

NJIT Pandemic Recovery Plan

Graduate Studies Office (GSO) Continuity and Recovery Plan

Introduction

GSO transitioned with minimal effort in March 2020 to the work-from-home mode due to efficient and reliable online processes that were developed in recent years for the vast majority of GSO's tasks. More specifically:

- GSO made available more than a year ago online processes for the submission of forms and documents to GSO by students and faculty. In April 2020 these processes were enhanced further for consistency, simplicity in obtaining digital signatures, and accurate tracking.
- The submission of PhD dissertation documents online to ProQuest that started about two years ago has made the submission of such documents a flawless and highly efficient procedure.
- Master's thesis final document submissions required until March 12, 2020 that the students pay a thesis binding fee. Some students had to visit the Bursar's office to pay this fee. To eliminate the fee, CGE (Committee on Graduate Education) waived the requirement for master's students to order bound copies of their thesis for the academic department and advisor. GSO now forwards the PDF version of their thesis to the Robert W. Van Houten library.
- Since the online GANS process was created a few years ago for the financial support nomination of graduate students, nominations and their approvals (by the chair, college, Budget, SRO, GSO) are completed online. For rare exceptions that cannot be handled by GANS, GSO produced in April an electronic version of the paper form that can be routed accurately for the collection of digital signatures.
- Upon approving financial support nominations for new international PhD students, the award letters are produced automatically to be forwarded to Admissions. Domestic students receive award letters directly from GSO. For all awards, a link is created dynamically in Highlander Pipeline for the students to visit and accept the offer. Therefore, all steps that involve GSO for student support are fully implemented online.
- All MS Thesis reviews with GSO staff are completed by a combination of email and WebEx.
- A contract signed with a vendor in March 2020 provides online professional development training to all PhD and MS students. It supplements substantially GSO's on-campus PhD professional development events that were first scheduled in September 2019. This contract was signed at the right time since all graduate students can now access these resources remotely.

Recovery Plan Details

Recovery Phase 0

As per the Introduction, all important GSO processes are readily available online and the vast majority of them have been tested for a rather long time. Also phone calls to GSO offices are forwarded to the computers of GSO staff. Therefore, continuity of operations in the work-from-home mode for GSO staff is guaranteed.

Recovery Phase 1

All GSO staff members will work remotely from home. All graduate courses will be offered online in the Summer and Fall of 2020 so master's students are not expected to be present on campus before January 2021. Only PhD students requiring laboratory access for their dissertation research and a handful of master's students may be visiting the campus. If any graduate student needs to meet with GSO staff, WebEx meetings will suffice.

Recovery Phase 2

A rotating work-from-home schedule will be realized. Just one GSO staff member from each pair shown below will be present in the office on any given work day while the other member will work from home:

1. Administrative Assistant III; Office Manager.
2. The two Coordinators of Graduate Awards.
3. Vice Provost for Graduate Studies; Associate Director for Graduate Studies.

The seventh staff member, the Assistant Director of Graduate Digital Learning, will be in the NJIT office twice per week and will work from home the rest of the week. The pairings shown above can also account for situations where a staff member raises vulnerability issues or the need to be out of work for a prolonged period of time. The only exceptions may relate to some job duties of the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and the Assistant Director of Graduate Digital Learning but relevant issues will be resolved with the help of the Office of the Provost and Academic Information Systems, respectively.

Student assistants will not be hired during this recovery phase.

Recovery Phase 3

All GSO staff members will be on-campus during regular work hours since social distancing can easily be maintained in the GSO suite. A master's student may be hired as an office assistant but there will be four vacant office cubicles surrounding this student. PhD Professional Development events will be held in large rooms; RSVP will be required to account for reduced room occupancy

Business Continuity Plan in the Event of another Complete Shutdown

The Introduction above shows that GSO has created efficient online processes for all important tasks. Therefore, all GSO operations can transition smoothly to the work-from-home mode in the event of another complete shutdown.