



ATENEIO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY  
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
University Research Council

**URC RESEARCH GUIDELINES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**A. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

1. Research need not cease during this Covid-19 pandemic. In general, the University encourages the continuation of scholarly activities, particularly those critical to the mission of the University and its research priority areas.
2. At all times, research must maintain high scholarly and ethical standards and comply with national and local public health directives, as well as University policies and regulations, especially those pertaining to the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. Until further notice, on-campus research shall be subject to the “Guidelines on Workplace Prevention and Control of Covid-19” signed by the University President on 16 May 2020 and the “Guidelines for Authorized Onsite Work for Maintenance Staff and Laboratory Technicians During Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ)” issued by the Office of the Vice President for Administration and Human Resources (OVPAHR) on 25 May 2020.
4. All research procedures involving human participants should abide by ethical standards and principles and comply with detailed guidance available from the University Research Ethics Office (UREO).
5. Research activities that entail accessing personal information for research-related purposes shall be conducted in accordance with the applicable provisions of Republic Act 10173 (Data Privacy Act of 2012), its Implementing Rules and Regulations, and relevant issuances of the National Privacy Commission.
6. Future issuances of memos and guidelines from the OVPAHR, the Office of Human Resource Management and Organization Development (OHRMOD), the University Physician, and/or the Occupational Safety and Health Committee shall be deemed as updating these research guidelines.
7. Research activities that cannot comply with physical distancing and other safety protocols are strongly discouraged.
8. Research activities that can be carried out remotely (such as review of literature; data collection, such as through phone interviews; online data collection, such as through data mining; observation without direct contact; data analysis; online meetings; writing) should be pursued.

9. The Loyola Schools and the Ateneo Professional Schools shall endeavor to familiarize their faculty members and students with remote and online methodologies, which minimize the exposure of research participants to the risks of Covid-19.
10. Research activities conducted online must take cognizance of cybersecurity issues.

## **B. RESEARCH INVOLVING IN-PERSON INTERACTION**

1. Researchers should consider the risks on the health and safety of research staff, colleagues, and human participants, as well as the impact on resources of research activities. As a rule, researchers must refrain from in-person or face-to-face interactions with participants, employees, and colleagues and consider alternative ways of conducting their studies.
2. Where necessary (such as research involving face-to-face interaction with human participants or research activities involving the presence of several individuals in a research activity in the same workspace), in-person interaction may be allowed only under the following conditions:

### *2.1 For Research in a Laboratory or Similar Setting*

2.1a. For research involving the presence of several individuals in the same workspace such as a laboratory or a field site but with no face-to-face interaction with a human participant, project proponents must seek permission to pursue or continue the research. The request shall be endorsed by the unit head (such as a department chair) and the Dean and approved by the Schools' Vice President and the Vice President for Administration and Human Resources (VPAHR).

2.1b. The request for permission must explain the Covid-19 mitigation plan to be followed, which should include the identification of hazards and the measurement of risks prior to the conduct of the research and the training of the research staff in protecting themselves from Covid-19, such as physical distancing and the mandatory wearing of face masks. The plan should also include scheduling alterations to minimize the number of personnel in a given space, the maintenance of hand wash stations, airflow, cleaning and disinfecting procedures, the inventory and assurance of the integrity of disinfectants and safety equipment, and other pertinent matters.

2.1c. If granted permission to proceed, all research projects involving the presence of several individuals in a research activity in the same workspace must accomplish a daily contact tracing form, which the principal investigator submits weekly to the Dean's office.

2.1d. For projects that have been allowed the use of laboratories before the issuance of these guidelines, the principal investigator shall submit and implement a safety plan as indicated in 2.1b and 2.1c.

## *2.2 The Use of Laboratories*

2.2a. As a rule, the number of people in a workspace must be limited through work shifts or staggered workdays, with no extended hours spent in the lab. However, should overtime work be necessary, the principal investigator must request permission for overtime work from the authorized administrators. In the Loyola Schools, these administrators are the Dean (for faculty members) and the Associate Dean for Student and Administrative Services (for nonteaching staff), who coordinate with the OVPAHR and the Campus Safety and Mobility Office.

2.2b. The number of personnel allowed to occupy a workspace at a given time must be indicated with signage on the door or entrance of the room. In the Loyola Schools, this number is determined by the Reimagining LS Spaces Ad Hoc Committee.

