

Essential research during stay-at-home orders

AS AT 10 SEPTEMBER 2021



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

- The health and safety of our community is our highest priority.
 - COVID-19 is a highly contagious and serious disease that spreads quickly in indoor settings. The delta variant is more infectious and spreads more easily than the 2020 variant, requiring additional control measures to those we implemented in 2020.
 - For the current outbreak, NSW Health have issued public health measures including [stay at home orders](#).
 - We don't know how long these orders will be in place.
 - Under these orders, all on-campus research is restricted to essential activities.
 - Staff and students are encouraged to get [vaccinated against COVID](#) as soon as possible.
- The following table outlines the specific [UOW directions](#) relating to essential research:

UNDERTAKING ESSENTIAL RESEARCH DURING STAY-AT-HOME ORDERS

COVID Safe Practices	<p>All research staff and students must abide by the current NSW Public Health Orders. As these are subject to change please check regularly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work from home unless needed to attend campus for essential work. • If unwell or have the mildest symptoms – get tested and stay at home. • No carpooling unless members of the same household. • Adhere to travel registration, vaccination and testing requirements, if visiting or leaving from LGAs of concern, or travelling to regional/rural NSW from Greater Sydney as specified in the Public Health Orders. • If visiting NSW Health facilities (including private facilities) or Department of Education facilities (including independent schools and early childhood centres) vaccination is required. • If on campus, wear a mask inside and outside. • When coming on campus, log into Safe Zone app and use check in timer. • Use of QR Codes for entry into each building and adhere to building COVID Safe Plans, building and room limits. • Maintain strict social distancing 1.5m and one person per 4m². • No eating or drinking inside buildings. • No congregating inside or outside buildings. • Return to work-from-home as soon as essential work is completed. • Meetings must occur via virtual options.
COVID Safe Research Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential on-campus research must be limited in number and timeframe, to minimise the number of people traveling, and the number of people in a building or a room at any one time. • Masks must be worn at all times indoors and outdoors. The type of mask required may differ depending on the research activity. • Sharing of equipment should be minimised. Equipment must be cleaned, in line with COVID Safe Plans, with detergent/disinfectant wipes/sprays at the beginning and end of each person's use. • There should be no external visitors on campus, except as required for essential face-to-face research as outlined below.
Face-to-Face Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face research is paused at this time, unless it is essential for the health and welfare of participants, and participants would not breach public health orders by participating in the study. • Researchers may continue research projects using remote data collection methods such as telephone, online, Skype, Zoom etc. (HREC to be informed as directed).
Laboratories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential lab activities may include maintaining equipment, animals, plants, cell and tissue cultures, or ensuring equipment and facilities are left in a safe state and that non-essential equipment is powered down/shut down. • Support staff necessary to ensure that laboratory researchers can perform essential set up, maintenance and operations to operate safely, must be available and able to carry out their duties in a COVID-safe manner. • Appropriate scheduling and team management must be in place, including the scheduling of researchers coming to use facilities. • Each lab must ensure relevant PPE is used, where appropriate, to avoid contamination and for personal protection. • Lab staff inductions are to be paused unless critical to carry out essential research as defined within these guidelines.
Lab-based Research	<p>This is permitted where current research cannot be undertaken at home but can be done safely on campus and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adheres to revised 2021 local COVID Safe plans. • Utilises facilities to protect research activities for experiments already underway or at an end point. • Are activities required to keep cells and plants and tissue cultures alive. • Not working with hazardous materials if alone. • Is critical time-sensitive or critical seasonal research that cannot be delayed. • Is protecting research in existing projects. <p>Commencement of new research projects is paused.</p>
Animal research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permitted if adheres to revised 2021 local COVID Safe plans, including use of appropriate PPE to avoid contamination. • Continuing experiments and maintaining life and welfare of animals already on site. • No more than two in a group where it is essential to feed or monitor animals. • Roster system must be implemented to avoid cross contamination and enable access only when essential.
HDR candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HDR candidates should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with their supervisory team to redesign their projects. • Adhere to the directions from the Graduate Research School. • Seek appropriate approval through Faculty for access to research facilities, where the research is deemed essential. • Be adequately supervised on-site by a staff member with appropriate expertise. • Adhere to the UOW directions when conducting research at third party facilities.
Travel for research or Field Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No travel for research or field work unless this is approved as part of revised COVID safe plan. See approval information below. • If approved, researchers must adhere to testing and travel registration requirements.
Communications and Records Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research staff and students should document the impact of COVID, using the staff reporting template and the HDR candidate contingency plan. • Revise and update COVID Safe Plans as needed, using the Research Activity Template for research activities. • Issues and concerns are to be raised with Head of School/Unit or WHS Unit.
Approvals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are to follow the local approval processes for essential research as determined by the Faculty/AIIM. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential research will require consultation with Head of School or Head of Research Unit, and must be accompanied by a revised and approved 2021 COVID Safe Plans in alignment with current health orders approved by the WHS Unit. • Protocols should outline how the research can be completed in a safe manner to minimise risk (COVID-safe and WHS, including supervision if needed) timeframe and number of people required on campus. • A variety of circumstances may trigger a review of these on-campus essential research directives. These will be managed as directed from the UOW Crisis Management Team.