# **Undertaking research activities at Bournemouth University during the COVID-19 pandemic: A guide for researchers**

***Version 3 – October 2020***

Restrictions associated with mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 will continue to have implications for carrying out research activities for the foreseeable future, including additional safety measures when undertaking research in the field or limits to the number of people that can access a research facility on campus at any given time.

**Bournemouth University remains committed to developing and supporting research** and therefore, BU’s academic community is strongly encouraged to continue to be proactive in ensuring that our programmes of research activity continue to advance, in a way which adapts to the challenges presented by COVID-19.

Wherever possible, **research activities should mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19 by adapting research design to take place online** – for example, by conducting interviews by video conference rather than in person. That said, the University recognises, this may not always be possible, and therefore, this guidance refers to:

1. Research and knowledge exchange activities which takes place on BU campuses
2. Research and knowledge exchange activities which takes place outside of the home and off-campus.

Before preparing to undertake research activities that are not online and require physical access to people and/or specialist facilities, it is recommended that all researchers read the relevant government guidance and ensure they are adhering to any frameworks stipulated by their research funder if applicable (see, for example, the [NIHR Re-Start Framework](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/restart-framework/24886)). Please see the useful links section set out in [appendix 5](#_Appendix_5:_external).

## **What if my research activities require travel?**

Travel can only be permitted in line with current government guidelines, including Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) [guidance](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice). Any travel required to undertake your research activities must be compliant with current domestic and international guidance (including any travel to BU-owned facilities). It is recommended that for the academic year 2020/21, travel for research purposes is mitigated wherever possible and alternative arrangements are made. This could include, for example, the creation of a collaboration agreement for partner organisations to undertake work in country.

## **What if my research activities take place on campus, for example in a BU laboratory?**

Space within Bournemouth University’s research facilities (including, but not limited to, laboratories) are subject to the same adaptations as all other spaces on campus. Therefore, access may be restricted (for example, only two people may be able to work safely in a laboratory, that previously accommodated eight). It will be up to your Faculty to determine how to prioritise the use of specialist spaces, in line with the principles set out in [appendix 1](#_Appendix_1:_principles) using the criteria as detailed in [appendix 2](#_Appendix_2:_prioritisation_1). In the first instance, please contact your Faculty Operations Team to gain access to the relevant facility.

## **What if my research activities need to take place off campus?**

You must follow the process set out in [appendix 3](#_Appendix_3:_processes), which includes completing the COVID-19 compliant research form, an updated risk assessment for approval by your Faculty Operations team (who are supported by the Health, Safety & Wellbeing team) and secure endorsement from any external partners for the research to proceed.

If you are required to complete an external risk assessment by any external organisations associated with the research or if a risk assessment for your project has been completed by a team member who is external to BU, these documents must also be approved by your Faculty Operations team. This documentation will then be reviewed by RDS and you will be issued a letter confirming your off campus research activities can proceed.

## **Why are you making me do more paperwork to undertake my research off campus?**

Bournemouth University strongly encourages all colleagues to continue to undertake research and knowledge exchange activities. Additional protocols are currently in place to ensure that the activities of the University are as safe as possible to protect the wellbeing of our colleagues and research partners. In the event of any outbreak associated with BU research sites, it is important that the institution can demonstrate how our academic community has ensured its activities are not contributors to the spread of the coronavirus.

## **What if my research costs will increase in order to adhere to COVID-19 adaptations?**

In the first instance, for externally funded projects, we recommend speaking to your Project Delivery Officer to discuss how your budget can be adapted. If your project is internally funded, it is recommended that you speak to the scheme’s manager to discuss how it can be adapted to include additional costs.

## **What if my research costs are likely to decrease as I change my research design?**

Even if your project is likely to cost less (for example, because you have switched from weekly travel to undertake interviews to conducting interviews online) is it really important to discuss this as soon as possible with your Project Delivery Officer (if your project is externally funded) or Funding Scheme Manager (if internally funded).

Your project could be reworked to enable other activities to enhance your project and/or release budget to support other activities. Furthermore, it is important that we have an accurate forecast of your anticipated expenditure to effectively manage our programmes of research activity.

