

# **COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Relating to Research**

## **University of Louisville (UofL) Research and Innovation**

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**Version 1.0**

The Office of the Executive Vice President for Research and Innovation (EVPRI) is actively monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on UofL research activities. The following FAQs contain information about the impact of COVID-19 on research, research operations, and sponsored programs at UofL. These FAQs will be updated as new information becomes available.

### **General**

#### **Who can I contact if I have questions about the impact of COVID-19 on my research program?**

Please email [evpri@louisville.edu](mailto:evpri@louisville.edu) if you have any questions that are not addressed in this list of FAQs.

### **Access to Research Facilities**

#### **Are UofL research laboratories and facilities still open and operational?**

Yes, research laboratories and facilities at UofL remain open and operational as of the date listed above. Please visit [UofL's dedicated COVID-19 webpage](#) for up to date information on the operational status of UofL's campuses.

Research laboratories and programs should create plans for continuation of operations with reduced personnel, interruption of supply chains, and other possible impacts and should plan to operate safely, including decontamination of laboratory workspaces to reduce the spread of the virus. All laboratories should immediately develop plans that include 1) identification of critical research components that, if not continued, would result in significant cost or loss of data, 2) identification of approaches to maintain critical research functions while protecting the health of workers, which include strategies for de-densifying personnel (i.e., social distancing), putting in place operating procedures to ensure a working environment to mitigate spread of the virus, and 3) identification of strategies for the laboratory to continue research under a potentially long-term (6-8 week) order to vacate campus and under shorter-term voluntary action. If UofL gives an order for mandatory closure, any laboratories requiring on-campus personnel will need to inform the Office of the EVPRI (Kevin Gardner, Kevyn Merten, and [evpri@louisville.edu](mailto:evpri@louisville.edu)) of such a need and the plans described above. Laboratories should develop plans, where possible, for remote work, which may include drafting proposals, manuscripts, analysis of data, etc.

## **Can I access my lab or other research facilities if campus is closed?**

Currently, UofL's campuses and facilities remain open and operational. Please refer to the [University's dedicated COVID-19 webpage](#) for the latest guidance on closures and access to research facilities and resources.

If UofL gives an order for mandatory closure, any laboratories requiring on-campus personnel will need to inform the Office of the EVPRI (Kevin Gardner, Kevyn Merten, and [evpri@louisville.edu](mailto:evpri@louisville.edu)) of such a need and the plans described above.

## **Can I study COVID-19 in UofL facilities?**

Any researcher who is planning to receive any biological specimens from COVID-19 patients (or any other materials associated with SARS-CoV-2) must file a biological materials registration or amendment with UofL's Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC). The IBC must review and approve the risk assessment and biocontainment plan for the proposed activities *before* shipment/transfer of these materials is initiated. If the study involves animals, then UofL's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) must review and *approve* the use of animals *prior* to the initiation of studies.

## **Is there anyone that should not be allowed into a UofL laboratory at this time?**

At this time, the University strongly discourages for volunteers or visitors to be in UofL laboratories due to the risks of COVID-19.

## **Human Subjects Research and Institutional Review Boards**

For information and FAQs on the impact of COVID-19 on human subjects research and Institutional Review Boards please visit the [HSPB website](#).

## **Research Animal Care and Use**

### **Who can I contact if I have questions about the impact of COVID-19 on the care and use of research animals at UofL?**

For any questions regarding animal facilities or animal care, please email [Dr. Leslie Sherwood](#) or call 502-852-3675/502-216-3997. Dr. Sherwood will be communicating directly with researchers that have active animal care and use proposals with updates.

### **Will UofL's Research Resources Facilities be impacted by COVID-19 related university closures or altered operations?**

Research Resources Facilities will continue to provide daily husbandry and veterinary care for research animals regardless of other University suspended operations or work from home directives. If you have special needs that involve animals, please contact [Dr. Leslie Sherwood](#).

### **How will the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) be impacted by COVID-19 related university closures or altered operations?**

The IACUC will continue to review animal care and use proposals, amendments to proposals, continuing reviews, renewals and tissue use proposals even if the University suspends operations or if a work from home directive is issued. Semi-annual inspections of animal facilities and laboratories scheduled to begin later in March must still take place for the University to remain compliant with federal animal welfare regulations. The IACUC office will be sending out guidance regarding these inspections to investigators directly.