2.2c. While low occupancy is critical, from a safety standpoint the “buddy system” must be instituted whenever possible. This system entails that two people are present in the lab or facility while maintaining social distancing requirements during operations. If alone in a given laboratory or workspace in any instance, one must adhere to all safety protocols, including the wearing of a face mask at all times.

2.2d. Only those members of a project who have undergone Covid-19 safety training may be permitted to conduct work in a laboratory.

2.2e. Each laboratory shall maintain an electronic logbook of research personnel and the times of their stay in the room, which can be referred to later for contact tracing purposes.

2.2f. Protocols are required for equipment and facilities shared by the personnel of more than one project. Each piece of shared equipment or a shared facility shall designate a person to be responsible for the implementation of safety protocols. This individual will also be responsible for maintaining the electronic logbook and records of sign-up and use of shared equipment.

2.2g. The Dean shall exercise oversight over the safety protocols of laboratories and common workspaces.

## *2.3 For Research Involving Human Participants and Face-to-Face Interaction*

2.3a. For research involving face-to-face interaction with human participants (as in some medical research), project proponents must seek permission to pursue or continue the research. The request shall be endorsed by the unit head (such as a department chair) and the Dean and approved by the Schools’ Vice President and the VPAHR. The necessary ethical clearance must also be sought from the UREO.

2.3b. The request for permission must explain the Covid-19 mitigation plan to be followed, which should include the identification of hazards and the measurement of risks prior to the conduct of the research and the training of the

research staff in protecting themselves from Covid-19, such as physical distancing and the mandatory wearing of face masks and other elements of personal protective equipment.

2.3c. The request for permission must also include information pertinent to the following questions:

- (i) What is the direct benefit to the human participant that cannot be obtained outside of the face-to-face interactions aspect of the study?
- (ii) Why can't the involvement of the human participant be postponed?
- (iii) What harm will befall the human participant if face-to-face interactions cease or are delayed?

2.3d. If granted permission to proceed, all research projects involving face-to-face interaction must accomplish a daily contact tracing form, which the principal investigator submits weekly to the Dean's office.

### **C. RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN REMOTE DATA COLLECTION**

1. **Research involving human participants remotely accessed can proceed with the planned activities with no need to obtain permission as long as it has received ethics clearance from the UREO.**
2. A complete informed consent process must be conducted to enroll participants in a study even when their participation is not in-person or face-to-face. While the informed consent process in research involving face-to-face interaction results in a signed consent, when research involves human participants remotely accessed new ways of seeking consent (such as in 3, below) must be found and agreed upon by the researcher and the participants, with the process retaining its integrity.
3. Consent from a participant in a study involving remote data collection may be obtained by mail or email. Other technologies, such as audio and/or video recording, may be used, with the consent duly recorded.

### **D. RESEARCH AT A LIBRARY OR ARCHIVE ON CAMPUS**

1. University libraries, archives, and repositories of nonelectronic materials shall devise and implement a plan to enable researchers to remotely access needed materials in their collections, should there be no such available remote access at present.
2. If the materials cannot be accessed remotely, researchers shall request permission to do on-campus research in these libraries, archives, and repositories. The request must be endorsed by the researcher's unit head (such as a department chair) and the Dean. The request is then submitted to the library or archive, after which it shall be passed on for approval to the Schools' Vice President and the VPAHR.
3. The request for on-campus research must explain the necessity and urgency of conducting on-site library or archival research.

4. The library or archive shall implement safety protocols on physical distancing, the mandatory use of personal protective devices, the reduced density of readers and personnel at any given time in any reading room, and other measures.
5. The number of persons allowed to occupy a reading room at a given time must be indicated with signage on the door or entrance of the room. In the Loyola Schools, this number is determined by the Reimagining LS Spaces Ad Hoc Committee.
6. Libraries, archives, and special repositories may require readers as well as personnel to wear gloves, in addition to face masks.
7. The library or archive shall maintain an electronic logbook of readers and personnel and the times of their stay in a reading room, which can be referred to later for contact tracing purposes.

