

## COVID-19: Office of Research Services – Important Research Support Update

### Important Research Support Updates for the following research areas:

1. Research Grants and Awards,
2. Research Contracts,
3. Research Partnerships and Intellectual Property,
4. Research Involving Humans, and
5. Research Involving Animals.

Dear Faculty Members,

**Due to the recent university budget reductions, the Office of Research Services (ORS) will be running a reduced staff complement in July and August 2020.** Despite this reduction in staff, the team remains dedicated to supporting the research community. Ongoing and new requests for ORS support regarding research grants, contracts, partnerships and research ethics and safety will take longer than usual, and we kindly ask for your support and understanding. To help assist faculty members with their planning, we have outlined our service expectations below:

#### Research Grants and Awards

- **Temporary Layoffs:** In July and August, three Grants Officers will be on staggered temporary layoff. As such, we kindly ask that researchers allow extra time for us to process applications and other documentation. As always, we are committed to supporting all faculty members; however, due to these significant staff reductions in July and August, we may not be able to accommodate late requests for support and email response time will be delayed.
- **Prioritization:** During this time, we will be prioritizing requests as outlined below.
  - Intake date and/or;
  - Time-sensitive funding opportunities and post-award activities with specific deadlines;
  - Agency deadlines in priority order.
- **Services:**
  - **Administrative Review:** During July and August, Grants Officers will provide **administrative review of new grant applications only, to ensure completeness with agency guidelines and assist with institutional signatures.**
  - **Engage Early:** It is advised that researchers engage the Office of Research Services as early as possible in planning to submit any grant applications.
  - **Internal Approvals:** To ensure internal approvals, including required institutional signatures, can be provided in time, we now require faculty members to provide **grant applications and the completed [Research Grant Application Form](#) a minimum of five business days before the agency deadline.**

#### Research Contracts

- **Staff Reductions:** Effective immediately there will be a reduction in staff supporting contract review.

- **Prioritization:**
  - Work is prioritized based on intake date and/or:
    - Fixed Deadline
    - Complexity
    - COVID-19
- **Services:**
  - Time to first review, or draft of a contract is 4-6 weeks once all information is received by the contract reviewer (i.e. relevant documents, information related to roles, expectations of rights, SOW, Budgets, etc.).

## Research Partnerships and Intellectual Property

- **Services:**
  - We will continue to support and foster research partnerships across the Institution and with external partners. With the increased volume of requests, our response time is delayed. Emails will be answered within one to two business days. Please provide at least 5 business days to set-up and explore new partnership opportunities that are not COVID-19 related.
  - Intellectual property and commercialization support will still be available. Please allow for at least two weeks to review new invention disclosures.
- **Prioritization:** Partnership activities will be prioritized as outlined below.
  - COVID-19 specific research activities
  - Time dependent requests to finalize an existing partnership agreement
  - Extension requests for existing agreements

## Research Involving Humans

- **Prioritization:** New studies and change requests directly related to COVID-19 and deemed as essential by the REB will be prioritized for review over other research submissions. Essential research includes studies related to:
  - front line workers who have a high risk of exposure to COVID-19 given the nature of their profession, and individuals required to work to provide necessary services to protect the public and allow government mandated distancing and quarantine (e.g. health-care professionals, emergency responders, law enforcement, grocery store workers, waste management workers, postal/delivery workers);
  - patient care and/or diagnostics;
  - equipment/devices related to personal protective equipment, patient care/diagnostics; and/or
  - supply chain management.
- Any change requests that affect the safety of research participants for studies unrelated to COVID-19 will receive priority review.
- The REB will review all other COVID-19-related studies not related to essential research areas after the essential COVID-19-related studies.
- Finally, all other studies will be reviewed. Given the dynamic nature of this emergency, the REB may change the list (review schedules) as needed to address the requirements of the COVID-19 emergency.

**Services:**

- The REB receives a high-volume of submissions during the months of July, August, October and November. During peak submission periods, the review turnaround time will be extended due to high volumes.
- In preparation for the upcoming peak submission period, researchers are strongly encouraged to submit their applications early or, if possible, during non-peak periods to minimize unforeseen delays. If you require assistance with your submission or would like to receive an REB consultation, please contact the Research Ethics Office at [researchethics@ontariotechu.ca](mailto:researchethics@ontariotechu.ca).

**Research Involving Animals**

The Animal Care Committee, through the Research Ethics Officer, will continue to review submissions to the committee (e.g. protocols and protocol amendments). Researchers should submit by following normal submission processes. **Note:** On-campus research must be approved prior to commencement. The process is available on the Health and Safety Website: [COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness Plan Assistance for Research and Laboratory Activities](#).

On behalf of the ORS team, I would like to extend my sincerest wishes for everyone to stay safe and healthy during this time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer

Jennifer Freeman  
Executive Director, Research Services