

COVID-Safe Guidelines for Research

1. Purpose & Scope

Research and research training through our HDR programs are core functions of the University and continue to be very high priorities. We are committed to minimise COVID-related disruptions to research, while continuing to assure the health, safety and wellbeing of our research community, including research participants and the broader community.

These guidelines provide information about maintaining research-related activities for all researchers, research higher degree and Honours candidates, and support staff. The information provided also supports contingency planning and preparedness to respond rapidly to changes in access to facilities and/or populations, in response to [Queensland Health directives](#).

2. General Principles

- Research and research training through our HDR programs are core functions of the University and continue to be a high priority to be maintained through any COVID disruption at Griffith.
- The health, safety and wellbeing of our research community, including research participants and the broader community is paramount.
- Planning for research should continue to include contingency planning, including for how the activity could be managed remotely if required and or rapidly paused/shut down in extreme circumstances.
- Where [Queensland Health directives](#) limit access to research locations and/or populations, assessment of what research work can be undertaken on-campus, and who needs to attend so that work can proceed safely, will take into account requirements of the research, the expertise of researchers, and existence of appropriate safety planning and supervision.

Similar considerations will be undertaken in assessing what research work can be undertaken at locations off-campus, such as in hospitals and other clinical settings, facilities and institutions, in line with those organisations' approvals, safety controls and protocols.

3. Warning System Levels & Approvals

The guidelines include reference to the University's [traffic-light warning system](#) (noting that these may at times be applied variably across campuses and facilities), in accordance with University's COVID-19 Management Plan.

- **COVID-19 normal.** All research activities can continue in line with normal approval and supervision through Groups, Elements and Institutes.
- **Tightened restrictions.** Research location and activities that are permitted will be influenced by the contemporary public health directives and emerging risk settings. Specific limits and/or approvals required will be documented on the [Risk Rating web page](#). When access limits are specified, research staff, HDR candidates and Honours students who cannot undertake their research remotely and can attend work on campus safely should seek approval for their Dean Academic or Director, Institute for Glycomics, using the Group's agreed approval process.
- **Campus closed.** Research staff, HDR candidates and Honours students who cannot make reasonable progress with their research remotely and have a specific, appropriate safety plan in place should seek endorsement for their Dean

Academic or Director, Institute for Glycomics, for consideration by a University-delegated authority. Note that advice from the Expert Advisory Panel may be sought by approvers, if required, before confirming/denying activities.

4. Activity/Venue Guidelines

A. Lab based research

Activity-specific guidelines apply consistently in times of Tightened Restrictions and Campus Closure, noting that approvals may be required for on-campus attendance (Section 3 above).

- Physical distancing controls should be established where possible and adhered to within laboratory spaces, including managing access to equipment and workspaces.
- Where staggered or rostered access times are required to accommodate researchers and HDR candidates, the general principles outline above must be adhered to ensure fair, equitable, transparent allocations of time both to facilities, equipment and technical or professional support.
- Planning staggered or rostered occupancy should also consider the suitability of rotating working groups, so the same group of people are working together on the same days/times and do not physically interact with the other group/s, to minimise potential exposures.
- Each lab should ensure relevant PPE is used and review cleaning protocols and regularly disinfect high touch surfaces.
- Essential visitors (including contractors required for start-up and/or maintenance of core and/or major research equipment facilities) may be approved to attend where physical distancing can be established and managed.
- A risk management plan will be required regarding engagement with external participants, volunteers and sample collection, developed in line with [Queensland Health directives](#) to the greatest extent possible. Refer also Section 4F in relation to human participants.

B. Fieldwork

Activity-specific guidelines apply consistently in times of Tightened Restrictions and Campus Closure, noting that approvals may be required for on-campus attendance (Section 3 above):

- Fieldwork may be approved where that activity complies with the travel restriction and public health directions of each locale to be attended.
- All travel for research (and any other University business) must comply with Griffith University Travel Policy and with public health directions of each jurisdiction to be entered. Assessment must consider how researchers can access the site safely, including determining what form of transport is appropriate.
- Appropriate levels of PPE, disinfectant and cleaning products should be made available in the field.
- Travel approvals will still be required in accordance with normal procedures.

C. Studio based

Activity-specific guidelines apply consistently in times of Tightened Restrictions and Campus Closure, noting that approvals may be required for on-campus attendance (Section 3 above):

- [Queensland Health directives](#) should be adhered to within studio spaces and consideration given to alternative/supplementary arrangements, such as the use of technology.

