The University of Cincinnati is committed to facilitating and protecting your research, but safety is our top priority. As the COVID-19 outbreak expands and the impact evolves, the Office of Research is working closely with the UC leadership team, other universities, and government agencies to identify best practices and establish guidance specific to research operations. This guidance is intended to help the campus research community limit the impact and potential risk associated with the growing COVID-19 pandemic.

Laboratories and research facilities should begin to plan for the possibility of significant disruptions to routine operations. Your plans should assume that there will be disruptions to facility/laboratory access and personnel. If you have not already done so, we urge you to develop a continuity of operations plan for your research program. The guidance below is provided to help assist you in this process.

We are facing an unprecedented challenge and must all do our part to “flatten the curve” to protect our community and to lessen predictable pressures on our public health infrastructure. While we recognize the challenges, we must shift work habits to significantly reduce the number of physical interactions on our campus. The fewer researchers on campus, the better.

We ask research group leaders to identify contributions that individuals in their group can make while working remotely. To the extent possible, you, your students and other lab personnel should devote time to productive alternatives such as writing grant proposals, reviewing articles and papers, writing thesis chapters, conducting analyses, compiling data and/or synthesizing important research. This is a good opportunity to reflect and to work on books and research papers.

Research Continuity Planning Guidance Topics (Last Updated 16 March)

- What actions can I take right now?
- What can I plan to take out of my lab or office?
- How can we prepare for a shortage of crucial supplies or vendor disruption?
- My work involves core facilities or shared usage space. What should I do?
- Will SRS still be submitting proposals?
- What should I do about Human-subject research?
- How will animal care proceed?
- What if I am doing research with Biohazards, Radioactive Materials (RAM) or Radiation Generating Equipment (RGE)?

The latest guidance and information will always be available at the UC Coronavirus website and the Office of Research site.
What actions can I take right now?

- Update your research group or lab member contact list (e.g., name, title; UC location, office phone, email and cell phone number). Share the list with each lab member and with your supervisor and/or department. Keep both hard copies as well as electronic versions of the list.
- If your research requires functions that must be supported on campus during a disruption, please identify key lab members, personal protective equipment, and equipment needed to perform these functions. As a PI, you should provide this information to your supervisor and/or department chair. Supervisors and department chairs should notify the College Associate Dean for Research.
- If required on-campus functions depend on vendor supplies for ensuring research facility or lab safety (e.g., liquid nitrogen), please plan ahead appropriately to meet this need. *
- Ensure that standard operating procedures and Materials Safety Data Sheets are available in a visible location and all safety procedures are being followed. Dispose of hazardous waste in a timely fashion, especially if working with time-sensitive materials (e.g., peroxide formers).
- Ensure you and your research team have remote access to files, data and software systems, while maintaining data control assurances.
- Develop plans for backing up data on university servers if you are working remotely or plan to work remotely.
- Continue to follow compliance guidelines for each project protocol. Be sure to submit modifications to the appropriate protocol review committee prior to making changes in protocols.
- Test and practice remote working arrangements as practical.
- Be strategic about how you plan and conduct your research at this time. Depending upon the nature of your research, you might consider:
  - Prioritizing work that can only be carried out in your research facility;
  - Advancing work in progress to the point that it could be paused if necessary;
  - Identifying the work that has the highest future potential; and
  - Considering the relationship of projects to graduate student theses and post-doctoral training objectives.
- REMEMBER to preserve whatever samples that you can now.

You may wish to put off work amenable to remote support, such as data analysis, planning, and writing, by stockpiling results and data now that could be analyzed remotely in the future. If you are carrying out a long-term experiment and if it is feasible to freeze or store samples at specific steps, consider doing this more often.

*UC has contracts with a number of vendors (e.g., Fisher Scientific) who have specific commitments to supply our research enterprise. If you encounter delays from those vendors, please contact your Associate Dean for Research (or equivalent) immediately.
What can I plan to take out of my lab or office?

Researchers should carefully evaluate whether on-campus research functions can be conducted off-campus. Many restrictions apply that are enforced by Federal, State and UC regulations, policies and guidelines.

