



**Office of Research & Economic Development (OORED) – Plans for Fall 2020 Semester Due to COVID-19
August 21, 2020**

Background: The OORED reviewed the TAMU System and TAMU Requirements for Research Due to COVID-19 and included those requirements where appropriate. Please see the addendum at the end of this document for a condensed version of those requirements as they relate to our research operations.

Research Operations Including Laboratories: [Note: Where possible, research should be conducted virtually]

1. All research operations may return to on-campus activities effective August 24, 2020, 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: purchasing requests for grants/contracts, approval for pre-planning of grants and contracts, and international travel. International travel is currently suspended unless related to COVID-19 research or support, and as approved by the President of A&M Central Texas.

2. All faculty members and staff conducting research in laboratories must work directly with Mr. Shawn Kelley, Safety and Risk Management Officer. Beyond the safety and cleaning requirements for teaching in laboratories, all research conducted by faculty members and staff must adhere to:
 - i. Contact Mr. Shawn Kelley by phone (254-519-5771) or via email at s.kelley@tamuct.edu to obtain appropriate cleaning supplies and gloves to pre and post sanitize the research equipment and research areas used by research personnel (faculty members, staff, and students) in laboratories. Students must work under the supervision of a faculty member or staff in laboratory settings at all times.
 - ii. All research personnel must be trained to use the equipment properly and safely, with faculty members and staff ensuring students received the training prior to research in the laboratories.
 - iii. All research personnel must pass the online laboratory safety training and submit the safety agreement form upon completion of training to the OORED. Contact the OORED for training and forms.
 - iv. Research personnel must adhere to the CDC, Texas State, and Texas A&M University System guidelines to combat the spread of COVID-19 including, but not limited to the following; wear a mask at all times, and use gloves at all times, and then sanitize the equipment intended to use prior to and after 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 or face-shields may be approved by Human

Resources for faculty/staff, or Student Success, Equity, and Inclusion (SSEI) through Student Affairs for students. Exceptions for glove use may be approved by the Safety and Risk Management Officer when appropriate, or Nitrile gloves may be used in lieu of latex gloves.

- v. All research personnel must enter their name, date, time, and duration for which the equipment was used and also check the pre and post sanitizing/cleaning columns in equipment use logs. The log information and checks, facilitate potential tracing of susceptible individuals in case a positive COVID-19 case is found in the laboratory.
- vi. 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 August 24, 2020, all students including undergraduate and graduate levels, are allowed to conduct research in laboratories 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 Success, Equity, and Inclusion (SSEI) through Student Affairs.
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, as directed by the Safety and Risk Management Officer. 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.

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. 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

IRB, IBC and IACUC Operations:

1. IRB and IBC meetings and respective research: (*IACUC for animal research is not in place since animal/vertebrate research is not allowed at A&M Central Texas*) – All IRB and IBC meetings will be conducted via Virtual meetings for the 2020 Fall Semester. Human Subjects and Biohazard related research will require COVID-19 related accommodations as approved by the IRB and IBC.

2. 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.
3. 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 or phone at 254-501-5823, or cell at 304-839-9039.

Addendum

From the Texas A&M University - Office of the Vice President for Research [Condensed Version]

Sent on behalf of Mark A. Barteau, Vice President for Research (underlined below – these guidelines are for TAMU only – and the Provost guidelines noted below are for TAMU only; A&M Central Texas assessed the following to help guide our requirements)

Research status and plans entering the fall semester [For TAMU Only: Assessed for A&M Central Texas]

As we welcome new and returning students for the fall semester, it is essential to maintain a high level of diligence with respect to COVID-19 safety. If there are significant outbreaks of infection in laboratories or buildings, across campus, or in the community, it may become necessary to curtail research activities, or even return to remote operation.

Summarized below are the status and guidelines for research as we begin the semester.

1. Research that is currently being carried out remotely should continue remotely to the extent possible.
2. Any deviations from approved protocols/permits must have prior approval by the cognizant body (IACUC, IRB, IBC, etc.)
3. The Office of Risk, Ethics, and Compliance (OREC) will notify SSC regarding cleaning of spaces in which an infected individual [COVID-19] has been present within the last seven days. If a space, such as a laboratory, will not be cleaned by SSC, OREC will notify the responsible individual. In such cases, the laboratory should be closed for a minimum of 24 hours, prior to cleaning, as described in the Provost's guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting facilities of July 20, 2020. As an alternative to cleaning, the laboratory may be closed for 7 days after the infected individual was last present.

Note for A&M Central Texas: Our university does not have an IACUC as noted above, and we do not have an OREC. However, as noted in our guidelines above, our Safety and Risk Management Officer, Mr. Shawn Kelley, is working with our appropriate individuals to ensure cleaning and disinfecting should they be required.