

Research and the Coronavirus

March 17, 2020 -- Things are quickly changing as UCF prepares and reacts to the coronavirus pandemic. The Office of Research is working with campus leadership and local and federal agencies to make sure we do everything we can to support our faculty and students conducting research while prioritizing your safety. Please check this list often as new information may be posted as the situation evolves. Remember, some answers may not be convenient, but your safety is our No. 1 priority and that is the motivation behind these guidelines for research operations. For the most up to date information about all UCF operations during this time, visit <https://www.ucf.edu/safety/coronavirus/>.

Lab Access and Research Protocol

Can I continue my research?

This is an individual investigator decision, unless UCF, the state, or the federal government places additional restrictions. Please take time to consider any added risk, in particular to those individuals who may be at heightened risk from this disease versus the true need to continue your research during this crisis at this time.

Please reference the CDC website for additional guidelines:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Can I start long-term research at this time?

This is not the time to begin long-range projects. There are too many uncertainties regarding when campus will be fully operational. Federal agencies and other research partners are aware of this unique situation and the need for social distancing. The Office of Research will work with you once we have more direction from our partners on no-cost extensions you may need to complete your work, once we are fully operational again.

Can I proceed with non-human research projects?

This is up to each investigator, but remember there is a lot of uncertainty at this time. It may be best to stop or pause if possible. Health and safety is should be your guide.

I have a face-to-face experiment, but we are being told social distancing. What should I do?

Health and safety, including preventing the spread of this disease, is our No. 1 priority and should be yours, too. If you can't do your work any other way, postpone the experiment.

Will I and my students have access to my lab?

Only if you fill out the [laboratory access survey](#) released on March 13. In the survey you are asked to identify people critical to maintaining time-sensitive and necessary lab operations. This is not a guarantee every person will have access, but the survey will help the Office of Research create an authorization list. Only individuals identified on the authorization list will be allowed to enter your lab beginning Wednesday, March 18. It is likely that each building on campus will be limited to one entry point beginning that day. These procedures are to implement social

distancing and for the safety of our faculty, staff, and students. We reserve the right to limit or stop research that is not consistent with these procedures or poses a health threat to personnel.

Will my graduate students have access to my lab?

Only if you identify them as critical to your lab operations in the laboratory access survey and your plan was approved.

What types of changes can I make to my protocol that do not require IRB approval?

In general, changes that are temporary in nature in order to limit subject exposure to the virus (This means that when this crisis is over, you will return to all pre-crisis procedures):

- a) Change on interaction methods, such as changes from face-to-face to over the phone or other similar devices.
- b) Please remember that this change can only be implemented if it presents no greater risk to participants. For example, if your study was taking place in person to avoid the risk by direct observations of the research subjects, a change to over the phone would not be permitted without a formal review by the IRB in the form of a modification.
- c) Do not add any additional risk to any subjects or study staff.
- d) You should make a note in your study records regarding the above mentioned minor temporary change(s) that were made along with the justification in case you are ever audited.

What type of changes “must” be approved by the IRB prior to implementing them?

In general, changes that:

- a) Are not being made as a direct result of the COVID-19 crisis, no matter how minor.
- b) Are greater-than-minimal risk changes that are a result of the COVID 19 crisis.
- c) Are on the protocol that is a greater-than-minimal risk study.

What if the greater-than-minimal risk revision can’t wait for IRB approval?

If it is in the best interest of the subject, and will minimize or prevent transmission of COVID 19, then make the change, however:

- a) You should immediately notify the IRB by email at IRB@ucf.edu.
- b) You should make a note of the change(s) in your study records with the justification.
- c) You must submit the revision of protocol with the change(s) to the IRB as soon as possible, noting that the revision was implemented because of an emergency, including the justification for that emergent change(s).

What if there is a desire or need to keep a temporary COVID-19-related change a permanent change?

- a) If the change is consistent with item B above, then initiate the change and submit the revision.
- b) When you submit the revision, please include in the description of the revision that the change was already implemented, and the reason it was implemented “emergently.”

What if you decide to suspend your study until the COVID-19 crisis is over?

There is no need to inform the IRB. However:

- a) If your study is a greater-than-minimal risk study that involves some type of patient care, you must ensure your suspension does not increase any risk to those study subjects.
- b) If possible, make sure you contact any study subject who will be affected by this suspension (i.e., a study visit will be cancelled, etc.)
- c) You should make a note in your study records of this temporary suspension along with the justification and any actions taken in case you are ever audited.

Research-related Travel and Pay

I have a speaker coming to campus. Do I have to cancel?

Yes. All campus events are canceled through the period of remote instruction.

I'm supposed to travel in the next few weeks. Should I cancel? Will it be reimbursed?

Yes, you should cancel. No travel approval petitions will be approved at this time. More information about work-related travel is available here:

<https://www.ucf.edu/safety/coronavirus/faq/#worktravel>

Can I still use my p-card? Are there any special restrictions?

You may use your p-card as usual. Follow the routine guidelines and procedures. All F&A procedures remain status quo until further notice.

I am a student research assistant. Do I come into work? Do I still get paid?

Only certain individuals will have limited access to labs until further notice. Check with your faculty member. Graduate research assistants are on contract, so they will be paid. If you are OPS, check with your faculty member for assignments.

Resources

Will we still have access to the library and other campus resources?

Yes. More information is being shared here:

<https://www.ucf.edu/safety/coronavirus/faq/#acaresources>

Will mail and supply delivery continue?

Mail service is planned to continue. Supply delivery may fluctuate as vendors implement their own procedures and may not make deliveries. If you have not already done so, we suggest checking in with your suppliers and making plans to ensure you have all the materials you need for your work.

I have a grant application due soon. Will the Office of Research and the Research Foundation help me submit?

Yes. At this time all operations continue. The office will be going remote by Wednesday, March 18. Almost all functions will simply shift in methodology and will be completed remotely. If you need to speak to someone about your grant because of some urgent deadline or extenuating circumstance, email proposals@ucf.edu .Please be considerate as we are experiencing a large volume of inquiries and like you, individuals are also concerned about their own personal situation.

What if?

What if one of my subjects, lab members, colleagues or I suddenly become sick at work?

If someone becomes unwell in the workspace and there is reason to suspect they may have come into contact with COVID-19, the unwell person should be removed to an area which is at least 6 feet away from other people. If possible, find a room or area where they can be isolated behind a closed door, such as a staff office.

The individual who is unwell should use their mobile phone to call a designated public health service number. If it is an emergency (if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk) then you should call 911, explain the situation, and include relevant information, such as why it is believed the individual was exposed to COVID-19 and describe their current symptoms.

While waiting for advice from the public health or emergency service, the affected person should remain at least 6 feet from other people. They should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and should cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in a bag or pocket then throw the tissue in the bin. If they don't have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting for medical assistance, they should use a separate bathroom if available.

To avoid risking people who have conditions that put them at higher risk of serious illness (such as diabetes, heart and lung disease, older age) arrange for remote working or advise them to take additional precautions, such as staying at home.

Easy Contact List

- Financial questions related to research: <https://fa.ucf.edu/coronavirus-faq/>
- Proposal questions: proposals@ucf.edu
- Environmental Health and Safety: ehs@ucf.edu