THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
College of Graduate Studies

The College of Graduate Studies
Okanagan Campus
EME2121
Tel: 250.807.8772
Email: gradask.ok@ubc.ca

Tips for Working from Home

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, supervisors and students are being advised to work from home. To continue research and scholarly activities, supervisors and students should explore options for virtual collaborative space.

It is important to remember that these are exceptional times calling for mutual support and understanding, and may require continuous adjustment and accommodation.

Tips for students on working from home

Try to designate a home space and establish a daily work schedule.

In consultation with your supervisor, try to ensure you have transferred or have remote access to appropriate resources from your study or research spaces on campus.

Ensure any data or information related to your research is safely stored, and if you work with personal or sensitive data that your connection is safe and secure.

Do your best to make yourself accessible to safe and secure telecommunications via Skype, Zoom, FaceTime or telephone.

Communicate your work schedule to those around you.

For caregivers, try to stay connected with the work environment and be as diligent as time affords.

Make sure to include time for your health and wellbeing.

Take care not to isolate yourself and try to maintain personal interactions with friends from within the university and outside beyond strict research-related work.

Tips for supervisors on working with individual students

Supervisors and students should work together to develop a personalized plan that allows each person to conduct research remotely to the fullest extent possible (e.g., performing data analysis, literature review, modelling and computation, writing manuscripts and applications, and planning).

Ask what resources and support your students need to work from home.

Prioritize activities, and discuss which activities can be ramped down, curtailed, or delayed, and possible alternatives that can limit potential research interruptions.

Discuss possible impacts on activities and deadlines involving external collaborators or partners as well as planned research-related trips. Develop strategies to deal with these while working from home.

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

College of Graduate Studies

Maintain as much as possible the forms of interactions you had before switching to working from home.

Communicate with students that ethics approvals will need to be modified if there is a shift in data collection from in-person contact to phone/video contact with subjects.

International students may be especially vulnerable given their distance from family members. Please keep this in mind and reach out and support them, including connecting them to support services.

Be transparent. If you have limited availability due to other obligations, let your students know when you will be available and can respond to questions.

Schedule regular and frequent check-ins with each student individually.

Respect students' time and availability and try to stick to business hours for deadlines and meetings. Be understanding of time constraints of students caring for family.

Take into consideration that remote communication is not always a perfect substitute for in-person meetings. Feedback, enquiries and answers should be formulated very clearly.

Time away from the University under these circumstances is not to be counted towards students' vacation. Ensure that students continue to receive their regular level of funding/scholarship support.

Be clear about expectations and be willing to adapt as the situation changes.

Be understanding about decreased productivity – there is a lot of anxiety, people are caring for family, students might have a lack of resources and need time to adapt to this new way of doing things.

Create smaller, manageable deliverables rather than focusing on big projects that don't require regular check-ins, so that communication can be regularly scheduled.

Know what resources are available to students and faculty who are feeling anxious or stressed.

Tips for supervisors on working with their groups

Maintain as much as possible the forms of interactions you had before switching to WfH (e.g., research discussion meeting, regular reports, presentations).

Maintaining contact and interactions with other research team members can be useful not only from a research productivity perspective but also for morale and social support. Consider more regular group meetings via Skype/Zoom/teleconference.

Ensure that you have reliable contact information for your team members.

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

College of Graduate Studies

These are tough times. However, be cognizant of your emotional leadership as negativity is infectious and can lead to increased anxiety and stress in students. Try to be positive in your interactions with students. Focus on opportunities and making "lemonade from lemons."

Try to create opportunities for lab/team members to engage with each other virtually to help maintain social contact. Consider establishing regular group meetings with you and/or across the group of trainees.

It doesn't have to be all about work. Working from home can be isolating and dispiriting. Make it fun! Start and encourage activities that will lift the spirits of your group and encourage remote social interactions (e.g. custom crossword puzzles, generate memes/videos, create chat groups). Ensure that all activities are appropriate and inclusive.