

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Dalhousie research community

FROM: Dr. Alice B. Aiken, Vice-President Research and Innovation

DATE: Friday 20 March 2020

RE: Suspension of all non-essential research activities at Dalhousie University

PLEASE READ THIS EMAIL IN FULL

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to provide important information about steps being taken by Dalhousie Research and Innovation to meet challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. During this difficult time, our highest priority is the safety and well-being of our researchers, research staff, trainees and participants.

All researchers are advised that all University campus-based research operations are to be suspended as of 5:00 pm on Tuesday 24 March 2020, until further notice.

Critical COVID-19 research is exempted and will continue as a matter of urgency, with full support. Exceptions will be considered for other time- or resource-sensitive critical projects. ***Principal Investigators who are conducting research that meets these criteria must request permission to continue operations.*** Please submit requests via the form available as **Appendix A** [here](#) [PDF]. Forms are to be submitted by PIs to their Chairs (or Deans, in single-department Faculties) no later than **noon on Monday 23 March 2020**. Completed forms are to be forwarded by Chairs to Deans and then to the Office of the Vice President Research and Innovation (ovpri@dal.ca) by 4:00pm on Monday 23 March 2020. The Provost and Vice-President Academic and the Vice-President Research and Innovation will review and decide upon all requests received.

To be clear, “critical” research is defined here as:

- All research related to COVID-19
- Highly unique research circumstances that have the approval of the Department Head, Dean, VPRI and Provost

Principal Investigators and their associated research staff, postdoctoral fellows and students, who are able (as determined by the Principal Investigator) to continue their work off-campus and/or online, are expected to do so as long as it is in keeping with guidance provided by [Nova Scotia Public Health](#). All employees who are working will continue to be paid.

For all full-time and regular part-time grant-paid research staff (such as research associates) who cannot work remotely, *salary will be continued until April 30, 2020*. Further information about the period following April 30, 2020 will be disseminated promptly when it is available.

Principal Investigators should contact Human Resources for advice and guidance with respect to hourly-paid student and other research employees who cannot work remotely, via hr@dal.ca.

Further advice will be provided by Human Resources as the situation evolves.

Protocol for shutdown of research

The process of shutting down laboratory research operations should begin immediately and be done in a safe and orderly manner.

Consider the following:

- Update your emergency contact lists for your laboratories, research groups, and for any other specialized equipment/facilities. Distribute accordingly.
- Ensure all equipment is fully powered down and unplugged, gas and water valves are closed (as appropriate), laboratories are cleaned, and ALL materials are safely stored properly (including chemical agents, biological materials, radiological agents and materials, etc.).
- Ensure laboratories are left in a secured state (materials, doors, windows, computers, etc.).
- Any equipment, experiments, processes, storage areas, etc. that require additional care over this period to prevent damage, or other safety concerns (i.e. requires periodic maintenance or operation, calibration requirements, etc.) during the closure must be identified. If this applies, written Standard Operating Procedures must be developed; procedures must identify not only how this will occur in a safe manner but which personnel are authorized to do so.
 - In the event of such requirements, researchers must maintain minimum staffing to ensure personnel safety, while observing the most current public health advice. Written procedures must be regularly updated to meet the current guidance from Public Health Officials (both Federal and Provincial).
 - These critical procedures will be permitted only in the most exceptional of circumstances to ensure the prevention of damage or other safety violations, and are not for the general continuation of research activities once the lab is shut down.
- The **Dalhousie Temporary Laboratory Shutdown Checklist**, developed by the Office of Environmental Health & Safety, can be used to record the process and must be shared with the respective head of your academic unit (i.e. Department Head, Director, or Dean). The Checklist is available as **Appendix B** [here](#) [PDF].

All researchers using animals in their work are advised that the University Committee on Laboratory Animals (UCLA)'s **Pandemic Plan is now in effect**. Please see **Appendix C** [here](#) [PDF] for more information and a high-level summary of the Pandemic Plan. Any researchers with questions or concerns regarding the Plan or the use of research animals generally are asked to contact the University Veterinarian, Dr. Chris Harvey Clark (charveyc@dal.ca).

To reiterate from my previous message, the Dalhousie Research Ethics Boards (REB) have invoked Dal REB SOP501.01 – REB Review During Publicly-Declared Emergencies. Dalhousie researchers whose studies have received REB approval through the NSHA or IWK must follow directives provided by those institutional REBs. **Appendix D** [here](#) [PDF] outlines directives that apply specifically to human participant research studies that have received REB approval through the Dalhousie HSREB or SSHREB.

Any general or additional questions can be sent to Jennifer Morawiecki, Chief of Staff for the Office of the Vice-President Research and Innovation (ovpri@dal.ca). We will continue to provide relevant updates, as they arise, via the university's COVID-19 site at dal.ca/coronavirus.

Please continue to take care of yourselves. Look out for your own health and the health of others. We are here to support you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alice B. Aiken
Vice-President Research and Innovation