



ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΚΡΗΤΗΣ  
UNIVERSITY OF CRETE

## Starting University...

### Student Life in the Days of COVID-19

The aim of this leaflet is to provide our students with information on the COVID-10 pandemic according to empirical and scientific evidence and to support them in their effort to deal with the psychological impact and the changes in the learning process brought about by the pandemic. The leaflet has been initiated by members of the Laboratories of "Applied Psychology", "Neuropsychology", "Experimental Psychology" of the Department of Psychology, the Student Counseling Center of University of Crete and the University's Committee for the Psychosocial Effects of COVID-19.

Dear students

Some of the main challenges you may be required to face, whether you are at the beginning of your student life or already a senior student, may concern:



## Potential educational challenges

### ***Responding to new teaching methods***

- Challenges related to replacing teaching with physical presence in the amphitheater with distance learning from home
- Acquiring new skills for attending courses and participating in examinations
- Connecting to various e-learning platforms utilized by academic staff
- Connecting and communicating with University's services/staff about issues related to e-learning

### ***Difficulties in concentrating***

- Attention difficulties due to the lack of a meaningful interactive learning environment, such as University's lecture amphitheaters and labs
- Distractors at home that might affect attention and concentration during lectures
- Parallel distracting activities during lectures, such as social media (Facebook, chat rooms, etc.), online games, and keeping track of the content in websites of your interest

### ***Increased course workload***

- Difficulty in getting motivated, accepting responsibilities, investing on learning and courses, and a tendency to procrastinate
- Increased requirements and varying degrees of difficulty of distance learning work
- Difficulty in managing time for assignments or study required for your academic progress

### ***Academic performance***

- Concerns about grades
- Concerns about the final outcome of assignments and examinations
- Anxiety about the future and the progress of studies, especially for senior students



## **Potential psychological challenges**

### ***Signs of anxiety and depression***

- Loneliness
- Insecurity and uncertainty
- Sadness and grief
- Pessimism, vulnerability and lack of inner resources
- Anger
- Overthinking

### ***Increased concern for our health and the well-being of significant others especially when they live at some distance from your place***

- Concern for family members and relatives belonging to high-risk groups
- Concern that we may be infected by contact with other people

### ***Social isolation and distancing - restrictions in our social life***

- Reduced social interactions with fellow students, or lack of opportunities to develop new social relationships for first year students
- Absence of interpersonal relationships
- Restricted University-related social activities

### ***Disruption of sleeping routines***

- Difficulty in sleeping
- Fatigue from lack of sleep
- Prolonged sleeping and resting hours

### ***Disruption of eating routines***

- Appetite problems with appetite resulting in either losing or adding more meals
- Weight loss or gain
- Emotional food - we eat because we have nothing else to do...

### ***Return or prolonged stay in the family home***

- Emotional disconnection or inability to connect effectively with the University for first year students
- Limited autonomy
- A diminished sense of belonging to the University community



## How could we respond to these challenges?

Although the above challenges may seem difficult to deal with, it is important to keep in mind that it is expected to feel and react this way, as we are called upon to employ regular coping strategies that turn out to be ineffective in crisis situations such as the pandemic.

What could we do to respond effectively to unprecedented new circumstances of **learning and education**?

### ***Try to attend your courses***

- ✓ Become familiar with technology and platforms from the beginning of the courses so that you will be able to attend without interruptions
- ✓ Turn to the University services in time, and not towards the end of the courses or before the exam, to resolve any technical issues
- ✓ Participate in assignments actively utilizing the resources provided by the University, such as the Library (<https://www.lib.uoc.gr/>)
- ✓ Communicate with the academic staff and ask questions related to courses' material

### ***Good practices for communicating with the Department and the academic staff***

- ✓ Visit the website of your Department every day, as announcements are regularly updated and it is important not to miss deadlines
- ✓ Visit regularly your courses' websites (<https://elearn.uoc.gr/>), in order to have access to important information and material related to the respective curriculum
- ✓ Visit your institutional email at least twice a day, because important information is sent there