## **What about research ethics?**

As with all research activities, appropriate ethical approval is required. Research should remain within the ethics approval that has been granted; however, where this is changed as a result of COVID 19 (for example moving from face-to-face to remote interviewing) please email [researchethics@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:researchethics@bournemouth.ac.uk) to notify the University of the change(s). In most instances this will be sufficient but it is possible that substantive changes may require a formal amendment to be notified via the [Online Ethics Checklist](https://ethics.bournemouth.ac.uk/); you will be advised if this is the case.

Otherwise, the Online Ethics Checklist will remain accessible; ethics review and approval will continue to operate as normal for new applications. Please note that no research activities involving human participants and collecting personal data should start until ethical approval is in place. The Online Ethics Checklist is available on any device and as its platform is public facing.

It is also recommended that you review any additional guidance produced by your research funder. A summary of updated guidance documentation can be found on [UKRI’s COVID-19 guidance pages](https://www.ukri.org/research/coronavirus/guidance-for-the-research-and-innovation-communities1/).

## **What happens if I am starting a new piece of research?**

If you are starting a new research project, it is critical that you ensure you mitigate the risks of spreading COVID-19. Furthermore, if you require access to BU facilities, it is important to demonstrate the strategic value of the project so space can be prioritised appropriately. Therefore, you still need to follow the processes set out in this document.

## **I have read this guidance, but am still confused as to what to do. Where can I go for help?**

Dr Rebecca Edwards, Research Programme Manager in RDS is providing operational oversight of this scheme, so if you have any queries or concerns in regard to the principles and/or process, please contact her in the first instance. For data queries, such as your RED ID, please contact your [Faculty Project Delivery Officer or a Project Administrator](https://blogs.bournemouth.ac.uk/research/contact/project-delivery/).

## **Appendix 1: principles** **of undertaking research in the context of COVID-19**

* Re-starting research activities at BU (both on campus and in the field – including outdoor and indoor locations) must be enshrined with the principles and planning assumptions of the University’s Major Incident Group (MIG).
* Crucially, this places the health, safety and wellbeing of people at the heart of these principles. This applies to BU staff and students, research partners and participants.
* They also recognise the expectation from government that researchers will be enabled by the Universities to re-start research activities to support COVID-19 recovery.

### Appendix 1a: On campus research activities

It is imperative for BU to:

1. Ensure that any research activities which resume adhere to BU’s [Major Incident Group Principles and Planning Assumptions](https://intranetsp.bournemouth.ac.uk/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/documentsrep/Principles%20Document%20Final.docx&action=default), whereby people (and their health, safety and wellbeing), remain our primary concern.
2. Ensure researchers concerned are able to conduct research activities in line with their own personal circumstances (for example, if they/their families require additional social distancing measures to be upheld)
3. Ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of any research partners and/or participants is maximised
4. Honour external commitments to research funders and sponsors, including embedding additional frameworks/requirements
5. Honour our commitments to postgraduate research (PGR) students to enable them to progress their studies wherever possible
6. Minimise increased financial costs to BU which may be incurred by extending research projects delayed by a lack of access to laboratories etc.
7. Enable projects of the highest strategic priority to progress (for example tied to an SIA investment, accelerate quality of REF submission, etc.)
8. Progress research activities which are time dependent (for example where there is an expiry data on samples requiring analysis etc.)
9. Implement protocols for ensuring staff and any research participants maintain adherence to social distancing
10. Demonstrate to national funders (including UKRI) that BU is enabling utilisation of publicly funded assets
11. Develop working practices which enables access to facilities away from core educational activities
12. Identify where any additional research costs are incurred and seek to leverage external funding (where feasible)

### Appendix 1b: Off campus research activities

It is imperative for BU to:

1. Ensure that any research activities which resume adhere to BU’s [Major Incident Group Principles and Planning Assumptions](https://intranetsp.bournemouth.ac.uk/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/documentsrep/Principles%20Document%20Final.docx&action=default), whereby people (and their health, safety and wellbeing), remain our primary concern. Ensure researchers concerned are able to conduct research activities in line with their own personal circumstances (e.g. if they/their families require additional social distancing measures to be upheld).
2. Ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of any research partners and/or participants is maximised
3. Honour external commitments to research funders and sponsors, including embedding additional frameworks/requirements
4. Honour our commitments to postgraduate research (PGR) students to enable them to progress their studies wherever possible
5. Minimise increased financial costs to BU which may be incurred by extending research projects delayed by a lack of access to field sites.
6. Enable projects of the highest strategic value to progress (for example tied to an SIA investment, accelerate quality of REF submission etc.)
7. Progress research activities which are time dependent (for example where there is an expiry data on samples requiring analysis etc.)
8. Where activities take place in third party own sites, agree protocols for ensuring staff and any research participants maintain adherence to social distancing.
9. Identify where any additional research costs are incurred and seek to leverage external funding (where feasible)
10. Enable time dependent activities (for example fieldwork dependent on weather conditions) to progress
11. Minimise barriers to inherently socially distant research activities taking place within daily travel distance

