

PSU Procedures for Continuing Research Activities – 2020-03-22

Definitions

The term Essential Research, gleaned from other universities and agencies, is 1) direct research on COVID-19 virus and its downstream effects or 2) laboratory work in support of ongoing clinical trials with potential therapeutic benefits for human participants. No one at PSU is currently conducting Essential Research.

Essential Functions include the maintenance of laboratory instruments, animal resources, plants, and cell lines & cultures. These efforts must be undertaken to prevent loss of research assets.

Essential Function Personnel are those faculty, staff, and/or graduate students who perform the Essential Functions and associated critical tasks, which cannot be performed remotely.

Essential Functions

It is up to the PI or lab manager to identify and justify Essential Functions as being required for sustaining research assets during the ramp-down period. For instance, the loss of research assets such as break down of pumps or loss of animals are justifiable concerns. However, the need to analyze samples or maintain research grant obligations is not sufficient justification to be considered an Essential Function.

Essential Function Personnel

PSU personnel who are key to conducting Essential Functions may gain access to facilities through designation by responsible PI or lab director. PI's may identify 1-2 Essential Function Personnel to act in their stead to provide Essential Functions. No undergraduate students may be designated as Essential Function Personnel or have access to PSU research facilities.

Non-Essential Research

It is up to the PI or lab manager to justify continuation of their Non-Essential Research during the ramp-down period. Non-essential research may include externally or internally funded projects, contracts, cooperative agreements, experiments requiring uninterrupted measurements, etc.

Graduate Students

Graduate students conducting research for their thesis/dissertation or as part of a research assistantship may continue their research activities, **if** it is possible to do safely (see below). However, research groups should conduct research remotely wherever possible. No undergraduate students are permitted to be on campus to carry out any research activities.

Required Plans, Procedures, and Precautions

PIs/lab managers who wish to designate Essential Function Personnel and/or request to continue Non-essential Research must submit the following plan and information to the Center for Research & Innovation jnboyer@plymouth.edu prior to being authorized to use facilities. Approval decisions will be made by OAA, EHS, and CRI.

- Written justification of Essential Functions required and/or need to continue Non-essential Research;

- Name, email, PSU ID#, cell phone # of designated personnel and the building/rooms to which they are to be given access;
- A standard operations plan to include
 - Procedures for contamination control prior to room entry (sanitizer/gloves located outside door to lab, etc.);
 - Procedures for social distancing in lab/field operations – 2 people at most in lab at one time, proper distancing, staggering time in labs, no traveling in same vehicle, etc.;
 - Procedures for facility disinfection of common lab touchpoints prior to leaving (doorknobs, countertops, drawer handles, etc.);

A Health Self-Assessment and Room Entry Log (attached) must be posted on each lab door. All research personnel are required to affirm conditions of the health self-assessment prior to entering the facility.

If you have any questions or concerns, contact Joe Boyer jnboyer@plymouth.edu 305-606-6874

COVID-19 Health Self-Assessment Questionnaire

PSU requires all on-site research personnel to complete a screening for exposure to COVID-19 or symptoms of illness before they enter PSU buildings and facilities. All forms must be filed with the PI responsible for facility.

Answering YES to any of the questions below is reason to deny entry to buildings and facilities.

1. Have you had any of the following symptoms in the past two weeks, even if they were mild?

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

2. Have you had close contact* with a person who is under investigation for possible COVID-19?

3. In the past three weeks, have you visited a country or facility with sustained (ongoing) occurrence of COVID-19, such as:

- China
- Iran
- Italy
- Japan
- South Korea

In addition, PSU research personnel must:

- Follow all guidelines or instructions included in the specific PI's justification for exception.
- Ensure that hand sanitizer, hand washing facilities and/or cleaning wipes are readily available AND USED prior to entry and upon leaving building facilities.

*Close contact is defined by the CDC as (a) being within approx. 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time. Close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a health care waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case OR (b) having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on).

