Dear student:

The challenges we face as a university, as a country and as a humanity in light of the crisis caused by the Coronavirus pandemic have created incertitude and anxiety among all. We understand what you're going through, because we are living it as well. The situation in the country is novel for all and requires agile and difficult decision-making to safeguard our health and wellbeing. We know you have big concerns and a lot of questions right now and, from the point of view of your studies, you are concerned about how you will complete your academic goal.

We want you to know that you are not alone, that we are here to support you, help you and accompany you in this process. Just like you, we have been adapting to the new circumstances and realities we are experiencing. This situation has required of the Institution, adjustment processes and attention to multiple challenges necessary to be able to bring to a happy conclusion the culmination of your academic year. The professors and administrative staff of Inter American University of Puerto Rico are committed and doing the unspeakable so you can achieve it.

We share a guide that will answer many of your questions and provide you direction in these moments of unease. These measures are temporary and may be subject to change in accordance with the current regulations of the different agencies. Remember, at Inter we work hard to help you achieve your educational goal. We trust that together, with God's help, we will achieve the goals we have set ourselves.

1. How can I use Blackboard?

Access **bit.ly/InterOnlineStudentSupport** to obtain information about how to use the Blackboard tools and navigate in the online courses.

2. How can I access the online courses?

Go to **bit.ly/InterOnlineStudentSupport** to obtain information about how to access the online courses.

3. Who should I call if I have trouble accessing the online courses?

Access **bit.ly/InterOnlineStudentSupport** for information about technical support and which services are available online.

4. What support services will I be provided remotely?

The academic units have distance education support staff who provide related services to students studying online. You should check your campus website for the support services available. You can also contact your dean of academic affairs or your dean of students for doubts or questions. Most academic and student services will be offered remotely. It is important that you keep an eye on the emails sent to you by the academic unit and the Central Office, which contain very important information.

5. How long will it take me to complete the course? Will there be any flexibility for students who do not operate distance learning platforms?

The course will take you the same time as the face-to-face course. It is important to know that online teaching strategies may vary. You'll work on some academic activities asynchronously, in accordance with your professor's guidelines. Other class sessions will be conducted synchronously, in real time, through Blackboard's video conferencing system, which also provides telephone call access. The professor can use other technological tools considering the needs of his or her students. Communication with your professors is essential at all times.

6. How can I strengthen distance learning skills?

You can study the *Recommendations for Successful Learning in Distance Education* document that we will send you. This document contains recommendations to facilitate your transition to online courses and provides a weekly calendar to help you get organized. You can also access the following address **bit.ly/InterOnlineStudentSupport** for information about:

- how to access the online courses
- how to navigate the online courses
- how to use the Blackboard tools
- where to request technical support
- what services are available online

7. What can I do if I don't have WiFi access, or have a computer at home?

You must communicate your situation immediately to your professors. They will identify alternatives so that you can complete the courses. They may be able to send the references and assignments via text messages or the WhatsApp application. In the case of virtual rooms available to carry out the videoconferencing sessions, you will be able to access them via telephone call. The course professor will provide you with the necessary instructions for access. Remember that in case you have some other difficulties, you should speak to your professors to identify other alternatives that will allow you to continue to be active in the courses.

8. I am a reasonable accommodation student and need assistance in this transition to online education. Who can help me?

You should contact your Professional Counselor as soon as possible. They are prepared to meet your needs and look for viable alternatives so you can successfully access and complete your courses. This also includes the administration of exams or other evaluation criteria.

9. When will I be able to complete my supervised practice hours? Will I fail if the practice is cancelled because of the COVID19 pandemic?

Academic departments, in conversations with professors and with the approval of the deans of academic affairs, are making decisions about how students will complete the practice courses and lab courses. As soon as the academic and administrative recess is over, your professor will contact you about it. Each unit will prepare a make-up plan to meet those outstanding competencies of those academic programs

that require it. The faculty continues to explore alternatives to deliver lab experiences using simulators and other software. It is important to remember that external practice centers are also closed to protect everyone's health and to comply with the current Executive Order.

10. I have a competition or summer exchange. Will the trip be cancelled?

All exchanges and activities abroad that were scheduled for the summer have been suspended: FOG Argentina, Punta Cana, International Youth Leadership Conference, Global Village, among others.

11. How will exams for those courses previously in-person be offered?

The professor of each course will indicate how he or she will evaluate his or her students and how he or she will offer the exams. There are different ways to evaluate learning, in addition to exams. This transition is likely to lead to changes in course requirements and evaluation criteria, tailored to online modalities.

12. How will the institution attend to the thesis defenses or dissertations of graduate programs? How will comprehensive exams be administered?

Both oral defenses and comprehensive examinations will be addressed using online technology tools. The faculty of the academic programs, together with the dean of academic affairs and department directors of the campuses, will establish the appropriate mechanisms and inform their students in a timely manner.

13. Should the institution contemplate completing the activities of the different terms remotely, how will final exams be administered?

