

Coronavirus Response

16 March 2020



The rapidly changing coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis is posing major challenges for communities and institutions around the world. The University of Divinity's response to the situation continues to evolve, but is consistently guided by two priorities: to safeguard the health of our members and the general public, and to ensure continuity of our educational mission especially for students.

The declaration of a pandemic by WHO, the ban on mass gatherings in Australia, and the institution of a state of emergency in Victoria require a proportionate response. After consultation with the University Council and the Principals of our Colleges, I announce the following measures:

1. As previously advised by the Chancellor, the Melbourne Graduation Ceremony scheduled for 27 March 2020 will not proceed and all graduands will be graduated *in absentia*, with a celebration to be held when it is safe to do so. Other events are likely to be cancelled or transferred to an online environment; please monitor the news and events website vox.divinity.edu.au for details.
2. All units except those with a practical field-based component will move to online delivery for the remainder of first semester, commencing as soon as practicable. Alternate arrangements for field work units, where required, will be advised later this week.
3. First semester will be extended by two weeks. This is to provide for two changes:
 - a) First, there will be a pause in delivery of all units next week, being the week of Monday 23 March through Friday 27 March, to allow staff to complete adjustments to unit delivery arrangements. Intensive units with sessions in this week will continue, with arrangements to be advised by the host College or lecturer. This means first semester teaching delivery will conclude one week later, in the week of Monday 1 June through Friday 5 June.
 - b) Second, and in addition to the "pause" in normal classes next week, there will be an extension of one week for all student assignments across all first semester units

In making these changes, the University will ensure that all units continue to deliver a high-quality educational experience. This means the learning outcomes and content approved by the Academic Board will still be delivered, using, as far as possible, the approved assessment tasks. All variations will be reported through the Academic Deans to the Academic Board. Further information about these changes will be provided by Colleges over the next week.

A protocol on student withdrawal from units after the census date due to unforeseen circumstances (such as illness) will be issued to assist students in accessing existing policy provisions.

The OVC and several Colleges are making arrangements for staff to work from home in many instances, while taking steps to ensure students experience as little interruption as possible to educational services.

These are extraordinary times, and I urge each member of the University to follow public health advice and protect themselves and the wider community, and to encourage and support each other as we navigate the emotions and stresses of an uncertain future. At the same time, it is vital that we find creative ways to learn, articulate, communicate, engage and, above all, serve others.

Professor Peter Sherlock

Vice-Chancellor

For more information see: divinity.edu.au