislation prohibiting the disconnection of electric and gas services for non-payment during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

According to the Public Service Commission website (dcpsc.org/coronavirus):
"Although disconnection of service for non-payment has been suspended, consumers will continue to be billed as usual by their utilities for services consumed. It is therefore important that those consumers who are able to pay for these services during the emergency period continue to pay their bills in a timely manner, as to avoid a large future arrearage. For consumers facing difficulty paying their utility bills, it is equally important to contact your utilities as soon as possible at the numbers listed below. The utility companies are committed to helping consumers weather this crisis by providing payment arrangements, and, where available, other assistance."

There are also programs in DC that offer Low-Income Discount Programs and Credit for Seniors & Disabled Residents:

- The Commission requires Verizon Washington, DC, Pepco, and Washington Gas to offer discount programs to residential customers. A brief description of each program is provided on the webpage.

- Utility customers with a disconnection notice or who currently have service disconnected can receive a grant up to $1,000 once a year through the Washington Area Fuel Fund administered by the Salvation Army. Customers in the District of Columbia (Wards 1-6) call 202-332-5000 or (Wards 7-8) call 202-678-9771.

- The Greater Washington Urban League provides up to $500 in assistance to eligible customers facing disconnection. Customers can call 202-265-8200 or visit: https://www.gwul.org/utility-assistance.

If you need help understanding what assistance may be available to you, please contact the Public Service Commission's Office of Consumer Services at 202-626-5120 or visit dcpsc.org/coronavirus.

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE:

National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC)
This utility state response tracker will provide more information about what steps each state has taken to provide utility relief.

Website: https://www.naruc.org/compilation-of-covid-19-news-resources/state-response-tracker/

I can't afford to buy groceries during COVID-19. Are there any food assistance organizations providing aid?

If you live in the DMV, **Capital Area Food Bank** is working with several food assistance organizations to ensure community members in need of emergency food are provided with aid.

To find a food assistance partner in the DMV, please visit the interactive map at **https://www.capitalareafoodbank.org/covid19response/**

For additional inquiries, please **email hungerlife@capitalareafoodbank.org or call 202-644-9807.**

Other DC Food Pantry Organizations for Low-Income Residents

Salvation Army
http://salvationarmynca.org/sherman-ave/

Lutheran Church of the Reformation
https://www.reformationdc.org/in-the-community

DC Central Kitchen
http://www.dccentralkitchen.org/mealdistributionagencies/

Thrive DC
https://www.thrivedc.org/programs/groceries/

Martha's Table
http://marthastable.org/programs/foodaccessprograms/

Bread for the City
http://www.breadforthecity.org/

The Children's Law Center provides a comprehensive list of food bank programs in Washington, DC
https://www.childrenslawcenter.org/sites/default/files/attachments/resources/4.%20Food%20Services_0.pdf

RESIDENTS OUTSIDE OF DC
Visit **Feeding America** at **https://www.feedingamerica.org/** to find a local food bank near you.

Please inquire at your local community center and churches. They may also be able to provide food assistance.

How can I prevent eviction during COVID-19?

The federal government "encourages all public housing agencies and owners to prevent displacement of families through eviction which significantly increases the risk of homelessness and overcrowding."

If you live in non-public housing - DC, Maryland and Virginia have banned evictions at least to the end of April.

It is strongly encouraged to check local policy changes during COVID-19. If your jurisdiction does not have a eviction ban, speak with your landlord.

MENTAL HEALTH

What should I do if I need assistance with my mental health?

Howard University Counseling Services encourages all students to be mindful of their mental health during COVID-19 pandemic. Please use the following free resources to help you destress, meditate, sleep and generally take care of your mental health:

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING SERVICES CRISIS LINE: 202-345-6709
Monday-Friday, 6 p.m. to 8 a.m. and 24/7 on weekends

UNITED HEALTHCARE STUDENT RESOURCES:
BetterHelp - 24/7 counseling
https://www.betterhelp.com/united/

MENTAL HEALTH APPS:
Calm
Headspace
Think Up
Insight Timer
Relax Melodies

EXPERT INFORMATION:
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) COVID-19 Resource Guide
https://www.nami.org/getattachment/About-NAMI/NAMI-News/2020/NAMI-Updates-on-the-Coronavirus/COVID-19-Updated-Guide-1.pdf

Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA)
https://adaa.org/finding-help/coronavirus-anxiety-helpful-resources