Guidelines for faculty with graduate students planning to finish Spring 2020

This is a very difficult time for our graduate and professional students. We have students who have had to cancel scheduled performances, can no longer continue face-to-face interaction with human subjects, and are not able to enter their research laboratories.

Extraordinary times call for exceptional measures. Graduate Studies recognizes that any exceptional measure taken will not directly correspond with usual academic, milestone, or assessment practices. Indeed, Graduate Studies encourages graduate programs and faculty to be flexible and strategically creative so that students who planned on completing their graduate degree in the spring 2020 semester may matriculate on time.

Graduate Studies has adjusted the spring 2020 semester deadline to April 30, 2020.

Following are a few general examples of creative solutions that would allow students to graduate under these extenuating circumstances:

In the fine arts, there are digital alternatives to what would typically be a final showing, demonstration, or performance. Faculty can allow digital accommodations (a public recital on facebook, a digital collection of paintings, a posted recording, etc). UNM Art Museum recently published an online curation of their ‘indelible ink’ exhibition providing a nice example of an alternative showing (https://issuu.com/unmartmuseum/docs/online_magazine_1). Students certainly look forward to their final showing, demonstrations, and performances. CFA should still allow these spring graduation students to use their facilities and participate in recitals and shows post-covid to complete their education experience.

Engineering and science graduate students may not get their final data from the lab. Faculty should be flexible and creative in considering how the student may alter their thesis/dissertation without the final data so that they can complete on time. This might result in a pause before a journal article is submitted. In fact, the journal article submission may take place months after graduation.

A student working with human subjects is no longer allowed face-to-face interactions. There may be a possibility to collect data or work with the subjects remotely. Alternative analyses can be developed of a dataset that is not as complete as expected.

Again, we recognize that these suggestions might not correspond directly with usual practices, but we are in unusual times and have no way of telling how long the current situation will last. It might not be a best practice to defer to the summer a traditional final assessment because we have no way of knowing the long-term impact of the pandemic. This is why it is incumbent on our faculty to envision creative, alternative strategies that lead our students to their planned spring 2020 matriculation.

The Faculty Senate Resolution further helps our students to stay on track. Faculty have resolved to be committed to keeping students focused on degree completion by way of practicing flexibility with deadlines and attendance; offering alternative and make-up assignments; and endorsing the use of CR/NC. Graduate Studies also echoes the consideration of CR/NC grades and further agrees that Incomplete grades should be avoided. We want to provide the opportunity for students that planned to finish in Spring 2020 to do so. At the same time, we need to provide post-covid-19 opportunities for these students even if they have already graduated.