From The Graduate School at Vanderbilt University:
“Because of the stress and uncertainty you may experience due to this extraordinary situation, remember to utilize resources from the Student Care Network, including the University Counseling Center, as needed. Graduate Life Coach Stacey Satchel is also available to answer questions and offer support. To schedule an appointment with Stacey, visit https://calendly.com/vugradlifecoach, and select a date and time to meet via Zoom.

We encourage you to visit the FAQ page on the Vanderbilt COVID-19 website, which is frequently updated, and includes the notice from Padma Raghavan, Vice Provost for Research, detailing the process for ramping down all on-campus research activities.” -Dean Wallace

From the Graduate Student Council (GSC):

Tips for Social Distancing
Join us in coming together as a community during this challenging time. The Graduate Student Council has set up a support network where Vanderbilt graduate students can provide and receive support from one another.

- Please fill out this form if you would like to extend an act of kindness and help make grocery/medicine deliveries or offer other forms of support to another member of our community.
- For those of us who could use a helping hand during this time, please don’t hesitate to register your needs here.

Guide to Working From Home for Graduate/Postdoctoral Researchers

With COVID19, everyone is asked to stay home and practice social distancing, but at the same time encouraged to continue research activities from home and conduct work remotely. This way of working is unfamiliar to many of us. The following guide aims to give you some ideas about how to work from home while maintaining your well-being, what types of tasks you may want to focus on, and what resources are still available for you.

How to work from home

First, go easy on yourself; we’re in a global pandemic and it’s very much not business as usual. Everyone is anxious and scared. Expecting high productivity is expecting too much. Practice self-compassion and realize that everyone is dealing with this situation in their own ways. Here are some ways you can get yourself back into gear if you are feeling unsettled:

1. Prioritize your physical and mental health. This could involve practicing mindfulness, limiting your intake of news, cleaning up your social media feed, spending time away from a screen, taking care of those around you, and exercising. There are many free live workouts available online . . . but really the best way to safely bring some physical activity into your routine is to go outside and walk - your body is used to your normal walks around campus and you need to keep up at least that level of activity. If you are not used to working out - make sure to start slow and easy, so as not to injure yourself. The CDC has put together a simple list of ways to manage the stress brought on by COVID-19.
2. **Try to carve out a space in your home that's just for work.** Find a desk/table/room where you can maintain a setup only for work, if possible, away from where you sleep. This helps you to have a dedicated space for your virtual meetings/online lectures and is a way to create a physical boundary between your working hours vs. non-working hours. Make sure that your space is comfortable and well lit.

3. **Fall into routine and make a schedule:** Get up, shower, get dressed, brush your teeth, eat breakfast—do your regular morning routine. Then go to your working space, just as though you're heading to campus. A consistent routine is very helpful for getting into a work mode. Feel free to experiment with what feels the most comfortable and productive for you, and realize that it may take some time to adjust to your new routine. Don’t forget to schedule time for self care and hobbies (yoga, art, baking, creative projects, exercise).

4. **Take breaks!** Often! Get up from your workspace and go for a walk, read, hang out with your pets, watch an episode of your favorite TV show, nap, play a game, paint your nails. Recognize when you're cognitively loaded and no longer working well, then step away from work for a bit to recharge.

5. **Use the same social support structures** you would normally use to stay connected: texts, phone/video calls. Access online resources (below). Stay in touch with your faculty and colleagues on a weekly basis. Social distancing does not mean social isolation. You can use free online tools such as WhatsApp, Slack, Skype, or Zoom. You may also find that these same social support structures are checking in too much and you need your space - don’t be afraid to communicate that you need some time - and utilize the Do Not Disturb functions on your phone, computer, etc.

6. Lastly, recognize that this is new territory. Do the best you can with working from home, but if you’re trying and still aren’t able to get stuff done, that’s ok. It might take a while. It might be impossible. **It’s ok. It’s hard to be productive right now. Do what you can.**

**What to work on from home**
The MISTRAL Guide for PhD students working under COVID-19 restrictions

Adapted with permission from the #MentalHealth series by Dr Zoe Ayres (@ZJAyres).

Many of us are finding we are unable to work normally because of closures and the need to isolate or distance ourselves. Here are some suggestions to help you feel less pressured, improve your productivity and maintain your mental wellbeing.

Write your introduction chapter
Use this time to review the overall context of your project, how it relates to the wider field of research and shape how you can articulate the original contribution you will make. Now is a good time to write your literature review and draft your thesis introduction. Can you write a review article with someone else (also do draft papers)?

Make a timetable
Structuring your day and sticking to it regularly will help you to manage your time and keep your productivity high. Remember: to take breaks too! Stay focused with apps like Pomodoro. Could you shorten your week different days if you don’t have to stick to a 5 weekdays and 2 weekend days format?

Find new training opportunities
You may have noticed the training you need in a Career Development Plan but think about other skills that you would otherwise not have time to explore: a new language, familiarity with new software... Find something to learn that you like!

Maintain your research proposal
Although you know roughly what data you want to collect, you may need to re-think how you will gather it, especially as this may now be delayed by the health crisis. Consider the pros and cons of alternative methods that don’t involve face-to-face interviews or travel. You may want to now prioritize tasks that you were planning to undertake after data-gathering. Don’t panic – you will still have time to collect data when the pandemic passes.

Connect with different communities
Explore new ways of communicating with others, for example small or online meetings like the MISTRAL hangouts. We can’t offer coffee breaks, lunch, and happy hours too!

The MISTRAL project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions grant agreement No 813837

Source: https://twitter.com/ItnMistral/status/1246030705894850560?o=0
Refocus on tasks that you can do from home, and table everything else. These will likely be different in nature from what you have done before. Write, do literature reviews, read papers, craft detailed experimental plans, do math, do simulations. You’re more likely to have successful physical tests if you spend more time on the fuzzy front end of the process—the research, understanding, and ideation phases.

