

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Office of Research Services (ORS) has taken steps to ensure business continuity in response to the COVID-19 outbreak in our community. Information on ORS and Agency Guidance is available on the ORS Website. The below **Frequently Asked Questions** relate to the conduct of sponsored projects and University research support services may be useful to Project PIs and facility users. FAQs will be updated as new information and agency guidance becomes available.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- **Is ORS open to assist faculty during the remote work period?**

Yes, the Office of Research Services (ORS) has taken steps to ensure business continuity in response to the COVID-19 outbreak in our community. Please see March 19, 2020 letter to the University Community for details. The letter and other relevant agency guidance is available on the COVID-19 link on the ORS website.

PREAWARD SERVICES

- **How can I best reach ORS PreAward Staff?**

Cate Ekstrom:	Phone: 312-203-3039	Email: cekstrom@depaul.edu
Jeff Deaner:	Phone: 312-362-7079	Email: jdeaner@depaul.edu
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- **How is proposal submission impacted by COVID-19?**

We anticipate there could be delays in staff using home-systems for electronic proposal submission. Emails with lengthy attachments may take longer to receive, proposal components may take longer to upload into submission systems, and final submissions may take additional time to submit from remote locations, particularly if multiple home users are sharing home systems. We recommend investigators have *complete proposals* available for submission a minimum of 1.5 days in advance of an agency deadline.

- **I am self-isolated and am unable to submit my grant by the agency deadline; may I request an extension?**

Researchers that have been directly affected by COVID-19 and are unable to meet stated agency deadlines should consult with PreAward staff. Many agencies, public and private, have delayed upcoming deadlines and/or posted procedures for seeking an extension to a posted submission deadline on their website. To the extent the funding agency allows an extension ORS will work with you to meet the extended deadline. If not allowed, ORS will work with you remotely to meet the agency's posted deadline.

For the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)**, please see NIH Extramural Response to Natural Disasters and Other Emergencies: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/natural_disasters.htm

National Science Foundation (NSF) has provided a list of select application deadlines extensions related to COVID-19 (https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/covid19/covid19_deadlines.pdf). Deadlines for opportunities not listed remain unchanged. If an applicant is unable to meet the deadline listed, they should coordinate with the appropriate program officer. Extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Additional information can also be found in NSF Responses to Natural Disasters at: <https://www.nsf.gov/naturaldisasters/>.

The Department of Defense (DOD) is encouraging all program officers to use maximum flexibility in the submission of applications, providing they still maintain sufficient ability to review all applications and complete the project within the timeframe necessary. Contact program officers for specific funding opportunity extensions.

- **I am using subcontractors in my proposal but cannot reach the planned Subcontracting Organization, can I still submit my proposal?**

In the event documentation from third- party organizations/individuals is unavailable at time of proposal deadline, we will transmit the submission to the funder, *where electronic submission systems allow*, without necessary documentation. A note or letter, as relevant, will be included in the submission citing the delay in third-party organization/individual sign-off due to COVID-19. ORS will work with PIs to secure required documentation in such situations post-agency transmittal.

- **I was approached by an agency offering to fund COVID-19-related research- how do I get started?**

Conducting work relating to COVID- may require multiple offices to review and negotiate the terms of the sponsored award and to assist you in obtaining required institutional approvals (e.g., IRB, IBC, etc.). If this situation arises, please immediately contact ORS PreAward Staff who can assist you in getting the proposed work scope and budget institutionally approved in anticipation of an award to the University.

- **Where can I find funding opportunities related to COVID-19?**

COVID-19 Funding Opportunities are posted on the ORS website and updated periodically as additional programs are announced. Please note, this list may not be inclusive of all information and opportunities available, additional opportunities may be accessible on the Grants.gov or the GrantForward search engines on the ORS website.

AWARD MANAGEMENT

- **How can I best reach ORS Award Management Staff?**

Doug Petcher:	Phone: 312-362-7595	Email: dpetcher@depaul.edu
Bob McCarthy:	Phone: 312-362-5409	Email: rmccart1@depaul.edu
Sandra Bowen:	Phone: 312-362-5457	Email: sbowen@depaul.edu
Daniela Lampariello	Phone: 312-362-6415	Email: dlampari@depaul.edu

- **Is the effort of project personnel working remotely because of COVID-19 able to be charged to my grant?**

In general, yes, provided the project personnel remain engaged on the project. Current sponsor prior approval requirements regarding disengagement and effort reductions remain in effect. If there is a significant disengagement of the PI or other senior key personnel from affected projects, most agency's standard prior approval requirements remain in effect.

