23 March 2020

From: Patrick A. Limbach, Vice President for Research

To: Academic Deans

Assistant/Associate Deans for Research (ADRs)

**Critical Research Designation Guidance for Governor’s STAY AT HOME ORDER**

With the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director’s [STAY AT HOME](https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/OHOOD/2020/03/22/file_attachments/1407840/Stay%20Home%20Order.pdf) Order issued March 22, 2020 (Order), only critical research and essential government functions needed to ensure the continuing operation of the university’s critical research are permissible on campus through April 6, 2020.

This guidance has been prepared to assist deans and their designees with identifying critical research and implementing the Order. **Under no circumstances should trainees, staff or other research personnel be required to work in an environment that is unsafe, including requiring multi-person activities that cannot maintain social distancing guidelines to the greatest extent possible. Undergraduate students, even if acting as a student employee, are not permitted to access university facilities under this guidance.**

**Guidelines for Managing Access for Research Projects and Facilities During Order Effective Dates**

Enclosure (1) describes the criteria for identifying which university research activities will be given priority for ongoing access to facilities during the periods covered by the Order including any subsequent time periods set out by ODH or other Ohio government agencies in response to COVID-19. For purposes of this determination, UC research activities are categorized as Level III (Standard), Level II (Essential) and Level I (Critical). **While we have been operating in Level II allowing Essential research activities on campus, as of today we must transition to Level I and now allow only *approved* Critical research activities on campus.**

These activities must be limited to:

* COVID-19 research that has the potential to mitigate the spread of the pandemic or is otherwise critical to the COVID-19 response;
* Medical research that if discontinued would endanger the lives of the human subjects participating in the research;
* Activities that require timely and regular attention to maintain essential functions that support critical research, including but not limited to critical research infrastructure and experimental conditions such as animal support, maintaining equipment that requires gas, cryogenic service, monitoring irreplaceable cell lines, maintaining unique or loaned collections, and other substantially similar treatments.

Enclosure (2) provides deans and ADRs with a means for identifying such activities, and a process for researchers to request priority access to university facilities while the Order is in effect. Colleges may create their own form and process to fit their local needs, but any approach must confirm that all research being conducted is done so following social distancing guidelines to the greatest extent possible. **Faculty and Principal Investigators (PIs) should always keep the safety and well-being of their trainees and research staff as their top priority. Faculty unable or unwilling to do so can have their research access and privileges revoked during this period.**

Deans and ADRs are being given the authority to designate allowable critical research and essential functions that can be continued on-campus at this time. Proper documentation is required and all approved on-campus critical research and/or essential functions in each college must be shared with the Vice President for Research. As noted above, all approved activities must adhere to social distancing guidelines to the greatest extent possible, maintain a safe work environment, and otherwise comply with university rules, policies and procedures and any social distancing requirements set out in the Order. **We ask that deans and ADRs make every effort to minimize research activities on campus during the duration of this Order or any subsequent and related orders. The Vice President for Research and Office of Research are available to assist in review or adjudication as needed.**

Deans and/or ADRs should communicate this guidance throughout the college while outlining the college’s process for having critical research and essential functions approved during the Order. Critical research or essential functions involving human subjects or animals must have appropriate regulatory approval; animal research also requires LAMS approval.

Please submit your approvals to the Vice President for Research via Heather Geers ([Heather.Geers@uc.edu](mailto:Heather.Geers@uc.edu)). As these approvals are received, the Office of Research will be establishing a shared drive and database that will keep track of all approved critical research activities during this Order. You will be provided access to that database.

*Deans and/or ADRs should continue to remind all researchers that all other research that can continue off campus is allowable under this Order and is expected to continue.*

The Office of Research [Coronavirus Web Page](https://research.uc.edu/coronavirus-and-your-research) is continually updated with information and additional guidance related to this pandemic including information relating to human subjects and animal research activities.

**Enclosure (1)**

**RESEARCH LEVEL DESIGNATIONS**

**The specific research activities that are permissible during Level I or Level II situations are dependent on the particular crisis. Not all examples may be relevant and are provided as guidance only.**

LEVEL I **Critical Research Activities** are directed at responding to or mitigating the crisis that has caused the University closure, and which holds the potential for significant contribution in resolving the crisis; Medical research that if discontinued would endanger the lives of the human subjects participating in the research; and activities that require timely and regular attention to maintain essential functions that support critical research, including but not limited to critical research infrastructure and experimental conditions such as animal support, maintaining equipment that requires gas, cryogenic service, monitoring irreplaceable cell lines, maintaining unique or loaned collections, and other substantially similar treatments. Examples:

* Biological research that would deliver prophylaxis or cure for an ongoing epidemic;
* Environmental research or analytics to improve current efforts to model or mitigate an ongoing natural disaster, such as flooding; wildland fire; or earthquake;
* Engineering or IT systems research and development that will deliver a system with the capability to provide surveillance, establish or maintain emergency communications, or provide direct support to First Responders;
* Social science, humanistic studies and expression that facilitate interpretation, understanding or enhanced communication of the crisis;
* Oversight or operation of research infrastructure (e.g., core facilities) that are necessary or advantageous to support critical research activities;
* Providing animal support, maintaining equipment that requires gas, cryogenic service, monitoring irreplaceable cell lines, maintaining unique or loaned collections, and other substantially similar treatments.