Use productivity tools. There are many techniques to help you with goal-setting, focusing on writing, motivation etc.; some of which are summarized here. You can also fill out this PDF that will help you outline your learning/work plan.

Utilize Vanderbilt University’s institutional membership for the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (click link for info on how to set up your account). NCFDD resources are broadly applicable across academic disciplines and include a range of topics such as time management, overcoming academic perfectionism, how to develop a daily writing plan, how to write grant proposals, and more. These resources offer concrete guidance that could increase your productivity and your sense of well-being.

Form writing accountability groups (virtually), where you set writing goals and timelines with other people (could be within or outside your lab/department/cohort group). Not only can you help each other meet writing goals, you also maintain contact with other people and won’t feel as isolated.

Other ways to stay productive and/or maintain your mental well-being:
https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2020/03/working-home-because-covid-19-here-are-10-ways-spend-your-time

Useful Resources/Links at Vanderbilt

Vanderbilt University COVID-19 central information website

Student Care Network

- Office of Student Care Coordination is supporting Vanderbilt students through phone appointments during this time and is the central and first point of contact for any undergraduate, graduate, or professional student who may have an academic, personal, emotional, medical, and/or other concern
- University Counseling Center is currently supporting Vanderbilt students through telemental health until further notice. Please go through the Office of Student Care Coordination to set up an appointment unless you are in immediate crisis. For students in crisis, please call 615-322-2571
- Center for Student Wellbeing will continue coaching sessions with students by phone. Students can call 615-322-0480 or email healthydotes@vanderbilt.edu to schedule. Appointments can also be scheduled via the office of Student Care Coordination.

Postdoc Wellness Program - is meeting with postdocs through telehealth during this time to promote psychological resilience and support personal and professional well-being. The program strives to empower all postdocs as they develop their strengths, refine their skills, and establish their professional identities.
Hardship Fund - This fund helps undergraduate, graduate and professional students with demonstrated need by alleviating financial burdens associated with the unexpected and abrupt changes to their Vanderbilt experience necessitated by this global public health crisis.

The Graduate School resources
- Graduate Life Coach - meeting via Zoom with graduate students and postdocs. Please schedule online for a date and time that suits your schedule. Information on the website regarding upcoming programming.
- Career Development - meeting via Zoom with graduate students and postdocs. Please schedule online for a date and time that suits your schedule. Information on the website regarding upcoming programming.
- Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

BRET - Career and professional development services and enrichment activities for PhD students and postdoctoral fellows in the biomedical sciences at VU and VUMC.

Stay connected with your colleagues!
- Graduate Student Council
  - gsc@vanderbilt.edu
  - Twitter: @VandyGSC

- Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association
  - postdoc@vanderbilt.edu
  - Twitter: @VandyPostDoc

Writing Studio
- Meeting with students via Zoom
- Twitter: @VUWritingStudio

Robert Penn Warren Center Graduate Student Conference: offering a thematic-based virtual conference for graduate students in the humanities and social sciences, or engaged in humanistic research, at the end of April or early May
  - Applicants should submit a 250-300-word abstract and a one-page CV in Word or PDF format by email to mary.g.lindstrom@vanderbilt.edu.
  - The deadline for paper submissions is April 8, 2020.

Center for Teaching - provides resources and tools for teaching remotely/online

Student Access Services.
Moving courses to an online format can affect students with accommodations. The Accessibility Services team is available via phone and email, and is posting updates as they become available.

Identity Centers
- Women’s Center - Weekly Zoom check-ins on Fridays 11:00 AM-12:00 PM
- KC Potter Center for LGBTQI Life The LGBTQI+ community was built on a foundation of using online communities to find affirmation and connection. In that spirit, we will continue to be present via email, Zoom, and phone. The staff will begin virtual office hours for community members to “drop in”.
- Black Cultural Center
Project SAFE Center for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response is open for advocacy appointments during our usual business hours of Monday-Friday 8 AM to 5 PM. Video call and phone call appointments remain available and may be scheduled by calling (615) 875-0660. If you are already connected with a Victim Resource Specialist, please feel free to communicate with them directly via email. We will continue our prevention education efforts through social media and webinars, and we will soon offer our Rooted in Resilience Support Group in a virtual format.

Community-Wide Resources:
Some of the above campus-based resources may only be open to students and not post-docs. Here’s a list of Nashville community resources that are available to the general public:

Nashville Resources
- **NAMI@Home** - NAMI Tennessee now offers NAMI@Home which will share information about mental health, mental illness, and coping during the time of Coronavirus in one place.
- **Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development**: unemployment resources
- **Broadband Connection resources - to help with staying connected at home**
- **Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Helpline**: (615) 532-6700
- **Nashville Coalition Against Domestic Violence** - if your home is or becomes unsafe, these are resources including a link to “quick exit”

Adapted with permission from advice given by mental health specialists and academics, many of whom are on social media; with additional thoughts/ideas contributed by Samantha Cheung, Arthur Chan, and Christine Romano [University of Toronto]. A full list of the original sources can be found here:

List of references on which this guide is based:
- Prof. Bryony DuPont on working from home during COVID: https://twitter.com/BryonyDuPont/status/1239945140229173248
- Prof. Jenny Yang on productivity tools: https://twitter.com/icjennikins/status/1240381716797067265
- Dr. Zoe Ayres on working from home during COVID: https://twitter.com/ZJAyres/status/1239983524259737606/photo/1
- Writing Accountability Groups: https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2010/06/14/shut-and-write
- Alison Flynn, University of Ottawa for "My online learning/work plan PDF: http://www.flynnresearchgroup.com/gettingcoursesonline