If an individual cannot contribute to their current project but can contribute to another sponsored project, the salary must be moved to that funding source.

- **I am the PI of a grant, if I am home sick and cannot work on my project; can my salary still be charged to the grant?**

Yes, pursuant to the University's indirect cost rate agreement with the federal government, sick leave and other paid absences that are permitted under University policy and treated consistently may be charged to the grant.

- **I am a PI/researcher working remotely as a result of the coronavirus; am I able to charge supplies relating to telework (i.e., such as a laptop, printer, office supplies, etc.) to my grant?**

Such purchases would generally not be allowable from the standpoint of both DePaul and agency policy. If you are lacking office equipment essential to the performance of your grant project, we will attempt to secure it on a loaner basis for you. Please contact Robert McCarthy about this at RMCCART1@depaul.edu. Also, the Information Services [resource page](#) on working remotely may be helpful. It provides useful suggestions along with a range of DePaul technology resources that support remote work.

- **How do I work remotely and protect research data?**

There are two main principles to bear in mind ---researchers should (1) use measures to access information in a secure manner and (2) avoid saving or storing data on unencrypted, personal devices. The University offers the use of VPN (Virtual Personal Network) software to make sure that all data is encrypted in transmission and that its central applications are not widely exposed to the internet. Contact IS/Tech Services for assistance.

- **I was planning grant related travel that was cancelled due to precautions regarding COVID-19, may I still charge the travel-related costs to the grant?**

To date, there is limited federal guidance relating to charges to awards for *non-refundable* travel, events, and other authorized activities cancelled due to the coronavirus. NIH has provided notice (NOT-OD-20-03), and NSF has released guidance regarding the implementation of OMB authority, allowing for the direct charging of select cancellation costs to grants. We think it is likely that other sponsors will allow reasonable cancellation costs as direct charges to grants and contracts in this set of circumstances. In order to be allowable, it is reasonable to assume that the traveler has requested and been denied a refund, and that documentation of such a request is retained by the PI. Please ensure appropriate records and cost documentation are maintained to substantiate the charging of any cancellation or other fees related to interruption of operations or services, or to allow for corrections in the event that a funding agency issue guidance that is in contradiction to this practice.

- **My grant activities have been delayed related to COVID-19, I anticipate these delays could lead to delays in completing my study by the end of the project period; what should I do?**

Most federal sponsors, including NSF and NIH, allow for a one-time no cost extension for 12 months at the end of the project. Please discuss your specific project with ORS Award Management staff, who will provide guidance on the options available to you.

- **I have a progress report due in the near term and my study is delayed related to COVID-19; should I include information relating to the delay in my progress report?**

Yes. If your study is impacted, ORS will provide you with guidance on how and where this should be included in your progress report (i.e., in Section F.2 of a NIH RPPR) and specifics about what information should be included.

- **I am planning a grant-funded trip for the fall, can I charge trip cancellation insurance to my grant?**

Trip cancellation insurance is typically unallowable on grants. However, we are monitoring any additional guidance the federal government may issue related to travel. If you need to travel in the coming months to conduct business for a sponsored project, traveler's insurance may be prudent, but should be charged to institutional funds until we get additional federal input.

RESEARCH PROTECTIONS

- **How can I best reach ORS Research Protections Staff?**

Susan Loess-Perez:	Phone: 312-362-7593
Jessica Bloom*:	Phone: 312-362-6168
Melodie Fox:	Phone: 312-362-7592
Stephanie Turner	Phone: 312-362-7497
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**Ms. Bloom is on leave through mid-April, 2020.*

ANIMAL RESEARCH

- **Can I expect any changes to facility access?**

Facility access is limited, as always. Only those persons authorized for card reader access will be allowed into the facility. Building access may be limited and will be managed by Public Safety and you may need to contact your department Chair or Dean to be added to a list of individuals who require access to the building during the current pandemic procedures in place.

