

Our community has been fraught with crises in 2020, and we are all feeling the impact at varying levels. As the COVID-19 situation develops, the University is making informed decisions to best support the community.

While the pandemic has had the immediate impact on our local and international coursework students, the crisis will inevitably also have a deep and long-term impact on our research activities, our HDR candidates and our researchers. This message outlines how we are supporting our research activities, our researchers and our research students.

The overarching aims of our approach is to ensure that ANU:

1. Protects the health and wellbeing of our staff and students
2. Continues to function as a high performing research university;
3. Continues all of our essential research activities wherever possible;
4. Can resume its normal level of research activity as rapidly as possible once this crisis has passed;
5. Minimizes the impact on the research and candidature of our HDR and Honours students;
6. Minimizes the impact on the research and careers of our Early Career Researchers; and
7. Manages the relationships and research with our external collaborators, clients and research funders.

These are challenging times for the University and for each of us personally. Many of our research community have diverted their focus to the current COVID-19 crisis and have made remarkable and generous contributions to the national response. We should all be proud of how ANU has risen to this huge global challenge.

I also know that you are continuing to do your research amidst this ever-evolving situation. Our continued resilience and sense of community is what will help us through these uncertain times.

The information and advice below are aimed at supporting you all through these tumultuous times. The environment is changing rapidly around us, and we will continue to provide advice to adapt to these changes. Please keep continue to monitor the [ANU COVID-19 advice page](#).

Professor Keith Nugent  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

## 1. Research Continuity Working Group

We have established a University Research Continuity Working Group to support and inform the Critical Incident Management Team. Our goal is to be able to maintain and support as much of the University's research productivity as possible with the least amount of disruption. Following the resolution of the COVID-19 situation and the resulting impact on the University, we hope this group can facilitate the continuation of research operations as far as possible.

The group membership is drawn from staff across the University. Meetings will be held at least twice a week, with the scope to consider research infrastructure, supplies, activities and engagement and the impact on HDR candidates. We will be communicating regularly to impacted members of the community as our work continues. It will work closely with research leaders.

The scope of the group is to consider and ensure an appropriate response to issues around:

1. Supporting the continuity of research activities;
2. Effective operating and maintenance of campus research facilities;
3. Ensuring we remain both safe and compliant with relevant regulations;
4. Managing external collaborations and relationships;
5. Appropriately managing and supporting our ECRs and HDR candidates;
6. Maintaining research support services across the University.

We recognise that a huge amount of work has already been done on these issues across the University. The intent of this group is to ensure that our University response is coordinated, that we can learn from each other as a community and that resources are made available if needed.

## 2. Critical Research Activities

You may already be well advanced in thinking through issues arising from the impact of COVID-19 on your research activities, critical infrastructure and services. Careful thought needs to be given to the immediate situation, but also to the increasing impact over the coming weeks and months.

Shortly, a checklist will be made available to research leaders to assist you in thinking through the issues and to help generate an effective plan that will help us through whatever happens in the next few months. The intent is that this will also assist Schools to ensure that we have considered all of the critical issues and contingencies, and that we have taken stock of current and planned activities and requirements. Time spent now on assessing impacts will be time well spent, will save crisis management at a later date, and will help avert some really poor outcomes. We would very much appreciate the input of School Directors and others to this checklist to ensure that we can draw on all of our insights and experience at this critical time.

It is important that we continue to function as a community and that we keep in touch with each other and share experiences. This means that, where appropriate, collaborative research meetings, discussions, seminars, supervision of HDR candidates, mentoring younger staff members – and being mentored by more senior staff members – must continue at the same rate that it does now. The technology made available by the University is excellent and, with a little practice, the meetings can be as productive as face-to-face meetings.

We recommend Microsoft Teams for internal meetings and project planning and Zoom for external collaborative meetings (See Section 5 below).

## 3. HDR Candidates

We are well aware that our HDR Candidates have specific requirements and questions. The Graduate Research Office and the Dean HDR will shortly contact HDR candidates to address these more specific issues in a separate email.

