

COVID-19 Research Operations Guidelines

Outside Collaborators and Sponsors

Virtual Meetings/Site Visits

- When possible, meet virtually for experimental planning/discussions, program updates, and grant/research related activities.

On Campus Meetings/Site Visits

- In person collaborations/site visits from people outside of the university should be deemed an essential part of a PI's research efforts.
- Researchers should seek permission requesting on campus visits, which will be reviewed by their department head.
- Visitors will be held to the same health and safety guidelines set forth by MSU to protect themselves and their colleges while on campus, including wearing a mask and practicing social distancing.
- Any visitors with known contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case or exhibiting any symptoms, including fever greater than 100 degrees; cough; shortness of breath, ect. – should not come to campus under any circumstances.

Travel

- Research related travel must follow [MSU's COVID-19 Travel Guidelines](#).
- For additional guidelines on field research go to [MSU's Field-Work Guidance](#).

Shared Lab Spaces

Access and Traffic Flow

- Discuss traffic flow and points of ingress/egress, label appropriately (e.g., floor markings, wall signs, one-way flow when possible).
- Coordinate access and scheduling among all users when from multiple labs. Utilize shared calendars as well as whiteboards/magnet boards where a lab can be labeled as occupied or free.
- Post a checklist for all to read prior to and when entering the lab with COVID-19 safety Guidance and any reminders about facility-specific rules.

Occupancy

- Only do in the lab what needs to be done in the lab (“collect and leave”).
- Consider working in teams or cohorts or designating “experts” to run all experiments on one piece of equipment.

- Determine space specific capacity (room, workstation, instrument). Clearly mark occupancy limits and the way to reserve or indicate usage.

Sanitization

- Develop a schedule to sanitize door handles, common work surfaces, equipment, and workstations after each use and at regular intervals.
- If possible, provide each user of the lab with his/her own “bench space” and/or computer to avoid communal use.

Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

Laboratories must follow MSU guidelines in accordance with CDC recommendations for disinfecting facilities in the event that a laboratory member is confirmed to have COVID-19. The following are approved disinfection methods, and one of these two options will be determined in consultation with the principal investigator (PI), department head or director, Office of Research Compliance (ORC), and Safety & Risk Management (SRM) in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case:

- **OPTION 1: Seven-day shutdown of the laboratory.** Entrance into the laboratory is prohibited during the seven-day period unless approved by ORC and SRM for short-term, emergency entrance with appropriate personal protective equipment. This option will be the default, unless a PI has coordinated with ORC and SRM an acceptable plan for deep cleaning that will not harm equipment, experiments, and neighboring laboratories/spaces.
- **OPTION 2: Deep cleaning of the laboratory.** Disinfection of porous items (i.e., lab notebooks, cardboard, etc.) sensitive equipment, reagents, and experimental samples may be impacted by this option. Please note that if it is determined that SRM approved deep clean methods could harm neighboring laboratories and spaces, this may not be an option.

Level of Research Operations

Level 0: Normal

- Normal operations

Level 1: Caution and Preparation for Modified Operations

- Maintain social/physical distancing (i.e., 6 foot distancing between individuals) and use of face coverings consistent with university guidelines and CDC guidance.
- Consider instituting rotations and/or split schedules of lab work, and allowable telework options, to reduce the number of individuals in the laboratory at any one time.
- Maintain good hygiene practices consistent with CDC guidelines. Key guidelines include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Frequent hand washing.
 - Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose and mouth.
 - Frequent disinfection of common areas and equipment.
- Develop a written plan for how you would manage during Level 2 research operations.

- Level 2 research operations plans do *not* need to be formally submitted during Level 1, but you are encouraged to consult with your supervisor, staff and/or the Office of Research Compliance with questions.
- A Level 2 research operations plan template is available as Appendix A
- Consider key laboratory functions or field work that must remain in working order for your research to survive a prolonged shutdown (e.g., cell lines, animal colonies, transgenic lines, equipment needing liquid nitrogen, etc.).
- Consider mitigation plans to prevent loss of critical supplies, reagents and other materials.
- Determine if you can work without certain shared resources being available on campus (i.e., mail services, fiscal shared services, janitorial work, routine pick-ups, etc.).
- Consider working with IT proactively to ensure access to data remotely.

