

## Dean of the Graduate Division

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**To:** Dean of the Graduate Division  
**Subject:** Reducing On-Site Research and the Impact on Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Scholars

March 19, 2020

TO: DEPARTMENT AND GROUP CHAIRS  
T-32 DIRECTORS  
GRADUATE ADVISORS  
GRADUATE COORDINATORS  
GRADUATE STUDENTS  
POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLARS

CC: DIVISIONAL DEANS  
ASSISTANT DEANS  
PROGRAM MSOs

FR: JAMES ANTONY, Dean of The Graduate Division  
SANDRA BROWN, Vice Chancellor for Research

SUBJ: Reducing On-Site Research and the Impact on Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Scholars

A few days ago, a campus-wide message went out providing guidance for reducing on-site research activity during the public health emergency. We encourage you to read the message once again:  
<http://adminrecords.ucsd.edu/Notices/2020/2020-3-17-1.html>.

As the campus-wide message states, all on-site research will be modified to be in compliance with UC San Diego policies on safety and social distancing. This is not a complete shut-down of research activity, but a requirement that every effort be made to transition the work of research staff off-site so as to restrict on-site efforts to critical activities. Our goal is to reduce the density of people in research laboratories, on campus, and in the community in general, consistent with the need for social distancing.

So how does this pertain to graduate students and postdoctoral scholars?

We have received sporadic reports of graduate students and postdoctoral scholars feeling pressure from their PIs to continue their experiments in a manner that is not consistent with the guidance provided in the campus-wide message. Faculty should follow the guidance provided in the campus-wide message, and all faculty and students/postdoctoral scholars are reminded that nobody in any laboratory should be pressured to do experiments if it makes them uncomfortable. Graduate students should also be assured that they are welcome to voice their concerns with program directors, thesis committee members, program administrators, or the supportive staff of the Graduate Division. Postdoctoral scholars may similarly seek guidance from their department leadership as well as the Office of Postdoctoral & Research Scholar Affairs.

We also appreciate that there are some students and postdoctoral scholars for whom stopping work could be very damaging to their research or their careers. This includes students hoping to graduate and postdoctoral scholars looking for jobs soon, finishing one last experiment for a last paper, or those working on long-term animal experiments that cannot be stopped without the loss of months or years of work. In these cases, the

immediate goals are set by the student or postdoctoral scholar, not the PI. This is acceptable, within the parameters, and following the guidelines outlined in, the campus-wide message.

Lastly, we recommend graduate programs consider how any time-dependent programmatic milestones (such as required sequences, lab rotations, and so forth) might be impacted. Our collective goal should be flexibility, and we encourage graduate programs to develop appropriate approaches that aid students in their progress towards degree while acknowledging the current realities. For its part, The Graduate Division is actively pursuing blanket extensions of relevant time limits and will communicate any changes in the coming days.

Our offices will continue to send you occasional updates. As always, we encourage you to monitor [coronavirus.ucsd.edu](https://coronavirus.ucsd.edu) for up-to-date information about campus announcements.