HDR candidates may be feeling vulnerable and unsure on how the current crisis will impact their progress. As supervisors, we strongly encourage you to take the following steps with the candidates under your supervision:

- Discuss the ongoing supervision arrangements with your HDR candidates as soon as possible. Be certain that you have a clear idea of the issues the candidate is facing, both professionally and personally.
- Make sure you have emergency contact details for your HDR candidates.
- Please maintain regular contact, at least weekly.
- The University is rapidly adapting to the use of the sophisticated video conferencing platforms such as [Microsoft Teams](#) or [Zoom](#). These resources will allow you to continue to communicate with candidates if either you or they fall ill or are required to go into isolation. Ensure you let your team know about your working arrangements as they change.
- Discuss possible changes to research projects in light of COVID-19. In particular, it is essential that you work with HDR candidates to ensure there is a well-considered plan for the project is available should travel or other restrictions continue for six months or more.

- Direct administrative enquiries to your local HDR administrator or the Graduate Research Office.
- Encourage your HDR candidates to seek support if required. Please be sure to ask after their health and wellbeing.  
[Health](#); [Mental health](#); [PARSA assistance](#); [Community Wellbeing team](#)
- For new / commencing HDR candidates that are unable to commence due to travel restrictions, please communicate their options are: (a) to enroll as an external student and commence their research remotely, ensuring they have adequate support and facilities in their locations to enable this to occur, or (b) to recommend deferral of commencement for at least 3mths duration. Contact the Graduate Research Office if you have any questions.
- Remain in contact with students that are required to self-isolate and be sure to provide details of the support services available from ANU.

Many of these points are also highly relevant to the care of our Early Career Researchers, particularly those on a research contract, who will also be seeking guidance on the impacts that all of this disruption will have on their career.

## 4. Research Support Continuity

The interruption of our research activities through COVID-19 will inevitably have an impact on the progress of many of our research projects.

The Research Services Division and the College Research Offices will endeavour to maintain discussions with our main research funders, such as the ARC and the NHMRC. Managing these relationships will be an ongoing task for us but we can expect that these funding bodies will be understanding towards the plight of the research community.

It is possible that large numbers of staff in the Research Support enterprise at ANU will need to be away from work for reasons of illness or quarantine. Douglas Robertson from RSD is currently having, or will shortly be having, discussions with all of the College Research Offices to ensure that we share our skills and knowledge in such a way that we can stand in for each other if the need arises. The resulting skill sharing and interoperability will stand us in good stead for the future, and will also ensure that ANU can provide the help you need in reporting progress to funders and supporting the effective operation of grants.

Some of the other funding bodies or collaborators may need care and attention. For example, many research partners will be under severe financial stress for the foreseeable future. We can expect that this has the potential to create stress in some relationships. Please identify where the funder of your research or research partner is likely to be suffering from financial stress. Factor this into the planning of your project and also, more importantly, into how you communicate with your research partners. For example, if you have a project which is funded by QANTAS, then it is likely that they may not view this research as a very high priority right now. This will create tensions, but you must try to find a mutually agreed approach to an amicable solution.

We strongly suggest you consider issue facing your partners and that you factor it into your planning of your project and also, more importantly, in how you communicate with your research partners. Please feel free to seek advice from your colleagues, your research office, Innovation ANU teams or my office if you are concerned about possible or emerging stresses in relationships with the partners who are supporting or investing in your research activities. They will be struggling too!

## 5. Engaging Remotely

Online systems are available for use to ensure continuity of existing and planned meetings relating to your research, supervision of students and HDR candidates, and general business continuity.

- Zoom is a video communications platform with the ability to host audio and video meetings with multiple attendees. User information can be found on the [ANU Zoom Client](#) page, which includes instructions for using the system. This system is ideal for meetings with external attendees.

- [Microsoft Teams](#), built on Office 365 groups, is a collaboration app that helps your team stay organized and have conversations all in the one interface. Documents can be stored, updated and shared, video and audio calling functionality, and a direct messaging chat function. This system is ideal for internal communications with your team.

## 6. Useful Links

- [ANU Community Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Australian Department of Health](#)
- [ACT Health](#)
- [World Health Organisation](#)
- [Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Ten misconceptions about coronavirus](#)

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