

Graduate Student Requests for Accommodations or Remote-Only Study Exceptions for the Spring 2021 Semester

Vanderbilt is taking every appropriate precaution to protect our graduate students and our entire community as we return to campus and in person classes and research. One of those precautions is providing our students with streamlined processes to request personal health-based accommodations and modifications. Congruent with the University's plan for Return to Campus, graduate students in programs with degrees awarded by the Graduate School are expected to be in residence in Nashville in order to take their didactic courses as well as to complete their experiential and co-curricular learning activities. This includes research and teaching assistantships.

Students with personal health-related conditions that might impact their ability to safely return to in person classes and activities on campus should contact the [Student Access Services \(SAS\) Office](#) for an immediate review of their request for an accommodation or modification. As appropriate, the SAS Office will work with the respective Associate Dean for Graduate Education on consideration of and implementation of an accommodation or modification that is deemed reasonable. If a student is requesting an accommodation or modification based on a personal health condition, the student will need to provide medical documentation directly to the SAS Office (but not to the supervising faculty member or school) through the [Commodore Access Portal](#). Such accommodation or modification requests will be reviewed using an individualized approach and an interactive process. Students residing with a household member who has an underlying medical condition, and who need to request an accommodation or modification, should follow the process above through SAS.

Students seeking a plan for a remote-only study exception due to other personal circumstances or travel restrictions should make their request by December 2 to the respective Associate Dean for Graduate Education listed below. However, any medical/health-related information in support of the request should be submitted directly to the SAS Office, which will consult with the Associate Dean as needed. These requests will be evaluated with consultation between the mentor/thesis advisor, Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) of the relevant program, and Associate Dean. Decisions regarding these requests will be made by December 14. Approval of a remote-only study exception will require that the student agree to be off campus for the entirety of the designated remote-only study period and the DGS must report such to the University Registrar for notation in the registration system. They will not have access to on campus facilities or spaces at any time; however, all virtual student and research resources will be fully available (career services, Student Care Network, library, etc.).

In general, for students who are Teaching Assistants, the expectation is that these students will be available in person to complete their teaching assistantship and experiential responsibilities. For accommodations and modifications recommended by the SAS Office, the Associate Dean in consultation with program leadership (i.e., department chair and DGS) will consider whether there are other options for fulfilling the teaching assistantship assignment in the program as appropriate. If the overall teaching assistantship needs within a program cannot be met with a reasonable accommodation or modification, the student will be given the option of taking a personal leave of absence.

For students who are Research Assistants or who are exclusively engaged in research and scholarship, if these activities allow for remote-only study exception (i.e. students engaged in theoretical, computational, etc. projects that do not necessitate on-campus activities), approval will be required from the Associate Dean in consultation with student's mentor/thesis advisor/ DGS/chair as appropriate. For students whose research is experimental or lab-based in nature and which necessitates on-campus activities, the expectation is that the student will be on

campus to perform this research. If the research or scholarship cannot be done remotely, and there cannot be a reasonable accommodation or modification, the student will be given the option of taking a personal leave of absence.

Any request for an accommodation or modification or remote-only study exception cannot alter the fundamental components of a course, academic program of study, or activity or present an undue burden. This will also include appropriate consideration of any implications related to funding, health insurance and the student's academic plan. Overall, the evaluation of these requests will consider a series of factors, which will include the impact on research and scholarly progress, teaching experiences, and the stage of a student in his/her program. In all cases, the respective Associate Dean for Graduate Education will render the final decision.

Every effort will be made to offer reasonable options that will enable a student to continue toward the attainment of the student's educational goals. If a student objects to a denial of an accommodation or modification request, or to the accommodations or modifications offered, the student may pursue several options including filing a grievance with the SAS office. Students may also seek a deferral (in the case of incoming students), a personal leave of absence, or a voluntary separation, subject to the appropriate academic requirements of their program.

Contact Information for Student Access Services Office:

[Student Access Services Webpage](#)
studentaccess@vanderbilt.edu
615-343-9727

Contact Information for Associate Deans for Graduate Education:

College of Arts and Science – David Wright (david.wright@vanderbilt.edu)
Divinity – Jimmy Byrd (james.p.byrd@vanderbilt.edu)
Peabody College – Jeannette Mancilla-Martinez (jeannette.mancilla-martinez@vanderbilt.edu)
School of Engineering – Duco Jansen (duco.jansen@vanderbilt.edu)
School of Medicine: Basic Sciences – Kathy Gould (kathy.gould@vanderbilt.edu)
School of Nursing – Mariann Piano (mariann.r.piano@vanderbilt.edu)