

Guidance on whether research activities can continue.

As you know the situation regarding Covid-19 is evolving each day. The guidance below is meant to help you understand the contingency preparations that are being made at Queen Mary.

Many of you will have had local messages confirming the following:

- In line with government advice QM remains open though many people that can work from home are being encouraged to. However, that does not mean that we shouldn't make sensible plans for future eventualities, e.g. thinking about what elements of your research projects could be done while at home etc.
- Clinical trials – the JRMO has issued [guidance for clinical trials](#) and staff involved should follow these. Staff working within Barts Health facilities should follow Trust guidance. There is also guidance now available for [non-clinical research](#) and [PGR students](#).
- Wet lab research. We do have plans to ensure that even if QM is closed key staff will come in to ensure facilities such as the BSU are maintained, and equipment (e.g. freezers, incubators, gas and water supplies) is checked and wherever possible maintained so work can continue. We would suggest that you think very hard before starting wet lab experiments that will run for more a day, and carry out experimental work in a way that would enable you to bring your experiments to safe state in which they could remain during a multi-week closure, if required, in the space of a day.
- Contingency plans related to the BSU have already been enacted
- Some laboratories have already decided to close on the basis of discussion with researchers and PGR students

We are now in a position to share the likely scenarios to help guide decision making about what experiments may continue to be supported, provided the campus environment is deemed safe for the work to be carried out. It is impossible to put a clear definition around what constitutes critical research projects. We understand every project is important. The principles will apply when the University moves to a situation that the campus remains open (not to teaching) but there may be disruption to mass transport or mass gathering. And then IF the University moves to a full closure.

The University is closed to teaching but not to academics and PhD students, what can I still do for my research projects?

- If you and your team are able to travel safely and coming to your laboratory would not contravene guidance provided by Public Health England, then you can still carry out your research.

- You should ensure that your supervisor for laboratory work has agreed you should continue your experiments. If your line manager is not available because they are ill or otherwise unavailable, then you must discuss with your Head of School or Institute and alert the laboratory manager.
- If a PhD student needs to continue to access the lab they should only do so if it is deemed safe and appropriate and PhD students like staff, should be encouraged to work from home where possible.
- If the numbers of technical or security staff able to come to work reach a level that means the University can no longer guarantee a safe environment for you to carry on your work, then we will move to a stage of restricting access to laboratories.
- You must stick to Queen Mary's lone working policy (details here: <http://www.hsd.qmul.ac.uk/a-z/lone-working/>) See additional guidance over page.
- You must tell campus security that you are on campus and when you have left campus.

How will you know whether you should come to work to carry on your research?

- If it is not possible for QMUL to support the continuation of your research due to a lack of the equipment or other resources you need to process results, you will be emailed through your Head of School or Institute.
- You are asked to notify the JRMO that you have paused your experiment, and they will make contact with the relevant funder.
- PhD students should keep a record of the continuous hours their research has been affected should they need to take a retrospective interruption due to time lost outside the lab

But stopping my research would ruin years of work?

- We understand that your work is important. Laboratory managers are working now to assess what work can be done now to help minimise the disruption caused, e.g. freezing down cell line etc.
- The vital resources for research are being categorised and those which represent a unique resource will be prioritised for trained technical and research or BSU staff to maintain a live stock during the period the University is closed.
- The laboratory managers will conclude their contingency planning shortly and be able to communicate what on-going research work could be preserved during the University shut down.

Who do I talk to if my research needs to continue if the University is completely closed?

- Talk to your line and laboratory managers.

Lone Working Guidance – Laboratories and Workshops for COVID-19

The HSD topic page on lone working at <http://www.hsd.qmul.ac.uk/a-z/lone-working/> clearly identifies 4 key questions for lone working – these are amended for the COVID-19 ‘working at home’ period as follows:

1. **(Eliminate the lone working)** Do you really need to lone work or can the activity be modified to involve more than one person so as to avoid lone working and not increase the risk?
2. **(If lone working is unavoidable)** Have you confirmed with your line manager / supervisor that the lone working activity is not restricted in line with the School / Institute COVID-19 contingency plan or under existing QMUL policy?

Where a restricted lone working activity needs to be conducted due to a significant health and safety, statutory priority or another justified reason, prior arrangement must be made and confirmed in writing with relevant other responsible person/s in the School / Institute and supporting Directorates (e.g. Estates & Facilities) to ensure a full cohort of assisting persons (first aider, lab manager, EAF Security / Maintenance competent person for assisting task) are in place on campus. *Some restricted lone working laboratory or workshop activities in existing QMUL H&S policy include:*

- Handling of oxygen depleting cryogenic liquids in confined spaces;
 - Experiments with highly toxic or corrosive, explosive or highly / extremely flammable substances;
 - Working with Hazard Group 3 pathogens;
 - Operation of dangerous machinery e.g. high speed centrifuges, high speed homogenisers and liquidisers, cutting machinery – e.g. microtomes, lathes (see page 6 of http://www.hsd.qmul.ac.uk/media/hsd/documents/QMUL_HS_025_Aug-2019_Lone-Working_Out-of-Hours-Working_H&S-Policy-and-Gu....docx for a fuller list – this is not exhaustive); Work on live electrical conductors;
 - Work involving foreseeable unpredictable aggressive behaviour from a customer / client / subjects (human or animal); and
 - Fumigation of a Containment Level 3 laboratory with formaldehyde or accessing plant area where fumigant may be released.
3. **(Lone Working Approval)** Has your risk assessment covering lone working been updated for COVID-19 ‘working at home’ period and approved by your line manager / supervisor and where relevant noted to the ‘responsible person’ in your School / Institute / Directorate?
 - *The responsible person will be your Head of School or Institute.*
 4. **(Lone Working – checks)** Are all control measures and personnel identified within your updated lone working risk assessment in place and tested before lone working begins (such as emergency contacts, emergency plan or procedure, lone working alarms, the use of buddy systems etc.?).
 - *Bear in mind that absences of key assisting personnel may occur suddenly so you will need to make more preparations for working that you would normally expect.*