Final exams, as well as other course evaluation criteria, will be taken online or through the use of remote learning tools, which will be identified by each professor. Later on, the faculty will inform you how the process will be carried out.

14. Will the institution adopt Pass/Fail grading alternatives for all courses?

The institution will continue with its A-F grading scale or other specific grades (depending on the course) as stipulated in the general and graduate catalogs.

15. Will the tutoring services of the campuses also continue virtually?

It is important that you contact your campus or its official website to learn about the services that will be available.

16. How will class interruption and transition to virtual modalities affect midterm grades and the withdrawal period?

The academic calendars of the different terms were amended. You must access the following link to familiarize yourself with date changes: **https://www.inter.edu/calendarios-academicos/.** These changes consider academic issues such as financial assistance.

17. How does class interruption and transition to virtual modalities affect institutional accreditation and professional accreditations of some academic programs?

The Federal Department of Education as well as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), the Postsecondary Institutions Board of Puerto Rico (JIP) and other accrediting agencies have authorized postsecondary institutions to transition to online learning in a way that students can successfully complete their academic goals. These measures apply equally to all institutions.

18. When does the (2020-30) January to May semester end?

The amended calendar for the second semester (2020-30) indicates that this academic term will end on Monday, June 1, 2020, with the last day of final exams.

19. When does the (2020-33) February to May trimester end?

The amended calendar for the third trimester (2020-33) indicates that this academic term will end on Wednesday, June 17, 2020, with the last day of final exams.

20. If I choose NOT to continue the academic term online because it is not the modality I prefer, can I apply for an incomplete on all courses or will total withdrawal be recommended?

First, you should contact your professors to discuss your situation and talk about alternatives. This situation is new to everyone and we are looking for options that allow you to complete your courses. In exceptional cases, the professor may grant the incomplete grade with grade (I), so that you can complete the course requirements later. However, you'll have more direction and support in the online course.

21. This situation has affected me emotionally, who can help me?

Chaplains and professional counselors from the campuses are available to offer you virtual counseling or by telephone. On your campus website you will find how to communicate with them.

22. Will the Center for Access to Information (CAI) be open?

The remote services offered by the CAI are available and accessible through your campus page. The institution has a wide variety of databases including e-books, journals, audiovisual resources, videos, among others. Similarly, the CAIs in the campuses will continue to offer online help services to meet the bibliographic resource needs of its students. Access **bit.ly/InterOnlineStudentSupport** to learn about remote access to the CAI.

23. Will I graduate?

If you complete the courses required to earn the academic degree and you have the grade average that your curriculum requires, you will receive your diploma and degree certification. You should contact the student dean of your academic unit to clarify questions.

24. Will graduation events take place? Will I receive a refund for the graduation fee?

Graduation acts will possibly be postponed. It all depends on how the country's situation unfolds, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the University will certify your degree, once you successfully complete the requirements of your curriculum. The graduation fee is non-refundable as it also includes the graduation evaluation, degree certification, diplomas, among others.

25. When restarting courses completely online, will I be refunded the fees that are applicable to face-to-face students, such as the first aid fee and the parking fee?

There are no reimbursements for fees. Courses will move online, but the academic units will continue to provide services to students. The transition to online courses is the result of an event beyond our control and all sectors of the University continue to do their best to enable students to complete their courses and to finish this academic year successfully.

26. The curfew has left me out of work and I have no money to pay the deferred payment terms I have left. What options do I have?

Each case will be evaluated individually. You should contact your campus Collection Office to identify alternatives for payment plans. The staff directory of the different offices is available on the website of the academic units.

27. I want to request official transcripts and a degree certification. Will the Registrar's Office offer services once the academic and administrative recess is over?

You can contact the Registrar's Office through the campus website. Most student services will be offered remotely.

28. Will courses be offered in the summer terms?

At least one summer session is contemplated to be offered and will in all likelihood be online or hybrid courses. This will depend on the country's health situation and the PR government guidelines. Dates will be informed soon.

29. When will I be able to enroll for the terms of the next academic year?

Once the class program is available, you can reserve your courses. It is important that you complete the FAFSA online. Once you complete both processes, you will need to accept the corresponding charges for your registration to be official. For the allocation of other financial aid, you must contact your campus, which will guide you on the steps to follow.

30. How does class interruption and the transition to virtual modalities affect my financial aid?

There are no effects on current financial aid processes. If you have any questions or concerns with your financial aid letter, you should contact the staff of the Financial Aid Office of your campus, for the appropriate attention.

31. What will happen to my student loans right now?

The Federal Department of Education issued a communication announcing the suspension of federal loan payments during this pandemic. It is important pay attention to changes to this guideline.

32. How has the institution prepared its faculty and administrative staff towards virtual mode?

Inter has more than two decades of experience in distance education, which has allowed us to adopt a culture of continuous training that includes, among others, professional development activities in virtual pedagogy. Over the past two weeks, we have strengthened this plan through training, retraining and the adoption of new strategies with the use of available information technologies. For their part, the administrative staff will work remotely, to continue to provide services and attend to academic, administrative and student affairs.