Level 2: Modified Operations with Approved Exceptions

- A lab or field-work research slowdown or shutdown plan (or exemption from slowdown) must be submitted to the appropriate department head or director and Office of Research Compliance within 24 hours of the announcement of Level 2.
 - A Level 2 research operations plan must designate no more than three lab members as essential staff, unless adequate justification can be provided.
 - The Level 2 research operations plan must outline the following procedures:
 - Rotations and/or split schedules of lab work, and allowable telework options, to reduce the number of individuals in the laboratory at any one time.
 - Use of face coverings consistent with university guidelines and CDC guidance.
 - Hygiene practices consistent with CDC guidelines.
- Essential experiments allowed under guidance of an approved plan (see Appendix A) – those experiments that, if discontinued, would generate significant financial or data loss.
- All research buildings will be locked and should only be accessed by the PI and lab members designated as essential staff. Do not prop open any doors or allow anyone that is non-essential to piggyback in.
- Maintenance and access of key shared resources continue under appropriate guidelines and approved plans (i.e., animals, plants, cell lines, liquid nitrogen, etc.)

Level 3: Mandatory Shutdown with VPREDGE Approved Exceptions

- Under a Level 3, there will be a mandatory laboratory and field-work shutdown for all research labs, unless designated by the Office of Research Compliance and the Office of the Vice President for Research, Economic Development, and Graduate Education.
- No new experiments, unless approved by Office of Research Compliance.
- Initiate the Outbreak Response Operations for the Animal Resources Center ABSL1 and ABSL2, Jutila Research Laboratory ABSL3, and the Johnson Family Livestock Facility ABSL2. For additional details for animal care, refer to ARC Human Infectious Disease Outbreak Response Plan that was distributed on Feb 28, 2020.

Level 4: Mandatory Shutdown with Presidential Approved Exceptions

- Under a Level 4, there will be a mandatory laboratory and field-work shutdown for all research labs, unless designated by the Office of Research Compliance, the Office of the Vice President for Research, Economic Development, and Graduate Education, and the Office of the President.
- Maintain and modify as needed the Outbreak Response Operations for the Animal Resources Center ABSL1 and ABSL2, Jutila Research Laboratory ABSL3, and the Johnson Family Livestock Facility ABSL2. For additional details, refer to ARC Human Infectious Disease Outbreak Response Plan that was distributed on Feb 28, 2020.

APPENDIX A: Template Response Plan for Level 2, 3, and 4 Research Operations

Laboratory Principal Investigator(s):

Name: _____ Dept/Institute: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Dept/Institute: _____ Phone: _____

Laboratory Location(s):

Building(s): _____

Room Number(s): _____

1. Are you able to transition all of your team (i.e., postdocs, students and staff) to remote work for at least the next 15 days* (i.e., data analysis, data interpretation, writing, literature review, etc.)?

- YES
- NO

* Please recognize that the 15 days is a minimum, but the laboratory shutdown may be longer. You will always have a chance to revisit this form and update.

If YES, sign and date this form, and provide a copy to your supervisor and the Office of Research Compliance.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

If NO, continue you Question 2.

2. Would closing your laboratory or field-work lead to significant financial or data loss?

- YES
- NO

If NO, please sign and date this form, provide a copy to your supervisor and the Office of Research Compliance, and temporarily halt studies until research operations return to Level 1 as designated by the Vice President for Research, Economic Development and Graduate Education.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

If YES, please proceed to Question 3.

3. Briefly describe the research activities that needs to continue and identify trained laboratory or field work members as “essential staff” that will maintain the work/equipment/colony/etc. Describe mitigation plans, that adhere to Level 2 guidelines, to ensure safe and responsible conduct of the research during this limited access (if granted).

[Feel free to expand this field or attach a document/plan]

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Administrative Signatures Only

Level 2 Plan Authorization:

Department Head or Director:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Director, Office of Research Compliance:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Level 3 Plan Authorization:

Department Head or Director:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Director, Office of Research Compliance:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Vice President for Research, Education and Graduate Education:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Level 4 Plan Authorization:

Department Head or Director:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Director, Office of Research Compliance:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Vice President for Research, Education and Graduate Education:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

President:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____