## **Appendix 2: prioritisation of research activities to resume**

Detailed within table 1 is an indicative guide for how the restart of research projects is to be prioritised.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Question* | *Indicative scoring* |
| Is the project externally funded? | Where 1 = less than £10k; 2=£10-30k; 3= £30-50k; 4 = £50-100k and 5 = over £100k.  Please use 0 if there is no external funding (comments section to indicate internal funding). |
| What will be the cost to BU if research projects are not restarted within the next three months? | Where 1 = less than £500; 2 = £500-£1,000-; 3= £1,000-£5,000, 4 = £5,000-£10,000 and 5 = over £10,000.  Please use 0 if there will be no additional costs. |
| Is the research time critical? (For example, samples that require analysis within a fixed time frame or is part of a longitudinal study) | Where 1 is minimal disruption and 5 is means the research will no longer be valid. |
| Is the research connected to a project linked to a SIA-funded initiative? (i.e. IMSET, BU-IAS or IMIV?) | Where 1 = none, 3 = associated project (i.e. some income is attributed, 5 = all income is attributed to the SIA-funded initiative). |
| Are you confident that the research has made the necessary adjustments to adhere to COVID-19 restrictions (including safety for participants)? | Where 1 = very low confidence and 5 = very high confidence. |
| Is there a reputational risk with not prioritising the restarting of the research project? | Where 1 is a very low risk (for example partners will not withdraw, similar research activities at other HEIs remain paused) and 5 is a very high risk (whereby partners have stated they will withdraw from research, BU is behind competitor organisations in terms of restarting, etc.) |
| Would delays to recommencing research activities be detrimental to the wellbeing of the staff, students, partners and/or participants? | Where 1 is a very low risk of a negative impact on wellbeing and 5 is a very high risk of negative impact on wellbeing (for example, a PhD completion being delayed by a year). |

## **Appendix 3: processes for undertaking research activities during the COVID-19 pandemic**

### Appendix 3a: On campus activities

If you require access to a BU owned research facility, prioritisation of these spaces in being managed by your Faculty. In the first instance, please contact, the relevant contact within your Faculty Operations Team as follows:

* FHSS: [HSSFacultySupportAdministrator@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:HSSFacultySupportAdministrator@bournemouth.ac.uk)
* FMC: [mbrocklehurst@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:mbrocklehurst@bournemouth.ac.uk)
* FoM: [lbrooks@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:lbrooks@bournemouth.ac.uk)
* FST: [dhall2@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:dhall2@bournemouth.ac.uk)

They will advise you of the relevant process to undertake to gain access to the space(s) you require, if applicable.

