

# **Mitigating Impacts to Research Activities Due to COVID-19**

## **Faculty and Students**

### **2020-2021**

Central Washington University is doing everything possible to allow our research activities to continue productively, while simultaneously prioritizing the protection of the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff. The goal of this memo is to provide you with guidance specifically regarding research issues and to help you in planning during this time when constraints due to COVID-19 are constantly evolving and changing the way we normally operate. A careful and proactive plan for research activities can minimize any negative impact we may experience.

Central is closely monitoring federal agency guidance regarding research and creative activities, as well as guidance provided by federal, state, and local public health and other government authorities.

Ultimately, continued research and creative activity on campus should be established by PIs or faculty research mentors with the approval of their department chairs, deans, and/or the Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC) office. Please work in collaboration with your unit leadership, and coordinate with the appropriate CWU regulatory/compliance bodies (e.g., School of Graduate Studies and Research, HSRC office, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, Environmental Health & Safety, and Safety Committees) to implement your plans. All approved on-campus research activities plans, including social distancing and hygiene protocols, for 2020-21 should be housed in either the college dean's office or the HSRC office (see direct contact information below in the last section "**Questions or Concerns**")

Please be aware that all CWU locations are subject to local public health directives, which currently vary by county and we should expect them to continue to do so. Thus, not all campus locations may be affected similarly.

## **Research Guidance and Planning**

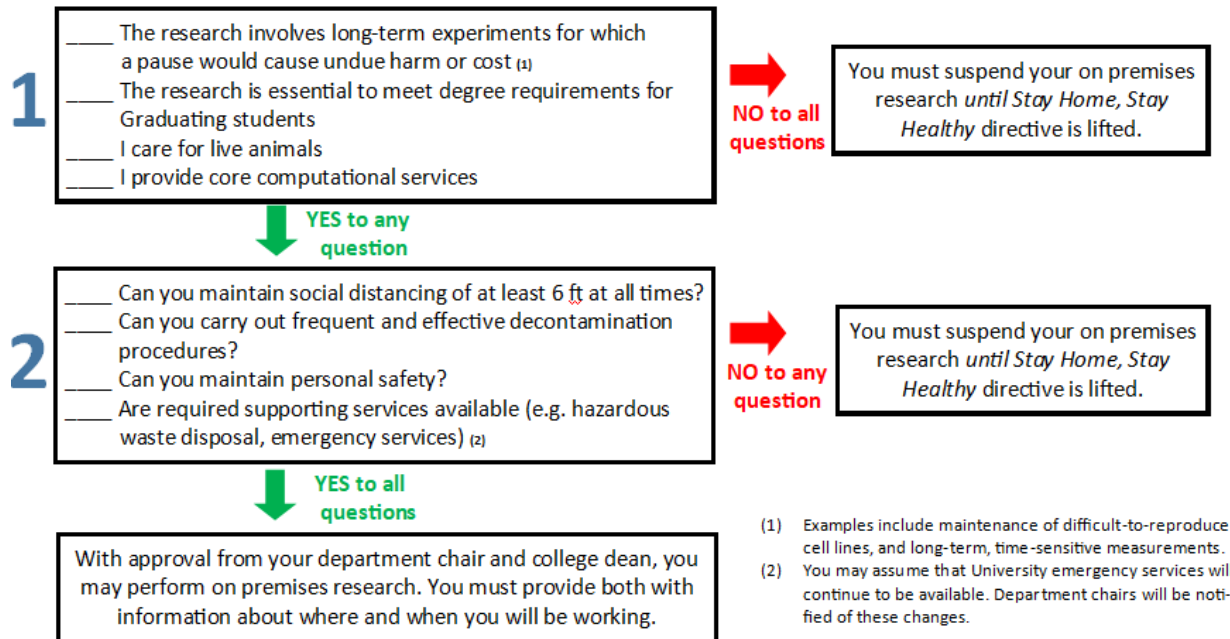
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### **Working remotely**

- Everyone in your research group should be working remotely, if feasible, carrying out work such as data analysis, literature review, manuscript writing, or proposal and progress report writing. All meetings should be now taking place remotely.
- Discuss plans with each member of your research team; it may be useful to have a regular remote check-in on weekly plans and progress for those working remotely.
- Remember to be as accommodating as possible for the members of your research team; each person will have unique circumstances. Regular and frequent communication is key.

## Essential Personnel for Research on Campus

Every research group needs to have a plan for maintaining, reducing, or suspending research activities depending on the trajectory of the COVID health crisis. In the case the campus suspends operations entirely, the usual policies will apply. This includes the need for Essential Personnel to carry out specified duties. Essential personnel shall meet all the requirements of the Allowable Research Decision Trees, see below and the Human Subjects Research section that follows in this memo. Plans for maintaining, reducing, or entirely suspending research activities should be submitted and approved by the college dean or the HSRC office.



In each unit, Essential Personnel should be already designated. If you are unsure of who in your research project is designated Essential Personnel, work with your department chair, college dean, or an equivalent administrator to identify such personnel.

### Communications

If a communication plan for your research group is not already in place, designate points of contact so everyone receives timely information.

### Plan for researcher time

Principal investigators and research group leads should discuss approaches now in the event that some personnel are unable to continue to conduct research activities. Such advanced planning will make future decisions straightforward and minimize disruption to research activities.

## Precautions

- Remember all personnel should discontinue research activities on campus and stay away if they experience any symptoms including fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.
- **Maintain social distancing:** Ensure that research team members are able to arrange personal interactions to maintain a comfortable, at least six-foot distance, from each other. If it is difficult to maintain social distance due to crowding in a research facility, you will need to work out shifts and set up schedules so that the number of people working at any one time does not preclude the ability to keep **social distance**.
- Finally, the most effective prevention measures are frequent and thorough hand washing and the regular sanitation of all surfaces within the research space.