Recommendations for Successful Learning in Online Education

The following are recommendations to facilitate your transition from face-to-face courses to online courses so you can successfully complete them.

Use of the Blackboard Platform

- In order to comply with course access and activities, you must have a computer with a fast, efficient and stable Internet connection. You can access the course with a desktop or laptop computer, tablet (iPad type) or mobile phone. In the last two cases, we recommend that you download the free **Blackboard for Students** app available for IOS and Android on the apps page of your choice.

- You access the course through the corresponding link via Blackboard. You will be able to enter the course all the time and as many times as you need. There may be some group meetings with the professor that require entering at a particular time.

- It is important that you enter the course **at least three times a week**, to check if the professor has uploaded new material or if any date of delivery for any work has changed.

- You should be aware of messages sent to you by the professor via course email.

- There may be group activities that require you to agree with your colleagues on virtual work meetings. These may occur in Blackboard or in other media are appropriate for the group.

- **If you have limited access to Internet, you can archive the contents of the units (modules) and tasks assigned, outside the platform. Once you complete the study of these, you can go to Blackboard to submit the work. Don't forget to enter at least three times a week to check if the professor has uploaded new material or changed the date of delivery of some work.**

- The Blackboard platform records all your visits and the activities you do. When there are virtual meetings, your timely entry is also recorded and the professor will be monitoring your activities. On time compliance with tasks and tests is taken into consideration, as in face-to-face courses.

Manage your time effectively

- Prepare daily work schedules that include time blocks to study and take breaks. It is recommended to:
    - dedicate at least one (1) hour of study per day for each class of three (3) credits
    - take one break after every two (2) hours of study

- Create weekly work calendars that include hours of study for each class, job due dates, and exam dates (recommended template included).

- Check the calendar for each course in Blackboard to be clear about the due date of the jobs and the date of the assessments. Check the professor messages in case they report changes to these dates.

- Prepare to-do lists to perform daily.

Make good use of study strategies

- Study actively:
    - prepare concept maps;
    - resume the principal concepts in your own words;
    - make review questions;
    - create flashcards;
    - prepare practice exams;
    - teach what you have learned;
    - study daily; don't let it all accumulate.

Recommendations for Successful Learning in Online Education

Know and use the strategies to have a good test

- Sleep well the night before taking the test. Don't take a test when you're tired
- Make sure you know how much time you have to complete the exam, and take it when you have the time you need.
- Before the exam, ask the professor what resources you can use during the exam and limit yourself to those.
- Read the instructions carefully before starting the exam.
- Read each question carefully before answering.
- Take the test in a peaceful and quiet place.

Observe good practices in group work

- Review the instructions among everyone before beginning the task to ensure everyone understands what to do.
- Set communication expectations and dates for completing tasks.
- Distribute tasks among group members, document your agreements in writing, and ensure that each group member receives a copy of the document.
- Be helpful and support your peers.
- Review your classmates' work before sending it to the professor to ensure it is complete and meets the instructions.
- Let the professor know any concerns you have about the development of the assigned work.

Use the available resources

- Contact your professor via the course email or the institutional email if you have questions about assigned assignments.
- Check if your professor has virtual office hours and contact him or her.
- Contact your academic or professional counselor
- Consider making virtual meetings of your workgroups or with your classmates.

Take care of your health

- Take a break after every two hours of study.
- Exercise, walk, meditate.
- Maintain healthy eating and sleeping routines.

Stay motivated

- Study in a quiet place, where everything is at hand, with a comfortable chair and enough light.
- Organize your materials by course: notes, photocopies, resources, review materials, among others.
- Reduce distractions.
- Set daily and weekly goals.
- Reward yourself when you achieve the proposed goals.
- Share your work plan with your family and friends.
- Check the course email and the institutional email daily to stay on top of professor messages.
- Never study in bed.

Adapted from:
Virginia Commonwealth University (2020). Tips for Success When Learning Online: https://clc.vcu.edu/learningonline/
Mattei, V. (2020). Preguntas frecuentes. UIPR Recinto de Ponce.

Weekly Workload Calendar

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8:00 am							
9:00 am							
10:00 am							
11:00 am							
12:00 pm							
1:00 pm							
2:00 pm							
3:00 pm							
4:00 pm							
5:00 pm							
6:00 pm							
7:00 pm							
8:00 pm							
9:00 pm							

Recommendations

- ✓ Indicate the days and hours that you will access the courses.
  The use of colors to color code the courses is suggested by some.

- ✓ Indicate the days and hours that you will study for each course. You should dedicate at least one hour a day, five days a week to study for a three-credit course.

- ✓ Include the hourly meetings that you have planned for the week.

- ✓ Indicate when you will be taking your breaks. Remember to take one after two hours of studying.

- ✓ Avoid studying late at night.