

**Memo to TST Graduate Students**  
**From Colleen Shantz, Director, Graduate Centre for Theological Studies**  
**March 20, 2020**

Dear students,

This message outlines the provisions that we have put in place to assist you during the period of social distancing, along with some advice about how to function well under the current circumstances. Despite the changing situation we have been working quickly to identify the supports and adjustments that are necessary (1) to keep you progressing in your studies, (2) to keep you safe and provide options during the intense period of COVID-19 precautions, and (3) to provide flexibility in procedures while maintaining our standards of academic excellence.

Courses and Research

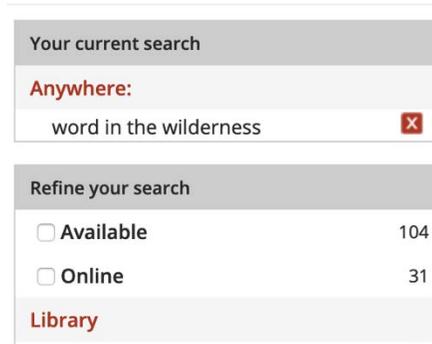
As you know, all current courses are being delivered through alternative means. This variation will continue until at least April 3. We imagine that many courses scheduled throughout the spring and summer will also use alternative means of delivery. Professors are adjusting their teaching accordingly and, when you are registered for a course, they will communicate the format to you. Remember to check your utoronto email at least once a day.

The main library on each UofT campus (UTM, UTS, and Robarts on the St George campus) will remain open for the foreseeable future, especially for students who do not have internet access at home. You may use the campus closest to you with your Tcard/library card. Other campus libraries are closed to physical visits, but available for online help.

We are blessed with an excellent library system that includes many electronic resources. In addition to the usual offerings, some publishers and distributors are responding to the current conditions with more generous provisions of ebooks and articles.

If you are looking for electronically accessible books, start on this webpage:

<https://search.library.utoronto.ca/index> . Once you've done your search, you can refine it (in the top left corner), by selecting **Online**. The window looks like this:



Our excellent librarians are also available to you—now, as always—to help identify resources for specific research questions. Here are the contact details for help at each library:

Emmanuel College

[http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/emmanuel/contact\\_us/askus](http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/emmanuel/contact_us/askus)

Knox College

email: joan.pries@utoronto.ca

Regis College

email: regis.library@utoronto.ca

St. Augustine's College

email: library@sastoronto.org

St. Michael's College

email: noel.mcferran@utoronto.ca

Trinity College  
email: ask.grahamlibrary@utoronto.ca  
Wycliffe College  
email: ask.grahamlibrary@utoronto.ca

### Dealing with Delays

As always, delays that are outside of a student's control are not counted against the student. For now, if you require an extension to complete some portion of your program, please continue to submit the same Request Forms (available at <https://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms>) that you would normally use so that we can properly track your progress. However, be assured that you will not be penalized for the delay during this interim period.

For the current semester, the deadline for all course work and other extensions is April 9 and the deadline for all work with extensions relating to COVID-19 accommodations is April 17. Other requests for extensions should be considered in the normal way with the appropriate supporting documentation.

We know that some of you are dealing with challenges that are specifically related to the COVID-19 provisions, especially additional childcare responsibilities, travel outside of Canada (for international students), and possibly quarantine. These circumstances are recognized with due consideration. For those of you facing still other challenges, Accessibility Services remain open. Please do make use of their helpful advice and assistance as needed.

### Forms

While the GCTS offices remain closed to visits, you may submit required forms electronically from your utoronto email account. TST forms are pdf-fillable, although this feature does not work in all browsers. For that reason, the best procedure is to download the form and complete it using Adobe Acrobat. If you have a printer and a scanner you will be able to sign the form as usual. However, for those without such equipment, you may attach the unsigned form to your email and in the body of the email include the following statement:

Attached here is the form [insert name of form]. Please accept this email as indication of my signature.

### General Examinations (comprehensives)

The GCTS office is routinely in touch with students who have entered the General Examination phase of the doctoral programme and with their supervisory committees. If your exams are already scheduled, we will communicate with you very soon, if we have not already, to discuss options. For the foreseeable future

- Take-home format exams will continue as scheduled unless students are facing a contingency delay (such as disruption in childcare, etc.), in which case you may request appropriate postponement/rescheduling. Arrangements will be made to hold your oral examination remotely/online.
- Students scheduled to write in-class exams between now and April 13 may request a postponement.
- Alternatively, in-class exams may be converted to take-home format, with the approval of your examination committee.

As circumstances unfold, we will continue to update our procedures and to inform you of the developments.

### Thesis & MRP Submission

While the GCTS office remains closed we will accept submissions of master's and doctoral theses by email. You must convert the document to pdf format and send it via your utoronto email. At such time that the office reopens to physical visits we will return to the requirement of hard-copy submissions. Master's Research Papers (deadline Aug 15) may be submitted to your MRP Mentor by pdf during this period as well.

### Doctoral Defences (Final Oral Examinations)

While the current provisions for social isolation remain in place, the GCTS is waiving the regulation that prohibits the remote participation of the candidate and limits the remote participation of members of the examination committee. For the immediate future, all doctoral defences must be conducted remotely. Students who wish to have an in-person defence may opt to postpone their examination.

### Supervisory Meetings (Conjoint PhD)

Next week we will distribute the new Annual Report Form for conjoint PhD students who are in the writing phase of the doctoral program, i.e. they have completed their general exams. The form triggers a meeting with your supervisory committee. The email will include specific instructions about how to proceed. These supervisory meetings may be held partially or entirely by remote means; however, they are meant to include the full committee. In this case, too, the protocols for email signatures will be in place to facilitate the ease of submitting the forms. Graduate Directors at each college can advise you about the means available at your college to conduct remote meetings.

### Language Exams

At present, the April 27 language examination session is scheduled to proceed as normal. Students will be informed of any changes via the graduate listserv.

### Non-Conjoint Programs

If you are a student in a non-conjoint program and not able to access any of the services noted above, or are not sure how a policy applies to you, please contact the GCTS Office.

### General Information

Throughout this time, the GCTS/DMin office remains operational and you may contact us by email ([gcts.office@utoronto.ca](mailto:gcts.office@utoronto.ca) and [dmin.office@utoronto.ca](mailto:dmin.office@utoronto.ca)) and phone (416.978.4050). Your college personnel are available to advise you about student services and the wonderful Graduate Directors at each college are an excellent source of information. The graduate directors are holding weekly remote meetings so that information is updated and clarified for everyone.

Let me close by wishing each of you the best during this exceptional period. Your continued progress in your studies is important to us and also an excellent way to maintain some sense of agency and stability amidst the uncertainty. One wise poem that has been circulating invites us to think about this period with Sabbath principles: while we refrain from business as usual, we can center down, become still, and know that we are connected. We will post resources for mental health and wellbeing on the TST website and through college sites. Be kind to yourself and one another.

Peace be with you,  
Colleen Shantz  
Director, Graduate Centre of Theological Studies