## **Graduate and Undergraduate Student Research**

### **Should graduate students conducting research be allowed to continue working in the lab?**

Graduate students conducting research at UofL are expected to continue their research activities even though classes are being moved online, with the important recognition of the guidance above for the overall continuation of research activities. For graduate students that are a part of a high-risk group (e.g., those that have pre-existing health conditions), plans should be made to allow these individuals to perform research activities remotely (e.g., data analysis, computational work, literature reviews). Research programs may also consider staggering schedules so that researchers and students can avoid close contact. Graduate students should be reminded to stay home if they are sick or do not feel well. Research mentors should prepare to facilitate graduate student research activities remotely should access to university facilities become limited, as described more fully above.

### **Should undergraduate students conducting research be allowed to continue working in the lab?**

Undergraduate students are encouraged to stay away from campus until at least April 5<sup>th</sup>. However, as long as University research facilities remain open, if the undergraduate research advisor approves, undergraduate students are allowed to continue working in the lab. Research mentors should consider undergraduate students in their overall laboratory plans, recognizing that undergraduate students should not be considered essential laboratory personnel and should not be responsible for maintaining critical research as described above. Faculty should plan for undergraduate student research activities to take place remotely.

## **Postdoctoral Scholars**

### **Should Postdoctoral Scholars conducting research be allowed to continue working in the lab?**

Most Postdoctoral Scholars are currently classified as employees of the University and therefore will be expected to follow university policies for absences and working remotely, in consultation with their mentor. Postdoctoral Scholars that are classified as trainees (non-employees) should consult with their research mentor.

## **Availability of Research Administration and Support**

### **What Research Administration/EVPRI services will be available during this period of uncertainty?**

All Research Administration/EVPRI units are operating as normal at this time and will continue to do so until further notice. These units are actively reviewing and updating business continuity plans to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on UofL research activities. At this time, we anticipate that these offices will be able to continue to deliver critical support for high priority activities (e.g., proposal submissions, IRB reviews, etc.), even if staff must work remotely.

### **Are the Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) and the IRBs operating as usual?**

The Human Subjects Protection Program and the UofL IRBs are currently fully operational. We expect this to continue even if the University suspends operations or if a work from home directive is issued. HSPP staff are capable of working remotely and all IRB meetings can be held electronically. For additional FAQs on Human Subjects research and Institutional Review Boards please visit the [HSPP website](#).

## **Sponsored Programs**

### **Will the University continue to submit proposals and accept awards during this time of uncertainty?**

Yes, the Office of Sponsored Programs Administration is currently fully operational and is prepared to operate remotely if needed to meet the needs of the UofL research community.

### **I am unable to submit my grant proposal by the required deadline due to COVID-19 related issues. May I request an extension?**

Most federal agencies, including NIH and NSF, do not grant prior approval for late submissions; however, there are existing policies that address extenuating circumstances. Current NIH guidance can be found at [NOT-OD-20-082](#). Current NSF guidance can be found at [FAQs about COVID-19 for NSF proposers and awardees](#) (see questions 16 and 17). We strongly encourage you to discuss your specific situation with both your agency Program Official and UofL Office of Sponsored Programs Administration (OSPA) personnel.

### **Should I notify an industry sponsor if progress on a project is interrupted due to COVID-19 related issues?**

Yes, industry sponsors should be notified if project progress is delayed by COVID-19 and any changes to the scope of work and/or budget due to these delays should be coordinated through OSPA. PIs are strongly encouraged to document all communications with industry sponsors related to delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Where can I get more information on sponsor specific policies concerning disasters and emergencies?**

NIH Extramural Response to Natural Disasters and Other Emergencies:  
[https://grants.nih.gov/grants/natural\\_disasters.htm](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/natural_disasters.htm)

NSF Responses to Natural Disasters: <https://www.nsf.gov/naturaldisasters/>

### **Who in Sponsored Programs should I contact with questions on specific projects?**

The best points of contact will be the OSPA Directors (below). They will direct you to the appropriate additional contact (if necessary)

Sponsored Programs – Grants: Judy Bristow, [judy.bristow@louisville.edu](mailto:judy.bristow@louisville.edu)

Sponsored Programs – Financial Administration: Glen Jones, [glen.jones@louisville.edu](mailto:glen.jones@louisville.edu)

Sponsored Programs – Contracts: Matthew Hawthorne, [mjhawt01@louisville.edu](mailto:mjhawt01@louisville.edu)

### **Allowable Costs/Charges/Effort on Sponsored Programs**

#### **Are travel cancellation costs due to COVID-19 allowable as direct charges to sponsored programs?**

**I was planning to travel to a conference supported by a grant, but the conference was cancelled due to precautions regarding COVID-19. May I still charge the travel-related costs to the grant?**

Federal agencies are working internally on a number of proposal and award-related issues pertaining to COVID-19. We are waiting on further communication from our sponsors about these issues and will provide guidance as further information becomes available. In the meantime, please continue to follow all relevant policies and procedures and apply those practices consistently. The University's current position is, if the original expense was allocable to a sponsored project, the subsequent fees for changing/cancelling travel due to COVID-19 would also be allocable to the project.