***Respond to communication with your academic advisor and seek his/her advice for academic matters***

- ✓ Make sure to communicate with your academic advisor, making use of the alternatives provided by e-learning platforms
- ✓ Schedule your meetings with your academic advisor and be punctual
- ✓ Ask questions to facilitate the educational process
- ✓ Keep in mind that your academic advisor is there to listen to you, help and support you within his/her responsibilities



What can we do to strengthen our **mental health resilience and well-being?**

***Recognize and accept “difficult” emotions. They are perfectly normal and expected***

- ✓ It is normal to experience anger, sadness, and anxiety during this extraordinary period
- ✓ It is important to communicate and share these feelings with people you feel close to (e.g. friends, relatives). You may find out that they share similar feelings
- ✓ Remind yourself that this is a temporary situation that will end at some point and think of adversities that you have successfully overcome in the past
- ✓ If these feelings impact on your everyday functioning significantly, it is important to seek support and assistance, for example by contacting the Counselling Center of the University of Crete (<http://skf.uoc.gr/>)

***Try to stay in touch with “significant others”***

- ✓ It is normal to feel lonely and isolated from others when you need to stay at home. Try to keep socially connected with your friends and family through alternative ways of communication, such as Skype, telephone and so on
- ✓ Communicate with people you value and love even if they are far away and try to connect with people who help you feel emotionally well
- ✓ The current situation makes us recognize and appreciate the importance of certain people in our lives





### ***Maintain your habits and routines***

- ✓ Start your day at about the same time
- ✓ Set specific (and achievable) goals during the day for a course and complete them
- ✓ Choose a physical activity to follow every day. It is especially helpful for your well-being to do a sport, take a walk, run or cycle

### ***Adopt good practices for sleep and food***

- ✓ Eat 3 healthy and proper meals every day
- ✓ Follow a sleep schedule. The goal is to be able to sleep 7-9 hours during night
- ✓ Avoid watching too much TV or working in front of screens, especially at night

### ***Take a break***

- ✓ Give yourself personal time
- ✓ Avoid constantly listening to and reading the news about the pandemic. Select the appropriate information sources and the most reliable ones.
- ✓ Take a break from lessons and choose an activity that pleases and refreshes you



### ***Closing...***

Let's not forget that physical distancing, wearing a mask and keeping hygiene rules all over the University campus are indications of personal responsibility, as they safeguard our personal health, the health of our loved ones, and public health.

Best wishes to all our students for a good and safe start to their studies

### **Useful websites:**

<https://eody.gov.gr/en/covid-19/>

<https://www.apa.org/topics/covid-19/student-stress>

<https://www.bps.org.uk/coronavirus-resources>

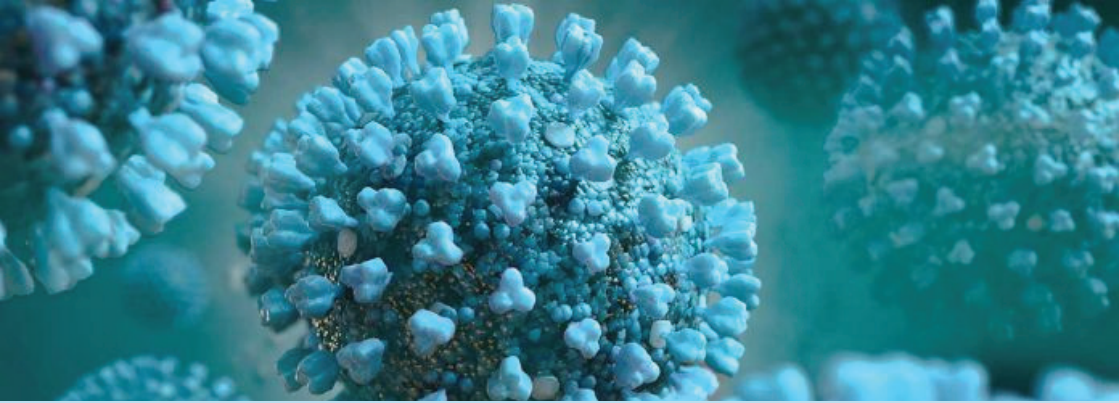
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/considerations.html>

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