

Dear SSIS Colleagues,

I have been asked to write to all colleagues to make sure everyone knows that in line with our institutional approach to conduct only exceptional activities on our campus sites, **as of 5pm today Friday (20th March) all on-site research activity (unless authorised as exceptional) will be suspended.** Access to retrieve resources ONLY to support home-working remains possible after today if absolutely necessary, but is strongly discouraged. Please do now collect all you need to continue your research activities at home from your office.

In these exceptional times, as no research in our College sits with the categories of COVID19 research, or essential maintenance of research materials and resources, we do need to advise all the researchers in the College on all our campuses that is the case and that they must therefore cease their on-site research activities in our buildings today.

The safety of our staff and students is our and the university's first priority, and we are not able to provide security and health and safety support for all buildings and for all operations. This, coupled with government public health advice, makes the risks of lone working and out of hours access to buildings too great. Although this does not affect us directly it also means that all research laboratories will be reduced to essential operations only. Please be assured that the university's recommendations are in line with several of our Russell Group counterparts. The majority, including Exeter, will be ceasing on-site research by Friday other than for a small number of approved exceptions.

These are difficult but essential steps for us to take. For now we have to focus our priorities on the safety and wellbeing of our staff, students and wider community. This is bound to be a deeply painful process for us all, and the DVC for Research and all ADRs will be working tirelessly to support our research community to re-establish the work that is impacted as soon as it is safe and appropriate for us to do so. With counterparts at other institutions, we are working to lobby our research funders to seek clarity and reassurance.

As I am sure your DoRs have indicated, we are looking to everyone to consider how they might continue their research using online data collection methods rather than face to face or other new ways of working wherever that is possible and appropriate. We are looking at ways to quickly facilitate new research ethics approval for existing projects where that would work and is feasible from the participants' perspectives.

The College Executive team are working with the university to minimise the effects of the new world we find ourselves in alongside our fantastic Directors of Research, Impact and Doctoral Studies. The Registrar's message today also relays information now known about funder responses so far but we will keep a watching brief.

Many thanks to them and to you all for helping to make the best of this challenging situation through homeworking. Longer term, we are hoping to provide more online materials and training and discussion forums to help us make the most of online research methods.

Some research groups and departments are looking at virtual reading groups and virtual coffee breaks, so keep those initiatives coming and do share with us things that work well as good news is important to receive.

Wishing you all well and hoping you have a safe weekend.

Anne Barlow