- **How will animals be cared for during the COVID19 pandemic?**

The RSF facility has a business continuity and disaster plan; the facilities staff are considered essential employees and animal care will occur daily. Special scheduling of the RSF Team was initiated to implement social distancing practices. The RSF has enhanced the sanitation practices for the safety of both users and facility staff. We have worked with our vendors to ensure a sufficient inventory of supplies during the current restricted research environment. See limitation below on initiating *new* activities.

- **Will protocols continue to be reviewed by the IACUC?**

Yes, IACUC protocol review will continue as usual until further notice. IACUC Committee meetings are taking place on Zoom. Contact Susan Loess Perez (sloessperez@depaul.edu) with any questions or concerns.

- **Can new, approved protocols involving animals be initiated at this time?**

Yes, but we are trying to minimize the work load of the animal care staff during the current pandemic. Therefore, we ask that if at all possible entirely new studies be delayed and that for current animals housed in the facility that each researcher evaluate the number of animals remaining and keep the number of animals to those essential to complete planned experimentation. In addition, we ask that researchers keep breeding to the minimum needed to maintain the lines.

IBC

- **Will protocols continue to be reviewed by the IBC?**

Yes. As protocols are submitted, they will be reviewed via the appropriate process. All new protocols should be submitted through the online eProtocol system. The IBC and ORS staff is working to minimize the impact of the COVID pandemic on your research and teaching activities that require IBC review and approval.

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

- **Will protocol and protocol submissions continue to be reviewed by the IRB?**

Yes, the IRB and the ORS staff is committed to minimizing the impact of the COVID pandemic upon the human subject research at DePaul. You may continue to submit new protocols and other submissions to ORP@depaul.edu. All submissions will be logged in and routed for review through normal processes. We do anticipate an increase in amendments re-designing research protocols, so there may be a slight delay in the review and approval process due to the volume of submissions. In addition, new protocols should take into consideration the current pandemic and social distancing practices. The IRB would be unlikely to approve new protocols that involve face-to face contact when the research plan is to begin soon. At this time, we would recommend that all research be designed to eliminate face-to face contact.

- **My approved protocol requires in-person participants interview/visits. May I shift the conduct of in-person participant interviews/visits to conduct through video or telephone?**

Yes. Any change to your research design or methodology must be submitted as an amendment to your research protocol and must be approved before you initiate the change. Therefore, if you plan on changing in-person activities to telephone or online activities, you will need to revise your protocol and support documents to reflect that change and submit the materials to the IRB for approval.

- **Can telephone screening of potential subjects continue?**

Yes, as there is no increased risk to subjects relating to COVID-19. If your protocol already included telephone screening activities, there is no reason why the process cannot continue.

- **May we enroll new subjects on existing studies?**

This should be decided on a study-by-study basis and would depend upon the study design. The risk/benefit ratio for subjects may have changed from the time at which the protocol was reviewed and approved. Studies that are conducted online or via telephone or video conferencing should not be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, studies that involve in-person meetings may need to be delayed or re-designed to eliminate the risk to the subjects and the researchers. For studies that are federally funded and involve behavioral interventions that require group or in-person interventions, we would encourage the researchers to reach out to their funding agency to determine the best course of action at this time and any impact upon their funding. We would discourage continuing to conduct research that involves face-to face contact until the social distancing policies are lifted. This may mean that studies will be delayed for several months. The delay in recruitment and enrollment or in conducting approved study activities does not need to be reported to the IRB.

- **If I want to conduct COVID-19 related Human Subjects research, how do we obtain consent?**

Based on recent guidance concerning research in the COVID-19 context and existing regulations, the IRB may approve of research utilizing waivers of documentation or electronic signatures.

- **Will submissions to the IRB of COVID-19 research be prioritized?**

Yes, as best as possible. The IRB understands that in some situations, research may need to be approved quickly to answer the research question. When you submit the protocol to the IRB at ORP@depaul.edu, we would ask that you indicate the urgency of the review and any deadline dates that apply. We will do our best to meet those deadlines.

- **Should NIH or other sponsors (government, industry, or non-profit) be notified if select protocol activities or in-person visits of a funded research study will be paused or delayed?**

Yes. The IRB recommends that the PI contact their Program Directors for advice about the impact of delaying the conduct of the research on their funding. ORS is willing to consult with Principal Investigators about any potential changes to the research and what would be required by the IRB to make changes. When necessary, ORS will communicate directly with the funding agency.