- Your Associate Dean for Research is a valuable resource in determining appropriate approaches to remote research operations.
- Specific questions regarding what can be taken from your research space can be directed to integrity@uc.edu.

All research must continue within the confines of the appropriate research space. In evaluating your options for remote work, please note the following:

- Researchers are not allowed to set up an off-campus laboratory site.
- Under no circumstances is it appropriate to remove animals or other materials from UC-approved housing or research spaces.
- Researchers may arrange with their PI or lab manager to take notebooks, data storage devices, or computers for remote work.* **No other materials, equipment or laboratory supplies are allowed offsite.**

*Transfer and/or transport of Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) or other data that requires a controlled environment requires prior approval from the Export Controls Office and must be in accordance with UC Data Security Policies.

How can we prepare for a shortage of crucial supplies or vendor disruption?

- Assess which supplies or services are truly critical.
- Contact vendors now regarding the potential for disruption. Identify alternative sources.
- For supplies or services that would be needed even in the event research would be interrupted, work with your research group, department and/or building manager to plan appropriately ahead of time to meet this need.

*UC has contracts with a number of vendors (e.g., Fisher Scientific) who have specific commitments to supply our research enterprise. If you encounter delays from those vendors, please contact your Associate Dean for Research (or equivalent) immediately.
My work involves core facilities or shared usage space. What should I do?

All researchers should immediately observe the 6' social distancing guidance in any shared usage space. Proper personal hygiene is critical, and all shared items should be cleaned immediately after use.

For those working with core facilities, to minimize potential disease spread do not take samples to a core without first contacting the Core Manager/Director to confirm they are operating and able to accept samples.

Will SRS still be submitting proposals?

Sponsored Research Services is providing support for proposal submissions and award negotiations. PI's should continue to monitor funder websites for updates on proposal submission deadlines or changes due to COVID-19. The Office of Research website will continue to list updated guidance from our major federal funders.

PI's conducting sponsored research should inform their appropriate Program Officer of any changes in research plans or progress as a result of COVID-19 impacts to UC.
What should I do about human-subject research?

The Human Research Protection Program and UC IRB are operating on our normal schedule. In an effort to minimize the risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19 in human participant research interactions, the university is placing temporary restrictions on human subjects research through May 1. We will continue to reevaluate this timeframe.

**Some Human Participant Research Studies or Activities Must Be Paused.**

1. **Why must some human participant research studies or specific activities be paused?**
   
   The real or perceived risk of viral transmission, the risk/benefit ratio for in-person contact associated with research activities must be assessed for each protocol. Ethical principles of research and federal regulations for the protection of human research participants require an acceptable risk/benefit ratio.

2. **Which studies or study procedures must be paused?**

   - All studies for which there is little to no prospect of direct benefit to participants that involve in-person contact or participant travel for research purposes must be paused, effective immediately or as soon as can be implemented. This includes social-behavioral and biomedical studies. Please contact Dr. Linke linkemj@uc.edu or Dr. Holden holdenjn@ucmail.uc.edu with any questions on whether your studies offer direct benefit to participants.
   - All studies involving blood draws or other collection of biological samples with no direct benefit to the research participant.
   - If part of the protocol, procedures such as telephone contact or monitoring or remote data collection may continue. If these procedures are not part of the protocol, the study may be modified per the above IRB determination to use remote data collection procedures when appropriate.
   - For studies at the College of Medicine that do not involve a study product/medication or device, visits should be postponed and/or conducted by telephone where feasible. Investigators should reach out to protocol/study teams for guidance on how best to proceed when in-person visits are not feasible. If these procedures are not part of the protocol, the study may be modified to use remote data collection procedures when appropriate per the IRB determination described below when appropriate.

