

General Research Guidance Statement - COVID-19

Social distancing is the key to keeping lab staff and students safe. We have to minimize person-to-person interactions for all members of our community. We are not discontinuing research at Rowan University ("Rowan"). We hope that during this period, research will be conducted remotely. PIs should make sure they are coordinating action with the Department Chairs and Deans that are relevant to their unit.

Only essential activity should be ongoing based on the following considerations:

- Work to maintain critical equipment and safe standby mode in laboratories;
- Work to maintain critical samples and animal populations; and
- Work that directly relates to COVID-19 that has a timeline for deployment that could address the current crisis.

We are continuing to ask that PIs work with their respective Department Chairs and Deans to develop a scale-back plan in case Rowan University plans and temporary measures are enacted in relation to the COVID-19 epidemic. This is a [checklist guidance document from Cornell on how to ramp down your lab](#). All plans should be consistent with Rowan EHS policies, consistent with guidelines related to social distancing and approved by your Department Head and Dean.

Guidance for Research Teams/Groups

Therefore we are providing some useful guidelines for researchers in addition to the document that was shared earlier:

- 1) Establish and test a robust communication network for your group; avoid face-to-face group meetings. Set up online chat rooms or meeting schedules, using Google Rowan accounts, so that you can still maintain interactions with your lab group.
- 2) For non-lab based research, please telework. Students can use teleworking capabilities that will minimally impact your work.
- 3) Consider engaging in research activities that allows for teleworking even for those with lab based research. Encourage writing of papers, dissertations, or grant applications to be completed remotely. Use time to catch up on analyzing the results that you have and publish your work. Use the time to work on manuscripts or thesis. It is also a good time to work on proposals. Our staff in the Division of University Research is teleworking and will be here to help you.
- 4) If you have to do lab based research and it is work that is essential, please observe social distancing guidelines. **You should only have a maximum of 10% of your regular staff at any time. Undergraduate student use should be minimized. Anyone present** must sanitize their work areas when they come and before they leave. Please implement social distancing even with the reduced

workforce. [Please consult what Caltech is doing for ideas on social distancing in research.](#)

- 5) Human subject research which requires in-person contact needs to be suspended. This applies not only to campus, but also in field work. Virtual interaction is permitted. Please contact our Research Compliance office to modify your IRB protocol to allow for virtual interactions.
- 6) We need to recognize that some researchers may feel pressured to work in laboratories when they do not feel it is appropriate. We need to remind PIs that concerns like this should be addressed and taken seriously. No one should feel pressured to work in the lab during this period. We should be clear with undergraduate and graduate student researchers that they are not required to be present.

How long will this last?

We are unsure about the timeline. Covid-19 has been unpredictable. The next few weeks will be critical in trying to flatten the curve of infection and therefore it is key that you practice social distancing.

Additional guidance

If you identify that any team is critical to maintaining operations, please ensure continuity of critical functions in the event of a single team member being diagnosed with COVID-19 by having backup personnel.

One consequence of the scaled back research and remote work is that the campus will have far fewer people and we will need to make sure that spaces and valuables are secured. Rowan Campus Security is mindful of this concern and will be taking appropriate measures. If you are aware of a particular security issue, please notify Public Safety and the Research Office immediately.

Finally, we need to develop methods to stay engaged and supportive of our remote workforce. We are looking for suggestions from you. In addition, we will also be sharing some suggestions on how to do this effectively in the near future.