LEVEL II **Essential Research Activities** involve significant University or researcher investment or support from an agency, foundation or contractual partnership that will likely be jeopardized and the investment lost if interrupted or discontinued. Research sponsored by federal or state agencies, private foundations, or industry partnerships that is on a delivery schedule with critical milestones that affects other partners’ outcomes or progress. Examples:

* Research that contributes to a federally-sponsored research program under a Phase II or continuing grant and has near-term completion of project deliverables;
* Research requiring access to unique or loaned collections, samples or materials along with the facilities that support continued work with these materials;
* Research involving trainees, the delay of which would negatively affect the project outcome or degree completion, or would impose a financial burden on the trainee.
* Biological research involving laboratory animals and/or biological cultures not directly tied to the current crisis that need regular care and monitoring;
* Oversight or operation of research infrastructure (e.g., core facilities) that are necessary or advantageous to support essential research activities.

LEVEL III **Standard Research Activities** are those that are on a normal path to completion, and if interrupted or postponed, would impose no critical or unrecoverable loss of financial investment on the researcher’s level of effort. Research that fulfills academic requirements or supports long-term laboratory research efforts of faculty, trainees, or staff. If supported by a federal or foundation grant, delays could be recovered through supplemental funding requests, alternate funding sources, or no-cost extensions. Examples:

* Research conducted or overseen by trainees as part of academic curricula or assistance to research faculty in the normal course of academic duties;
* Research that can be re-structured to permit ongoing work outside UC research facilities or laboratories with no significant impact on project schedule or outcomes.
* Research that can be postponed or resumed after the current crisis or University emergency has cleared.

**Enclosure (2)**

**Documentation of Research Priority Level**

Given the current COVID-19 crisis, the University of Cincinnati requires documentation for those researchers seeking to conduct **essential or critical research activities** that requires access to the campus and campus research facilities including offices and laboratories. The continuance of this research may also require trainees and staff (no undergraduates) to be present on site.

This form should be completed by the appropriate faculty member and submitted for review and approval as instructed by the college office. Once approved, a copy of this form will be provided to the Office of the Vice President for Research to maintain a record of authorized researchers who have access to University facilities.

**At the present time (March 23, 2020), the ODH Director’s Order limits on-campus activities to Critical Research only. Requests should only be made for approval for Critical Research. No other research is allowed on campus during this Order and those activities should cease as quickly as possible.**

**Undergraduate students, even if acting as a student employee, are not permitted to access university facilities under this guidance. Graduate students should only be approved for access under exceptional circumstances.**

The information on these approval forms will be reviewed and shared with the Provost, Public Safety, Facilities and other units on campus managing this Order. Personnel requests may be revised by the Vice President for Research based on conversations with these units to ensure compliance with this Order.

Suggested Approval Form is provided on the following page.

**Critical Research Approval Request**

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Project Director / PI (Name and Department)

List members of research staff requiring access and specific locations for access in the attached spreadsheet.

PROJECT TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

FUNDING SOURCE OF PROJECT: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH TO BE PERFORMED, SOCIAL DISTANCING AND SAFETY CONTROLS IN PLACE, AND JUSTIFICATION SUPPORTING REQUESTED PRIORITY LEVEL. FOR REQUESTS TO MAINTAIN CRITICAL RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE AND EXPERIMENTAL CONDITIONS, PLEASE INCLUDE FREQUENCY OF ON-CAMPUS ACCESS (e.g., DAILY, WEEKLY) AND INCLUDE ANY EXTERNAL SUPPLIERS THAT WILL BE IMPACTED BY THIS ACCESS (e.g., Cryogen refills).

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**DEAN’S APPROVAL FOR ACCESS**

**I concur with the level of Priority assigned this project, and approve access to the laboratory or facility noted above. Progress of the research and the safety and security of the facility and researcher(s) will be monitored throughout the duration of the emergency situation.**

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Signature and College / School

Individuals who will be accessing on-campus facilities and specific locations requested for access.

