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Law School News: F.A.Q.: COVID-19 And RWU Law

Roger Williams University School of Law

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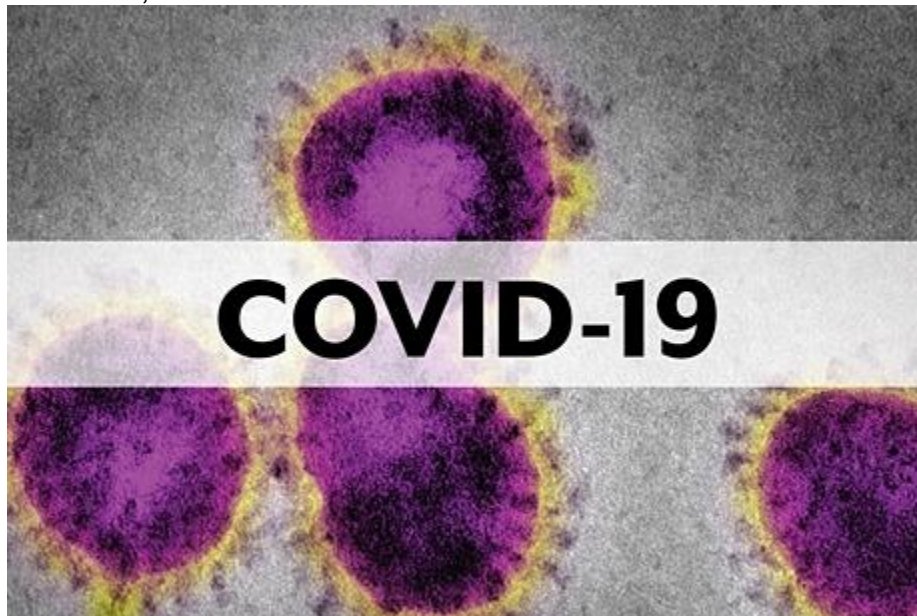
March 20, 2020

Law School News

F.A.Q.: COVID-19 and RWU Law

In what seems like the blink of an eye, we have gone from enjoying Spring Break to being in the middle of a worldwide public health crisis. Here's what you need to know now.

March 20, 2020



- What is RWU Law doing to deal with the COVID-19 crisis?

In what seems like the blink of an eye, we have gone from enjoying Spring Break to being in the middle of a worldwide public health crisis. Like law school communities across the country, RWU Law is preparing to deliver course content and support services to our students remotely. Please be assured that we are doing and will continue to do our best to get you through this semester by creating *the safest learning environment possible*. This was our implicit promise to you when you chose RWU Law, and circumstances have now made that promise explicit: our first priority is safe and effective teaching and learning.

- What is the timeline for the remainder of the semester?

We are going remote with instruction and all support services effective Monday, March 23. Law classes and exams will remain remote for the remainder of the semester. Students cannot and will not be coming to the law school until Monday, April 20, at the earliest (we'll let you know for certain by Monday, April 13). Even if we are able to invite you back for the 20th – and we hope we can – instruction and exams will remain online.

That said, our last day of classes remains Wednesday, April 22, as originally scheduled. We are not extending the semester. The good news is that we are about 70 percent of the way through the spring semester. We just need to finish the last 30 percent.

- How has RWU Law prepared for online classes?

Certainly when we began the semester, neither students nor faculty were planning a sudden move to online instruction. So this is a big transition, but we are all committed to getting it right – not just in terms of academic classes, but also support services and extracurriculars such as student groups – all with the goal of actively maintaining our vibrant law school community.

Professors have been working hard to transition to online instruction for all courses, including both doctrinal classes and legal practice, as well as skills courses and seminars. They're getting trained in how to use the technologies, holding mock classes or practice sessions, and making adjustments based on student feedback. There are bound to be a few bumps in the road, but it will work, and we'll all get better at it as we go along. We recognize that this shift will create challenges for some students, and we're committed to working with those students and figuring out how to deliver the goods in ways that make sense for everybody.

- How should I prepare for online learning?

[Professor Kathy Thompson](#) and the Academic Support team, which includes [Brittany Raposa](#) and writing specialist [Justin Kishbaugh](#), are putting together resources to help students transition to online learning. They will be available by email and on meeting platforms, both individually and in groups, to provide the support that you need. Professor Thompson's RAs and TAs will also remain available to help. Office hours (via phone or [Zoom](#)) [are here](#).

- What if I need additional help?

