



**Office of Research & Economic Development (OORED)**  
**Research Plans for Spring 2021 Semester**  
**Due to COVID-19**  
**January 19, 2021**

Background: The OORED continuously reviews the Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) and Texas A&M University (TAMU) Requirements for Research Due to COVID-19 and includes those requirements where appropriate. The following are the Research Plans for Texas A&M University-Central Texas for the Spring 2021 Semester as approved by the Vice President for Research and Economic Development.

*Research Operations Including Labs:*

**[Note: Where possible, research should be conducted virtually]**

1. All research operations may return to on-campus activities effective January 19, 2021, with specific requirements noted below for preventing COVID-19. At all times, research activities must adhere to CDC, Texas State, and Texas A&M University System requirements.

The Office of Research and Economic Development provides support for research operations from 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday, and on an as-needed basis beyond those hours. All requests for the following will be initially processed through on-line operations, or in face-to-face requests when required: approval for pre-planning of grants and contracts, purchasing requests for grants/contracts, and international travel. International travel is suspended until further notice as indicated by the Safety Coordinator unless there is a COVID-10 related research exception.

2. All faculty members and staff conducting research in labs must work directly with Mr. Shawn Kelley, Safety and Risk Management Officer, and Dr. Gunisha Sagar, Labs Coordinator. Beyond the safety and cleaning requirements for teaching in labs, all research conducted by faculty members and staff must adhere to the following:
  - i. Contact Mr. Kelley by phone (254-519-5771) or via email at [s.kelley@tamuct.edu](mailto:s.kelley@tamuct.edu) **and** Dr. Sagar, by phone (254-501-5843) or via email at [gunisha\\_sagar@tamuct.edu](mailto:gunisha_sagar@tamuct.edu) to obtain appropriate cleaning supplies and gloves for research equipment used in labs.

- ii. Researchers must wear a mask and use gloves at all times unless it is inappropriate due to the specific research, and then clean the equipment intended to use prior to the research conducted. Cleaning must include all handles, knobs, and additional components that may be touched by future researchers. Exceptions to the use of masks may be approved by Human Resources for faculty/staff or the Student Success, Equity and Inclusion Office (SSEI) in Student Affairs for students. Exceptions for glove use may be approved by the Safety and Risk Management Officer when appropriate.
- iii. Once the research is complete for the day, researchers must re-clean the same components as cleaned in the pre-research step directly above.
- iv. Cleaning supplies for each lab intended for research operations may remain in the lab and marked as "For Research Cleaning Only" to ensure the cleaning supplies are not used for cleaning between teaching periods.

*Level of Research Approval and Potential Changes:*

1. If the COVID-19 conditions warrant a change in the level of research requirements, such as a reduction for all on-campus research except for federally required grants/contracts, the Institutional Official (IO) for research will immediately inform all faculty members and staff via email. The IO is the Vice President for Research and Economic Development.
2. Effective January 19, 2021, all students including undergraduate and graduate levels, are allowed to conduct research in labs with a faculty member or staff mentoring the students, and in close proximity to the respective lab. The faculty member or staff must also maintain at least 6 feet physical distance from the students, and ensure students conducting research in a lab are wearing a mask and gloves unless waived by Student Affairs, and maintain at least 6 feet physical distance from others in the lab.
3. If a faculty member, staff or student is found to have COVID-19 and was conducting research in a lab prior to quarantine, that individual and those who are aware of the situation must follow the reporting requirements of COVID-19 procedures found in the university Return to Campus documents at <https://www.tamuct.edu/covid19/index.html>. The respective lab will be deep cleaned according to the university cleaning procedures for a known COVID-19 case within a respective location. If the deep cleaning is not conducted immediately, the lab may be restricted for research up to seven (7) days. If the lab is used for research and teaching, the Safety and Risk Management Officer will intervene to reduce the days restricted so that research and teaching will recommence as soon as possible.

*Export Control and International Travel or Export Control and Research:*

1. Export Control and International Travel: With the suspension of International Travel until further notice, all export control review related to international travel is also suspended for international travel. However, export control for ongoing or future grants and contracts will continue to require review by Dr. Walter Murphy, Executive Director for Research and Sponsored Programs with contact information at: Phone (254-519-5761) or email at [murphyw@tamuct.edu](mailto:murphyw@tamuct.edu)

*IRB, IBC and IACUC Operations:*

3. Institutional Review Board [IRB] and Institutional Biosafety Committee [IBC] meetings and respective research: **(An Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee [IACUC] for animal research is not in place since animal/vertebrate research is not allowed at A&M Central Texas – Please do not bring vertebrates to campus or capture vertebrates on campus)** – All IRB and IBC meetings will be conducted via Virtual meetings for the 2021 Spring Semester. Human Subjects (IRB) and Biosafety related research will require COVID-19 related accommodations as approved by the IRB and IBC.
4. IRB Audit and IRB Protocol Software: The IO will continue to enhance the IRB Audit process in conjunction with an assessment for a new virtual protocol review software provided by the Texas A&M University System.
5. IBC is currently at Level 1 and is in review for Level 2 BSL that would allow for blood related research. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, review for Level 2 BSL is on hold until further notice.

*Economic Development:*

1. All Economic Development related meetings, including university research park planning meetings, will be virtual, unless respective external members provide safe environments that include virtual access for faculty/staff.
2. The Cooperative Ed.D. planning with Texas A&M University-Kingsville will continue via virtual meetings. Official announcements for the Cooperative Ed.D. are forthcoming.

Contact:

Dr. Russ Porter (IO) at [porter@tamuct.edu](mailto:porter@tamuct.edu) or phone at 254-501-5823, or cell at 304-839-9039.

Or

Dr. Walter Murphy (Executive Director for Research and Sponsored Programs) at [murphyw@tamuct.edu](mailto:murphyw@tamuct.edu) or phone at 254-501-5823