- Where staggered or rostered access times are required to accommodate researchers, research support staff, HDR candidates and Honours students, the general principles outline above must be adhered to ensure fair, equitable, transparent allocations.

D. Office based, including HDR Hubs

- Office-based research activities must ensure appropriate occupancy levels and physical distancing is in place where possible in shared office environments and shared workspaces (e.g. hot desks) should have an agreed disinfecting protocol prior to use.
- During periods of Campus Closure, only research that cannot reasonably be undertaken remotely will be considered for approval to continue on-campus. This includes where personal circumstances may prevent reasonable progress.
- During periods of Campus Closure, office space allocations may be made into shared spaces in specified 'open' buildings and not necessarily to the researcher's usual workspace.

E. Biosciences Resources Facility

Activity-specific guidelines apply consistently in times of Tightened Restrictions and Campus Closure, noting that approvals may be required for on-campus attendance (Section 3 above):

- Approvals for all research activities planned to be undertaken within the Biosciences Resources Facility will include confirmation of current protocols approved by the University Ethics Committee.
- The number of people permitted in the Biosciences Resources Facility may be limited at times by [Queensland Health directives](#), in which case staggered or rostered access times will be instigated by the Facility staff.
- Use of appropriate PPE must be maintained along with careful observance of other [Queensland Health directives](#).

F. Clinical/human participants

- Participants in a vulnerable risk group or who are who are exhibiting cold or flu symptoms should be advised not to participate until further notice.
- In line with [Queensland Health directives](#), clients and staff should maintain physical distancing requirements where possible. Where physical distancing is not possible, approved risk-management strategies should be implemented.
- Clinical trials must comply with the [Commonwealth Department of Health Guidance on clinical trials for institutions, HRECS, researchers and sponsors](#) and any site-specific protocols.
- During periods of Tightened Restrictions or Campus Closure, studies involving human participants and that do not require physical contact can be conducted in appropriately managed spaces and meet physical distancing requirements may be approved. Ethics approval and the associated informed consent in essential. A risk management plan is required, which includes detail of the type of participants and notice of any potentially vulnerable groups.
- During periods of Tightened Restrictions or Campus Closure, studies involving human participants and that involve some level of physical contact, while utilising appropriate PPE may be considered. These must be able to be conducted in appropriately managed spaces. Ethics approval and the associated informed consent in essential. A risk management plan is required, which includes detail of the type of participants and notice of any potentially vulnerable groups. Advice from the Expert Advisory Panel may be sought in relation to each case, prior to approval

- During periods of Campus Closure, studies involving healthy participants and that do not require physical contact and can be conducted in appropriately managed spaces and in line with [Queensland Health directives](#), may be approved for high priority projects.
- Where an existing trial is in progress with cohort, to ensure continuity of treatment, approval may be granted to resume recruitment of new participants, for priority projects during periods of Campus Closure.

G. Off-campus/third party facilities

- Guidelines for the conduct of off-campus research workshops and events are provided below in Section 4H.
- A range of University other research activities are conducted off-campus, in third party facilities, including hospitals clinics, laboratories and other facilities. Approvals to undertake research activities in third party facilities will only be considered where these activities are in line with those organisations' safety controls and protocols and can provide written approval from the relevant authority in the third-party organisation.
- Griffith staff who have funded research that is being carried out at off-campus sites must abide by the risk-mitigation requirements of those locations in conjunction with Griffith University procedures.
- The same guidelines for "General Principles" and "Specific Activity Venue Guidelines" should be considered in assessing these requests.

H. Research workshops and events

This section relates to workshops and events that are for the conduct or dissemination of research.

- Physical distancing and hygiene measures for any face-to-face engagement should be established in line with current [Queensland Health directives](#) and adhered to within workshop and event spaces; these measures should extend to assessment of the cleaning protocols for the venue.
- During periods of Tightened Restrictions or Campus Closure, wherever it is possible to effectively and efficiently achieve the goals of the workshop or event remotely, researchers are encouraged to hold virtual meetings via use of technology to enable reduced physical contact.

On-campus workshops and events

- On-campus face to face research workshops and events are not supported during periods of Campus Closure.
- At all other times, on-campus research workshops and events, including classes, need to adhere to the University's COVID-19 policies and [Queensland Health directives](#).

Off-campus workshops and events

- Face to face research workshops and events in off-campus venues can only be supported where:
 - the work can be where that activity complies with the relevant travel and public health directions of each locale to be attended.
 - an approved risk assessment and risk management plan is place.
- The same guidelines for "General Principles" and "Specific Activity Venue Guidelines" should be considered in assessing these requests.