

ASTRO 3D EDI

Strategies for Adapting to Impact by COVID 19

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Purpose

The brief guidelines below reflect [the honest feedback we received from the A3D community on how COVID 19 is impacting their lives](#). We recognise that each institute has different policies and resources. However, we hope that by providing guidance on expectations, logistics, and community support, we can ensure that we do our collective best to support all of our members during this challenging time.

:: Video Conferencing ::

With many of us now on back-to-back video mtgs every day, the screen burn-out is real. To make this a sustainable new way of working and make sure our on-screen time is productive:

- Schedule (hour long) video mtgs to **end after 55 minutes** so that people can take a (biological) break, attend to carer responsibilities, reset their minds in preparation for the next meeting, respond to any urgent requests, etc.
- Consider if video meetings can be shorter, e.g. 30 min or less for journal clubs, seminars, personnel briefings, etc.
- Accept that not everyone will attend every video meeting. In the same way that sometimes people weren't able to attend regularly scheduled face-to-face meetings, sometimes people can't make all of the video meetings.
 - For organisers/group leaders, this means accepting that team members will miss a few videos mtgs. You can be annoyed for a bit, but I think we all prefer for our people to self-care rather than burn out.
 - For participants, ask yourself if you really need to attend every video mtg that is scheduled. Prioritise and attend as best you can, but also give yourself permission to self-care.
- People caring for children are not as available to attend marathon video mtgs, e.g. anything beyond a 1 hour block (or sometimes less) may not be feasible. Please check

with your participants and adjust as needed, e.g. schedule carers to report first so that they can step away from the meeting if needed.

:: Adapting Professional Expectations ::

Productivity: Given the added personal and professional responsibilities experienced by every single person, many universities such as [ANU \(see link here\)](#) have adopted a 25 hour productivity rule (25 hours = 35-40 hours).

- Managers/supervisors -- If you are able to formally/informally adopt a 25 hour equivalent to full-time work week for your team, please let them know.
- Individuals --
 - Talk with your manager/supervisors to clarify how many hours are recognised as equivalent to full-time work. If you do not feel that you can have this conversation, please contact the EDI team for help. [See list here for ASTRO 3D EDI representatives at your institute](#), or contact Vy Tran (EDI chair; kimvy.tran@gmail.com) directly.
 - Estimate average work hours so that as part future job opportunities, you can provide context. Note that work hours do not need to be an exact tally, it really is just something to keep in mind. For example, “Due to COVID 19, I worked at approximately 50% equivalent for most of 2020 because of additional responsibilities.”

Online Teaching: For those transitioning to online teaching, there is now substantially more pressure and time overhead that impacts research programs. Most universities are planning to continue online teaching through the next term (mid-2020 at least).

:: Supporting Our Members ::

Many of our members, especially students and early career researchers, are faced with additional challenges and anxieties that include:

- Being the primary/sole wage earner in their family unit that may include young children.
- Financial payments such as student loans, mortgages, university fees, etc.
- Even members with partners who work may have income cut due to, e.g. fewer hours. Not everyone is eligible for JobSeeker assistance, e.g. internationals and most people working at universities.

- In some cases, experiencing in everyday life racism that is exacerbated by the origin of COVID 19. This is a particular concern for members of Asian descent (please contact the EDI committee as needed).

In addition to the above, our international members may be impacted by:

- Being at least one trans-oceanic flight from parents who may need assistance or their partner.
- Not being able to leave Australia to take care of family, or at least not being able to return to Australia at the moment if they do.
- Feeling especially isolated if they are in Australia by themselves.
- Concerns about visas.

Managers/supervisors -- Most people have now moved to meeting regularly with all of their team members with individual meetings at least 1-2 times per week.

Individuals -- Please communicate with your supervisors so that they are aware of your situation and can assist as best as possible.

:: Community Connections ::

Studies show that regular social interactions are essential for personal well-being. Working from home has disrupted many of the small daily opportunities we have to be social creatures such as chats in the hallway, over a cup of tea, during lunch, etc.

To stay connected, most institutes have moved to online connections such as Slack and Zoom. We strongly recommend that individuals take advantage of opportunities to connect online with their academic communities.

To also foster community within the ASTRO 3D network:

- We now have two new Slack channels:
 - [#staying-sane-covid19](#)
 - [#work-life-balance-hobbies](#)
- Monthly Director's Video update
- Zoom colloquia (every month; see Slack channel)
- Most of the Projects have monthly video mtgs such as Genesis and Galaxy Evolution. These are announced on their respective Slack channels and open for anyone to join.
- ECR casual Zoom coffee; every Wednesday 12pm AEST (for more details, contact [Senior ECR committee](#))

:: Adapting to Working from Home ::

With many of us working from home, we are presented with a unique set of challenges trying to adapt to this new environment ([see link to the A3D EDI survey on impact of COVID 19](#)).

Our home office might not be ideal as our regular workspace; working from a small desk in a small room, working in the kitchen, living room or garage, with only a laptop without a big screen. Upkeeping productivity in this new environment can lead to additional stress.

Our younger members, e.g., students and early career researchers, are faced with additional challenges of living in small houses, shared houses, perhaps with little room for a comfortable desk and chair.

- Most universities have allowed staff and students to bring home computing equipment (keyboard, monitors, etc.) to make your home office more ergonomic.
- Managers/supervisors --
 - Check with your team to see if they have a safe and comfortable working environment at home, and whether they have all the necessary equipment.
 - Confirm that team members, especially students with limited finances, have suitable access to high-speed internet.
 - Accept that not everyone will be able to reach their full productivity.
 - If a member requires specialized ergonomic equipment (e.g., chair, footrest), find out if they can bring it home.
- Individuals --
 - Set up an ergonomic workspace. Try to find a quiet, light space if you can.
 - Talk with your manager/supervisors if you experience any health issues due to this new working environment to look for solutions.
 - Remember to take regular breaks, take time to exercise, meditate and get some fresh air

:: Resources Available at Universities ::

ANU

ANU provides the following:

<https://www.anu.edu.au/news/all-news/looking-after-your-health-and-wellbeing#anxiety>

Support Services available to you

If you are feeling worried, anxious or need some support, please make use of the various services available to the ANU Community.

Students

You can access support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via ANU Crisis Support Line on 1300 050 327 or via SMS Text message service on 0488 884 170.

Mental health support and assistance is also available through:

ANU Counselling (9am-5pm weekdays): 02 6125 2442 or counselling.centre@anu.edu.au

the Respectful Relationships Unit

You can access ANU Counselling Centre appointment via Zoom Video. To book an appointment, email Counselling.Centre@anu.edu.au and let them know that you are off campus.

Other health and wellbeing services on campus include:

Access and Inclusion

On-campus medical services, provided by the National Health Co-op

Spiritual support

A full list of student wellbeing services is available [here](#).

You can also have a look at these mental health resources. The (T) next to the resource means there are translated documents.

Staff

Staff and their family members can access free support and counselling through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which can be reached on 1800 808 374 (this number operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week).

More details can be found at

<https://services.anu.edu.au/human-resources/wellbeing/employee-assistance-program>.

Other health and wellbeing services and resources include:

On-campus medical services, provided by the National Health Co-op

Mindfulness

Now more than ever, look after each other and be kind to one another. We are all in this together.

Simple steps you can take to improve your well-being

Multilingual resources

For resources on COVID-19 in 24 different languages, check out EthnoLink's multilingual resource library: <https://www.ethnolink.com.au/covid-19-coronavirus-translated-resources/>