[Professor Thompson](#)'s team will continue to work with individual students through the [Academic Success Program](#) but will also be expanding that assistance to any students having difficulty or needing extra support in transitioning to online learning. Students with unique concerns should contact [Dean Lalli](#), [Dean Goldstein](#) or Professor Thompson, especially if academic or personal accommodations are needed. We can brainstorm to find whatever support solutions you need. We are also working with the Counseling Center to provide mental health resources for all of our students. Further information will be sent to students via email, or you can visit the [Counseling Center's webpage](#).

- What should I do if I have financial concerns?

If you're facing additional, unanticipated expenses related to the current healthcare crisis or the transition to online learning, you should contact [Tina Bacon](#) or [Kate Politano](#) in the [Financial Aid](#) office. They will be working with RWU Law administrators to identify and address individual concerns.

- How do I find out more about my individual classes?

Professors will communicate directly with students in their courses on how to access the course, their instruction plan, and how they will keep office hours or otherwise communicate with students. Some classes will be conducted through one platform and others through another (primarily [Zoom](#) and the Meetings tool within [Bridges](#)).

- How will class and exam schedules be impacted?

Just as all classes will be held online, all exams will also be administered online. How this will play out in practice is currently being discussed. For example, all exams will probably be open book. We will also be working hard to arrive at a fair set of grading policies, as we recognize that we're operating in very unusual circumstances.

- Will attendance be taken in online classes? What if I miss an online class?

We anticipate that faculty will be taking attendance for live classes – which can be done electronically – so please let your professors know if you are unable to attend as scheduled. We want to know that you're out there, that you're okay, that you're still listening and learning and getting your money's worth, and that you're still a part of our law school community.

We understand that some students have family and other obligations, or home distractions that may prevent them from fully participating at the designated class time, and that some may encounter technical glitches that prevent them from logging on. We will therefore be recording all class sessions. If for some reason you can't be there in real time, you'll be able to watch later.

- I don't have my textbooks. What should I do?

Students who need ebook versions of their texts should consult the "Obtaining Access to Books" tab in the Law Library's [Guide for Remote Learning](#). You will be able to obtain the majority of books without library mediation.

- Are other School of Law services still available?

All offices are open for business and are operating remotely, from [Financial Aid](#), to [Career Services](#), to [Academic Support](#). Please reach out with your questions. Students who need to contact the [Law Library](#) should use this [email](#) for fastest service.

- Will we still go forward with Commencement?

We are committed to Commencement ceremonies for the graduating class. If we get the all-clear for April 20, as noted above, then Commencement will likely proceed [as scheduled](#). If we don't, we may have to push it back a bit. But it *will* happen, and it *will* be fun, we promise. We will communicate an update as soon as information becomes available.

- How can I be sure that I've completed all my graduation requirements?

We are committed to helping all 3Ls graduate, which includes reviewing and revisiting all graduation requirements (such as the pro bono requirement). If we must adjust graduation requirements due to the circumstances, then we will do that. We're in communication with other law schools and with the ABA to be sure that any decisions we make are consistent with best practices, and that we are considering all the relevant circumstances.

- Are summer classes still going to happen?

We anticipate that all summer classes will move forward on schedule. However, registration has been pushed back to Monday, March 30.

- Will 2020 Summer Stipends still be available?

Yes. However, in order to address current challenges being faced by students, we have made the following changes:

(1) If you have already secured a public interest internship for the summer but have not yet submitted your stipend application, please do so by Sunday, March 22, at 11:59 p.m. Apply through Symplicity, job posting #8339. The Stipend Committee will review these applications and will make decisions in the next few weeks.

(2) If you are still seeking an internship for the summer, we have added an additional deadline, which will be Friday, April 24. For this deadline, you do not need to have secured an offer, but you do need to have at least interviewed, or set up an interview, with a public interest employer. Be clear in your essay about the status of your search and your commitment to public interest. The Stipend Committee will review these applications and will make decisions by mid-May. This application will open on Monday, March 23, and we will send out an email announcing it.

(3) If you received a Summer Stipend award but your internship gets canceled, please notify [Career Development](#) as soon as possible. Students in this situation will be given additional time to secure another internship. If you have any additional questions, please contact Career Development.

- Am I entitled to a refund?

We are not issuing tuition refunds or discounting; we are committed to fulfilling our obligation to you. However, students unable to complete the semester should contact [Deans Lalli](#) or [Goldstein](#) regarding our Leave of Absence policy, which may be adjusted under special

circumstances. Also, we will be issuing prorated refunds or credits for parking (more details about this later).

- How will COVID-19 impact bar exams?

[Brittany Raposa](#) will be gathering information about the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on bar exams and bar applications, and she will send updates as information becomes available between now and July, assuming that the exams are administered as scheduled.