#### **How should credits from cancelled travel costs be handled on sponsored programs?**

If a traveler has charged an airline ticket or other travel cost to a sponsored program, and then the trip is later cancelled, the credit must accrue to the sponsored program.

#### **Can I charge trip cancellation insurance to my grant?**

Trip cancellation insurance is typically unallowable on grants. However, we are monitoring any additional guidance the federal government may issue related to travel. If you need to travel in the coming months to conduct business for a sponsored project, and you want to purchase trip cancellation insurance, you may reach out to the Office of Sponsored Programs Administration (OSPA) to request prior approval from the sponsor to charge this cost to the grant. Please refer to the [University's dedicated COVID-19 webpage](#) for the latest information on travel restrictions and guidelines.

#### **I'm a PI working remotely from home due to the COVID-19 situation. Can my effort still be charged to a grant?**

In general, yes, provided you remain engaged in your project. Current prior approval requirements from federal agencies regarding disengagement and effort reductions remain in effect.

**If I must work from a remote location, will I still be able to get paid by grants and other sponsored programs?**

If an employee funded by a sponsored program must work from a remote location, their salary may continue to be charged to the grant as long as the employee can successfully perform duties that benefit the project.

For biweekly personnel, electronic messaging or email communication with the supervisor will be considered reasonable and acceptable alternative forms of work verification. Please maintain all documentation.

**What if I am home sick and can't work on my project? Can my salary still be charged to the grant?**

Yes, pursuant to UofL's indirect cost rate agreement with the federal government, sick leave and other paid absences that are permitted under University policy may be charged to the grant.

**If schools or eldercare facilities close, can award funded employees stay at home to provide care and still charge their salary to a sponsored program?**

If an employee funded by a sponsored program stays home due to a school or facility closure, the employee's compensation would be charged in accordance with the University's absence policy. Employees working from home with the approval of their supervisor or on a mandatory remote plan (and able to fulfill their duties) may continue to charge their compensation to sponsored programs.

**I am a PI/researcher and I am required to work from home due to COVID-19. Am I able to charge supplies related to telework (e.g., laptop, printer, office supplies, etc.) to a sponsored program?**

These types of expenses are typically considered administrative costs (i.e., indirect costs) and generally are not appropriate as a direct cost unless specifically approved by the sponsor. Expenses related to telework should be charged to unrestricted accounts, including Research Infrastructure Funds when they support research activities and programs.

**Am I allowed to pay staff who may be sick or quarantined from sponsored program sources?**

Federal agencies are working internally on a number of proposal and award-related issues pertaining to COVID-19. We are waiting on further communication from our sponsors about these issues and will provide guidance as further information becomes available. In the meantime, please continue to follow all relevant policies and procedures and apply those practices consistently (i.e., staff compensation should be charged in a consistent manner). The University's current position is, if an employee's salary is charged to a sponsored program immediately before entering quarantine, then their time spent in quarantine can also be charged to the sponsored program.

**Research-related Travel**

**I was planning to visit a lab/was planning to meet with a collaborator/was planning to attend a conference, but cannot because of travel restrictions related to COVID-19. What should I do?**

Please refer to the [University's dedicated COVID-19 webpage](#) for the latest guidance on travel restrictions and guidelines. Meeting with collaborators and attending conferences (as possible) via teleconferencing and videoconferencing is strongly encouraged at this time.

**Can I attend scientific conferences?**

Please refer to the [University's dedicated COVID-19 webpage](#) for the latest guidance on travel restrictions and guidelines.

**External Resources**

**[Council on Governmental Relations \(COGR\): Institutional and Agency Response to COVID-19 and Additional Resources](#)**

**[NIH – NOT-OD-20-086 - Flexibilities Available to Applicants and Recipients of Federal Financial Assistance Affected by COVID-19](#)**