

College of the Environment COVID-19 Response Guidance: In-person Meetings with Students

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Relevant UW Guidance:

- [President Cauce message to faculty and staff: Beginning March 9, classes and finals will not be held in person](#) (6 March 2020)
- [Provost Richards and Prof. Janes message to faculty and graduate students: Moving classes online and concluding the winter quarter](#) (6 March 2020)

Dear Chairs/Directors/Administrators,

By now you will have received messages from the university leadership notifying us that all UW classes will no longer meet in person, effective Monday, March 9. This email provides additional guidance to help you and your colleagues decide how to proceed with in-person meetings with students, either individually or in small groups, between now and the commencement of spring quarter on March 30.

Please keep in mind that the current overarching UW guidance laid out by the President/Provost on Friday is two-fold:

- 1) Take actions that consider first and foremost the best interests of our students.
- 2) Take social-distancing steps to support the region's efforts against this outbreak.

Their detailed messages can be found on the UW's [coronavirus webpage](#).

At this point in time, there are no expectations that faculty/staff cease all in-person meetings. In general, however, since classes are not meeting in person, individual meetings with students should not be happening as part of formal instruction (in other words, the student(s) cannot be evaluated/assessed for credit or a grade as a result of that contact). We also know that some students will be eager to meet with instructors and other university employees.

At the same time, all university employees, including faculty, are being encouraged to reduce as much in-person contact with other individuals as possible. We expect our faculty and staff to exercise an abundance of caution as they choose whether or not to meet with students in-person. Things to take into consideration:

- Ability of all parties to connect remotely. Faculty/staff now have [free access to Zoom](#), but we recognize that relying on this tool may hinder equity and accessibility for some of our students. Phone calls may be another effective way to connect remotely at this time.
- Relative risk of all potential participants of severe illness or complications from COVID-19. Nobody should feel like they personally have to meet with students (or other employees) in person at this time. UW supervisors have been asked to provide telework options to employees whose job duties can be performed remotely without hampering operations. In addition, employees may use sick time off to stay at home if ill, caring for an ill family member, or in the event of the closure of a family member's care facility.

Finally, in line with guidance from [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#), if individuals do offer to meet with students outside of classroom instruction, they need to be sure to take additional precautions for infection prevention:

- Make remote participation available when possible.
- Try to find ways to give people more physical space.
- Practice good hygiene.
- Make hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies available.
- Disinfect high touch surfaces more frequently. Standard cleaning products are effective against COVID-19.