

# Safety and Wellness Tips for Graduate Students Serving as Instructors of Record and TAs Who Will Be Teaching In-Person during the Pandemic

## Duke University August 2020

Teaching and mentoring students in person during the pandemic is challenging. This is a stressful time for the campus community and graduate students with instructional responsibilities may face some especially complex situations while on campus and while teaching in-person classes. The tips below offer suggestions on how to handle some issues that may arise as we work to mitigate risk of community exposure to COVID-19 maintain our values of inclusion and respect. Many of these suggestions will also be relevant for graduate students teaching remotely.

1. **Set the Ground Rules for the Class.** Prior to the first in-person class meeting and again at the first class meeting, clearly communicate the key health and safety ground rules identified in the Duke Compact. Regularly remind students and student groups of their obligations under the Compact to each other and to the community at Duke and in Durham.
2. **If You Are an Instructor of Record, include Health and Safety Measures in the Syllabus.** Mention the requirements to wear appropriate face coverings, maintain physical distancing, and adhere to other safety guidelines. Include information about [health resources](#) for students, including [wellness](#) and [mental health](#). And echo the need for us all to pitch in to prevent COVID-19 spread.
3. **Model Compliance and Positive Behavior.** Make sure that you follow required and recommended health safety measures during interactions at all times on campus.
4. **Gently Enforce Compliance with the Health and Safety Guidelines.** If you notice that a student is not complying with health and safety measures, and circumstances allow for a constructive conversation, remind that individual of the guidelines and the reasons behind them. If a student is not wearing a face covering, for instance, provide them with one if you have spare masks or let them know where they can get one (masks should be available in designated rooms in each classroom building).
5. **Be Firm and Consistent in the Case of Non-Compliance.** If a student in your course refuses to comply with health and safety guidelines, and cannot provide adequate proof of exemption, ask them to leave the room to protect the safety of others in the class. If the individual refuses to leave, stop the class, tell students that you will schedule a remote/virtual class to cover the material for that day, and then instruct everyone to leave the room. If you are an instructor of record, report the incident to your DUS and/or DGS, depending on the level of the course, as well as your chair/dean. If you are a TA, report it to the instructor of record.
6. **Use Available Resources to Deal with Non-Compliance.** If a situation around non-compliance arises (students gathering in close proximity, for example) that jeopardizes health and safety, and you do not feel comfortable addressing the situation directly, please contact your DUS, DGS, program director, or chair/dean. You can also contact Duke's anonymous Speak Up Program at (800) 826-8109 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week), complete the Speak Up [online form](#), or contact the [Duke Office of Audit, Risk and Compliance](#).
7. **Stay Informed.** Stay up to date with the health and safety guidelines from Duke and the local and national health authorities. You can find the latest guidance and updates [here](#). Those guidelines are likely to evolve this year.

8. **Seek Assistance.** If you have concerns about the health or behavior of any student in your classes or with whom you interact, contact DukeReach ([studentaffairs.duke.edu/dukereach](https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/dukereach)), as well as the relevant DUS, DGS, or program director, as appropriate. If you need advice or a sounding board yourself, talk to your faculty adviser, your DGS or another mentors.
9. **Be Mindful that All Students, Staff and Faculty Should Be Treated Fairly and Equitably.** Ensure that the guidelines are enforced equitably and report any incident of bias or discrimination based on peoples' backgrounds, such as race and ethnicity, to Duke's Office for Institutional Equity: <https://oie.duke.edu/we-can-help/complaints-and-concerns>.
10. **Be Considerate of Staff.** Remain flexible in your expectations given these challenging and unprecedented times, and be especially considerate of staff who may be working remotely some or all of the time, those who are involved in cleaning campus facilities, and/or other staff members who need to participate in face-to-face interactions on campus regularly. A kind greeting and a word of thanks go a long way.
11. **Take Care of Yourself.** In order to teach and advise well it is important to be well. Remain attentive to your own well-being and the well-being of those close to you. Take advantage of the resources available to you: <https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/graduate-professional-students>  
<https://gradschool.duke.edu/student-life/student-health-and-wellness>  
Similar resource pages are provided by Duke's professional schools.
12. **Take Time to Reflect.** As apprentice teachers, it is always advisable to make time to assess how your teaching is going and how your pedagogical style is evolving, and to discuss teaching experiences with mentors and peers. This imperative has become even more significant during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has confronted teachers everywhere with many additional challenges.