### Appendix 3b: Off campus activities

You will need to adhere to the process set out below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Process point* | *Action* |
| Step 1  **Feasibility** | Researcher to determine whether research is still feasible in light of COVID-19. If feasible, proceed to step 2. |
| Step 2  **Adaptation** | Researcher to determine whether research activities can evolve in light of COVID-19 and redesign study as such (in consultation with the relevant funder if required). Once revisions are agreed (if applicable), proceed to step 3. |
| Step 3  **Risk assessment** | Researcher to:   * Develop a new risk assessment – include “COVID-19 Compliant Off-Campus Research” at the start of the title before the name and location of the activity. Complete and attach COVID-19 risk assessment and method statement to risk assessment (see Appendix 6 for template documents). **DO NOT SUBMIT** **/SAVE DRAFT COPY/ SEND FOR APPROVAL** – instead log out when you get to approval page and email your Faculty Operations Team for assessment to be checked (see email addresses below). Your faculty will confirm when you can submit.   + FHSS: [HSSFacultySupportAdministrator@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:HSSFacultySupportAdministrator@bournemouth.ac.uk)   + FMC: [mbrocklehurst@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:mbrocklehurst@bournemouth.ac.uk)   + FoM: [lbrooks@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:lbrooks@bournemouth.ac.uk)   + FST: [dhall2@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:dhall2@bournemouth.ac.uk) |
| Step 4  **Risk assessment approval** | Faculty Operations team to:   * Review the risk assessment (utilising the COVID-19 Guidance provided by Health, Safety & Wellbeing and consulting specialist expertise, if required). Once satisfied that the risk assessment is of required standard, provide approval and return this to the applicant. |
| Step 5  **Research partner(s) approval** | Researcher to:   * Secure written approval from the site that the research will take place on (this could include hospitals, community centres or the landowner of an outdoor space etcetera), that it can proceed and adheres to their risk assessment processes. |
| Step 6  **Faculty approval** | Researcher to:   * Complete the COVID-19 Adapted Research Form (as provided in [appendix 4](#_Appendix_4:_COVID-19)) and send it to your Deputy Dean for Research & Professional Practice (DDRPP) for endorsement including the **approved risk assessments** and any **partner approvals**:   + FHSS: [vhundley@bourenmouth.ac.uk](mailto:vhundley@bourenmouth.ac.uk)   + FMC: [dmendis@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:dmendis@bournemouth.ac.uk)   + FoM: [msilk@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:msilk@bournemouth.ac.uk)   + FST: [tzhang@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:tzhang@bournemouth.ac.uk)   Once DDRPP approval is provided (either with an electronic signature or email to confirm), send the finalised documentation to [RDSProjectAdmin@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:RDSProjectAdmin@bournemouth.ac.uk) |
| Step 7  **Institutional approval** | RDS to:   * Ensure that all the documentation (risk assessment, recommencing research form and ethical approval) has been completed. * RDS to confirm with the researcher by issuing an approval letter that the research can proceed and the RED records are updated as such (if applicable).   *(Please note, approval will ordinarily be issued within one week, if not sooner. If an expedited approval is required please ensure this is clearly marked in the subject line of the email sent through to RDS).* |

## **Appendix 4: COVID-19 Adapted Research Form**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Request to undertake research and knowledge exchange activities outside of the home: post June 2020*** | |
| Principal investigator |  |
| Other team members |  |
| Department and Faculty |  |
| Title of project |  |
| Project start date |  |
| Anticipated project finish date |  |
| Funder |  |
| Total budget |  |
| Activity code |  |
| If your research taking place outside of the home and off-campus? | *If no, please re-read this guidance as this form does not need to be completed.* |
| Rationale for research resuming outside of the home |  |
| Location of the research (please be as specific as possible, including room/laboratory numbers if applicable) |  |
| How is the research still feasible? |  |
| If applicable, how has the research activity evolved to understand the impacts of C19? |  |
| How will you travel to your research location and ensure it is compliant with current travel restrictions? |  |
| Ideal times and dates of the research activities (please be as specific as possible – for example, 8 hour per day for four week, or three hours per week for six months) |  |
| Minimum times and dates of the research activities to resume (please be as specific as possible as to the minimum times for your research to be viable) |  |
| Please detail any specialist equipment that your research is reliant upon |  |
| Have you completed a BU risk assessment and has this been approved? (Please provide evidence of this as an appendix to this form – UNLESS your research activities take place on campus, when this step needs to be completed AFTER endorsement from the RPMC MIG) |  |
| External partner(s) involved |  |
| Do you have support from your external partners to resume your planned research activities? (Please provide evidence of this as an appendix to this form) |  |
| Have you completed risk assessments required by any research partners and have these been endorsed by BU? (please provide evidence of this as an appendix to this form) |  |
| Signatures of DDRPP (or nominated representative) indicating Faculty endorsement of responses to this form and for research to proceed |  |

## **Appendix 5: external guidance for undertaking research during the COVID-19 pandemic**

### From government:

* Government guidance on returning to work: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>
* Government guidance on reopening labs and research facilities: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/labs-and-research-facilities>

### Other sector guidance:

* Universities UK principles and considerations: emerging from lockdown: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/principles-considerations-emerging-lockdown-uk-universities-june-2020.aspx>
* NHS Health Research Authority: <https://www.hra.nhs.uk/covid-19-research/covid-19-guidance-sponsors-sites-and-researchers/>

### From funders:

* UKRI guidance for research and innovation communities: <https://www.ukri.org/research/coronavirus/guidance-for-the-research-and-innovation-communities1/>
* NIHR Restart Framework: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/restart-framework/24886>

## **Appendix 6: template documents**

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