3. **Which studies may continue?**

   - Studies for which there is direct benefit to participants may continue. Please contact Dr. Linke linkemj@uc.edu or Dr. Holden holdenjn@ucmail.uc.edu with any questions on whether your studies offer direct benefit to participants.
   - To the extent possible, study activities that can be done remotely by telephone or electronically should be done in this way. If these procedures are not part of the protocol, the study may be modified to use remote data collection procedures when appropriate per the IRB determination described below when appropriate.
   - Studies that do not involve face-to-face interactions with participants may continue.
   - Studies conducted electronically or via telephone or involving secondary data analysis may continue.
   - Additional information for studies conducted at the College of Medicine
- It is assumed that trials with investigational treatments, including drugs and devices, provide the potential for benefit and should continue.
- In general, study participants who are taking study product that is treating a health condition should continue on their assigned study product and undergo study visits per their individual protocol. Study medications should be refilled and safety labs obtained per protocol.
- Some study visits that can be delayed or postponed safely should be done where there is concern about the transmission of COVID-19. This should be decided on a case-by-case basis by the local study lead investigator in consultation with study teams/protocol teams and local institutional officials. If these procedures are not part of the protocol, the study may be modified to use remote data collection procedures when appropriate per the IRB determination described below.
- In addition, each investigator should limit study staff to be utilized to conduct visits to limit contact for study personnel, study participants and other individuals. Supervisory research personnel should discuss upcoming schedules in the next 6-8 weeks and how to limit the number of study personnel required to conduct visits that must be completed.
- All study participants should be contacted by telephone and asked about any respiratory symptoms or fever prior to their visits on the day prior to the scheduled visit. If study participants have any respiratory symptoms or fever they should be referred for appropriate testing before coming to a study visit. Upon arrival to UC Health or UC Medical Center, study participants should be asked again about respiratory symptoms or fever, and, if they report any, should be immediately moved to an isolated room and asked to put on a mask. Study personnel should wear appropriate personal protective equipment when conducting a study visit with a participant who is having respiratory symptoms or fever and refer the study participant for appropriate testing for infectious diseases.
- Study investigators should use their best judgment to limit contact that is not absolutely necessary to ensure the safety of the study participant and ensure the integrity of the research.

4. **What if a human research study needs to be modified in response to COVID-19?**

Per UC SOP HRP-029 Review of Study Modifications “Modifications in approved research may not be initiated without prior IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards”. If protocols must be modified to address immediate safety concerns to participants or study staff related to the COVID-19 epidemic, the UC IRB has determined that these modifications meet this exception. Any modifications made per this exception should be subsequently submitted for IRB notification using the Reportable New Information (RNI) function in RAP as an Unreviewed change: Change to the protocol taken without prior IRB review to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to a subject.

Please contact the HRPP office at [irb@uc.edu](mailto:irb@uc.edu) or 513-558-5259 with any questions.
How will animal care proceed?

**Every PI working with research animals should create a plan to manage animal experiments and ongoing care in case of decreased lab staffing or shortage of supplies.** Every PI should create an emergency contact list and share that with the Attending Veterinarian and LAMS Director: tetensje@ucmail.uc.edu or lams@ucmail.uc.edu.

Other considerations:
- Research labs should prioritize ongoing essential research
- Consider delaying new projects and delaying acquisition of new animal subjects
- Reduce rodent breeding to only numbers required to maintain lines

Lab Animal Medical Services (LAMS) has continuity plans in place to provide routine care (food, water, sanitation, health checks) and routine veterinary care. LAMS is stocked with essential items for animal care. Animal caretakers and Veterinarians are considered essential personnel and will continue to report to work unless they become infected with the COVID-19. The IACUC office is operating and IACUC meetings are continuing as scheduled. If changes occur, the IACUC website will be updated accordingly.

**If you manage your own animals or conduct your work at an outlying facility** your group should have contingency plans in place for who will provide daily animal checks and what to do if this person is unable to perform them. If help is needed providing care due to illness of all caretakers and PIs, the Attending Veterinarian should be contacted to arrange for emergency backup animal care.
What if I am doing research with Biohazards, Radioactive Materials (RAM) or Radiation Generating Equipment (RGE)?

Please minimize RAM orders to those that are essential for clinical care or are essential for research continuity. The Radiation Safety Office is operating and the Radiation Safety Committee will meet as scheduled.