Areas of Research Applicable to COVID-19 and Decision Tree

Update: 4.6.2020

Note: the information provided below is our best understanding at this time. Since this is a rapidly moving area, it may change. Please check the UW Coronavirus website often for updates. Restrictions placed on certain types of human subjects research are still in effect. At this time, even if your research may be eligible based on the guidance below, it is still restricted under these human subjects research directives.

What areas of in-person research are allowable under the new Stay Home, Stay Healthy directive?

Below are examples of areas of research applicable to COVID-19 response plus those related to a broader set of therapies – and are therefore allowable, according to the original and recently updated information from the Governor’s office.

All areas listed are potentially valuable to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and/or potentially useful to recovery efforts. Many such areas may not be obvious now but should be considered for continued operations. You may wish to consider the Population Health areas as a useful framework for assessing areas that might be appropriate.

Research Area Examples

- Areas of biological and biomedical research working with SARS-CoV2 nucleic acid, proteins, virus or samples or involving COVID-19, including aspects of the virus, disease, transmission, vaccines, health care, therapies, and recovery from the infection or pandemic, as examples.
- Areas of biological and biomedical research, including those that may involve engineering, chemistry or physics, that can be reasonably justified as having a possible impact on COVID-19 including impacts that might have a sparing effect on resources needed to fight the pandemic. Examples might be research on underlying health conditions or other infectious diseases.
- All areas of biological and biomedical research and of public health research, including those that may involve engineering, materials science, chemistry or physics, that can be reasonably justified as important for developing biotechnology-related therapies, defined as therapies to treat human health problems. These areas need not be directly COVID-19 related. Allowable areas of non-COVID-19 research do not include preventative approaches, unless they are important as part of an approach to develop a therapy, or for augmenting a therapeutic strategy. [Updated 4/6/2020]
- All areas of public health research that have relevance to COVID-19, that is, community health research, including the compilation, modeling, analysis and communication of public health information.
- All areas involving environmental factors that might play into transmission, reservoirs, survival of the SARS-CoV2 virus.
- All areas of humanities, social sciences, information sciences, and business that impact our understanding of misinformation, public perception, social isolation, stress, communication, economic impacts, and business concerns that may relate to COVID-19.
- All areas of mathematics, statistics, and computer science addressing the ability to track or model or analyze data of importance to COVID-19.
- All areas of importance to logistics of COVID-19 response, including supply chain, modeling, health care logistics, GPS-based analysis.
• All areas of biological and biomedical research and of public health research, including those that may involve engineering, materials science, chemistry or physics, that can be reasonably justified as important for developing biotechnology-related therapies, defined as therapies to treat human health problems. These areas need not be directly COVID-19 related. Allowable areas of non-COVID-19 research do not include preventative approaches, such as diagnostics or vaccines, unless they are important as part of an approach to develop a therapy. Involvement of human subjects in this research remains limited to the allowable areas specified by current UW human subjects policy.
• All areas of materials science that might impact novel COVID-19 therapeutics.
• Others as appropriate.

Facilities
• All facilities that store, analyze, or otherwise process samples that are either biological or materials that might be applicable to therapies.
• All animal facilities.
• All computational facilities.
• All facilities for which shutting down would result in significant effort and/or cost both for the shut-down and the subsequent start-up.

Others
• Research involving long-term experiments, or maintaining vital equipment, cell lines, animals, and other time-sensitive research items, for which a pause would cause undue harm and/or cost.
• Research that is essential to meet thesis requirements for a final defense in Spring Quarter, or requirements of a new position that has already been accepted.

I have reviewed this guidance, including the decision tree below, and I am still not sure my research qualifies, who can I ask?

Send your question to research@uw.edu with the subject line COVID-19 and we will reply as soon as possible.

At this point the decision to keep a laboratory open should be based on following the decision tree at the bottom of this document and in close consultation with your department chair or director, and College or School.

Decision Tree

Decision tree to determine whether your in-person research meets criteria for operation under the Stay Home, Stay Healthy directive. Human subjects research must also meet these criteria for continuing.

1. Is your research allowable based on one or more of the exclusion criteria below?

   Question 1a. Does your research fall into any of the above categories?
   If yes, go to question 2.

   Question 1b. Do you help support a facility that stores, analyzes, or otherwise processes samples, houses and/or carries out procedures with animals, or carries out computation?
   If yes, go to question 2.
Question 1c. Do you support a facility for which shutting down would result in significant effort and/or cost both for the shut-down and the subsequent start-up?
   If yes, go to question 2.

Question 1d. Does your research involve long-term experiments, time-sensitive samples, equipment that requires monitoring and/or maintenance?
   If yes, go to question 2.

Question 1e. Do you have a time-sensitive deadline, such as a thesis defense Spring Quarter or an accepted position with requirements, that requires you to finish in-person experiments?
   If yes, go to question 2.

If you answer yes to any of these questions, go to question 2. If you answer no to all of them, you need to shut down your research until the Stay Home, Stay Healthy directive is lifted. Please see the Research Shutdown Checklist.

2. Safety standards--can you accommodate all of the safety standards below?

   Question 2a. Can you regularly inform personnel that if they are sick or experiencing even mild symptoms of illness, they are required to stay home? [Updated 4.6.2020]
      If yes, go to question 2b.

   Questions 2b. Can you maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet at all times when researchers are in the laboratory? This will preclude training new techniques to others, unless it can be accomplished while maintaining at least 6 feet distance. It will also preclude techniques that need more than 2 hands, unless an alternate approach can be devised. It will also preclude dangerous experiments that require two people in close proximity. In some cases, it will require strict scheduling.
      If yes, go to question 2c.

   Question 2c. Can you carry out frequent laboratory decontamination procedures? This requires access to disinfecting solutions or wipes, and a schedule to wipe down surfaces regularly, wipe down common equipment before and after use, and wipe down lab benchtops before and after use.
      If yes, go to question 2d.

   Question 2d. Can you maintain personal safety with appropriate personal protective equipment and frequent hand-washing?
      If yes, go to question 3.

If you answer yes to all of these questions, go to question 3. If you answer no to any one of them, you need to shut down your research until the Stay Home, Stay Healthy directive is lifted. Please see the Research Shutdown Checklist.

3. Personnel

   Question 3a. Do you have personnel available to carry out the research? It may be difficult to hire new personnel under the current situation.
      If yes, go to question 3b.
If no, you need to ramp down your research until the Stay Home, Stay Healthy directive is lifted. Please see the Research Shutdown Checklist.

Question 3b. Are the personnel you need to do the experiments willing to come into your facility to carry them out in a safe manner? You cannot pressure or require them to work, unless they are critical personnel for specific tasks. In that case, you still cannot ask them to do more than is required by their designation.

If yes, you are approved for carrying out in-person research. Please be sure to minimize the number of personnel in your research space at any one time and prioritize experiments needed to meet an impending deadline.

If no, you need to ramp down your research until the Stay Home, Stay Healthy directive is lifted. Please see the Research Shutdown Checklist.