#### **E. STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH**

1. Undergraduate and graduate students cannot be required to participate in any research activity that puts them in an environment that introduces and augments the risks of contracting Covid-19.
2. Students are permitted to participate in critical research activities provided that:
  - a. The student voluntarily decides to participate in the research.
  - b. The research activity in question is (i) essential to the completion of a course or degree requirement, such as a master's or doctoral project or thesis/dissertation or a graduate seminar paper; or (ii) an important component of a University-sponsored research undertaking. The research activity must also have been granted ethical clearance by the appropriate department, school, or Schools-level ethics review committee.
  - c. Research activities are carried out remotely, and no in-person data gathering activities are included as part of the research, subject to the immediately following provision.
3. Student participation in research involving human participants and face-to-face interaction or involving the presence of several individuals in the same workspace, such as a laboratory or a field site, is possible only if the project has received the requisite approval of University authorities.
4. The student's professor or principal investigator shall request permission for the student to participate in critical research activities. The request shall be endorsed by the unit head (such as a department chair) and the Dean and approved by the Schools' Vice President and the VPAHR.

#### **F. DISCRETIONARY RESEARCH LOADS**

1. Dean's offices may continue to distribute discretionary loads in support of research, following school-level policies and practices.

2. In addition, research loads with the appropriate number of units may be granted in cases such as, in the context of the pandemic:
  - a. A faculty member who writes a manuscript on online learning and submits it to a Scopus-indexed journal or conference proceedings
  - b. A faculty member who trains and mentors students and colleagues in remote and online research methodologies

#### **G. RESEARCH PERSONNEL SAFETY AND INSURANCE**

1. The requisite safety training for Covid-19 of the staff of a research project shall be the responsibility of the principal investigator, who shall ensure that the training abides by the guidelines issued by University authorities.
2. The principal investigator is responsible for ensuring that all protocols—on safety or otherwise—conform with government and University standards and that these protocols are followed.
3. Research projects are expected to provide their staff with face masks and, where necessary, gloves. In case of reusable masks and gloves, research personnel are responsible for ensuring that these masks and gloves are washed and cleaned regularly.
4. Permanent employees and faculty members are covered by a health insurance, but project and temporary staff members are not. Research project staff may be included in the University's health insurance package if (a) they are employed for a year, and (b) their annual premium is covered by the research funds. For project staff who will be employed for less than a year, an outpatient health card, such as from The Medical City Clinic (TMCC), may be obtained by a project staff, who will have the option of paying for the card or be covered by the project's research funds. These insurance expenses can be charged to the budget of a University-funded research grant, but the total approved amount of the grant must not be exceeded.

#### **H. PURCHASE OF RESEARCH EQUIPMENT AND OTHER CAPITAL EXPENDITURES**

1. While the policy on a general freeze in capital expenditures subsists, the principal investigator of a research project funded by the University who intends to purchase equipment and/or other capital expenditures that are indispensable to the study and cost more than ₱10,000 apiece will need to seek exemption from the URC through the LS OADRCW. The request for exemption shall use standardized forms.
2. Once permission has been obtained, the principal investigator may proceed with the purchase of equipment and/or other capital expenditures following the established procedures of the Central Purchasing Office (CPO).

## I. RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

1. All research-related offices of the University remain fully operational and endeavor to maintain continuity of services even if personnel are working remotely.
2. Researchers of ongoing projects are enjoined to report to their respective funding institutions how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected their research activities and what alterations in the project are being made or have been made in view of pandemic. Any changes in the timetable and compliance with deliverables must also be reported as soon as possible.
3. Clearance from the UREO should be obtained for any new research undertaking that involves human participants. For already approved projects that undergo significant modifications in response to the pandemic, modifications that have implications for research ethics must be approved by the UREO via their Protocol Amendment procedures.
4. In general, the University's exercise of due diligence would prevent it from incurring liability in case a member of the project staff or a student should contract Covid-19 in the course of pursuing a study or research project. Researchers must demonstrate this due diligence through:
  - a. Compliance with the law and other state and health regulations pertaining to the pandemic;
  - b. Considering all alternative courses of action to minimize, if not eliminate, the risks to students and employees;
  - c. Demonstrating the social value or utility of the activity as compelling enough to justify pursuing it despite the possible risks; and
  - d. Ensuring that the person exposed to the risk has been cleared of other vulnerabilities, which may increase the likelihood of contracting the disease.
5. All nonessential international and domestic travel is suspended until the end of 2020.
6. Individuals, offices, and workspaces that depart from these guidelines will lose privileges, may face disciplinary action, and/or may be closed until the threat of Covid- 19 has passed. Their violations may be reported by Office Marshalls or other individuals to the Occupational Safety and Health Committee.