## Ramp-down decisions

If you feel that the best course of action for your research group is to ramp down your research activities, you should do so. Every situation will be different. If you do begin to ramp down, please be sure to address the issues noted below.

## Guidance for the possibility of a research facility shutdown

- Prepare for a significant drop in support services on which you depend. By thoughtful planning you may be able to minimize the long-term impacts on your research.
- Make sure all data is backed up on the cloud, that all research related materials are stored appropriately, and that all instruments are shut down every night. Plan as if you may not have access tomorrow.
- Take stock of your inventory and pre-order reagents and supplies that have long shelf lives. Consider those that have had long shipping delays in the past and order early. Make sure your critical consumables (gloves, pipette tips, growth media, etc.) are in stock.
- Plan for keeping equipment functional and safe.
- Animals on campus are being maintained and cared for following CWU IACUC procedures and the recommendations by the Office of Laboratory Animals (OLAW).
- Repairs performed by Facilities and other service providers may be delayed. Consider scheduling those as soon as possible.

## Locked buildings

For security and safety, some buildings have moved to a locked mode, similar to weekends and holidays, so you and your research team will still have access. Make sure you have a plan for communication with anyone who might not have after-hours access but has legitimate access needs (such as an undergraduate researcher or a repair person, for instance). Note that some of these facilities are curtailing hours and/or services, so it is wise to check in advance anyway

# Human Subjects Research

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## Allowable Human Subjects Research Decision Tree during COVID-19 2020-2021

**IF THE RESEARCH CAN BE CONDUCTED WITH REMOTE METHOD(S), THEN  
YOU MAY NOT CONDUCT THE RESEARCH IN PERSON.**

1. Does the proposed research involve essential in-person interactions? Essential in-person interactions are those that cannot adequately be accomplished through a remote method such as a phone call, video conference, email, etc.

**[If principal investigator is a student]** Is the proposed research essential to meet degree requirements for a student graduating in AYE2021?

**YES to both questions above [if applicable]**



2. **Does the proposed research follow the best practices for human subjects research listed below?**

Does the research proposal exclude vulnerable populations including but not limited to diabetes, known cardiovascular disease, and older individuals (over the age of 65), especially if they have chronic medical conditions or are frail?

Will social distancing (at least 6 feet) be maintained at all times OR will prolonged, close interaction (less than 6 feet) be limited to a cumulative total of less than 15 minutes for all procedures?

Will research personnel and participants wear appropriate personal protective equipment (i.e. face masks, gloves, goggles, lab coat, etc.) throughout all in-person study procedures?

Will research personnel and participants complete a COVID-19 screening/attestation immediately before in-person interactions?

Will the number of research personnel present during data collection be limited to one?

Will the number of research participants present during data collection be limited to one?

Will frequent and effective disinfecting procedures according to the CDC and university policy be carried out during and between participants?

***If the answer is NO to any of the above questions, or you have any questions regarding research during COVID-19, please contact the HSRC office to discuss the proposed research protocol.***

YES to all questions



3. With approval from the faculty sponsor [**if applicable**] and department chair acknowledging that the research involves essential in-person interactions, you may submit an application for the proposed research to the HSRC.

## **Animal Research Issues**

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Even with some buildings being locked 24/7, your existing animal facility access remains the same.

## **Conducting Fieldwork**

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Any fieldwork that violates Central Washington University restrictions, such as on travel or gatherings, or mandates by the Governor of Washington or local health officials, should be cancelled. If it does not violate those mandates, then you should be in close contact with your faculty advisor/sponsor as you determine how and whether to proceed only after seeking approval from your departmental chair and dean. This conversation, with a clear agreement between the parties, should take place regardless of whether the work is funded by a grant, contract or other CWU funding procured by the faculty member.

## **Specific Guidance for Undergraduates**

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At this time, undergraduate engaged in research or creative activities should be provided alternative research activities that may be completed remotely. Such alternatives could include literature review, coding qualitative data or working on other research tasks remotely, writing up research already completed, or watching someone else working at the bench by video as they describe what they are doing. Note that some research facilities may have limited access at this time, so students should work with their mentors to determine the best course of action for completing their work for credit. Undergraduates either volunteering or working for compensation in a university research facility should follow the general university guidance to work remotely whenever possible. All undergraduates should consult with their faculty mentors to determine how to proceed, and how to maintain their safety while pursuing research activities.

As always, this is a rapidly evolving situation, and could change at any time.

## Questions or Concerns

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- **Contact Information Tree:**
- **Department Chairs**
- **Jill Hernandez**, Dean, College of Arts and Humanities, [Jill.Hernandez2@cwu.edu](mailto:Jill.Hernandez2@cwu.edu)
- **Jeffrey Stinson**, Dean, College of Business, [Jeffrey.Stinson@cwu.edu](mailto:Jeffrey.Stinson@cwu.edu)
- **Kurt Kirstein**, Interim Associate Dean, College of Education & Professional Studies, [Kurt.Kirstein@cwu.edu](mailto:Kurt.Kirstein@cwu.edu)
- **Martha Kurtz**, Associate Dean, College of the Sciences, [Martha.Kurtz@cwu.edu](mailto:Martha.Kurtz@cwu.edu)
- **Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee**, [iacuc@cwu.edu](mailto:iacuc@cwu.edu)
- **Human Subjects Review Committee Office**, [hsrc@cwu.edu](mailto:hsrc@cwu.edu)
- **Kevin Archer**, Dean, School of Graduate Studies and Research, [archerke@cwu.edu](mailto:archerke@cwu.edu)
- **Gail Mackin**, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, [gail.mackin@cwu.edu](mailto:gail.mackin@cwu.edu)