

Research Continuity at Hunter College

March 19, 2020

It is our intention that the important research conducted by Hunter College continue during the COVID-19 public health emergency. We are asking Principal Investigators (PIs) to ramp down research activities conducted on site. Our objective is to honor New York State's Emergency Decree to limit face-to-face human interaction in research activities. Research programs that have therapeutic benefit may be exempted and will need to be approved on a case-by-case basis.

We are asking each PI impacted to identify up to two volunteer essential emergency personnel who will be responsible for maintaining critical on-site research functions and equipment during the COVID-19 public health emergency. While there is a ramp-down of on-site research activities, there should be a ramp-up of research activities conducted remotely. Research should proceed in the way identified below. Federal sponsors are allowing for maximal flexibility with regard to administrative, cost, and reporting requirements (see [NSF](#), [NIH](#)). If research cannot be conducted virtually or remotely and research needs to pause, use the standard process to notify the sponsor as soon as possible.

During this temporary suspension, we recognize that lab-based experiments might not be possible. We ask Principal Investigators (PIs), postdoctoral researchers, and students whose research is impacted to shift their activities to include virtual research group meetings, manuscript writing, data analysis, report writing, and administrative tasks. These changes should be documented in a revised work plan, which will be used to inform the sponsor and in some cases request supplements to accommodate the changes. If you intend to make these changes to your research, please submit the revised work plans to Robert Buckley at (rbuckley@hunter.cuny.edu), Manoj Pardasani (mp4009@hunter.cuny.edu), and Elizabeth Cohn at (elizabeth.cohn@hunter.cuny.edu) as soon as feasible.

The guidelines below have been reported by CUNY Central and on the [CUNY Office of Research](#) website, which also has links to federal agency COVID-19 guidance and guidance developed by the [CUNY Research Foundation to address the challenges of conducting research during the COVID-19 crisis](#). Please be aware that we will have essential emergency personnel coverage in the Animal Care Facility.

Human subjects research:

For research involving interactions with people, interactions should be limited to minimize risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19, in accordance with [CUNY Coronavirus Guidance](#), [CDC Guidance](#), and campus guidance. Follow your campus guidelines, but in general **human subject research involving direct interaction with study participants should be paused and no study participants should travel to CUNY colleges** (except studies with therapeutic benefit, see below).

Studies that offer direct therapeutic benefit to participants or where stopping procedures would cause harm to study participants may continue, on a case-by-case basis. For health and safety, changes to protect study participants can be instituted immediately. Please submit a modification to the IRB to indicate temporary modifications within 5 business days.

For in-person/site-based studies that do not offer direct therapeutic benefit to participants or that will NOT cause harm to participants if suspended, PIs who would like to continue the study must submit a modification to change study procedures requiring NO face-to-face interactions. PIs should notify the research sponsor of any changes in research procedures and submit all HRPP/IRB modifications via [Ideate](#).

Remote studies that do not offer direct therapeutic benefit to participants, do not involve face-to-face interactions (i.e., conducted electronically or via telephone), and can feasibly continue without significant modification to their IRB-approved protocols for this work should continue, wherever possible.

Animal research:

Animal facility staff have an emergency plan in place and should follow that plan as described by the College Veterinarian. For research involving animals, essential personnel should be identified and trained. Emergency personnel should be identified and trained, in the case of University closure.

Tissue and other non-IACUC materials research:

For tissue and other non-IACUC materials, such as insects, plants, and sea animals, additional orders should be suspended, except on a case-by-case basis. PIs should decide which to maintain (e.g., freeze) and which to abandon.

Equipment/facilities:

PIs should plan for the continuation of essential functions and equipment maintenance. We are asking you to identify one or two essential personnel who will be responsible for these essential lab functions. Beyond essential personnel, PIs should identify emergency personnel who would be able to maintain equipment if necessary, in case of University shutdown. No students at any level should be emergency personnel unless they are the only one with the necessary skills; if so, they should be supervised by a faculty member. Undergraduate students are prohibited from working in the labs. Make sure that your laboratory has an emergency contact list with off-campus phone numbers posted on the door, and please send this list to Lon Kaufman (lk506@hunter.cuny.edu), Manoj Pardasani (mp4009@hunter.cuny.edu), Elizabeth Cohn (Elizabeth.cohn@hunter.cuny.edu) and Lori Mazor (lm2376@hunter.cuny.edu). At a minimum, the list should have a primary and a backup person listed.

Confidentiality of data:

Researchers should continue to follow all approved practices regarding confidentiality and integrity of data and the protection of participant privacy, including restrictions on data storage. For example, data that must be maintained on a Hunter or CUNY-maintained electronic server should not be transferred to external storage. Remote solutions to maintain access to these data is the ideal solution; any necessary changes to plans for data storage and maintenance of confidentiality should be submitted to the IRB as a modification. PIs should notify the campus [HRPP Coordinator](#) and sponsor of any changes in research procedures and submit all HRPP/IRB modifications via [Ideate](#). For PIs submitting new protocols, data collection protocols should be for remote data collection, depending upon therapeutic benefit on a case-by-case basis. Protocols may also include in-person data collection for some future time, when guidance for remote collection is removed CUNY-wide.

Data use agreements:

For studies of data access and analysis covered by data use agreements (DUA), PIs may need to request modification if a different platform is being used other than what is covered by the DUA. Please contact the [Agreements Point Person](#) at your campus. If the DUA involves human subjects and the protocol requires modifications, an IRB modification should be submitted via Ideate.

HRPP Operations:

We realize the importance of having a responsive and functioning HRPP office during this time, and arrangements have been made for research pre-review activities to take place via an experienced consultant who will continue to review protocols and modifications and who will be able to process necessary changes. We have also posted both HRPP positions and look forward to resuming and potentially streamlining some of the processes during the transition.

Additional guidelines for PIs on Research Continuity and information from federal funders can be found on the [CUNY Office of Research](#), which also links to the [CUNY Research Foundation](#). Updates on Research Continuity can also be found at www.cuny.edu under the academic continuity tab or by searching “research continuity” in the search bar. These are updated by CUNY Central on a regular basis.